



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

MINUTES

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Peter Poulter. This was based on a reading from Matthew Chapter 5, verses 1-20.

The Moderator spoke of an inter-faith celebration he had attended early in the new year.

00/01 Welcome to the Arthur Rank Centre

Revd Gordon Gatward, the new Director of the Arthur Rank Centre, gave a warm welcome to Mission Council. The Moderator wished him well in his new appointment.

00/02 Welcome

The Moderator, the Revd Peter McIntosh, welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular:- the Revd Ken Forbes (Scottish Congregational Church), Mrs Roberta Wood (Northern synod), the Revd Simon Thomas (Wessex synod), Ms Suzanne Adofo (Church Related Community Work Development Worker) and Mrs Barbara Hedgecock (Minutes Secretary).

00/03 Attendance

There were 63 members present with 16 staff and others in attendance and Mrs Barbara Hedgecock (Minutes Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revd Frank Beattie (Life & Witness), the Revd Tom Bayliss (West Midlands Synod), Mrs Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer), the Revd Liz Byrne (Yardley Hastings Centre Minister), Dr Graham Campling (Southern Synod), Ms Gabrielle Cox (Church & Society), Mr Peter Devaney (Wales Synod), the Revd Nanette Lewis Head (Equal Opportunities), Dr Donald South (Mersey Synod), Mr Stephen Summers (CRCW Development Worker), the Revd Geoffrey Townsend (North Western Synod), the Revd Pamela Ward (Northern Synod) and the Revd Philip Woods (International Church Relations).

00/04 Agenda

The Deputy General Secretary proposed additions to the printed agenda, which were agreed. It was noted that the list of members of Mission Council had been headed with the date 1999 in error.

00/05 Minutes of Mission Council 1-3 October 1999

The minutes of the meeting held on 1-3 October 1999, which had been circulated, were presented by the Clerk. They were approved and signed with the following correction:

99/48 (99/31) last sentence to read: "Mission Council was assured that appropriate consultations would take place."

00/06 Matters Arising

99/48 Congregational Union of Scotland (CUS)/United Reformed Church (URC) Union

The General Secretary reported that the Bill had received its third reading in the House of Commons and awaited its Royal Assent. He detailed arrangements for the Unifying Assembly to be held on Saturday 1st April, 2000 in the Barony Hall of the University of Glasgow, outlining travel arrangements, overnight hospitality, car parking and cloakroom facilities. A video would be made for those unable to attend.

Arrangements had been made for representatives of the URC to lead worship in and/or take greetings to almost all the CUS churches on the following day.

99/51 Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG)

The Convener of RPAG, the Revd Duncan Wilson, reported that as the further consultations referred to in 99/51 had been convened by Ministries it was appropriate that the Convener of Ministries, the Revd Graham Long, should present the report.

Mr. Long presented a paper headed "Deployment Targets to 2005" which had been tabled at the meeting, noting that the figures contained therein, though not significantly different from those presented at the last meeting of Mission Council, had been accepted by a very representative group as the appropriate working figures for the coming period. They represented what was seen as a coherent approach to deployment policy. Those present at the consultation had indicated that it would be helpful to aim for a 10% vacancy rate. Following some discussion as to how realistic this was, it was noted that such a figure could be a factor in the calculations, but that it should not be allowed to dominate. It was noted that the consultation had not considered non-stipendiary ministers.

On behalf of Ministries Committee, the Revd Graham Long sought agreement to authorise a working party to prepare a statement and appropriate resolutions to Assembly in 2001, in order to determine future policy on, firstly, the fixed term appointment of all stipendiary ministers in pastoral charge and secondly, the place of the district as the focus for the call of stipendiary ministers. Mission Council was unwilling to grant such authorisation in the absence of sufficient information and time for discussion, and it was suggested that the Ministries Committee might do further work on these issues with a view to presenting a report to a future meeting.

99/54 Task Group on Discipline

The Deputy General Secretary said that the Task Group had not yet revised its report, and the matter would be brought to the next meeting of Mission Council.

00/07 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) report (Paper D)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report, noting that paragraphs 1 and 4 were matters of report and paragraph 2 was to be discussed later in the agenda.

Mr. Waller proposed that: **Mission Council should meet in 2002 and 2003 on the dates indicated in paragraph 3 of paper D.** This was agreed.

Two corrections to paragraph 4 were noted in that the Small Churches Task Group would be reporting to the current meeting and the Discipline Task Group would be reporting in March 2000. Mission Council discharged the Millennium Task Group expressing thanks to the Convener, The Revd Elizabeth Caswell, and the other members.

Referring to paragraph 1 of the addendum to the report of MCAG, Mr. Waller proposed that Mission Council appoint Mrs Barbara Hedgecock as Minutes Secretary. This was agreed.

Referring to paragraph 2 of the addendum, Mr. Waller proposed that Mission Council appoint Miss Jean Thompson as the Secretary of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL), initially for a one-year trial period. This was agreed.

Mr. Waller explained the background to paragraph 3 of the addendum which referred to cross-committee representation, and it was agreed that such minor changes should be allowed to occur on an informal basis. Any more significant deviations from the pattern set by the Assembly would need the agreement of the Assembly.

00/08 Oversight Ministries (Papers C and C1)

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the papers, noting that this matter had been discussed at the October meeting when it had been agreed that the paper presented to Mission Council in March 1997 (now marked Paper C) should be circulated to members. This paper, the fourth to have been produced on the subject, had not been considered fully at the time of its original presentation. Mr. Waller noted that Paper C1 was produced as a result of ecumenical consultations.

The Revd Roberta Rominger, a member of the group which had produced Paper C in 1997, introduced the document and suggested that the most fruitful approach would be to focus on the second recommendation on the first page which proposed that a significant piece of work should be done. There was considerable discussion following which it was agreed that the General Secretary should discuss with the moderators and synod clerks ways in which the task of caring for retired ministers and widows/widowers could be taken from the moderators. A report should be made to the Mission Council in October 2000 for discussion and with a view to making a statement to the Assembly.

It was further agreed that a Task Group should be set up which would focus on the theological, ecclesiological and mission issues of oversight ministry. It was agreed that the Deputy General Secretary would suggest a remit for this group later in the meeting. *See Minute 00/17.*

00/09 Small Churches Task Group (Paper J)

The Deputy General Secretary introduced this paper in the absence of the Convener, the Revd Graham Robson.

There were a number of comments and, though there was appreciation of the work which had been done, concern was expressed that the paper did not adequately reflect the nature of the small church and its relationship to its community. The Revd Ray Adams, a member of the Task Group, undertook to report the views of Mission Council to the Group. Mission Council received the preliminary report and asked the Task Group to continue its work and to focus on the particular issues which had been raised.

00/10 Special committee to nominate a General Secretary

The Moderator said that the special committee which had been appointed by the General Assembly to nominate the next General Secretary had completed its work. Having briefly outlined the process which had been followed, he informed Mission Council that the committee would bring the name of the Revd Dr David Cornick, currently Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, to the General Assembly as nominee for the post of General Secretary. The appointment would be made in July 2000 and the term of office would begin in July 2001 on the retirement of the Revd Tony Burnham.

00/11 Personalia

On reconvening the meeting after a break, the Moderator greeted Huw Morrison, FURY Chair, and led prayer for the Revd Dr David Cornick and his family.

00/12 Indonesia

Information was given concerning the situation in Indonesia, and the need to support Indonesian Christians and to express concern to the Indonesian government. Permission was granted for the Revd Peter Brain, Secretary for Church and Society, to speak. Mr. Brain reported that the Uniting Church in Australia was making representations to the Indonesian Government with the full support of the United Reformed Church. He also said that he had written to the Indonesian Ambassador on our behalf, and intended to work closely with our ecumenical partners in this country in order to continue to make appropriate representations. Mission Council endorsed this action.

00/13 Multi-racial, multi-cultural development programme (Paper B)

The Deputy General Secretary introduced this paper on behalf of the Management Committee, the membership of which was detailed in paragraph 1.6 of the report. It was the intention to bring a further report to the March meeting of Mission Council. Mr. Waller noted that there were a few corrections to be made to the report as follows: in paragraph 1.2, the date should read 1987; in paragraph 3.2(b), the apostrophe should be deleted from "committee's"; in paragraph 3.2(d), the word "of" should be added after "participation"; in Annex 3, after "2000", the words "The approximate annual budget would be:" should be added. It was also noted that the draft resolution in Annex 2 needed improvement.

The Deputy General Secretary paid tribute to the significant contribution made by Mrs Virginia Beecher, who had been forced to retire from the management committee owing to illness and had recently died. Members of Mission Council were asked to pray for her family. Much appreciation was expressed for the work of the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper who had been at the heart of what had been a far-reaching and successful programme.

There was considerable discussion during which support was expressed for the continuation of the work, though there was not universal agreement for the way forward proposed in the paper.

The following resolution was put:

Mission Council:

acknowledges the support given by the Council for World Mission and gives thanks for the ministry of the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper as multi-racial / multi-cultural development worker during these past three years;
accepts the need for a continuing programme of work which seeks to ensure that the United Reformed Church becomes and remains an instrument for racial justice within its own life and the life of society.

This was agreed unanimously, the first part with acclamation.

It was further agreed that the Management Committee should talk with the Staffing, Resource Planning and Mission Council Advisory Groups (SAG, RPAG and MCAG) considering all possible options. A report should be brought to the March meeting of Mission Council for decision.

It was noted that Mrs. Lewis-Cooper would present a report to the General Assembly, and would also be contributing a piece to "Articles of Reformed Faith and Religion".

00/14 A successor to the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL) (Paper H)

The Convener, Mr Simon Rowntree, following a paper presented to the October meeting, presented this report. It was noted that throughout the paper "committee" should be replaced by "group". Mission Council agreed the proposals outlined in Paper H.

00/15 Appointment of Rural Consultant (Paper F)

This paper was for information only.

00/16 Nominations Committee Report (Paper I)

This report was presented by the Convener, the Revd Glyn Jenkins.

In the absence of the Revd Angus Duncan, the General Secretary moved that:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints the Revd Peter James Brain as Moderator of North Western Synod from 1st September 2000 to 31st August 2007. This was agreed.

Mrs. Wilma Frew moved that:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, re-appoints Mrs Rosemary Johnston as Children's Advocate from 1st April 2000 to 31st March 2005. This was agreed.

In the absence of the Revd Davd Hannen the Deputy General Secretary moved that:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints Ms Avis Reaney as Financial Secretary with effect from 1st April 2000. This was agreed.

The Deputy General Secretary asked that the last appointment be kept confidential for the following two weeks. Mr. Brain and Mrs. Johnston having withdrawn during the presentation and decision taking, returned and the Moderator greeted them warmly.

Mr. Jenkins presented the remainder of the report which was for information. It was noted that the heading of item 4 should read; "Moderators' Review and Nominating Groups".

00/17 Oversight Ministries - continued from Minute 00/08

The Deputy General Secretary presented the remit to Mission Council and moved the following resolution:

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

- (1) examine from the perspective of our Reformed theology and ecclesiology, and with a concern for mission, the proper relationship between personal and conciliar leadership and authority, with special reference to the work of synod moderators;**

- (2) **draw on previous URC reports, the experience of partner churches and existing ecumenical reports that relate to the subject; and**
- (3) **report to Mission Council in March 2002 the result of the examination and any proposals that come from it.**

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

This was agreed.

