

# MISSION COUNCIL

24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006

## MINUTES

Mission Council met at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Present with the Moderator were 68 members and 14 staff, in attendance.

### **Session One**

Opening worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Jill Thornton.

### **06/01 Welcome**

The Moderator welcomed those who were attending Mission Council for the first time:

The Revd David Varcoe (Thames North Synod); Ms Isobel Simmons (FURY Chair); Mr Stuart Dew (Secretary for Church and Society); the Revd Neil Thorogood (Chaplain to Moderator-elect); Ms Morag McLintock (Equal Opportunities Convener-elect); Mrs Ann Barton (Assembly Arrangements).

### **06/02 Attendance**

Apologies were given:

Revd Sheila Maxey; Revd Andrew Prasad; Mrs Suzanne Adofo; Mr John Brown; Mrs Karen Bulley; Mrs Melanie Frew; Mr Graham Jones; Ms Michelle Marcano; Revd Richard Pope.

### **06/03 Notification of Additional Business**

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the agenda

There being a number of detailed technical documents from the Section O Advisory Group to consider a small scrutiny group consisting of the Revds Roberta Rominger, Wilf Bahadur and Mr John Ellis, together with the Clerk and the Legal Advisor was appointed to examine these.

### **06/04 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of 4-6 October 2005 were approved with alterations.

The Minutes of the meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2006 were approved with alterations.

### **06/05**

Mission Council met in Closed Session.

A confidential paper was distributed. After discussion and advice from the Legal Advisor the matter under consideration was adjourned until a later session. A small group consisting of the Legal Advisor, General Secretary, Revd Elizabeth Nash and Mr Nigel McDonald was asked to take the matter forward.

Mission Council returned to Open Session.

### **06/06 MCAG (Paper A3)**

The Revd Peter Brain proposed that option C, relating to the election of the Moderator of Assembly, be accepted. This was seconded by the Revd Elizabeth Welch  
Mission Council agreed.

The Deputy General Secretary spoke to the Assembly Resolution on "Saying Sorry" and reported on his conversations with the Methodist Church on this matter. Mission Council

agreed that this was an adequate response, with a note that the Moderator of General Assembly may not be the most appropriate person to make such apologies.

#### **Civil partnerships (Paper A3i)**

Mission Council received the paper A3i. The Revd Richard Mortimer and the Revd James Breslin responded to a number of questions and the authors of the report were thanked. It was agreed that a final draft would be produced taking account of the suggestions and comments made, and the final document should be made available to local churches.

#### **06/07 Paper A Nominations**

The Deputy General Secretary gave notice of nominations needing to be made to Advisory Groups of Mission Council during the course of the meeting.

#### **06/08**

##### **Paper A1 Grants and Loans Group**

Mission Council received the Annual Report of the Grants and Loans Group

#### **06/09 Paper A4**

Mission Council received the report and noted that thanks were due to the retiring Secretary of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group, Mr Tegid Peregrine.

#### **06/10 Resource Sharing Group**

Mission Council received the Report

#### **06/11 Ethical Investment Advisory Group (Paper A6)**

Mr John Ellis presented the report of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group. He noted the report's boundaries and acknowledged that there was much more to be said. He examined the ethical issues involved in the Caterpillar story, and highlighted the group's recommendations. After discussion the various options contained in the report were put to the vote.

**Option 26 was adopted.**

**Option 27 was adopted.**

**Option 28 was adopted.**

**Option 29 was adopted.**

Option 30 was rejected.

**Option 31 was adopted.**

The Moderator thanked Mr Ellis and the EIAG.

The Deputy General Secretary gave notices and the session ended.

#### **Session Two**

#### **06/12 Catch the Vision (Paper B)**

The General Secretary reflected on the progress of the Catch the Vision process. He stated that already some of the shape is emerging, but we need to be patient and go on wrestling until we see the whole.

The Catch the Vision timetable is essentially

2005 Structures

2006 Resources and Staffing

2007 Mission and spirituality.

He stated that this year's look at resources had involved lots of consultation with committees. He expressed thanks especially to the Staffing Advisory Group, which had undertaken a review of Church House staffing.

He stated that we need to accept that our dream of becoming a catalyst to wider unity shows no signs of fulfilment. Mission needs to be at the centre of our theologising and activity.

Mission happens where the church and the world meet; that happens mostly in local Christian communities. That is why our resources should be used primarily in local churches.

The structural changes are there for local experiments in doing church differently.

A regeneration agency is being considered to breathe new life and mission into church buildings. The programme is intended to emphasise the primacy of the local church and the ministries which serve it and this will include shifting Mission to the heart of the national programme.

He emphasised that we have to change our mentality from that of a large church to that of a small church - this could be intensely exciting " We have seen the possibility of leaving behind the liberal/evangelical divide, but can we live the unity to which we are committed?"

He further stated that we have got to do this with shrinking resources! We do not want to cut local ministry - and bringing this report was a way of testing this assumption.

The Catch the Vision report was written after the budget report. It would be irresponsible to run with a high deficit budget. We must manage our income and expenditure.

He paid tribute to the loyalty and dedication of colleagues, and spoke to the difficulties of managing Church House. Cost control is next to impossible and it is hard to get definitive answers to anything. This forced a style of management that he would not choose. Operational decisions are not taken by those appointed to manage them, but by committees. Policy making and management need to be separated. At present the whole cost-cutting exercise is being borne by the central administration and its staff. In some areas costs cannot be reduced. A robust IT structure is vital as is the cost of child protection administration. The funding of Church House is as tight as it can be without posing a threat to Assembly's work.

After informal group discussion, members were invited to respond to the report. The General Secretary responded briefly.

### **06/13 Worship**

Worship included an address by Rosemary Johnson, who reflected on her eleven years as Children's Advocate.

### **Session Three - Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 9.15am**

The Moderator led Mission Council in theological reflection.

### **06/14 Catch the Vision**

Mr Eric Chilton introduced the discussion. He outlined areas in which it might be possible to make savings, noted the challenges being faced by the Finance Committee in budgeting, and highlighted some of the most immediate financial problems being faced.

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss questions arising from paper B.

The General secretary requested that all groups submit their comments to him for consideration by the steering group.

#### **06/15 Revd Jonathan Edwards**

Mission Council agreed to send a message of good wishes to the Revd Jonathan Edwards, on his appointment as General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

#### **Session Four**

##### **06/16 Training Review (Paper D)**

The Revd John Humphreys introduced the paper. He reminded Mission Council of Resolution 51 (General Assembly 2005), which is the basis of the current report. The report also reflects comments made by Mission Council following the withdrawal of previous resolutions after the meeting of Mission Council in March 2005 (see minutes 05/59).

He recalled decisions made in the past concerning the provision of training facilities, and noted that these had been difficult to live with; the committee would ask General Assembly to take essential action, the first necessary steps towards integrated training and education agreed by General Assembly 2005:

Integrate training for all, using three centres for learning - Northern, Scottish and Westminster Colleges. This would involve ceasing to recognise Mansfield College, Oxford, the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham and the seven (plus one in Wales) part-time courses currently recognised. New relationships with Mansfield and with part-time courses would be developed. The resource centres have developed and were developing dispersed learning. The report proposed that synods be committed to the concept of Ecumenical Training Partnerships. EM1 students would receive local elements of their training ecumenically, but would remain members of the United Reformed Church's learning community.

Noting that there was not much in the report about Wales, the convener said that changes in the ecumenical scene there would be monitored by the Training Committees.

The report was not based on finance; finance was only addressed after the framework for education had been drafted. He asked Mission Council to test the resolutions.

Mission Council moved into groups.

#### **Session Five**

##### **06/16 (continued) Training Review (Paper D)**

Groups reported on their discussions during the previous session.

The Revd John Humphreys responded, thanking the groups for their comments and requesting that written responses be submitted to the Training Committee.