00/18 Training Committee (Paper G)

Before presenting the written report the Convener, the Revd John Proctor, reported, for information only, the following matter relating to the Training for Learning and Service (TLS) Course. The United Reformed Church had been using TLS since 1995. The course had been devised, inaugurated and sustained through the Scottish Churches Open College (SCOC). However, that body had indicated that it would not support the course in England and Wales beyond October 2001. The material was owned by the SCOC and the College provided the link to University recognition. Mr. Proctor said that the Training Committee would be proposing a two-stage response. A small group had been appointed to review the situation and report to the Training Committee very soon. In the light of that report the Committee would bring a resolution to the General Assembly which would seek to deal with the short-term future of lay preaching training. The second stage would take time, and would involve a detailed consideration of lay preacher training needs, probably in partnership with a training institution and our ecumenical partners. This was noted, and the committee was requested to remember the needs of those who did not intend to become lay preachers but nevertheless wanted to follow a training course.

The Convener presented the written report concerning Mansfield College and mentioned the concerns of the Training Committee which included funding issues, the need for the course to be both reformed and ecumenical and the importance of appointing the right Director of Ordinand Training and using an appropriate process to achieve that. The Training Committee had requested more details of the proposed arrangement with Regent's Park College, and Mr. Proctor had arranged to visit the college in February. Mission Council endorsed the approach.

00/19 Information Technology (IT) Management (Paper A)

The General Secretary presented this paper from the Mission Council Advisory Group and also the recommendation contained within it in paragraph 2. Mr. Burnham explained that the interim procedure outlined in paragraph 8 was expected to be needed for a short time only since it was hoped that the Task Group would be set up by the Mission Council in March. Nonetheless, it was agreed, following a request from the Eastern Synod, that the interim group should also have responsibility for the co-ordination of IT management affecting the synod offices.

The following resolution was moved:

Mission Council agrees to set up an IT Task Group for three years 2000 – 2002 with the remit and membership as set out in Paper A.

This was agreed. It was noted that membership of the group should include someone with high professional expertise and that the synods would need to consult in order to nominate the two people who would represent them.

00/20 Changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration (Paper E)

The Revd Graham Long, Convener of Ministries, formally presented the paper and asked that the Treasurer should introduce it. This was agreed. Before he did the Clerk explained that, because paragraph 6.1.5 of the Plan for Partnership had been inserted into the Plan by resolution of the 1999 General Assembly, the first resolution contained in Paper E fell within the provisions of Standing Order 3(e)(iv). She informed Mission Council that, in accordance with that Standing Order, the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary had together decided that new evidence justified the bringing of this resolution.

Mr Graham Stacy presented Paper E and moved the following resolution:

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial remuneration by the addition of the words in italics in para 6.1.5, and the re-numbering of the sub-paragraphs, which will then read:

6.1.5.1 Children's allowances: Where a minister has one or more financially dependent children below the age of 24 years, an annual non-pensionable allowance of £800 in respect of the first dependent child and £400 in respect of each additional dependent child will be paid, provided that the minister certifies (on a form provided) that the total annual income of the family (excluding state children's benefits) is expected to be less than £2,000 in excess of the basic stipend; *(see para 6.1.5.6 below)*

6.1.5.2 Any casual earnings of, or educational grants for, dependent children, or housing or fixed car allowances paid by the Church, may be disregarded as family income;

6.1.5.3 The allowance will be paid in accordance with the circumstances pertaining at the date that the certificate is signed. Any subsequent change, e.g. when the family income changes, will be disregarded in the current year; pro-rata grants may be claimed in the year of the birth of a baby, and in the year in which a child ceases to be dependent, or attains the age of 24;

6.1.5.4 The first year in which this allowance will be paid is 2000. The sums of £800, £400 and £2,000 in paras 6.1.5.1 and 6.1.5.6 will be reviewed by the MoM Committee for each subsequent year;

6.1.5.5 It is envisaged that forms will be issued in February of each year, and grants will be paid through the first available payroll run after the form is received in the MoM office;

6.1.5.6 Where a minister certifies that the total family income, as defined in this para, is likely to exceed the basic stipend + £2,000, the allowance will be paid less 50p for every £1 that the expected income exceeds the basic stipend + £2,000.

This was agreed.

Mr. Stacy moved that:

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, suspends para 6.1.2 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration relating to any cost of heating and lighting incurred after April 1st 2000, and amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the deletion of para 6.1.2 with effect from July 1st 2000.

This was agreed.

00/21 Assembly Arrangements Committee

The Revd Alasdair Pratt advised Mission Council that, in view of the forthcoming union with the Congregational Union of Scotland, the Committee had decided that it would be appropriate to hold the annual meeting of the General Assembly in 2002 in Scotland. Accordingly, arrangements were being made for Assembly to meet at the University of St. Andrew's from Thursday 4th July to Monday 8th July 2002.

00/22 Closing Remarks

The Moderator thanked members for their participation in the meeting.

Closing Worship was led by the Chaplain.



MISSION COUNCIL

22 January 2000

PAPERS

A	salmon	IT Management
B	canary yellow	Multi-racial Multi-cultural
C	cream	Oversight Ministries
C1	cream	Episkope and Episcopacy
D	gold	MCAG
E	blue	Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration
F	bright green	new Rural Consultant
G	white	Ordination Training at Mansfield College
H	pink	AGOGAL
I	lilac	Nominations
J	white	Small Churches Task Group



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

A

IT Management

1. **Church House IT.** The work on introducing the IT Network has revealed the need for a clearer management structure for IT. At present the responsibility rests with the in-house Office Management Group (OMG) convened by the DGS. Day to day responsibility is in the hands of Eva Chiu, contracted until June 2000 to oversee the installation of the network; Ann Barton as Facilities Co-ordinator reporting to Hilary Gunn for hardware and some software; Clem Frank for the Finance network and Carol Rogers for Communications and Editorial. The database is a joint enterprise between Communications and Ministries managed by Judith Johnson with input by Stephanie Honey.

2. **MCAG**, after hearing a report of the consultation by Tony Burnham with Clem Frank, Hilary Gunn, Carol Rogers and John Waller, recommends that

MC set up an IT Task Group for three years, 2000 – 2002

3. **Remit.**
 - ◆ to be accountable to the MC for IT Management and development in the Church;
 - ◆ to manage the Church House network, its hard and software and staff training;
 - ◆ to be the reference point for the IT staff person (or part-time persons) see below para 4;
 - ◆ to oversee the IT relationships with the synods and ultimately other parts of the church;
 - ◆ to support and advise on the development of all URC websites;
 - ◆ to advise on future communication developments including
 - ⇒ access to networks/database throughout the church
 - ⇒ computerisation of manual records
 - ⇒ telephone policy
 - ⇒ video conferencing

 - ◆ to advise MC on an appropriate IT policy including its future management structure from the beginning of 2003; and
 - ◆ to undertake any other tasks remitted by MC or the GS.

4. **Membership.** This needs to reflect the heavy usage within Church House as well as the need to relate to Synods and beyond. Therefore it is proposed that the Group consist of seven persons comprising
 1. three persons appointed by MC, of whom one shall be convener and two shall represent the interests of the synods. At least one shall be a member of MC;
 2. three persons from the Office representing Office Management, Communications and Finance; and
 3. the database administrator (Judith Johnson).
5. **Database.** This is operating satisfactorily and will continue under the direction of Judith Johnson.
6. **Website.** This is the responsibility of the Communications and Editorial Committee, but there are a number of uninvolved makers. It is proposed to hold some preliminary discussions in-house and then report to the Communication and Editorial Committee.
7. **Staff.** It was recognised when the network plan was agreed that Eva Chiu might be followed by someone at technician level. However it is now seen that, at least part time, a more senior person also is required. Whether this is one person with two roles, or two persons part time, or some collaboration with another church or charity is being explored.
8. **Interim procedure.** Until MC has set up the Task Group, responsibility for in-house matters will be dealt with by the Deputy General Secretary in consultation with Hilary Gunn, David Lawrence, Chris Langham and Judith Johnson.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

B

Report of The URC's Multi-Racial, Multi-Cultural Development Programme To The
Mission Council, January 22, 2000

Part 1 – Background

- 1.1 “The United Reformed Church humbly recognises that the failure and weakness of the church have in particular been manifested in division which has made it impossible for Christians fully to know, experience and communicate the life of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church”. (URC Basis of Union, paragraph 7)
- 1.2 One of the failures and weaknesses of the church has been in the area of RACIAL JUSTICE. Of course this has not been a complete failure, but from time to time since 1978 the Assembly has drawn local churches’ attention to the need to address this aspect of our common life. (“Declaration on Racism” Annex 1)
- 1.3 In 1994 Assembly asked Mission Council to consider a motion from Thames North Synod regarding the creation of a special Multi-racial ministry post. In 1996 Mission Council responded by advising the Assembly to instruct the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Committee, to use one of its five special ministry posts for the appointment of a Multi-racial, Multi-cultural Development Worker within the United Reformed Church for an initial period of three years. This advice was accepted.
- 1.4 As these posts can only be filled by people from other churches which are members of the Council for World Mission the post was advertised in those churches and from a field of eleven applicants the Revd. Marjorie Lewis-Cooper was appointed in July 1997. The post has been supported by the Council for World Mission through an annual grant of £8,000 throughout the period of the programme.

Objectives

- 1.5 The objectives of the post were agreed as follows:
 - a) To help the United Reformed Church at every level to be more open and integrated culturally and racially

- b) To explore the task of mission in our Multi-cultural society
- c) To foster awareness of issues of racism and racial justice in congregations and councils of the United Reformed Church

A methodology was agreed which the programme has followed.

1.6 The arrangements for the post and the management of the programme have been the responsibility of a Management Committee, representative of the Mission Council, Church and Society Committee, Equal Opportunities Committee, Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee, together with people with particular insights into the issues involved. The following have served on the committee for some or all of the time:

Sandra Ackroyd (URC representative to The Churches Commission for Racial Justice [CCRJ]) Wilfred Bahadur (Equal Opportunities Committee) Virginia Becher (Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee) Peter Brain (Church and Society Committee) Henna Desai (Young woman of Asian Ancestry) Mia Kyte Hilborn (Overseas Exchange Sub-committee) John Macaulay (Equal Opportunities Committee) Sheila Maxey (Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee) Naboth Muchopa (The Methodist Church Secretary for Racial Justice) Simon Walkling (Equal Opportunities Committee). John Waller has acted as convenor of the group throughout the period.

Part 2 – The Work of the Multi-racial, Multi-Cultural Development Programme 1997-1999

Visits to Synods

2.1 Between 1997 and 1998, considerable time was spent observing and analysing the multi-racial/cultural nature of the URC in its local, district and synodical structures. Visits were made to the twelve synods and discussions were held with local congregations, District Council meetings, Synods and key individuals, groups and committees. Draft Reports of the visits have been circulated within the respective synods for comments and amendments.

The visits and reports cover a wide range of issues related to the URC's programme, including:-

- ◆ Contextual analysis and strategic planning
- ◆ Manifestation of racism and the level of participation of minority ethnic persons in the life of the church.
- ◆ Mission
- ◆ relationships with other minority ethnic Christians, people of other faiths and community-based racial justice programmes.
- ◆ Participation in the promotion of racial justice in the wider society.

Some synods have already debated racial justice concerns, The Thames North Synod passed a resolution encouraging the establishment of a continuing programme and staff post.

2.2 Some specific issues that would need to be addressed other than in the proposed new programme (see below) include:

- ◆ The implication of other issues of culture and ethnicity such as Welsh and Scottish national needs and aspirations.
- ◆ The plight of travellers

Conferences, Courses and Meetings within the URC

- 2.3 A number of Conferences, courses and meetings were held including
- ◆ Training for a newly established network of Racial Justice Advocates in February and October 1999.
 - ◆ Meetings with minority ethnic ministers and lay person. Of particular concern is the racist behaviour directed at black members in multi-cultural congregations, and the rejection of the ministry of minority ethnic by some congregations because of racism.
 - ◆ Consultations and meetings with synodical Moderators, staff at Church House, young people in the URC and theological institutions that train URC ministers.
 - ◆ Meetings with some General Assembly Committees to explore the relationship between the committees and the Multi-racial, Multi-cultural Development Programme. Of particular concern is the lack of representation of minority ethnic persons on most Assembly Committees. There is also a need for committees to reflect on the impact of their work on minority ethnic persons.

Consultations and Networking with Ecumenical Colleagues

- 2.4 The URC's Multi-racial, Multi-cultural Development Programme has benefited from consultations with ecumenical colleagues in Britain and overseas including:
- ◆ The Methodist Church Racial Justice Office
 - ◆ The committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns [CMEAC]
 - ◆ The Catholic Association For Racial Justice [CARJ]
 - ◆ The London Baptist Association's Racial Justice Programme
 - ◆ The African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance [ACEA]
 - ◆ The Churches' Commission for Racial Justice [CCRJ]
 - ◆ The world Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism [PCR]
 - ◆ The Caribbean Conference of Churches [CCC]
 - ◆ The Racial Justice Office of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.
- 2.5 These consultations have been important sources of information and opportunities to identify areas for ecumenical collaboration. All these discussions have taken place in the context of a current broader debate about racial justice in British society. Some elements of this debate have been: the celebration of the Windrush Anniversary in 1998, the report of the enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, parliamentary debate on a new Immigration and Asylum Bill and the election of the first black president of the Methodist Conference, due to take up office in the year 2000.

Part 3 – Recommendations

- 3.1 In light of the initial expectations and the outline of the work done to date set out above, the Management Committee are unanimous in recommending that the United Reformed Church continue with a major programme around racial justice which would hold to the same aims set out above (1.5)

- 3.2 The elements of the racial justice programme should be to:
- a) Develop the advocacy work across the church, recruiting, training and supporting some advocates in each synod
 - b) Oversee the availability of regular racism awareness training for URC leaders, Assembly staff, committee's etc. and to ensure racism awareness training is an element in URC ministerial and other training programmes
 - c) Encourage, strengthen and empower minority ethnic URC members and leaders in the practice, application and manifestation of their faith and to promote adequate resources for projects involving minority ethnic people and groups within the church and society.
 - d) Liase with Assembly Committees in monitoring the participation minority ethnic members in all the committees and councils of the church
 - e) Represent the United Reformed Church on ecumenical and civil bodies
- 3.3 A new standing committee of the General Assembly should be created to carry out, monitor and develop this programme. The option of giving the work to a sub-committee of an existing committee is not recommended because of the significance of the task and because the remit goes across almost all the existing committees. There would need to be cross-representation with other committees and ecumenical bodies.
- 3.4 The staffing of this programme requires one full-time post, probably designated Secretary for Racial Justice, with adequate support staff. This 5-year appointment should be reviewed no later than the start of the fourth year
- 3.5 The budget for this programme for 2001 onwards should be developed by the Management Committee with RPAG before March 2000 Mission Council, Annex 3 offers a first draft.
- 3.6 A draft resolution for General Assembly is presented at Annex 2. The text of this report would be edited to form the supporting text for any resolution.



DECLARATION ON RACISM

This Declaration (-core text printed below in bold capitals) was debated and agreed at the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, May 1987, in the following terms:

The Assembly adopts the Declaration on Racism and commends it for study and action and as a future point of reference throughout the Church.

Preamble on the Biblical Basis

Creation: All human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1.26) as the summit of God's creation. Human beings are made for each other, to live in community and to have corporate responsibility for the whole of creation (Genesis 2.19-20). But unlike the rest of creation there are no separate species within humanity. There is only one human race. What we call 'races' are nothing more significant than slight variations of the basic human stock (Acts 17.26 and Genesis 3.20).

Redemption: In Jesus Christ the barriers between humankind and God are broken down. Similarly the divisions within the human family are destroyed (Ephesians 2.13-18). Reconciliation with God is to become part of a new humanity in which all human distinctions of race, class, sex or status cease to be reasons for hostility and division (Galatians 3.28; Colossians 3.11; James 2.5-9). In Christ the unity of humankind is restored (Ephesians 2.19-22) - now it is based upon faith in God.

CREED

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH BELIEVES THAT ALL PEOPLE ARE CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE, FREE AND EQUAL IN HIS SIGHT.

In Jesus Christ God sought to challenge human pride and strife which had shattered humanity's essential unity. Through his ministry we know that each person is valued by God and should have the respect of others. "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3.28). When one person is oppressed or treated unjustly then the unity of humanity is violated and God's purpose is denied.

DEFINITION

RACISM RESULTS WHERE PREJUDICED ATTITUDES OF SUPERIORITY OVER OTHERS ARE COMBINED WITH THE POWER TO SHAPE SOCIETY.

Racism takes many forms: actions of individuals based on prejudice, organised discrimination against others and wholesale and often unrecognised injustice in the institutions and attitudes of society. Whether it is overt and deliberate or hidden and unconscious it is always sinful. Racism sustains evil and causes pain and misery to all who are its targets and victims. In Britain, as in so many other parts of the world, white racism is the predominant form that this evil takes.

HISTORY

WESTERN CIVILISATION IS, AND HAS LONG BEEN, SERIOUSLY FLAWED BY RACISM.

Through imperial expansion, the history of the cruel slave trade and through cultural and economic domination Western civilisation sought to extend its power over the whole earth, destroying many cultures, and maintained that power through military might. Even Western Christianity with its central belief in the saving and reconciling love of God for all humanity often allowed itself to be used in the reinforcement and extension of imperial power. The missionary enterprise of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, so full of noble ideals and practical Christian concern, often presented the Gospel in terms that legitimised the cultural and economic imperialism and racism that were inherent in Western countries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

BRITISH SOCIETY NURTURES RACISM THROUGH ASSUMPTIONS, STEREOTYPES AND ORGANISATIONAL BARRIERS WHICH DENY BLACK PEOPLE A JUST SHARE OF POWER AND DECISION-MAKING.

Racism is plain to see in those parts of the country where black people are disadvantaged in housing, employment and education and where they experience discrimination and attack. It is no less present in those areas where there are no black people, where decisions are made and attitudes formed. Racism pervades the whole of society and is manifest in its institutions, including the Church.

CONFESSION

THE CHURCH DISPLAYS RACISM BY FAILING TO ADAPT SO THAT BLACK PEOPLE CAN SHARE FULLY IN ITS LIFE, ITS OUTREACH AND ITS DECISION-MAKING.

Christians often do not recognise racism in church and society and so do not resist it. By tacit acceptance of the evil, opportunities are missed to receive the forgiveness and renewal of God which come through confession and repentance.

AFFIRMATION

THERE IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY WHEN BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE LEARN TO COOPERATE, SHARE POWER AND MAKE DECISIONS TOGETHER AND WHERE NEW FORMS OF COMMUNITY LIFE ARE THUS DISCOVERED.

As black and white Christians worship and share together in proclaiming and living their faith they experience the liberating joy and power of the Holy Spirit. In society at large new possibilities have emerged through the development of multicultural education, through legislation against racial discrimination and through equal opportunities policies. Similar signs of hope are to be found in such ecumenical initiatives as the Zebra Project, the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches, and the development of racism awareness courses, and within the URC, the pioneering work with people of other faiths, the Shalom Project in East London and the youth study programme No Longer Strangers.

COMMITMENT

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH COMMITS ITSELF TO CHALLENGE AND EQUIP ALL ITS PEOPLE TO RESIST RACISM WITHIN THEMSELVES, WITHIN THE CHURCH AND WITHIN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE AND TO TRAIN PEOPLE AND DEVOTE RESOURCES TO THIS TASK.

It plans to offer education and training to its members so that they may recognise racism and develop strategies to defeat it. As part of the wider Church it commits itself to share in the struggle to overcome racism wherever it is to be found, at local, regional, national and international levels.

PLEDGE

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PLEDGES ITSELF, AS IT SHARES IN ACTION AGAINST RACISM, TO MONITOR AND REVIEW AT REGULAR INTERVALS WHAT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

This requires that individuals and churches alike must listen to the voices of black people within the churches and in wider society and must adopt targets, agendas and timetables so that the unity and equality so sadly denied by racism may become realities. It also requires the development of educational material and training courses, the adoption by the denomination of specific measurable goals and the allocation of resources of people and finance.

The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

Annex 2

Draft resolution to come from Mission Council

Assembly:

- 1 acknowledges the support given by the Council for World Mission and gives thanks for the ministry of the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper as multi-racial / multi-cultural development worker during these past three years;
- 2 accepts the need for a continuing programme of work as outlined in the report to ensure that the United Reformed Church becomes and remains an instrument for racial justice within its own life and of the life of society;
- 3 establishes a standing committee of Assembly, to be known as the Committee For Racial Justice, with a Convener and 7 members including cross-representation with other committees as agreed;
- 4 establishes the post of Secretary for Racial Justice as a full-time Assembly officer, with the hope that Mission Council might confirm an appointment in October 2000.

Annex 3

Draft budget statement

This has been discussed in outline with RPAG officers. If the proposals in this paper are agreed, there would need to be an over-spend to cover the costs of the last six months of 2000.

1	Salary and related costs for post-holder and support staff	£46,000
2	Travel and office cost	£ 9,000
3	Committees and conferences, including the cost of advocates' meetings	£13,000
4	Subscriptions, materials and sundry costs	£ 3,000



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000



MISSION COUNCIL TASK GROUP ON OVERSIGHT MINISTRIES

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Moderators stand in a unique position, between the national church and the local congregations. From this standpoint they are able to speak with a prophetic voice, calling the whole church to its mission and purpose, and challenging our parochialism by reminding us of the larger picture behind the local decisions we make. The URC needs this gift of prophetic leadership. We therefore request the church to give serious and urgent consideration to the following issues:

1. The conciliar form of church government with its theological underpinning in the ministry of the whole people of God is central to our heritage and is one of the treasures the URC brings to ecumenical relationships. It cannot be denied, however, that councils also have limitations, and that these limitations have hindered us in our mission. Sometimes oversight requires a "face" and a personal voice in order to be effective.
2. We must not allow fear or an overbearing loyalty to the past to blind us to the range of possibilities God sets before us today. Drawing upon its reformation insight, but allowing this to be informed by its ecumenical experience, the URC should strive to create a model of episcopate, personal, collegial and communal, which is liberating and empowering for the church: faithful to the past but designed to meet the challenges of the present and the future. This vision should be clearly expressed as a matter of urgency at this stage of our ecumenical pilgrimage.
3. The moderators should be affirmed in their role as church leaders in partnership with ecumenical colleagues, and we should make a positive effort to release them from some of their present workload to enable them to support and develop ecumenical ventures and relationships. This may call for delegation of some tasks to specific persons, whose role would be recognized by the province.
4. The councils of the church could be more effective in their oversight. We would particularly recommend a re-examination of the pastoral role of the district council in its care for both ministers and churches and of the support provinces could give to districts in their oversight role, as too much of this responsibility currently falls to the moderator alone.

REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL
TASK GROUP ON OVERSIGHT MINISTRIES
MARCH 97

1. Background

1.1 In their report to the 1995 General Assembly, the Patterns of Ministry Working Party identified the need for a review of the oversight ministry exercised by URC provincial moderators.