##### **06/17 Ministries Committee (Papers E1-E6)**

Mr John Ellis presented the report. He spoke of the relationship between church and state. How does the church position itself in society? Co-operation or dissent?

The government and the church would both like to see good working conditions for ministers. He introduced a response to a DTI paper on working conditions for ministers, explaining that this was not intended for General Assembly but would be submitted to the DTI with Mission Council's approval.

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, approved the paper 'Clergy Working Conditions - Statement of Good Practice.'**

Paper E6. Mr Ellis explained the background to resolution (M6), 'Pension Fund Changes re Civil Partnerships'.

After brief discussion, Mission Council agreed by a large majority that this resolution should be submitted to General Assembly with Mission Council's approval.

Mr Ellis explained the background to resolution (M3) and the Church's 'duty to consider extension of full-time stipendiary service'. Mr Ellis responded to a number of questions, and Mission Council agreed that the resolution should be submitted to General Assembly.

## **Session Six**

### **06/17 (continued)**

Mr John Ellis introduced paper E1; he outlined the background to the paper, and Mission Council discussed the paper in groups.

Mr Ellis responded and asked how much, if any, of the report should go to General Assembly. A straw poll indicated that Mission Council agreed that the paper, with any amendments to take into consideration the present discussion, should be submitted to General Assembly.

### **06/18 Church and Society (Paper F)**

The Revd Martin Camroux introduced Paper F.

### **06/19 Section O Advisory Group (Paper A2)**

Mr Andrew Middleton reported, outlining the proposed procedure for dealing with cases of ministerial incapacity, and responded to a number of questions.

### **06/20 Assembly Resolution 34 (Paper G)**

Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams presented paper G. Mission Council accepted the paper.

### **06/21 Assembly Resolution 42 (Paper L)**

Mission Council received the interim report of the London Synod Commission.

### **06/22 Confidential Paper (see 06/05)**

Mission Council moved into closed session.

The Moderator introduced the debate.

After discussion, the Moderator ruled that the wording of the draft should be offered to the Trustees to see if there would be financial or legal implications for them, and that the URC's insurers should be consulted.

The Clerk moved that the matter be remitted to MCAG for its further consideration and report. Mission Council agreed.

## **Session Seven**

### **06/17 (again)**

The Moderator read a draft of the letter of good wishes to the Revd Jonathan Edwards on his appointment as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

### **06/23 Declaration for a Safe Church (Paper H)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented Paper H: Synod responses to 'Declaration for a Safe Church - a Charter for Action'. He invited synod representatives to speak.

The Revd Peter Poulter responded, noting that the views of the synods would be taken back to the group.

### **06/24 Ministry and Mission Fund Review (Paper K)**

Mr Eric Chilton presented Paper K. He stated that the review group individually had pledged to contribute 5% of their net take-home income, and urged members of all councils of the church to do the same.

The Ministry and Mission Fund was a supreme example of resource sharing, and the group felt that such a high level of resource sharing should be highlighted and extended. The church had considerable investments in some synods, so there should be a synchronised investment policy to maximise returns.

There was considerable discussion.  
Mr Chilton responded:

#### **06/25 Communications and Editorial (Paper J)**

The Revd Martin Hazell presented the paper. Giving Biblical and modern examples, he emphasised the importance of communication. He described something of the committee's work and commended the Secretary for her service. He sought Mission Council's authority to 'put in train immediately the task of appointing a new secretary as a successor to Carol Rogers who will be retiring on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2006'.

He stated that guest editors would continue to edit Reform until early 2007.

Mission Council received the paper.

#### **Session Eight**

Mission Council celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Communion

#### **06/26 Election to Mission Council Advisory Group**

The Clerk intimated that there was one nomination, Ms Morag McLintock, who was duly appointed by Mission Council.

There were no nominations for other posts, Mission Council agreed that the matter be remitted to Mission Council Advisory Group.

The Deputy General Secretary reported that Mr Hartley Oldham would remain on the Section O Advisory Group for a further year to facilitate the hand over to a new Convener and Secretary.

#### **06/27 (Paper ADD) Additional Business**

##### **Nominations**

Dr Stephen Orchard reported that the committee was looking at its procedures and processes in the context of a changing structure, and sought advice and comments. He presented the report which was received.

The Deputy General Secretary reported that there was a group reviewing the role of the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary. The work of the Finance Office had been monitored regularly since the Financial Secretary's departure, and it was anticipated that the post would not be renewed in its existing form.

##### **Future Meetings**

Paper ADD (6): Dates of future Mission Councils. The Deputy General Secretary presented suggested dates for 2009: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March, at Ushaw College, Durham; and Monday 16<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick.

##### **Mission Council agreed**

Paper ADD (7): Wessex Synod Resolution: This resolution should be directed to General Assembly in the first instance.

Paper ADD (8): Review of Inter-faith Committee: In 2001 the General Assembly resolved that the Inter-Faith Committee be appointed until 2006 with a review at the beginning of that year. This having been overtaken by events Mission Council resolved:

**Acting on behalf the General Assembly Mission Council agrees that the review of the Inter Faith Relations Committee should be deferred so that it may be part of a wider review of Assembly committees and consequent proposals brought by the Catch the Vision process to a future General Assembly.**

Leaside United Church.

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly agrees to the transfer of Leaside United Reformed /Methodist Church from the Thames North synod to the Eastern synod on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006, following the agreement of the two synods concerned.**

Paper A4: The Clerk reported that the group charged with scrutiny of technical papers suggested that the author of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group report to English Heritage be asked to rewrite it, and that the group be given authority to accept it on behalf of Mission Council. Mission Council agreed.

#### **06/28 Assembly Arrangements Committee**

Mr William McVey reported. The committee has been looking at possibilities for reducing the numbers at General Assembly to around 250.

He proposed that there should be 200 representatives (1 per 394 members); regional representation; there would be places for young people which may not be filled by older people, but may be traded to other synods.

Assembly representation would be for a cycle of two assemblies. He also suggested that members of Mission Council should be the core members of General Assembly.

There was considerable debate and he stated that the Committee would take comments into account and would welcome further communication.

#### **06/29 Ministerial Review (Paper E1)**

Mr John Ellis reported. Feedback from discussion groups suggested general agreement He suggested Mission Council approve the paper for submission to General Assembly taking account of the points raised in the debate;

**Mission Council agreed.**

#### **06/30 Apology**

Mission Council moved into closed Session. The Revd Peter Poulter moved that:

**Mission Council approves the text of an apology for use subject to the approval of MCAG, as Trustees.**

Seconded by the Revd Elizabeth Nash.

**Mission Council agreed.**

#### **06/31 Communications and Editorial (Paper J)**

The Moderator noted that though the committee convener in his presentation in an earlier session had sought Mission Council's approval to reappoint a secretary without delay, this would be referred to the Staffing Advisory Group in the usual way.

#### **06/32 Assembly Committee Resolutions to General Assembly (Paper ASS)**

The Moderator invited conveners of Assembly Committees to comment ( where necessary) on the resolutions their committees were submitting to General Assembly. Mr John Ellis commented on the Ministries Committee's resolutions and responded to a number of questions. Other resolutions considered on this paper included Training Committee Resolutions, Charity Trusts, and Youth and Children's Work.

## Session Nine

### 06/33 Catch the Vision (Paper B)

Mr Eric Chilton spoke about the budgetary process, indicating that he would now go to synod treasurers and invite them to make pledges (rather than estimates). He would also ask committee conveners to look at possible economies. The Catch the Vision steering group and MCAG should look at the revised figures and present a reasonable budget to Assembly. Alternatively it might be necessary to present a resolution that MCAG be given authority to present a final budget to Mission Council in October 2006.

**Mission council agreed.**

### 06/34 The Trustees Body

The General Secretary said that the Church had little option but to adopt a different form of Trustee body. This was explained in Paper B which envisaged a 2-fold process:

- 1) to invite Assembly to appoint the URC Trust as a transitional trustee body until Assembly can appoint a full Trustee body in 2007.
- 2) The Legal Adviser said MCAG would have to retire as Trustees, in order that General Assembly could then appoint URC Trust as trustees.

In order to facilitate this, the following resolution was moved:

**'Mission Council requests MCAG to retire as trustees at the appropriate time to facilitate the appointment of the URC Trust as new charity trustees.'**

**Mission Council Agreed**

### 06/35 Catch the Vision

The General Secretary invited Mission Council's comments and suggestions on the Catch the Vision Report.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- is there a fault line between 'are we Reformed' and 'are we United'; organic unity should still be the goal; is 2.6 looking at a certain aspect of unity and saying we shouldn't be going there, and looking at 2.7 and saying that should be our aim?;
- 3.3 do our congregations realise that we are no longer promising to provide a minister for every congregation? how does this affect the M&M fund?;
- 3.5 'we wait for the church to respond' - but we *are* the church; in some places churches are responding well to changing times, while in other places churches are waiting for leadership from the Councils of the church;
- we are *not* looking at a financial crisis, we are looking at a resource crisis; if minister numbers continue to drop, there will be an easing of finances; in ten years there will be one minister to every 5.5 churches if current trends continue; we have to address the bricks and mortar issue as a fundamental question; the resource issue is insufficiently highlighted in the report;
- 1.1 it is proper that issues to do with giving should be raised, but not sure if it wise to raise them right at the beginning of the report - they should be in the finance section; page 8, three focussed areas of work is a good thing, but calling them 'offices' may not be the best name - what about 'departments'?
- it would be helpful if there was more detail about the responsibilities of the three 'offices';
- people were unhappy to separate 'United' from 'Reformed'; Reformed structure is precious as a means of discernment;
- will the 2007 budget be income or expenditure driven?;



- when there were departments, their main purpose was communication and included representatives from synods. In 1992 departments were scrapped and committees were established and no longer representative; accountability would be co-ordinated within Mission Council, while speciality work would be done by staff members;
- we have a corporate strategy for ministry but not for church buildings, yet we expect ministers to relate to congregations in church buildings;
- if work is to be done on what constitutes a viable congregation, it would be useful to consult the work of the Small Church Task Group which reported a few years ago;
- what will be the nature of Christian community in 20 years' time? all churches in the UK are facing this question; disciples meeting together to share encouragement and support in their Christian service; if we are a separate community (the URC) then we need to be nurtured and sustained in our community, we need to be refreshed in the strengths of our community and explore how we can be that community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; if we are already united, so that our tradition is expressed in an ecumenical partnership; how do we nurture and support the 'lone voices' of tiny groups of URC people within ecumenical partnerships; also nurturing our worship;
- we are going through a series of potential decisions which will have accumulative effects (Districts, Assemblies, Structures etc) but the cumulative effect could be a sense of disconnection from the church to which they belong and an adhering to the local; what are we going to do to continue to engage people in the process, in the excitement?

The General Secretary responded, saying we had experienced 'Mission Council at its very best'. He thanked the contributors and noted that all the comments will be taken back to the Steering Group.

#### **06/36 Thanks**

The Moderator thanked those who were attending Mission Council for the last time.

The General Secretary thanked the Moderator and the Moderator's Chaplain for their year of service to the denomination and to Mission Council in particular.

Mission Council closed with worship.



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

## The United Reformed Church

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

To: Members of Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

20<sup>th</sup> February 2006

Mission Council: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire  
Telephone: 01773 602482 Facsimile: 01773 540841

Dear Colleague,

March Mission Council is in sight and this letter comes with the usual request that you respond as soon as possible with details of your requirements for accommodation and meals. In view of the January's single-issue meeting, March Mission Council will have a full agenda of reports and business, including the Assembly budget and committee resolutions to General Assembly.

Among items to be considered are proposals about the governance of the Church; issues arising from previous Assembly resolutions on re-structuring; the report of the Review of Training; the Communications and Editorial committee's proposals on future working; and an introduction to a joint United Reformed Church/Methodist Church report called 'Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation'.

Most of the papers in this mailing, however, are about practical arrangements for Mission Council:

- directions for getting to The Hayes Centre
- a list of members (to help people plan shared transport)
- an expense slip (to be completed and handed in at the meeting)
- a form giving your accommodation and meal requirements, and certain other information.

Please EITHER return this form as quickly as possible, and by 7<sup>th</sup> March, OR email your requirements to [krystyna.bilogan@urc.org.uk](mailto:krystyna.bilogan@urc.org.uk). OR telephone 020 7916 8646.

Because of arrangements at 'The Hayes', we shall be unable to start Mission Council until 4.00 p.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> March. It will be possible to check in to your room from 2.15 p.m. and tea will be served from 3.30 p.m. We shall finish business at lunchtime on Sunday.

There are enclosed two agenda papers: Paper A (giving notice of elections to Mission Council groups) and Paper A1 (the report of the Grants and Loans Group). There will be a further mailing of papers in about two weeks' time.

If you have any questions about the meeting, accommodation or the agenda, please don't hesitate to contact my office. I look forward to seeing you at Swanwick.

With good wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Adams." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

The Revd Raymond Adams  
Deputy General Secretary



# The United Reformed Church

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

To: Members of Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

15<sup>th</sup> March 2006

Mission Council: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006  
The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire  
Telephone: 01773 602482 Facsimile: 01773 540841

Dear Colleague,

This second reminder of the approach of Mission Council comes with a sheaf of papers which represent a considerable amount of work done by the groups, committees and individuals who have prepared them. Because the January meeting was a single-issue Council, the enclosed agenda looks fairly daunting, though most of the material would not have been ready by January.

The prospect of a hectic meeting can be eased if members read the papers sufficiently far in advance so as to have time to reflect on the main issues. By so doing, the Moderator will be able to gauge which matters need time for discussion and which can be accepted without too much comment.

The 'A'- numbered papers all refer to Advisory Groups which are required to make annual reports to Mission Council.

The 'ASS' paper is one of resolutions which Assembly Committees propose to submit to General Assembly, and which require Mission Council to check for clarity, as well as acting as a filter of common sense and experience of the Church: they do not require Mission Council's formal approval as such.

Major themes at this Mission Council are bound to include the next stage of 'Catch the Vision' (Paper B) and the reviews of several significant parts of the Church's work: Training (Paper D), the Ministry and Mission Fund (Paper K), Communications and Editorial (Paper J), and Church and Society (Paper F). The Ministries Committee also brings a number of matters, with significant consequences for our ministers and CRCWs (Papers E1-E6).

## Papers

You should find the following papers enclosed with this letter, unless otherwise indicated:

Agenda

List of Group members, leaders and reporters

- A Advisory Groups - and notice of election (sent with first mailing)
- A1 Grants and Loans Group (sent with first mailing)
- A2 Section O Advisory Group
- A3 Mission Council Advisory Group
- A3 (i) Advice to local churches on Civil Partnerships
- A3 (ii) Procedure for electing Assembly Moderator (response to Assembly resolution 53)
- A4 Listed Buildings Advisory Group
- A5 Resource Sharing Task Group
- A6 Ethical Investment Advisory Group
- B Catch the Vision
- C Budget 2007
- D Training Review
- E1 Ministries - Scheme of ministerial review
- E2 Ministries - The government, the United Reformed Church and clergy working conditions
- E3 Ministries - DTI statement of good practice
- E4 Ministries - DTI clergy conditions and the United Reformed Church 's response
- E5 Ministries - the movement of ministers
- E6 Ministries - Resolutions about Pension Fund changes caused by change in the Law concerning Civil Partnerships
- F Church and Society
- G Racial justice and multi-cultural ministries (response to Assembly Resolution 34c)
- H 'Declaration of a Safe Church' - (synod responses to Assembly Resolution 6c)
- J Communications and Editorial Review
- K Ministry and Mission Fund Review
- L Commission on the London Synod - interim report
- ASS Resolutions from Assembly Committees to General Assembly
- ADD Additional business (includes Nominations Committee report)  
(to be distributed at Mission Council)

### General Information

a) Please remember to bring with you

- All the agenda papers
- the Minutes of the October 2005 and January 2006 meetings
- a Bible.

b) Accommodation will be in the Lakeside building at the Hayes Conference Centre . All rooms have en-suite facilities, with soap and towels provided.

c) The words of hymns and other worship material will be projected on a screen, so it is not necessary to bring a hymnbook.

d) Please note that on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March there will be no trains service from Alfreton station. A bus service will transport passengers to Nottingham for mainline connections.