Oversight is a significant feature of the church's ministry, and in some traditions it is an integral part of a three-fold pattern of ministry incorporating bishops, priests and deacons. Clearly, for us, oversight is shared between the councils of the church and their officers. It is most clearly focussed in the work of the Moderators of provincial synods. The responsibilities of the Moderators have grown and developed...but the need for their ministry has become increasingly accepted. We think it is time to review and reflect on the role of the Provincial Moderators in relation to the workload, expectations and the exercise of oversight generally.

1995 Reports to General Assembly, p. 126, para 5.4

1.2 Assembly agreed, resolving:

Assembly asks Mission Council to carry out a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight, and in particular to consider the work and responsibilities of moderators of provincial synods, keeping the ecumenical context in mind. (Res 50)

The Mission Council subsequently voted to appoint a Task Group of five members, including a lay member, to carry out the review. The Task Group was appointed by the Nominations Committee and comprised the Revs. Rhona Jones (Chairman), Roberta Rumminger (Secretary), Gethin Abraham-Williams, Bill Gathercole, and Mr. Geoffrey Lawrence.

1.4 The Task Group met four times between October 1996 and January 1997. Time was not adequate to enable us to undertake the comprehensive review requested by Assembly. We noted that a similar study published by the Baptist Union in November 1996 entitled Transforming Superintendency was the culmination of a 30-month process including nationwide consultation with people at every level of church life. The Group also questioned whether its members represented the breadth of competencies (biblical, theological, historical, experiential) required for such a review. Therefore, on the agreement of the Deputy General Secretary, we defined our task as a preliminary one:

- a) the identification of the primary issues needing to be addressed by the URC in reference to the oversight role of provincial moderators, and
- b) the gathering of work which has already been done on these issues.

1.5 The Group took as its starting point the reflections of the Patterns of Ministry Working Party, who identified various areas of concern:

- a) URC understanding and embodiment of the traditional three-fold pattern of the ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and the place of moderators within this pattern;
- b) the relationship between moderators and district councils in their shared responsibility for the oversight of ministry and local churches;
- c) changes since 1972 in the expectations placed upon moderators, in light of the maturing of the URC, the growth of ecumenical involvement at the regional level, and changes in the culture at large;
- d) the tensions that have been noted between the moderators' pastoral, representational and prophetic roles (mission vs. maintenance,

- discipline vs. pastoral care);
e) the evolving understanding of oversight amongst our partner churches ecumenically.

1.6 We note with appreciation and concern the work done over the past few years on these and related issues. In January 1994 Mission Council received the report of a Working Party on "Authority in the URC", with theological reflection and a reaffirmation of the conciliar nature of authority in the URC, as spelled out in the Basis of Union. In April 1994, a Working Party on "The Nature of 'Oversight' of Provincial Moderators and District Councils" brought a report to Mission Council, examining key biblical texts and offering insight and recommendations on how districts and moderators could be more effective in the oversight responsibility they share. The 1994 General Assembly asked the Mission Council Advisory Group to review the "Guidance for Provincial Moderator Review Groups" adopted in 1986. Their report was submitted to Mission Council for discussion in January 1995. In January 1996 Mission Council considered a paper by the Deputy General Secretary on the theme of "Authority".

1.7 Much of this work is of the highest quality, with good insights and strong recommendations to the wider church. Why was yet another Task Group appointed to cover the same ground? We are in danger of commissioning group after group to identify issues without ever undertaking the substantive work that these groups urge upon us. Our Group feels that what is needed is a serious review of our beliefs and practice, conducted by persons of significant competence, to enable the URC to move into the 21st century with new clarity. At this 25th anniversary juncture, it is right that the URC should reflect thoroughly and creatively on the strengths and weaknesses of conciliar forms of oversight, the experience of personal oversight ministry as it has evolved in the role of the provincial moderator, and the legitimate challenges posed by our ecumenical partners and critics. We should be prepared in this reflection to be open to the possibility of new patterns of oversight, informed by tradition with all its wealth of insight, but guided by a sense of mission that acknowledges our need for prophetic leadership. We note the URC's submission to Called to Be One:

The commitment of the churches to more visible unity is tested by their willingness to address obstacles and to submit to continual reformation.

'We cannot determine what that unity will be like, but we believe it requires a journeying (Abraham-like) into the unknown.' Called to Be One p. 22 para. 4.8

2. Introduction: Changes in the Moderator's Role since 1972

2.1 The moderator is minister to the whole church: to local congregations, districts, province, and ministers, and with a provincial and national responsibility for vision, strategy, mission and resources. The job has grown as the vision has grown, as strategy has become more urgent, and as resources have become more scarce. Professional omni-competence is assumed in our moderators, despite the fact that we offer them no specific training for the job and very little orientation.

2.2 Provincial staff levels have also grown. In 1972 it would have been usual for the moderator to be the only full-time person working at provincial level, with perhaps some secretarial support. Now s/he works alongside Youth Leadership Training Officers/Youth and Children's Work Trainers, training officers, development officers, mission enablers and others. Each province has a different sort of team operating at provincial level, and there are also different expectations of the moderator's role. In some provinces s/he is clearly the line manager for other staff; in others, s/he is a team member; in still others, the provincial team is seen as working alongside the moderator without his/her particular oversight or direct involvement.

2.3 The moderator's ecumenical brief has grown tremendously since 1972. Most moderators now relate to several intermediate bodies, and LEP's also consume great amounts of time and energy. There are relationships with other church leaders to be fostered, and ecumenical consultation is expected to a far greater degree in matters of appointment and regional

strategy. The moderators are in the front line in expressing the URC's commitment to ecumenical partnership. Some of the work can be delegated, but the moderator must be personally in touch with all of it so as to be able to speak and act effectively for the URC at intermediate level.

2.4 These changes have resulted in ever-increasing complexity in the ministry exercised by the moderators, creating great pressures upon the moderators in their work and tensions for the church in its expectations.

3. Defining the Moderator's Role: Moderator as Representative

3.1 The provincial moderator stands in a unique position within the URC, combining wide-ranging knowledge of local URC life within one region of the country and deep involvement in the national life of the church. From this perspective, moderators are able to speak of the local to the national and of the national to the local. This perspective and voice is of such value to the life of the church at all levels that we would wish to identify it as the primary responsibility of the moderators. All expectations currently brought to the role of the moderator should be weighed against this central principle. If that "trans-local" dimension is not present, someone else should probably be doing the job.

3.2 As moderators represent the national to the local, they become the "face" of the national church within a regional or local situation, both denominationally and ecumenically. Moderators are perceived as representatives of the wider church when they preside at ordinations or inductions. The Basis of Union states that moderators are representing the district council when they function in this way; we would question whether this is an adequate description of what is happening. When a new bishop is installed or an LEF is inaugurated, the URC sends its Moderator to represent on the podium alongside the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops. Moderators also represent the URC at national and international meetings.

3.3 Within a local or regional context, the moderator represents the URC in a way no one else can. Whatever our ecclesiology may say, s/he is recognised by the other church leaders as a key person to contact if one wishes to do business. This can place heavy burdens upon a moderator whose province boundaries encompass several Intermediate Bodies. Provincial and district ecumenical officers play a critical role in seeing that the moderator is freed from the day-to-day burden of ecumenical administration in order to be available in a representative capacity, and provinces and districts need to ensure that this support is in place.

3.4 Moderators come to ecumenical relations as persons in their own right. Church Leaders' Covenants are made between individuals, though usually with reference to districts, provinces and local URC ministers. This is essentially a personal act, but the church recognises a representational dimension in it: the expectation is that successive moderators will be prepared to share in these covenants.

3.5 The moderator is appointed by General Assembly. The province to which s/he is inducted will have been involved in the appointment process, but it is not the province which inducts. The president of the induction, normally the Moderator of Assembly, represents the national church. This underlines the degree of independence which we ask the provincial moderator to bring to his/her local and regional ministry. We need him/her to interpret national policy and to help implement it at local/regional level. We expect the moderator's voice to be prophetic in its challenge to our local isolationism. Sometimes the moderator shoulders the burden of people's hostility against the wider church and its decisions. The moderator exercises a pastoral ministry in speaking to this hostility and working to transform it.

3.6 By tradition we are wary of particular forms of personal oversight, with good historical reason. But there are circumstances in which this caution hinders our life as a church. There are limitations to the conciliar form of church government which we urgently need to

acknowledge. Our ecumenical partners challenge us in our suspicion of leadership: we have a tendency to set up leaders and then cut them down to size, or to define their roles in such diffuse ways as to render them ineffectual. In the process we disable qualities of leadership which are one of the gifts of the Spirit to the Church.

3.7 Our instinctive caution against personal ministries of leadership assumes that the models of the past are the only models possible, which is clearly untrue. In recent years we have seen our Roman Catholic and Anglican brothers and sisters embrace a style of episcopacy which is increasingly collaborative. We urge the URC to take note of this breadth of possibility in models of personal oversight and to develop a model which reflects uniquely Reformed insights.

3.8 The moderator's function in introducing available ministers to vacant churches is a positive experience in general. It is positive because the moderator is able in his/her representative role to bring objectivity and wide experience, thus enabling individuals and churches to sharpen their self-perception.

3.9 The Moderators' Meeting is not a council of the church and the moderators themselves have strongly resisted the temptation to issue joint statements which might influence the decisions taken by the church. However, the annual report presented by the moderators to Assembly is always read with great interest and attention. We would challenge the URC to look again at the role of the Moderators' Meeting. It is a tremendous resource of insight and perspective: twelve people who between them know every local church and every minister of the URC. This is a collective voice that deserves to be allowed to speak.

3.10 The moderators can also represent the church collectively, as on their periodic study tours abroad. Meeting with Christians in other parts of the world, they share URC concern and experience and then bring their learnings back for the benefit of the whole church.

4. Defining the Moderator's Role: Moderator as Colleague

4.1 URC moderators are part of a collegial structure of partnership, with personal ministry functioning alongside the ministry of the church's councils. Although it is not always easy for us to define where responsibility for oversight lies in particular situations of need, we would affirm this sharing of ministry. We note the URC's comments in Called to Be One concerning episcopate:

The United Reformed Church responds that personal oversight and authority need to be rooted in an understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God and the authority of such individuals has to be exercised within the councils of the church.

Called to Be One p. 25 para. 4.19

4.2 The moderator has responsibility for vision, strategy, mission and resources. S/he presides at the Provincial Synod and acts as consultant to the province committees in their work. This consultancy role is important: both provinces and districts have responsibility for tasks which arise only occasionally, and they need advice as to procedures and examples of good practice which the moderator, with his/her wider perspective, experience and network of contacts, can provide. The moderator also works as a colleague alongside provincial training officers, YLTO's/YCWT's, development officers, mission enablers, etc. The Task Group notes that in the Basis of Union 1972 the title used for moderator was "moderator of synod". We do not believe that this adequately describes the role of the moderator, which is now much wider. Common usage refers to the "provincial moderator", which is a more suitable title.

4.3 Significant work has already been done on the question of the relationship between the moderators and the district councils (see April 1994 report to Mission Council, "The Nature of 'Oversight' of Provincial Moderators and District Councils"). District councils are responsible for

the mission of the church within a given area and the oversight of local churches and ministers. The moderator's responsibility is for the good of the church as a whole: mission in its broadest sense, ministers, and local congregations. This leads inevitably to an overlap of oversight responsibility. We do not see this as a weakness, but potentially as one of our greatest strengths. Trusting in the leadership abilities of our moderators and the wisdom of our councils, we believe that the result is a creative partnership in which each works to safeguard an appropriate balance of responsibility, for the good of ministers and churches alike.