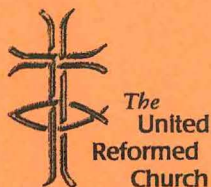
I look forward to seeing you at The Hayes, Conference Centre in Swanwick .

In the meantime, good reading and safe journeying

Yours sincerely



The Revd Raymond Adams  
Deputy General Secretary



# MISSION COUNCIL

## 24 – 26 MARCH 2006

### MEMBERS & REPRESENTATIVES

The Moderator  
General Secretary  
Deputy General Secretary  
Clerk

Revd Dr David Peel  
Revd Dr David Cornick  
Revd Ray Adams  
Revd James Breslin

Past Moderator  
Moderator Elect  
Treasurer  
Legal Adviser

Revd Sheila Maxey  
Revd Elizabeth Caswell  
Mr Eric Chilton  
Mrs Janet Knott

#### Assembly Standing Committees

Doctrine Prayer & Worship  
Life & Witness  
Church & Society  
Youth & Children's Work  
Ecumenical  
Ministries  
Training  
Finance  
Communications & Editorial  
Nominations  
Assembly Arrangements  
Equal Opportunities  
Inter-Faith Relations  
Racial Justice

Revd Dr Susan Durber  
Revd Brian Jolly  
Revd Martin Camroux  
Revd Kathryn Price  
Revd Elizabeth Nash  
Mr John Ellis  
Revd John Humphreys  
Mr Eric Chilton  
Revd Martin Hazell  
Revd Dr Stephen Orchard  
Mr William McVey  
Revd Wilf Bahadur  
Revd Dr John Parry  
Revd Andrew Prasad

#### Fury Council

Miss Isobel Simmons (Chair)  
Miss Fleur James

#### 13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 N	Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Colin Offor, Revd John Durell, Mrs Susan Rand
2 N.W	Revd Peter Brain	Miss Kathleen Cross, Revd Alan Wickens, Mr George Morton (temp)
3 Mer	Revd Howard Sharp	Mr Donald Swift, Revd Jenny Morgan, Mrs Wilma Prentice
4 York	Revd Arnold Harrison	Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Mrs Val Morrison
5 E.M	Revd Terry Oakley	Mrs Irene Wren, Revd Yolande Burns, Mrs Margaret Gateley
6 W.M	Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Dr Tony Jeans (Mr Bill Robson alt)
7 E	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner
8 S.W	Revd David Grosch-Miller	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Richard Pope
9 Wex	Revd Adrian Bulley	Revd Clive Sutcliffe, Mrs Glenis Massey, Revd Ruth Whitehead
10 Th.N	Revd Roberta Rominger	Revd David Varcoe, Revd John Macaulay, Mr David Eldridge
11 S	Revd Nigel Uden	Dr Graham Campling, Mr Nigel Macdonald, Mrs Maureen Lawrence
12 Wal	Revd Peter Noble	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Barbara Shapland, Mrs Liz Tadd
13 Scot	Revd John Humphreys	Revd Alan Paterson, Miss Irene Hudson, Mr Patrick Smyth

#### In attendance

Minute Secretary  
Moderator's Chaplain  
Reform Editor  
Training  
International Church Relations  
Ministries  
Youth Work  
HR & Facilities Manager  
Church Related Community Work  
Theological Reflector

Revd Ken Forbes  
Revd Jill Thornton  
-  
Revd Roy Lowes  
Revd Philip Woods  
Revd Christine Craven  
Mr John Brown  
Ms Michelle Marcano  
Mrs Suzanne Adofo/  
Mr Stephen Summers

Rural Consultant  
Grants & Loans Conv.  
Church & Society  
Pilots Dev'ment Officer  
Ecumenical Relations  
Windermere Cntr Dir.  
Communications  
Children's Advocate  
Racial Justice  
Life & Witness

Mr Graham Jones  
Dr Brian Woodhall  
Mr Stuart Dew  
Mrs Karen Bulley  
Revd Richard Mortimer  
Mr Lawrence Moore  
Mrs Carol Rogers  
Mrs Rosemary Johnston  
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams  
Revd John Steele



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

## AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

### Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March

14.15 onwards      *Arrivals and check in rooms*

15.30                *Tea*

16.00 Session 1      *Opening worship*

Chaplain

16.20                **The Moderator welcomes**

The Revd David Varcoe      (Thames North Synod)

Ms Isobel Simmons          (FURY Chair)

Mr Stuart Dew                (Secretary for Church and Society)

The Revd Neil Thorogood    (Chaplain to Moderator-elect)

Ms Morag McLintock        (Equal Opportunities Convener-elect)

Mrs Ann Barton              (Assembly Arrangements)

(Please ask if there are any others present for the first time - and in what capacity?)

#### **Apologies from**

DepGenSec leads

The Revd Sheila Maxey      (past Moderator)

The Revd Andrew Prasad    (Convener of Racial Justice and  
Multicultural Ministry Committee)

Mrs Suzanne Adofo (CRCW Development Worker)

Mr John Brown (Secretary for Youth Work)

Mrs Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer)

Mrs Melanie Frew ( West Midlands synod representative)

The Revd Graham Jones (Rural Consultant)

Ms Michelle Marcano (HR and Facilities Manager)

16.20+

**The Deputy General Secretary presents the agenda, gives notification of additional business, and tabled papers**

- **PAPERS ADD and Group questions.**
- **Paper A2 (Sat - Session 6) Ask for three volunteers to scrutinise details of this paper with Legal Adviser and Clerk before the session.**
- **Paper A4 (Fri - Session 1) note: LBAC Appeals Procedure has not been circulated: ask two people to inspect work and bring recommendation to Sunday morning session.**
- **Suggest move item on synod responses to 'Declaration of a Safe Church' to Saturday evening (when Peter Poulter is present)**

16.30

**Minutes of October 2005 and January 2006 Mission Councils**



*(Notified Corrections on Paper ADD - para 1 (a) and (b))*

Matters Arising - none other than appears on the agenda

Deputy General Secretary to propose move into closed session  
(members of MC only)

- Distribute Paper AP
- Report (Paper ADD para 4) details of Liaison and Steering Groups
- Paper AP contains apology proposed by 7 members of Mission Council to Minister A. - Elizabeth Nash leads
- Legal Adviser (Andrew Middleton) to respond
- The General Secretary may wish to comment on historic information
- Decision required

17.15

(Move back into open session)

Reports of Mission Council Advisory and Task Groups

Mission Council Advisory Group Report PAPERS A3 DepGenSec leads  
1(b) - procedure for electing Assembly Moderators (PAPER A3ii)  
Decision required

2 - 'Saying Sorry' - (take in Session 6 with Matters from Assembly)

3 - Advice to Churches on Civil Partnerships (PAPER A3i)

(Richard Mortimer to answer questions if any) Decision required

Notice of elections to Advisory Groups PAPER A DepGenSec leads  
(Summary of MC's required action is in box at bottom of page 3:

*Nominations to clerk (proposer and seconder) by Saturday evening)*

Grants and Loans Group PAPER A1 ditto

Listed Building Advisory Group PAPER A4 ditto

Decision required- take on Sunday morning - after  
scrutiny of Appeals Procedure (two volunteers needed)

Resource Sharing Task Group PAPER A5 ditto

Deputy General Secretary has some Notices

- John Durell (Group Leader in Group C) will not be present on Saturday afternoon. Group C will have to appoint a leader from its number.
- Members of MCAG should meet after the Friday evening session for 15 minutes.