4.3.1 We note that the Baptist report Transforming Superintendency, in exploring the relationship between Associations and Area Superintendents, attributes responsibility for local congregations to the Association and pastoral care of the ministers to the Superintendent. The Task Group felt that such a separation in oversight creates an unfortunate dichotomy between the interests of the local church and the interests of the minister, with potential for adversarial confrontation. A church in dispute with its minister could become an Association in dispute with its Superintendent, with no one available to mediate between them. (We note that similar concerns are being expressed in Baptist circles.) In our situation, a church in dispute with its minister could become a district in dispute with the moderator, undermining the moderator's role as minister to all concerned.

4.3.2 The moderator typically works alongside the district pastoral committee in its ministry of oversight, acting as a partner and resource to strengthen that ministry. S/he brings wider experience of the church to inform the local committee in its work and is available to step in as a representative of the wider church whenever such a presence is helpful. The moderator's effectiveness in caring for the local churches and ministers depends upon his/her being one step removed from the day-to-day matters of administrative oversight. We would remind districts that the moderator's role is that of prophet, not chaplain.

4.3.3 The moderator is available to respond to pastoral care needs of ministers and churches. When a pastoral care need or a problem comes to the attention of a committee, it is often the moderator who receives the call for help.

4.3.4 The province can offer support to the district council in its oversight of ministers and churches, not only through the person of the moderator, but also through provincial committees. We urge the church to reassess the role of the province in the oversight and support of its districts, particularly when a mediator is needed in situations of dispute. Some disputes are best addressed by the moderator; in other situations a conciliar response is more appropriate than a personal response.

4.4 One frequently quoted definition of the moderator's role is that the moderator is "minister to the ministers" within the province. The Task Group resists this chaplaincy definition, while at the same time recognising the moderator's ability to respond in situations of pastoral need where confidentiality is critical (4.3.3.) Care for ministers is the Achilles' Heel of the whole Church. We would ask Mission Council to consider this carefully, arguing strongly that the care of the ministers is not the primary responsibility of a moderator. Delegating responsibility for the care of ministers to the moderators alone underestimates the need of the ministers for pastoral care and overestimates the ability of one person within the province to give it.

4.5 Moderators are seen as the primary providers of pastoral care to retired ministers and their spouses or widows. The moderator visits as the face of the wider church expressing its ongoing appreciation and care. Although we are aware of how much this ministry is valued by those who receive it, we believe that it should not be the sole concern of the moderator.

4.5.1 The Task Group noted that the Baptist report places responsibility for the pastoral care of retired ministers/widows in the hands of the local church. However, not all retired URC ministers/widows are members of URC congregations. There are also situations where tensions arise between a retired minister within a congregation and its serving minister. It is better, therefore, for this responsibility to lie at district level, and for it to be seen as the

responsibility of the district. The moderator, through his/her participation in district pastoral committees, can share in this work as appropriate.

4.5.2 Moderators function as welfare officers for ministers and their families, advising them of support to which they may be entitled and providing information to various national officers. This work can be highly confidential and could not easily be devolved to any other district or province officer.

4.6 Individuals who feel they may be called to ordained ministry submit their sense of call to the testing of the wider church through its various councils and committees: church meeting, district council, national assessment panel and provincial synod. At an early stage in the process they also seek the advice and guidance of the moderator. The moderator serves church and candidate alike when, through wisdom and experience, s/he helps to discern the shape and authenticity of a call.

4.7 Some moderators are aware of a responsibility to encourage ministry development among individuals within their provinces. They take it upon themselves to be alert for signs of particular gifts of leadership and to endeavour to foster those gifts for the good of the whole church. The importance of this task cannot be overestimated, and the moderators, with their knowledge both of local people and wider need, are well-placed to perform it. However, it is an "extra", beyond the scope of their day-to-day responsibilities, with little support from outside, and thus depends upon the personal commitment of an individual moderator for the future of the church.

5. The Appointment and Care of Moderators

5.1 Not least among the issues of pastoral care of ministers is the care of the moderators themselves. The General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, both former moderators, have undertaken annual visits to the moderators, and this has been much welcomed. The Moderators' Meeting can also provide a certain amount of support, as can the more informal sharing which takes place on the moderators' joint study tours. Support for the moderators' spouses is an area which remains to be addressed. The moderator's spouse can often feel particularly isolated in his/her role. Most moderators have support groups, and this should be encouraged, but the care of the moderators and their spouses remains an ongoing issue.

5.2 Although it is widely assumed that the maximum term a moderator may serve is twelve years (seven plus five), the URC has never taken a policy decision to limit the number of times a moderator may be reappointed. A paper submitted by the General Secretary to Mission Council in 1994, "Moderators of Synods: Length of Service", outlines the case for and against such limitation. We have studied the arguments, and it is our view that a twelve year limit (with flexibility for those near retirement age) would be beneficial both to moderators and to the church. Twelve years has become our practice, if not our formal policy, because in most cases, given the pressures of the job, twelve years is enough. A twelve year limit would free the church to appoint younger moderators, with clear expectations that after a period as moderator, they would go on to other forms of ministry. It would allow new people with fresh ideas and energy to offer their service to the church in this most important role.

5.3 Evidence shows that care of moderators after they have completed their term of service is also important. We note that service as a moderator can be followed by a different kind of ministry. This needs to be handled sensitively, and we urge Mission Council to consider this carefully along with the value of continuing to use the gifts and experience of former moderators, where appropriate.

5.4 At present the General Secretary arranges a programme of orientation and training for new moderators. We encourage the church to fund an adequate transition period to aid this induction process.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Moderators stand in a unique position, between the national church and the local congregations. From this standpoint they are able to speak with a prophetic voice, calling the whole church to its mission and purpose, and challenging our parochialism by reminding us of the larger picture behind the local decisions we make. The URC needs this gift of prophetic leadership. We therefore request the church to give serious and urgent consideration to the following issues:

1. The conciliar form of church government with its theological underpinning in the ministry of the whole people of God is central to our heritage and is one of the treasures the URC brings to ecumenical relationships. It cannot be denied, however, that councils also have limitations, and that these limitations have hindered us in our mission. Sometimes oversight requires a "face" and a personal voice in order to be effective.

2. We must not allow fear or an overbearing loyalty to the past to blind us to the range of possibilities God sets before us today. Drawing upon its reformation insight, but allowing this to be informed by its ecumenical experience, the URC should strive to create a model of episcopate, personal, collegial and communal, which is liberating and empowering for the church: faithful to the past but designed to meet the challenges of the present and the future. This vision should be clearly expressed as a matter of urgency at this stage of our ecumenical pilgrimage.

3. The moderators should be affirmed in their role as church leaders in partnership with ecumenical colleagues, and we should make a positive effort to release them from some of their present workload to enable them to support and develop ecumenical ventures and relationships. This may well be delegation of some tasks to specific persons, whose role is defined by the province.

4. The boards of the church could be more active in their oversight. We would particularly recommend a re-examination of the pastoral role of the district council in its care for both ministers and churches and of the support provinces could give to districts in their oversight role, as too much of this responsibility currently falls to the moderator alone.

19 February, 1997

Rev. Rhona Jones (Convener)
Rev. Roberta Rominger (Secretary)
Rev. Gethin Abraham-Williams
Rev. Bill Gathercole
Mr. Geoffrey Lawrence



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

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**Aide memoire of a meeting held on Monday 20 December 1999
in United Reformed Church House**

Present: Those who had attended the ecumenical consultations in 1998 and 1999 at St Georges, Windsor, on *Episkope and Episcopacy*.
Revd Dr Colin Thompson
Revd Fleur Houston (also a member of the Advisory Group on Faith and Order)
Mr Colin Ferguson
Revd James Breslin
Revd Elizabeth Welch
Revd Murdoch MacKenzie

Members of the Advisory Group on Faith and Order

Revd Dr Donald Norwood
Revd Dr David Thompson
Revd Richard Mortimer
Revd Wendy Baskett

Revd John Waller **convened the meeting**
Revd Sheila Maxey **acted as secretary to the meeting**

The purpose of the meeting

1. To hear from those appointed by the Ecumenical Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee to attend two ecumenical consultations on *Episkope and Episcopacy* arranged by the Centre for the Study of the Christian Church.
2. To consider how the theological insights into oversight ministries, and especially personal oversight ministries, gained both from the two consultations and from this meeting might be fed into the ongoing concern of Mission Council with the ministry of oversight and into our ecumenical relationships.

Reflection on the two ecumenical consultations on *Episkope and Episcopacy*

The Church of England, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Union were all represented, but the first three were in the majority.

The first consultation gave careful consideration to all the different kinds of *episkope/oversight* exercised by the various churches but only reached the question of the relationship between the personal and the conciliar exercise of oversight at the end.

The second consultation was dominated by the ecumenical agenda of the Anglican Communion as it struggled with the question of how essential the historic episcopate was to the reconciliation of ordained ministries.

What are the issues for the United Reformed Church?

A very wide-ranging discussion can largely be gathered under the following list of issues offered by Elizabeth Welch.

1. Personal leadership and its relations to the councils of the church

The Reformed 3-fold pattern of ministry, based in all three traditions which formed the URC in the local congregation, is minister, elders, church meeting. Our pattern of call of a minister to pastoral oversight of a church in all its life and witness clearly recognised the importance of personal leadership, exercised collegially with the elders and within the council of the Church Meeting.

However, that well-tryed pattern is lacking at District level. It is seen again at Synod level with the moderator and the synod, but there is no real equivalent of the elders and the moderator is an Assembly appointment, not a Synod appointment. It is seen again in the election of an Assembly Moderator, but the short term of office restricts the effectiveness of his or her personal leadership.

2. Continuity in history

There is a strong tradition in our churches that we are a catholic church in the catholic tradition of faithful oversight – continuity in our history, our times, and also that we are *simpliciter episcopalis*. But pragmatism in our approach to church order is not good enough – it must be theological pragmatism, rooted in a clear understanding of the nature of the Church.

3. *Koinonia* – the fellowship, the communion of the Church

Episcopally ordered churches maintain that bishops are an expression of the relatedness, the unity of the churches within the diocese. The URC expresses that *koinonia* (beyond the local congregation) through District Council and Synod and General Assembly.

The synod moderator is a personal expression of the *koinonia* of the churches in that synod. But does the size of synod areas work against the effectiveness of that? The size of Church of England dioceses and Methodist Districts is also not conducive to effective personal leadership and *koinonia*.

4. Unity and universality (catholicity)

The unity of churches over a geographical area is not assured by having bishops: we have Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Black Majority bishops in the UK, covering the same areas. The URC's consideration of the current and future role of personal *episkope* beyond the local must be based, firstly, on a concern for the good order of the URC and its effectiveness as an instrument in God's mission. However, as we seek, as a church, to come ever closer to Christ we will, inevitably, come closer to those other churches with whom we are one in Christ.

5. Of what do we need to repent?

Although we, in common with Reformed churches like the Church of Scotland, have some historical cause to be wary of the abuse of power by individuals, we have often failed to recognise and receive the gift of personal leadership. We have done this, in part, by imposing very short terms of office. Hidden authority has then, sometimes, been exercised by those allowed to serve for a longer term e.g. District Secretaries and Presbytery Clerks.