18.45

*Dinner*

19.30 Session 2 Catch the Vision -1 PAPER B - Gen Sec leads

20.10 Ethical Investment Advisory Group PAPER A6 - John Ellis leads  
Decision Required on recommendations page 6 (paras 26-29  
on page 5, possibly 31)

20.40 Reflections from the Children's Advocate - Rosemary Johnston  
(retires at the end of next week - 31<sup>st</sup> March - after 11 years in post)

(Moderator - please remind MCAG to meet after evening session for a short time)

21.00 Evening prayer

### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March

08.00 Morning prayer

08.30 Breakfast

09.15 Session 3 Bible study - The Moderator  
Catch the Vision - 2 PAPER B  
- Gen Sec leads  
Financial Report and the 2007 Budget PAPER C  
- Treasurer leads

#### Notice (The Clerk):

Nominations to clerk (proposer and seconder) by Saturday evening for

- a) 1 x Assembly Committee convener to be member of Mission Council Advisory Group
  - b) 1 x member of Staffing Advisory Group (not necessarily member of Mission Council)
- (Details on Paper A).

10.45 Coffee

11.15: Session 4 Training Review and groups PAPER D  
John Humphreys (Convener) leads

12.45: Lunch

14.30: Session 5 Plenary responses to Training Review Report  
15.00 Ministries Report and groups PAPERS E1 - E6  
John Ellis (Convener) leads

15.45 Tea

16.15: Session 6 Ministries Report - Groups (continued)  
17.00 Plenary response  
17.30 Church and Society report and resolutions PAPER F  
Martin Camroux (Convener) leads - MC is asked to give general approval to the direction of the proposals for Ecumenical Public Issues Team (page 2 and 3)  
Section O Advisory Group PAPER A2  
Legal Adviser (Andrew Middleton) leads

#### Matters arising from General Assembly 2005 - 1

(2005 Assembly Resolutions are listed below for consistency. They also appear at different points in the agenda according to convenience)

- o Resolution 2: 'Saying sorry' PAPER A3  
- DepGenSec leads
- o (Resolution 6c: synod responses to 'Declaration of a safe Church' PAPER H)  
(suggest postpone until Session 7)

- Resolution 34 c: Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry PAPER G  
     - Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry leads
- Resolution 37: Electronic Media - Communications and Editorial  
     Martin Hazell (Convener) will comment
- (Resolution 38 Ministry and Mission Fund Review PAPER K )  
     (to be taken in Session 7)
- Resolutions 40 and 41 - synod responses - GenSec leads
- Resolution 42 - London synod Commission PAPER L  
     (for report - Gen Sec will respond if needed)
- (Resolution 44 - Options for revised General Assembly - Assembly Arrangements  
     (to be taken in Session 8)
- (Resolutions 53 - Election of Assembly Moderator PAPER A3ii)  
     (already taken - Session 1)

18.45: *Dinner*

- 20.00: Session 7
- Communications and Editorial Review PAPER J  
     - Martin Hazell (Convener) leads
  - Ministry and Mission Fund Review PAPER K  
     Eric Chilton ( Treasurer) leads
  - Synod responses to ' Declaration of a safe Church' PAPER H  
     DepGenSec leads - Peter Poulter may comment/reply

21.30 Evening Prayer

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March

07.45 Holy Communion

08.30 *Breakfast*

09.30: Session 8

- Election to Advisory Groups PAPER A  
     (see also Paper ADD para3 - note re Hartley Oldham)  
     - Clerk leads

Nominations Committee PAPER ADD (para 5)  
     - Stephen Orchard ( Convener) leads

- Susan Durber (convener of Northern Synod Moderator's appointing group) to bring resolution
- Deputy General Secretary to report on work of Treasurer's Review Group

Assembly Arrangements Committee  
     - William McVey (Convener) leads

Any matters held over from previous Sessions:

a) DepGenSec leads:

- PAPER A4 LBAC - need to agree Resolution
- Dates of future Mission Councils Paper ADD para 6
- Wessex synod resolution to MC Paper ADD para 7(a) -  
     suggest refer to MCAG for initial thought and response
- Resolution about Interfaith Committee PAPER ADD para 8

- b) **PAPER ASS: Suggest the Clerk introduces the task of scrutinizing Committee resolutions for Assembly (see also Synod resolution PAPER ADD para 7 page3).**

(not later than)

10.00: *Groups*

PAPER ASS

10.45: *Coffee*

**11.05 - suggest continue in groups**

**11.30: Session 9 Plenary includes any other business**

**Moderator thanks those who have come to the end of their current period of service on Mission Council**

- (Please ask those who are synod representatives to indicate who they are)
- Sheila Maxey (in her absence) - former Moderator
- The Revd Wilf Bahadur (Convener Equal Opportunities)
- Mr John Ellis (Convener of Ministries)
- The Revd Brian Jolly (Convener of Life and Witness)
- The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard (Convener of Nominations)
- The Revd Kathryn Price (Convener of Youth and Children's Work)
- Mrs Rosemary Johnston (Children's Advocate) - retires 31<sup>st</sup> March
- The Revd David Lawrence (in his absence) - Editor of Reform and Press Officer)
- Mrs Carol Rogers (Secretary for Communications) will retire before October  
Mission Council (has attended every Mission Council since it started, except the special one in January)
- Jill Thornton\* ( Moderator's Chaplain)

**General Secretary thanks the Moderator (and Moderator's Chaplain\*)**

12.15 *Closing worship*

12.45: *Lunch and departure*



The  
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## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

## AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

### Friday 24<sup>th</sup> March

14.15 onwards	<i>Arrivals and check in rooms</i>	
15.30	<i>Tea</i>	
16.00 Session 1	Opening worship	
	Welcome	
	Apologies for absence	
	Presentation of the agenda, notification of additional business, and tabled papers	PAPER ADD
	Minutes of October 2005 and January 2006 Mission Councils (Notified Corrections on Paper ADD)	
	Matters Arising	PAPER ADD
	<u>Reports of Mission Council Advisory and Task Groups</u>	
	Mission Council Advisory Group Report	PAPERS A3, A3i and A3ii
	Notice of elections to Advisory Groups	PAPER A
	Grants and Loans Group	PAPER A1
	Listed Building Advisory Group	PAPER A4
	Resource Sharing Task Group	PAPER A5
18.45	<i>Dinner</i>	
19.30 Session 2	Catch the Vision -1	PAPER B
20.10	Ethical Investment Advisory Group	PAPER A6
20.40	Reflections from the Children's Advocate	
21.00	Evening prayer	

### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March

08.00	Morning prayer	
08.30	Breakfast	
09.15 Session 3	Bible study	
	Catch the Vision - 2	PAPER B
	Financial Report and the 2007 Budget	PAPER C
10.45:	<i>Coffee</i>	
11.15: Session 4	Training Review and groups	PAPER D
12.45:	<i>Lunch</i>	