6. Various models of *episkope*

The three forms – personal, collegial and communal – are all needed for the good order of the church. However, the 1984 Report of the Anglican – Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and our Unity* particularly challenged the Reformed churches as follows:

The Reformed churches have to ask themselves whether they attach enough importance to the personal dimension of the ordained ministry at the district or presbytery level – that is to say, to the exercise of oversight in a particular way through one person together with and within a college. (para 94)

Suggested next steps

1. Offer this aide memoire to Mission Council when it discusses the 1997 paper on Oversight Ministries. It may then become clear what contribution the Ecumenical and/or the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committees can best make both to the Mission Council's work and to the current ecumenical discussions in all three nations and beyond.
2. Ask the Ecumenical Committee to:
 - a. look again at the report of the Informal Conversations between the URC and the Church of England and consider whether it warrants wider distribution or further action.
 - b. Consider discussing the Church of England's agreements with our Reformed partners who are also party to them – the EKD, and the French Reformed Church.
 - c. Consider setting up a UK Reformed – Anglican consultation to study what *God's Reign and Our Unity* has to offer to today's search for the visible unity of the Church.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

D

Report of Mission Council Advisory Group

1. The group has commissioned work on two papers. One is a version of the paper on the resignation of ministers and secession of churches, which was received but not discussed at the March 1999 Mission Council. It is being revised in the light of legal advice. The second paper considers what might be recommended if the situation described in resolution 35(iii) should arise. It is probable that the first paper will be presented to Mission Council in March. The second may also be available if the circumstances require it.
2. The group considered a paper containing proposals for setting up an IT task group. This is offered to Mission Council as Paper A.
3. Dates of future meetings. The following have already been arranged:

2000	March 21-23	Swanwick
	September 29 - October 1	Ushaw College, Durham
2001	January 20	Arthur Rank Centre (provisional)
	March 23-25	All Saints Pastoral Centre, St Albans
	October 2-4	Swanwick

In order to book venues, the following dates are proposed for the Council meetings in 2002 and 2003:

2002	January 26	(Saturday)
	March 22-24	(Friday - Sunday)
	October 1-3	(Tuesday - Thursday)
2003	January 25	(Saturday)
	March 25-27	(Tuesday - Thursday)
	October 3-5	(Friday - Sunday)

4. Mission Council has a good record in setting up task groups, and someone has asked for a complete list of those currently in existence. This list is offered for correction and information.

Millennium task group

Convener: Elizabeth Caswell
To be discharged
(until next Millennium!)

Resource Sharing task group

Convener: Tony Burnham
No defined time limit.

Grouping of Churches task group	Convener: Arnold Harrison Revised report due March 2000
Small Churches task group	Convener: Graham Robson Report deferred to March 2000
Discipline task group	Convener: Julian Macro Revised report due January 2000
Local Church Premises task group	Convener: Martin Ballard Report due March 2000
Resolution 37 task group	Convener: John Reardon Report due March 2000
Authority of the Councils of the Church task group	Convener: To be appointed by Nominations Committee Report due March 2001

The almost exclusively male list of conveners needs correction in considering future appointments. At present we have four task groups due to report in March. When the groups were set up their reporting dates were carefully staggered: Mission Council asking for further work, and task groups asking for extra time has resulted in what may be a bit of a log jam.

Those nominated at the last meeting to form the resolution 37 group

first meeting. Two letters of complaint regarding the composition of this group were received. Neither writer persisted in the complaint when told how Mission Council had decided on the names.

John Waller
December 1999

Addendum to MCAG report

Certain matters have occurred since the meeting of MCAG which Mission Council needs to consider:

1. **Mission Council Minutes Secretary.** Mrs Barbara Hedgecock has agreed to take on this role and Mission Council is asked to appoint her formally for a 4-year period. Barbara Hedgecock attends the church at Purley.
2. **AGOGAL Secretary.** Miss Jean Thompson has agreed to take on this role, initially for a one-year trial period. Mission Council is asked to appoint her, recognising that her service may be for a different committee if other proposals are agreed. Jean Thompson is a member of the church at Kingston-on-Thames.
3. **Cross-committee representation.** The meeting of Assembly-appointed staff has realised that, in the light of experience, committees are operating this in a slightly different way from that set down in the reports to General Assembly 1994. The changes are not significant at the moment (for example there has been no Finance Committee representative on the Ecumenical Committee, and the Inter-Faith Committee has sent someone to Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee). Mission Council is asked whether it is content to allow these changes to occur on an informal basis, or whether Assembly's support should be sought.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

E

Changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

Regulations relating to the provision of children's allowances

Assembly 1999 agreed to amend the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration to provide for the payment of children's allowances where the minister's family income did not exceed the basic stipend by more than £2,000.

It has been pointed out to the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee that the regulations approved by Assembly mean that, if the family income exceeds the basic stipend by say £2,001, the minister will lose a benefit of £800 in respect of the first dependent child, and £400 per child in respect of any further dependent children.

The Ministries Committee, acting through the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee, therefore asks the Mission Council to amend the Plan to provide for a reducing allowance (where the allowance will be reduced by 50p for every £1 that the family income exceeds the limit).

Clearly there will be a cost to this change in the provision, but this cannot be quantified. The sub-committee considers that the sum included in the budget for 2000 for this allowance need not be varied.

Resolution

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the addition of the words in italics in para 6.1.5, and the re-numbering of the sub-paragraphs, which will then read:

- 6.1.5.1 Children's allowances: Where a minister has one or more financially dependent children below the age of 24 years, an annual non-pensionable allowance of £800 in respect of the first dependent child and £400 in respect of each additional dependent child will be paid, provided that the minister certifies (on a form provided) that the total annual income of the family (excluding state children's benefits) is expected to be less than £2,000 in excess of the basic stipend; (*see para 6.1.5.6 below*)
- 6.1.5.2 Any casual earnings of, or educational grants for, dependent children, or housing or fixed car allowances paid by the Church, may be disregarded as family income;
- 6.1.5.3 The allowance will be paid in accordance with the circumstances pertaining at the date that the certificate is signed. Any subsequent change, e.g. when the family income changes, will be disregarded in the current year. pro-rata grants may be claimed in the year of the birth of a baby, and in the year in which a child ceases to be dependent, or attains the age of 24.
- 6.1.5.4 The first year in which this allowance will be paid is 2000. The sums of £800, £400 and £2,000 in paras 6.1.5.1 and 6.1.5.6 will be reviewed by the MoM Committee for each subsequent year;
- 6.1.5.5 It is envisaged that forms will be issued in February of each year, and grants will be paid through the first available payroll run after the form is received in the MoM office.
- 6.1.5.6 *Where a minister certifies that the total family income, as defined in this para, is likely to exceed the basic stipend + £2,000, the allowance will be paid less 50p for every £1 that the expected income exceeds the basic stipend + £2,000.*

Cessation of the Manse Heat and Light Arrangement from April 2000

Background

For the last eight years we have operated a "manse heat and light arrangement" under which part of the full stipend payment was treated as a reimbursement of manse heat and light costs.

The real benefit of the arrangement has been that ministers and the Church have not had to pay National Insurance contributions on the amount of the heat and light reimbursement. For ministers this saving has been about 10% of the heat and light amount and for the Church the saving has been about 12%. The average annual saving per minister has been about £60 while the Church has saved over £50,000 each year.

As far as Income Tax is concerned, there should not have been any overall advantage or disadvantage arising from the arrangement because the Inspector of Taxes adjusted ministers' tax code numbers so as to tax the benefit of having heat and light costs reimbursed. However, although the ultimate effect should have been neutral, there is no doubt that, due to the use of estimates and delays in the adjustment of code numbers, many ministers suffered uncomfortable distortions in the amount of tax deducted from their monthly stipend payments, particularly at the year end.

The administration of the scheme involving the gathering of information about heat and light costs every year from ministers is a very substantial and time consuming task. Furthermore the adjustments to tax code numbers are very complex and difficult to follow.

Change in April 2000

In his Budget Statement on 9 March 1999 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that, with effect from 6 April 2000, employers would have to pay National Insurance contributions on benefits in kind which had previously been exempt. Although the detailed regulations have not been announced, we anticipate that the Church (as "employer") will in future have to pay National Insurance contributions on any heat and light reimbursement so that we will lose the £50,000 annual saving referred to above.

The Budget change does not affect "employee's" National Insurance contributions so that, if we continued with the arrangement, ministers would continue to save on average around £60 per annum. However, the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee has come to the conclusion that the administrative time and cost involved in operating the arrangement, and the complicated and sometimes unpredictable impact on individual ministers' tax deductions, far outweigh the potential benefit to individual ministers.

Amendment required to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

The present heat and light arrangement is provided for in para 6.1.2 of the Plan which reads as follows:

6.1.2 Reimbursement of heat and light costs.

6.1.2.1 The basic stipend will be reduced by an amount advised by each minister annually, being the actual cost of heat and light of the manse in which the minister resides. A reimbursement of the actual heat and light costs will be paid to each minister, without deduction of National Insurance and Income Tax under PAYE. These adjustments will be subject to a tax assessment as a benefit in kind.

6.1.2.2 Each minister will be required to submit a return by 31st May of each year setting out the amount of heat and light costs paid in the preceding year ending 31st March. This return will form the basis of the amount to be provisionally deducted in the following year as well as being used to adjust the amount deducted in the previous year.

6.1.2.3 Paragraph 6.1.2 does not apply to CRCWs

Resolution

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the deletion of para 6.1.2 with effect from April 1st 2000.

OR

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, suspends para 6.1.2 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration relating to any cost of heating and lighting incurred after April 1st 2000, and amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the deletion of para 6.1.2 with effect from July 1st 2000.

Two resolutions are printed. One will be moved, dependant upon the result of negotiations with the Inland Revenue, the result of which will, it is hoped be known by the date of Mission Council.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

F

Appointment of new URC/Methodist Rural Officer/Consultant

As intimated at the October Mission Council, Michael Cruchley's full time post as Rural Consultant for the United Reformed and Methodist Churches finished at the end of last year.

In his absence, the Life and Witness Committee received Michael's final report at their November meeting, and paid tribute to his sterling period of service to the churches over the past ten years in both part-time and full time capacities.

We wish him well in his new appointment from the 1st of January, as Rural Officer for the Synod of Wales.

His successor in the joint appointment is to be Mrs. Jenny Carpenter of the Methodist Church, who will take up her duties at the beginning of April. She will be part of the team based at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh, and may be contacted at the ARC office.

Mrs. Carpenter has wide experience of Methodism, having served in many roles, including vice-president of the Methodist Conference (1988/89). Since 1990 she has been a leading ecumenical figure, serving as Field Officer of CTE (North and Midlands); in particular she has helped the churches to respond to the developing English regional institutions. Jenny has kept alive an interest in rural life and the rural church, serving on the ecumenical Churches Rural Group and advocating the Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome Commitment.

She is no stranger to the United Reformed Church, and we look forward to the contribution she will make to the life of our churches.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

G

Report to Mission Council: Ordination Training at Mansfield College, Oxford

Since last Mission Council, there have been two lengthy discussions at Mansfield, when Alan Argent (Chair of the Congregational Federation's Training Board) and I have met the Principal, Bursar and other representatives of the College. There has also been active discussion on the Mansfield Governing Body, and the College has made some proposals about possible ways forward.

Proposal

In the current academic year Dale Rominger is acting as Director of Ordination Training, and is doing well, although he is appointed only on a limited temporary basis. The College would like to make more lasting and settled arrangements for the leadership of the ordination programme as soon as reasonably possible, and therefore wishes to advertise and interview for a properly termed Director's appointment from the autumn of 2000. In the current situation, when the Reformed churches cannot offer firm guarantees on student numbers, Mansfield proposes to seek an even fuller measure of co-operation with neighbouring theological colleges than has been the case in the recent years.

The College would like to offer a full and competent ordination programme, but flexible as to numbers. The teaching would therefore be closely integrated with the teaching at Regent's Park College, a Baptist foundation which maintains a fairly broad outlook. Help in certain subjects could also be sought from elsewhere; for example Mansfield students already attend Old Testament classes at Wycliffe Hall (evangelical Anglican). The Mansfield Director of Ordination Training would be a Mansfield Fellow and employee, but would contribute academically to the Regent's teaching programme, in effect as part of the Regent's staff team. The Director would also provide specialist Reformed input to the Mansfield students, would advise and guide them in their preparation for ministry, and would seek to foster their sense of belonging to the Mansfield community in Chapel and College.

This arrangement would allow flexibility with regard to numbers, in that neither educational nor financial viability would depend on numerical guarantees that the churches cannot presently give. It would be educationally coherent. There might even be scope for overseeing the internship programme in partnership with a similar scheme at Regent's. Surely there would be benefits in the enhanced ecumenical dimension of

the programme, yet the particular church commitments of the Mansfield theological tradition would remain evident.

Staffing

A Director must be appointed first. The College wishes to offer a seven year tenure, from 2000 to 2007. The Director would also be titled Chaplain; this involves oversight of College Chapel activity, but carries no expectation of heavy pastoral involvement among the wider Mansfield community. This is chiefly an academic post, so that teaching and research will be major components of the work. It will be equally important that the Director command the confidence of the CF and the URC as a mentor of ordinands. A draft job description has been prepared by the College.

It is likely that a further part-time appointment would be needed, but detailed consideration of this would be deferred until the Director's appointment has been made and the particular gifts of the new Director are known. The scoping of this part-time appointment would depend to some extent on the numbers of students admitted to the programme.

Students

Mansfield could only admit students who would enjoy and gain proper benefit from its 'liberal system' - the distinctive liberal culture of Mansfield, which is not to be confused with the liberal culture of the wider world.

Finance

The Mansfield Trustees do not wish finance to be linked only to numbers. They expect to pay the Director roughly what is paid for a similar post at Regent's (about £20,000 + £4500 Housing Allowance + £500 Entertainment Allowance, total £25K). With National Insurance and Pension, a gross sum of £28K-£30K is in view.

The College already has a legacy, the Morley-Adlam Fund, assigned to support a post in Ministerial Training, and this realises about £13K per annum. The College now asks the URC if it would be prepared to meet the remainder of the stipend costs, some £16K p.a. over seven years, on the understanding that the student fee would then be computed on a sliding scale. The College Bursar has drafted some proposals for this sliding scale: if ordinand numbers remain as they were in the late nineties (about 16) the Church's financial commitment (including the subsidy of the Director's post) would match the present fee level; if student numbers settle to a lower total the amount paid per head would increase. I can give details at Council if required.

Inspection

The churches will inspect the programme at due intervals. Inspections of ecumenical teaching have to be planned ecumenically, but this should be manageable.

METC

The Mansfield Ministerial Education and Training Committee will have an important role in supporting the new arrangements. How it will do this is for the College to consider, although the churches will be happy to be consulted.

Diversification

When it appeared in 1998 that the URC might cease to send ordinands to Mansfield, a number of creative proposals emerged for the continuance and possible broadening of theological work in the College. These should not be allowed to fall from view, for some of them might constructively supplement the proposals outlined above.

Moving forward

Discussions on the proposal follow the timetable below:

- Correspondence about financial detail - not later than early December
- Discussion at URC Training Committee - Jan 5-6
- Discussion at Mansfield METC - Jan 10
- Discussion at URC Mission Council - Jan 22
- Discussion at Cong Fed Training Board - Feb 4

If all these discussions go favourably, the College will hope to advertise in February for an autumn appointment. It will be important for all parties to keep one another informed of opinion and prospects through the coming weeks. The Principal agreed that he would - when the occasion arose - invite Alan Argent and John Proctor to nominate a churches' representative to any interview panel.

Training Committee concerns

The Training Committee considered the proposals, and raised four concerns.

- a. The arrangement for co-operation with Regent's needs to be worked out in fuller detail. I was asked to visit Regent's with staff from Mansfield, to talk about this.
- b. Provision for retaining the Reformed character of ordinands' formation is important, and the programme must provide for this, in regard to such matters as worship, polity and pastoral training.
- c. The role of the new Director is absolutely vital, and we must ensure the appointment of a Director who will be able to mentor our ordinands effectively.
- d. The additional part-time appointment should be sorted out as soon as possible.

Nonetheless we commend this arrangement as having the potential to meet Assembly's wish to continue ordination training at Mansfield.

John Proctor, for the Training Committee, 7th January 2000



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

H

The Future of Advisory Group On Grants And Loans
Grants and loans to local churches

History

AGOGAL was established in 1992 initially as an inter-committee clearing house in which grant applications were considered in the light of the established policies of Assembly committees. It had the further advantage of preventing a church making a number of applications for a project to different committees. The original membership of AGOGAL was the General Secretary as convener, a secretary, and one representative of each of the following committees - Finance, World Church and Mission, Ministries, Faith and Life, and Church and Society.

In time the committees all came to be represented by their staff secretaries.

When the work of AGOGAL was reviewed by Mission Council in 1996 this latter change was accepted and a staff secretary for Youth and Children's Work added to the membership. However, to avoid this becoming a completely "in-house" group, it was agreed that both the convener and secretary should be appointed by Mission Council. The General Secretary (later Deputy General Secretary) was made a member of the group. It was also agreed that an annual report should be made to Mission Council.

AGOGAL has dealt with grant applications of two kinds. **Specific** grants are available for projects which have the development of the church's outreach at heart. **General** grants offer support under four broad headings - community ministry, educational chaplaincy, ecumenical, and local ministries - and in many cases represent the URC's ongoing commitment to particular pieces of work. It is felt that some of these, notably grants to ecumenical officers and higher education chaplaincies, could be dealt with separately by their appropriate committees. It would be expected that the new body would adhere to AGOGAL's practice of not considering retrospective applications.

The Proposal

That a new Mission Council group called the Grants and Loans Group be established to:

- continue the work of AGOGAL, other than the grants for ecumenical officers, which will be remitted to the Ecumenical Committee, and grants for higher education chaplaincies and industrial chaplaincy, which will be remitted to the Ministries Committee.
- be the clearing house for grant applications to the CWM Self-Support Fund.

- take over the consideration of applications for grants and loans from the Church Buildings Fund, presently a function of the Finance committee.
- stimulate reflection on the theology and practice of mission, in the light of its experience.

The committee would thus be the one point through which grants and loans to local churches are considered and approved.

It is further proposed that these changes should take effect from 1 March 2000 but it is not expected that there will be any immediate changes in existing grant-making policy or practice.

The Remit of the Mission Council Grants and Loans Group

1. To make grants under the headings presently administered by AGOGAL:

- **New Enterprise in Mission** - to support any form of new mission
- **Mission expenses in the UK** - to provide help towards local expenses for URC ministers and CRCW's in situations where only the lack of local funding prevents an appointment being made
- **Mission in Ecumenical Situations** - to pay non-URC people in leadership positions in ecumenically agreed new church situations
- **Social Action** - to support church social action and community projects other than CRCW projects

The amount allocated under these headings in 1998 was about £81,000 and for the first ten months of 1999 was about £66,000. The budget figure available in 2000 is in the region of £100,000.

2. To be the clearing house for grant applications to the CWM self-support fund. £366,000 has been set aside for the URC to cover a three-year period.

3. To administer the Church Buildings Fund. A note on this fund and the basis on which it is administered is stated in Appendix A.

Draft proposals for handling grant and loan applications are set out in Appendix B. These will need to be revised and extended.

4. To stimulate reflection on the theology and practice of mission, in the light of its experience. It is expected that the committee will feed this reflection into the meetings of Mission Council.

Membership of the committee

- A convener, who will be a member of Mission Council, or invited to attend. S/he will serve for four years.
- A secretary. Responsibilities would include liaison (with Finance Office) monitoring and payment in respect of applications, and servicing and general oversight of the committee. S/he will serve for four years.

- One person from each synod with a wide knowledge of the life of the synod, who would also be responsible for seeing that applications came in the correct form and according to agreed principles. Synod representatives would answer questions on the applications from their synod at the meetings, but would not take part in the subsequent discussion and decision.
- In order to provide expertise, to link Assembly Committees and to help the process of reflection, the following staff secretaries will act as consultants to the committee, whilst not necessarily attending all its meetings:

Secretary for Finance (or alternative)
Secretary for International Relations
Secretary for Life and Witness
Secretary for Church and Society
Secretary for Church & Society
A CRCW Development worker
A Youth and Children's Secretary
Deputy General Secretary

The intention would be to involve the synods, both in monitoring projects in their own region and in collectively making decisions. Out of that collective experience should grow an understanding of the theology and practice of mission which could be shared more widely.

Status of the committee

This will be a committee of Mission Council, able to make executive decisions within the area of its remit, but reporting and reflecting on its work to the Council at least once a year.

-O-

The Church Buildings Fund

The Church Buildings Fund is in the managing trusteeship of United Reformed Church Trust, who will delegate the day to day management of the fund to the Mission Council Grants and Loans Group.

The Church Buildings Fund is used, in the terms of the Charity Commissioners Order of 4 January 1977 (The apportionment Scheme) in one or more of the following ways:-

1. in the upkeep and repair of the buildings of the local churches of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales and the maintenance of the services therein;
2. In the improvement and extension of the buildings of such churches;
3. In the provision and erection of buildings in England and Wales for use for the purposes of such churches or as residencies for ministers of the United Reformed Church.

Note that the reference to 'England and Wales' in the Charity Commissioner's order was appropriate when the order was made in 1997. With the incorporation of Churches in Scotland into the URC, difficulty arises with this particular geographical limitation and the advice of the Commissioners was sought in November 1999 with regard to this.

The fund has been used, recently, mainly for the purchase of property for use by the Church centrally (as manses) and for making loans to local churches for major works. Grants from the fund are made for the provision of disabled facilities in local churches, and for the cost of feasibility studies regarding the use of local Church premises. Full details of the limits of grant and loan applications acceptable are given in the paper - "Guidance Notes relating to Loans and Grants from the Church Buildings Fund".

It is important to note that money from the Church Buildings Fund may only be given or lent to local United Reformed Churches (as listed in the yearbook). Grants or loans may not be made in respect of premises that are not stated to be held for the purposes of the United Reformed Church. In ecumenical situations, premises held for the purposes of another denomination are not to be held for the purposes of the United Reformed Church, unless that is a formal sharing agreement made in the terms of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969.

In past years the funds available have proved adequate for all requests for assistance, i.e. no application has been turned down for the lack of funds. However, the popularity of the disabled facility grants now made may mean that in the future, grants will have to be restricted.

Finance Committee offers guidance that in any year grants given should not exceed the income of the fund, or 15% of the available fund (whichever is the greater). In this context the available fund is the total of the value of the investments, plus the cost of property purchased as manses for central staff, plus any uninvested cash balance. The income of the fund in 1998 was £100,000, so grants in 1000 should be limited to about £440,000.

The United Reformed Church Mission Council Grants and Loans Group

Notes for Applicants

1. Please complete the attached application form and send it together with the following information to your synod's GLG representative (see attached list):
 - the audited accounts for the most recent financial year
 - a project budget
 - a one page statement of the project's aims and objectives and how they fit in with your mission strategy
 - a one page outline of your mission strategy
 - a copy of the supporting resolution(s) and any accompanying minutes from your District
 - for CWM Self-Support Fund applications a copy of your current business plan and a statement illustrating how a self-support fund grant will contribute to the project becoming financially self-supporting
 - for applications involving the employment of someone a copy of the job description, person specification, the terms and conditions of employment and a statement on how the person(s) will be recruited.
2. On receipt of these documents your application will be acknowledged and you will be notified when the relevant synod committee will consider your application for endorsement.
3. If your application is endorsed by your synod it will then be forwarded for consideration at the next available meeting of Mission Council Grants and Loans Group (GLG).
4. At any stage in this process either your synod's representative or the secretary of MCGALG may ask you for further information.
5. In considering your application GLG has a number of options open to it:
 - to award a grant or loan in full or in part of the sum requested (or in the case of CWM applications to endorse the application - see below)
 - to reject the application
 - to refer it back to the synod (usually with a request for some further action)
 - to ask for a report on the project from a neighbouring synod or an expert in the field

(This is not an exclusive list and is for illustrative purposes only)
6. In awarding a grant GLG will normally request a brief report (no more than two sides of A4) within a year and an evaluation on completion of the work for which funding is sought.
7. In the case of applications for CWM funds, if GLG endorses it, it will be forwarded to CWM who may request further information before the application is considered at

one of its six-monthly meetings. (CWM applications require a long lead-in time - advice on this can be obtained from the secretary of GLG).