14.30: <b>Session 5</b>	Plenary responses to Training Review Report	
15.00	Ministries Report and groups	PAPERS E1 - E6
15.45	<i>Tea</i>	
16.15: <b>Session 6</b>	Ministries Report - Groups (continued)	
17.00	Plenary response	
17.30	Church and Society report and resolutions	PAPER F
	Section O Advisory Group	PAPER A2
	<u>Matters arising from General Assembly 2005 - 1</u>	
	o Resolution 2: 'Saying sorry'	PAPER A3
	o Resolution 6c: synod responses to 'Declaration of a safe Church'	PAPER H
	o Resolution 34 c: Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry	PAPER G
	o (Resolution 37: Electronic Media - Communications and Editorial)	
	o (Resolution 38 Ministry and Mission Fund Review	PAPER K )
	o Resolutions 40 and 41 - synod responses	
	o Resolution 42 - London synod Commission	PAPER L
	o (Resolution 44 - Options for revised General Assembly - Assembly Arrangements Committee)	
	o (Resolutions 53 - Election of Assembly Moderator	PAPER A3ii)
18.45:	<i>Dinner</i>	
20.00: <b>Session 7</b>	Communications and Editorial Review	PAPER J
	Ministry and Mission Fund Review	PAPER K
21.30	Evening Prayer	

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March

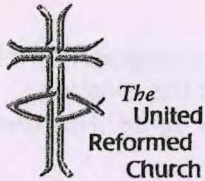
07.45	Holy Communion	
08.30	<i>Breakfast</i>	
09.30: <b>Session 8</b>	Election to Advisory Groups	PAPER A
	Nominations Committee	PAPER ADD
	Assembly Arrangements Committee	
	Matters arising from General Assembly 2005 - 2	
	(any matters held over from Session 1)	
	Groups	PAPER ASS
10.45:	<i>Coffee</i>	
11.15: <b>Session 9</b>	Plenary includes any other business	
12.15	Closing worship	
12.45:	<i>Lunch and departure</i>	

# MISSION COUNCIL – 24 - 26 MARCH 2006

## GROUPS

*The first named person is asked to act as group leader and the second named person in each group as reporter*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p><b>Peter Brain</b>  <b>Glenis Massey</b>            Ray Adams            Adrian Bulley            Yolande Burns            William McVey            Elizabeth Nash            Colin Offor            Carol Rogers            Katalina Tahaafe-Williams            Neil Thorogood</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>B</b></p> <p><b>Susan Durber</b>  <b>Patrick Smyth</b>            David Cornick            Arnold Harrison            Fleur James            Terry Oakley            Susan Rand            Barbara Shapland            Steve Summers            Clive Sutcliffe            Irene Wren</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p><b>John Durell</b>  <b>Jennifer Morgan</b>            Wilf Bahadur            Elizabeth Caswell            Kathleen Cross            Melanie Frew            Janet Gray            Anthony Howells            Brian Jolly            Roy Lowes            Richard Pope</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p><b>Ruth Whitehead</b>  <b>Mick Barnes</b>            James Breslin            Martin Hazell            Lawrence Moore            Bill Robson            Howard Sharp            Donald Swift            Liz Tadd            Elizabeth Welch            Alan Wickens</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>E</b></p> <p><b>Roz Harrison</b>  <b>John Ellis</b>            Stuart Dew            David Eldridge            Margaret Gateley            Janet Knott            George Morton            Alan Paterson            John Steele            Jill Thornton            Nigel Uden</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>F</b></p> <p><b>John Humphreys</b>  <b>Kathryn Price</b>            Karen Bulley            Graham Campling            Roderick Garthwaite            Morag Maclintock            Andrew Middleton            John Parry            David Peel            Peter Poulter            Joan Turner</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>G</b></p> <p><b>Val Morrison</b>  <b>David Grosch-Miller</b>            Ken Forbes            Irene Hudson            Stuart Jackson            Sheila Maxey            Nigel Macdonald            Richard Mortimer            Peter Noble            Wilma Prentice            Isobel Simmons</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>H</b></p> <p><b>Roberta Rominger</b>  <b>Philip Woods</b>            Martin Camroux            Eric Chilton            Christine Craven            Rosemary Johnston            Maureen Lawrence            Pauline Loosemore            Stephen Orchard            Victor Ridgewell            David Varcoe</p>



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**Group  
Discussion**

**Session 4 (Saturday morning)  
PAPER D - The Training Review**

General Assembly 2005 passed Resolution 51, which endorsed

**"... as key training principles for the United Reformed Church:**

- **Integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission - promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the Equipping the Saints and Catch the Vision reports**
- **Ecumenical engagement at every stage**
- **The presentation of a distinctive Reformed Ethos and History in that ecumenical engagement**
- **The delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the URC is situated.**

In the light of these principles and the consequent Training Committee report before Mission Council, groups should ask

1. Is there sufficient information and clear analysis in this report for the General Assembly to reach a decision on its proposals? (If not, what further information would you like to see appended, and why?)
2. Does the report make a convincing case? (e.g. para 8 page 5) and do you support it?
3. What opportunities and difficulties do you see emerging from these proposals?
4. Do you have any additional comments to make for the Training Committee to bear in mind as it takes this report to General Assembly?

---

**Sessions 5 & 6 (Saturday afternoon)  
Paper E1 - The Development of Ministers and  
Church Related Community Workers**

Paper E1 is a response from the Ministries and Training Committees to a commission from Mission Council. It proposes a new scheme of ministerial review.

In forming their reactions to the proposals, Mission Council members might wish to consider particularly the following questions.



- 1 Those working on Mission Council's request (set out in paragraph 1) felt that the most useful practical response was to develop the existing ministerial accompanied self-appraisal scheme. Do you agree? Has this focus resulted in any other key areas being neglected?
- 2 Two key proposed changes from the existing scheme are:
  - (i) to include pastorates as well as ministers in the review;
  - (ii) to make review compulsory.Do you agree that the time is right for the Church to make these changes?
- 3 The proposed scheme requires role descriptions and objectives to be agreed.
  - (a) Do you think that would be a valuable exercise for those involved?
  - (b) Should the URC attempt a generic role description for a Minister in more detail than set out in the Basis of Union?
- 4 The draft scheme suggests a demanding timetable for implementation. Would you favour this or a different way of phasing in a new scheme?
- 5 If the URC becomes more precise in what it expects of individual Ministers and CRCWs, should it also set out more explicitly its expectations of Elders?
- 6 Would you want Mission Council to send all, some or none of this paper to this year's General Assembly?



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**A**

**Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council**

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

**1. Mission Council Advisory Group**

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

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

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

Moderator	David Peel	
Immediate past Moderator	Sheila Maxey	
Moderator-elect	Elizabeth Caswell	
2 Committee Conveners	<u>VACANCY</u>	2006
	Andrew Prasad	2008
Treasurer	Eric Chilton (ex officio)	
4 members of Mission Council	Adrian Bulley	2007
	Roz Harrison	2007
	Irene Wren	2008
	Val Morrison	2007

The General Secretary

The Deputy General Secretary is secretary to Mission Council Advisory Group.

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

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

**2. Staffing Advisory Group**

*The Group considers any Assembly post due to become vacant, or proposals for new posts and recommends (through the Mission Council Advisory Group) to Mission Council whether this post should continue or be created.*

Convener	Val Morrison	2008
Secretary	The General Secretary	
3 members	Peter Paye	2009
	<u>VACANCY</u>	2006
	(additional vacancy in 2007)	

- plus 2 co-opted members (agreed by March 2005 Mission Council): Veronica Taylor and Chris Wright - until 2007)

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

### **3. Grants and Loans Group**

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

Convener	Brian Woodhall	2008
Secretary	Graham Rolfe	2010
One representative from each synod plus, as consultants: A Senior Financial representative Secretary for International Relations Secretary for Life and Witness Secretary for Church and Society A CRCW Development Worker Secretary for Youth Work Deputy General Secretary		

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

### **4. Section O Process Advisory Group**

Convener	Julian Macro	2010
Secretary	Margaret Carrick-Smith	2010
Ex officio: Secretary of Commission Panel Convener of Commission Panel (co-opted) The General Secretary The Clerk to the Assembly The Secretary for Ministries The Legal Adviser is in attendance		

The convener and secretary may or may not be members of Mission Council. They normally serve for 4 years. Other members of the Group serve 'ex officio'.

### **5. Church House Management Group**

Convener	Donald Swift	2008
Secretary	The Deputy General Secretary	
3 members	David Marshall Jones	2007
	Val Morrison	2008

Ex officio:

A Senior Financial representative  
The Human Resources and Facilities Manager  
The Secretary for Communications and Editorial

The convener and members of the Group may or may not be members of Mission Council. They normally serve for 4 years and report to the Mission Council Advisory Group. Church House staff serve 'ex officio'.

**6. Criminal Records Bureau (Churches Agency for Safeguarding) Reference Group** (established in January 2004)

Adrian Bulley (a synod moderator)  
Liz Crocker (a child care specialist)  
Wilma Frew (a magistrate)  
The Secretary for Youth Work  
The Children's Work Development Officer  
The Deputy General Secretary

**7. Resource Sharing Task Group**

Convener	Elizabeth Caswell	2008
Secretary	John Rea	
Members	Rachel Greening	2009
	Dick Gray	2009
	Martin Hazell	
	Tom Woodbridge	

This group organises consultations with synod-appointed representatives (two per synod)

**Action required of Mission Council**

**Mission Council Advisory Group:**

Elect a member who is a convener of an Assembly Committee (and therefore is a member of Mission Council)

**Staffing Advisory Group**

Elect a member who need not be a member of Mission Council.

**Nominations shall be taken from a proposer and a seconder; or from groups at Mission Council.**

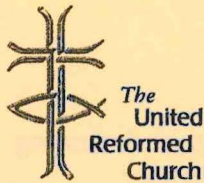
**Information**

**Section O Advisory Group**

The appointment of the Revd Julian Macro as Convener and Mrs Margaret Carrick-Smith as Secretary of this Group was agreed by the January 2006 Mission Council.

**Resource Sharing Task Group**

October 2005 Mission Council authorised MCAG to fill a vacancy on this group. The Revd Dick Gray (South Western) was duly appointed, to serve for four years (until 2009).



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MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A1

Annual Report of the Grants and Loans Group 2005

1 INTRODUCTION

The Grants and Loans Group (GLG) administers the Church Buildings Fund, which provides grants and loans to churches to assist with improvements/modifications to church buildings, and the Mission Project Fund, which provides grants for mission work. We have continued our policy of giving grants only to Synods and Churches with the greatest need.

2 BUDGET PROVISION

For the year 2005 the budget allocation for grants from the Church Building Fund was approx £86000. This is the expected income from dividends, deposit account interest and loan interest. This has again been used mainly for provision of facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year £54500 had been spent with £33000 granted but not yet spent. There is always a problem knowing exactly when the grants will be taken up as there are often delays in building work being carried out. If the grant is not taken up within 12 months an extension has to be applied for, but will normally be granted. A loan of £50000 has also been given for urgent remedial work on a church.

The allocation for the Mission Project Fund was £120000 of which we have spent £101800, with outstanding grants of £11000 having not yet been taken up.

3 GRANTS FOR FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

The expected large drop in the applications for grants towards costs of facilities for the disabled has not occurred. Thus we have not been able to consider any other projects within the 2005 budget. However we hope in 2006 to examine other uses for this fund. A summary of the expenditure is given in the appendix.

4 MISSION PROJECT FUND

In 2005 10 applications were received of which 9 were approved, but 6 were for extensions of existing projects. A summary of the projects is given in the appendix. We ask for an annual report from all the mission projects and are very encouraged by the initiative, determination and commitment of the people seeking to be 'church' in their communities.

## 5 CWM SELF SUPPORT FUND

All the projects that received monies from this fund are now up and running and as this source of funding has now closed there will be no further reports.

## 6 REFLECTIONS

GLG believes that the monies it makes available from Central Funds provides a real benefit, both to local churches and communities, and that without it many projects would not get started. The hope is that if the projects are successful that they would eventually become self financing and any requests for continuance of funding after the initial grant are always scrutinized very carefully. However it is now becoming clear that some projects, especially in inner cities, which though they are successful are going to find it very difficult to become self financing. This poses a dilemma for the group as monies are clearly always going to be limited and if we tie up money on existing projects, however worthwhile, we will have less money for new projects. We believe one of our main priorities is to provide money to new mission projects as a seed corn to get them off the ground. However it would be sad to see some of the very successful inner city projects being reduced.

Projects for which money has been allocated this year are :-

For ecumenical project to establish Town Centre chaplaincy in Bolton

For church worker/planter in ecumenical project in new community in Devon

For youth intern for work with young people in Bridgewater

Continued support for 3 community projects in inner city Birmingham

Continued support for inner city projects in Wolverhampton and Liverpool

Continued support for CONTRAST project in Nottingham to provide education to students of all ages and background in inter-culture theology.

## 7 THANKS

Unfortunately our secretary Sandra Lloyd-Langston has had to retire. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Sandra for all the work she has carried out on our behalf.

Brian Woodhall  
Convener

APPENDIX

a. CHURCH BUILDINGS FUND

SUMMARY OF GRANTS AGREED FOR FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND FOR FEASIBILITY STUDIES - January/December 2005

	No of Churches	(2004)	Amount	(2004)
Disabled Facilities	10	(17)	£41,250	(£65,382)
Feasibility Studies	-	(1)	£ 0	(£ 800)
Special Grants	-	(-)	-	(£ 0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10*</b>	<b>(18)</b>	<b>£41,250</b>	<b>(£66,182)</b>

b. SUMMARY OF LOANS 2005

	No of Churches	(2004)	Amount	(2004)
Building Loans	1	(2)	£100,000	(£70,000)
Professional Fees	-	(-)	-	(£ 0)
Special Loans	-	(-)	-	(£ 0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>£100,000</b>	<b>(£70,000)</b>
	<b>E.Mids</b>			

**\*Breakdown by Synod**

1 Northern  
 2 North Western  
 1 East Midlands  
 5 Eastern  
 1 South Western      Total 10

c. SUMMARY OF "MISSION" GRANTS - January/December 2005

£10,000 Central Liverpool (Mersey)  
 £23,025 over three years, Bloomsbury Mission Project (West Midlands)  
 £9,148 over five years, South Aston (West Midlands)  
 £17,116 over five years, Balsall Heath (West Midlands)  
 £20,000 over five years, Penn Field Community Support Programme  
 (West Midlands)  
 £12,500 over five years, Greater Manchester Industrial Mission (North Western)  
 £5,000 over two years, Westfield URC, Bridgwater (South Western)  
 £13,272 over five years, CONTRAST, Nottingham (East Midlands)  
 £27,454 over five years, Cranbrook LEP, Devon (South Western)

## MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

### Statement prepared by the Section O Advisory Group for Mission Council

In the Report to last year's Assembly reference was made to a new procedure (to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) which would enable effective action to be taken in respect of those Ministers regarded as unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons. The Section O Advisory Group was instructed to carry out this task and its brief was specifically to produce a procedure appropriate to deal with the situations mentioned above. This work has now been done.

It is important for Mission Council and Assembly to understand exactly what it is that the Church is seeking to achieve by the introduction of the new procedure. Its purpose is to achieve 'once and for all' closure in the most extreme and difficult situations and the task of the Review Commission in any Ministerial Incapacity case will be to decide whether the name of the minister should remain on the roll.

It is absolutely clear from the wording of the Procedure that it will only be invoked as a last resort, when the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and others involved pastorally can do no more. We have to accept, with regret, that in certain instances – thankfully rare - pastoral care will not, of itself, restore peace and harmony and that, the longer a situation remains unresolved, the greater the damage to the Church - and, probably, to the minister as well. So, if APRC can do no more and has actually said so, the Church must find another way of achieving closure. In effect, the hope of resolving the matter through pastoral means will have already disappeared by the time a minister comes into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

So then, this will not be another pastoral measure, but a formal procedure, because it concerns the question of whether a minister's status should be terminated against his/her will, and the minister's rights must be safeguarded in those circumstances.