8. When GLG meets to decide on applications your synod representative can only answer questions of fact and is prohibited from either speaking for or voting on all applications from his/her synod.
9. Within two weeks of the meeting of GLG the group's secretary will inform you of its decision on your application.
10. GLG's decision on all grants, loans and CWM endorsements is final. Resubmitted applications will not be considered unless they show substantial evidence of having been reworked or without new and justifiable reasons why the application should be considered.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

I

Nominations Committee Report - January 2000

1. Assembly Appointed Staff

1.1 Moderator of North Western Synod.

The nominating group was convened by Revd Angus Duncan and proposes that **Revd Peter James Brain** be appointed from 1 September 2000 to 31 August 2007.

1.2 Children's Advocate.

The review group was convened by Mrs Wilma Frew and recommends that **Mrs Rosemary Johnston** be re-appointed from 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2005.

1.3 Financial Secretary.

The Appointment Group was convened by Revd David Hannen and proposes the appointment of **Ms Avis Reaney with effect from 1 April 2000.**

1.4 Editor *Reform*.

The Review Group will now meet on 26th January under the convenership of Revd Donald Hilton or, should he be unable to attend, Revd Janet Sowerbutts.

1.5 Secretary: Church and Society

In anticipation of SAG approval, an Appointment Group has been chosen and will be convened by Revd Keith Forecast.

2. Task Group on Authority

As instructed by Mission Council [99/65 refers] we have appointed the following:

Revd Adrian Bulley [Convener]
Revd Ray Adams [representing the Moderators' Meeting]
Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
Mr Eric Chilton
Revd Jack Dyce
Mrs Irene Wren

We have been unable, so far, to find a willing candidate as Secretary.

3. Assembly Committees

Some forty names are currently being canvassed with mainly favourable response. The list will be made available to Conveners at March Mission Council.

3.1 Our colleagues in the Scottish Congregational Church, in the absence of a complete Synod structure at present, have proposed that the current co-options should continue until General Assembly 2001

4. Moderators Review Groups

The lists of the Assembly Panels for four groups [Mersey, South Western, Southern and Wales] are almost complete and should be confirmed before Easter.



MISSION COUNCIL
22 January 2000

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**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
SMALL CHURCHES TASK GROUP**

Convener: Rev. Graham Robson, 9 Oakleigh Drive, Oakleigh Park, Lincoln LN11DG
Secretary: Rev. Stuart Scott, 312 Coleshill Road, Birmingham B36 8BG

PRELIMINARY REPORT

PART 1 - The resolution

At General Assembly 1998 the following resolution was passed:

RESOLUTION 6

Small Churches

General Assembly recognises the value of the work done by small Churches and requests Mission Council to set up a Task Group to consider and report on the opportunities, challenges and difficulties which such Churches face.

General Assembly also directs synods and district councils to reflect on the unique situation of each of the churches in their area, when considering what special (financial, pastoral and other) support they need.

The Small Churches Task Group was set up by Mission Council to address the first part of this resolution with a request for a report to its' meeting in January 2000. The members of the Group are Graham Robson (Convener), Stuart Scott (Secretary), Sheila Rudofsky, Barbara Flood-Page, Rosemary Wass, Ray Adams, Raymond Singh and Rosalind Fearon (whose resignation was accepted in October 1999; it was agreed that no replacement be sought but Rosalind continue to receive minutes and appropriate papers and be invited to comment if she wished to do so).

PART 2 - The road we have travelled (so far)

The members of the Task Group met for the first time in Tavistock Place on *22 December 1998*. The group has met subsequently on four occasions and two further meetings are planned.

At the first meeting the brief was introduced by John Waller, who has received copies of minutes of all meetings. There was then general discussion and sharing of experience and a number of issues were discerned. It was agreed to make contact with a number of key individuals and agencies both within the United Reformed Church and ecumenically and to gather information from small churches themselves. An initial request was made for stories of four churches in different categories (declining, growing, static, and an ecumenical project) from the URC Moderators.

On 24 March 1999 the Task Group met at Tavistock Place with Jim Gould, minister at Crossway U.R.C., Elephant and Castle, and James Ashdown, a freelance community worker, working with the Bellingham U.R.C. They were representing the Urban Churches Support Group, a network of United Reformed Churches open to all within the M25, which had initiated the Assembly resolution to which the Task Group is responding.

In further discussion it was agreed to send a questionnaire to one District in each province and the churches given by the Moderators, and to invite Dan Yarnell, then the Small Church Officer of the Small Church Network of the British Church Growth Association, to the next meeting, which took place on May 25 1999 in the Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham.

The Group agreed at this meeting the content of questionnaires to go to the Districts and local churches and to follow-up Church plants. We were also concerned about the lack of specific new material from rural context.

October 12 -13 1999, the Group met residentially at Heronbrook House, Knowle, West Midlands. The secretary had summarised the responses received to the questionnaires and these were discussed. He also reported on the "New way of being Church" workshop he had attended at The United College of the Ascension, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The Group reached a consensus on "marks of viability" of a small church (see later) and discussed further a number of other issues and responses. It was agreed that both the responses to the questionnaires and the summaries of the responses would be further discussed and

PART 3 - The report

- I. Introduction
- II. Definition and identity
- III. Leadership and training
- IV. Structures
- V. Buildings and finance
- VI. Mission and service to the community
- VII. Ecumenism
- VIII. Vision
- IX. Conclusion

I. Introduction - Opportunities, challenges and difficulties faced by small churches
The opportunities, challenges and difficulties faced by small churches do not belong to the small church alone. They are also opportunities, challenges and difficulties for the whole church as a covenanted community. The covenant is not only by God's initiative, but also with one another. It describes the essence of being 'church'. The small church is part of God's economy, a vital resource for the gospel in many and diverse places. If this is the case, the allocation of resources, and the nature of advice, guidance and support given to the small church is a marker of the life of the whole church.

II. Definition and identity

How is a small church to be defined? Literature on the small church begins from a numerical base, usually fifty. Numbers however are only a starting point, rather than the defining point of a small church, for they depend too rigidly on statistics of either attendance at worship or the membership roll and do not take into account other factors of church life and witness. It is clear too that fifty may be too high a starting place in a denomination where a significant proportion of churches have a membership of less than twenty.

What is the perception of identity in the small church? The task group suggests that the local church is a community of people covenanted together that is part of a wider covenanting community in the United Reformed Church. It is also related to churches of other denominations, particularly locally. This may be to be very far from the local churches own perception of its identity, in which isolation predominates.

III. Leadership and training

Leadership is a key concern among small churches, but there is no consistent pattern. The allocation of paid leadership (that is, ordained ministry) is related at least indirectly to numbers. There are churches that have no leadership of this kind, unscoped churches and churches "supplied" with ministry. There are non-stipendiary ministers and a specified number of Special Category Ministers, not always serving small churches. There may be unrealistic expectations of ministers, who in some contexts demonstrate the gifts and abilities to transform situations but do not inevitably do so. Such transformation depends on other factors relating to the individual context.

Lay leadership is important and undertakes key roles, but again there is no consistent pattern. There is evidence of lack of clarity in the roles and expectations of lay ministry, at the level of the local church and in District Councils. *Local* leadership has an important role to play, but there is a need both for flexibility and for clarity. Careful planning is necessary.

Appropriate training for ministry in the small church is essential for all leaders within them. Collaborative ministry might appear threatening but teams should be encouraged. A culture of dependence culture needs to be avoided.

IV. Structures

Districts and Synods have an important role. Small churches should feel they are a part of the decision-making processes. The picture of support is varied. Some churches testify to being very much a part of the District. For others, the District is remote. Representation may be an issue; transport may not be readily available even if there is a willing person to undertake the role. Being part of the District is more than attending a Council meeting; it is part of the local church identity. There may be a perception of District as "them" who make decisions that affect "us". There appears to be a need for greater understanding as to how the processes work, and identification with them. Small churches may not have the personnel or the expertise to offer to the wider church, its Councils and Committees. A sense of belonging needs to be created and certainly nurtured.

Positive encouragement might be needed to attend events. The small church voice needs to be heard throughout the life of the United Reformed Church, that it might express its own needs and not be part of the silent majority.

We are also aware that there are Districts that consist almost entirely of small churches. This can

have two consequences - either there is a focus on the small church or there is a struggle to fill roles and respond to demands and expectations.

What is true for events is also true of literature. The quantity and the content places small churches and perhaps also Districts of small churches under pressure. There may be little guidance or advice available (or perceived to be available) with regard to prioritisation. There are assumptions about the nature of the local church that for a significant proportion bear no relation to reality. Some streamlining appears to be necessary.

V. Buildings and finance

This area is second only to the provision of ministry in raising the awareness that the small church is part of the U.R.C. For some this is a loss of independence with regard to ownership and decision making. For others it is a sense of dependence on others and on others schedules and deadlines as well as expertise that profoundly affect sense of identity, mission and sense of purpose.

There have been changes over time and present buildings may not be appropriate in style or location. Some, and probably all to some extent, have developed into sacred places, the repository of sacred history, but are deteriorating rapidly and placing enormous demands on resources of finance and personnel. The perception of sacredness has implications for the continuation or closure of some churches that is not always understood. The struggle for survival articulated by some is not just or most importantly the maintenance of Christian witness

It is not possible to dictate the content of mission for the small church, only to advocate that there should be some content. Some small churches are actively engaged in community development which embodies their sense of vision. Others seek to relate to their community and offer appropriate service. Every church has a role within its community and should not be isolated from it. Each church however needs to develop mission that is appropriate for its own unique context, using the resources that are available. In any case, it should be clear that service to the community is only one aspect of mission. Other small churches may focus on proclamation, or a teaching ministry.

VII. Ecumenism

Ecumenical partnership in the small church is sometimes seen as the last resort. There is a tension between holding on to a particular tradition and form of church life, and seeking some return from the allocation of resources, and seeking unity as a basis for the sharing of the gospel. What is the nature of the covenant community in the context of ecumenical partnership? How do local ecumenical partnerships relate to the wider church? What do the statistics (e.g. numbers of U.R.C. members and total membership) mean for mission, evangelism and Christian nurture?

VIII. Vision

Where does the small church look for vision? Who provides it? Where does leadership come from? How is the small church enabled to face, manage and live with change?

IX. Conclusion - Marks of viability

The Task Group offers these as possible marks of viability that we might evaluate in considering and reflecting on the life of the small local church:

1. open to the Spirit (sense of purpose; vision; in worship)
2. open to one another (covenanting together; sharing ownership; participation; responsible stewardship of finance)
3. open to people (open door; welcoming)
4. open to change (desire to be effective for the sake of the gospel)
5. open to the community around (serving; visible presence; resource; socially and globally aware)
6. open to receiving help (knowing their allies; ecumenism; those who share common concerns; District; financial resources available)
7. open to developing local leadership
8. open to learning and nurturing
9. open to listen

Graham Robson (Convenor)
Stuart P. Scott (Secretary)
January 2000