Mission Council is therefore asked to take two resolutions to Assembly in order to introduce the new procedure. Resolution No. [ ] asks Assembly to approve Part I and, as this deals with the constitutional aspects, it will, if passed, be subject to the 'two year' rule. Resolution No. [ ] asks Assembly to note the proposed Part II, which contains the Rules of Procedure and the Advisory Group will be glad to receive comments on Part II at any time up to the end of October. The intention will be to bring the complete procedure into operation at next year's Assembly.

The comparable Resolution last year to amend the Structure in order to introduce the new Procedure was Resolution No.11. The Resolution which the Advisory Group asks Mission Council to take to Assembly this year differs considerably because in the course of its further work on the new Procedure, the Group has come to the conclusion that the initiation of the Procedure should not be through the Councils of the Church, as with Section O. Rather, the new proposal is that the Synod Moderator or Deputy General Secretary, whichever of them believes that there might be reason for a Minister to be brought within the Procedure, should consult with the other of those two and with the Convener of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee.



The initiation of the Incapacity Procedure would only follow if, having consulted together, those three persons, either unanimously or by a majority, believed that this was the right course to adopt. Once the Procedure has been commenced, the case would be dealt with entirely by the Review Commission. The Advisory Group considers this approach to be in line with the non-disciplinary nature of the new Procedure.

It is hoped that this paper will provide some guidance to Mission Council in understanding the main features of the proposed new Procedure.

**March 2006**

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MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

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## Section O Advisory Group

**Resolution No. [to be inserted] Introduction of a new procedure for dealing with cases of Ministerial Incapacity**

General Assembly (i) resolves to introduce a procedure (to be known as the "Ministerial Incapacity Procedure") designed for dealing with cases involving Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being incapable of exercising ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons and (ii) approves Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below and (iii) notes the intention to introduce Part II thereof also in the form or substantially in the form set out below to coincide with the intended ratification of this resolution at the General Assembly of 2007:

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### SECTION [to be inserted]

#### PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY

*The Introduction which follows does not form part of the text of the Incapacity Procedure*

#### INTRODUCTION

The Procedure which follows allows the Church to deal with the cases of ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being incapable of exercising ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons.

It is not a disciplinary process and will only be invoked in situations where the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee, if that committee has been involved, has said that it can do no more.

Whilst considered as a last resort, the Incapacity Procedure will nevertheless enable the Church to take decisive action in cases where the continued exercise of ministry would undermine the promises made by the minister at ordination to lead a holy life and to preserve the unity and peace of the Church.

#### **PART I – subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)**

**Note:** The words and expressions marked \* (the first time they appear) are defined in Part II of this Procedure.

1. Under the provisions of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (herein called "the Incapacity Procedure") a Review Commission\* and, in the event of an appeal, an Appeals Review Commission\* shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of considering and deciding upon cases properly referred to it in which Ministers\*, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of ministerial discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other or similar or related reasons.
2. The Review Commission, the Standing Panel\*, the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the Incapacity Procedure shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure\* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as that Procedure remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church\*.
3. Subject only to Section H of Part II, when the case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure, it must be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that procedure and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
4. The Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Disciplinary Process, save only where the Incapacity Procedure is initiated as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, giving rise to a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Disciplinary Process in relation to that Minister.
5. Although the operation of the Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the Minister of the promises made at ordination, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the matter and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union\* and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.
6. Save only as provided in Paragraph 7, this Part I of the Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.
7. Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the Church, required to bring that procedure into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law and any such changes as are made under this Paragraph shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

## MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

### PART II – not subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

#### A. GENERAL

A.1 The following is a list of definitions of terms as used in the Incapacity Procedure:-

- **“APRC”** means the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee which operates under the General Assembly of the Church
- **“Appeals Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding each appeal dealt with under that process
- **“Appeals Review Commission”** means the Commission consisting of three person constituted for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each appeal under Part II, Section L of the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Assembly Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under that process
- **“Basis of Union”** means the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- **“Church”** means the United Reformed Church
- **“Commencement Notice”** means the Notice sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.3 in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Consultation Group”** means the group of persons required to be consulted in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.1 as to whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated
- **“Decision Record”** means the record of the Decision made by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be in the case of any Minister under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Disciplinary Process”** means the Process operated by the Church for the purpose of exercising ministerial discipline contained in Section O of the Church’s Manual
- **“District Council”** means that District Council which exercises

oversight of the Minister in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure (unless such meaning is excluded by the context) and references to District Councils shall be understood to include Area Councils in Scotland, such Area Councils being in every respect identical with District Councils and wherever the words "District Council" or "District" appear they shall as regards Scotland be read as meaning "Area Council" or "Area"

- **"Enquiry"** means the enquiry carried out by the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Section G
- **"Hearing"** means any Hearing conducted by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission under Part II, Sections J or L
- **"Incapacity Procedure"** means the whole Procedure set out in Parts I and II hereof for dealing with cases of ministers falling within Part I, Paragraph 1 hereof
- **"Minister"** means a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers and who is under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **"Minister's Representative"** means any person appointed to represent a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph A.7
- **"Notice of Appeal"** means a Notice of Appeal lodged by or on behalf of a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph L.1.1
- **"Record of the Hearing"** means the Secretary's Minute together with any verbatim record made and transcribed in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **"Review Commission"** means a Commission consisting of five persons selected as described in Part II, Section D for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure
- **"Roll of Ministers"** has the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **"Secretary of the Review Commission"** means the person appointed to act as the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph D.2
- **"Secretary's Minute"** means the summary minute of the Hearing prepared by the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **"Standing Panel"** means the panel of persons constituted in accordance with Part II, Section C who will form part of each Review Commission

- **“Statement of Reasons”** means a statement appended to the Decision Record setting out the reasons for the Decision
- **“Structure”** means the Structure of the United Reformed Church
- **“Suspension” and “to Suspend”** shall have the meanings given to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **“Synod”** means the Synod of which the Minister concerned is a member (unless such meaning is excluded by the context)

A.2 The Incapacity Procedure needs to move along in a timely manner so that feelings of frustration and unfairness do not arise as a result of unexplained delays and also so as to reduce the period of maximum stress for the Minister and all those involved. Yet, of equal importance, the issues have to be explored sensitively to enable wise and thoughtful decisions to be taken. Thus the Review Commission must at all times be mindful of the need to balance proper expedition on the one hand with the need to achieve natural justice both for the Minister and the whole Church and an outcome which is fair and properly considered.

A.3 Subject to the exception contained in Paragraph A.4 all statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of the Incapacity Procedure shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason and shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Incapacity Procedure.

A.4 The Review Commission may, with the consent of the person or group making it, pass on any statement falling within Paragraph A.3 to any person or group within the Church, provided that the Review Commission satisfies itself that any statement so passed on will remain within the confidential forum of the recipient(s).

A.5 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding the appointment of persons to the Standing Panel or to any Review Commission or in the initiation of the consultation specified in Paragraph B.1 or as a member of the Consultation Group or in the subsequent issue of a Commencement Notice or some other administrative or procedural matter under the Incapacity Procedure is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Incapacity Procedure already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person’s duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This paragraph does not permit any member of a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission to appoint his/her own deputy.

A.6 In any case where the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary in the case of appeals) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of the General Assembly.

A.7.1 Any Minister coming within the Incapacity Procedure shall be entitled to appoint another person to act as the Minister’s Representative\* in receiving

and responding to any forms, letters or other documents, in dealing with any other procedural matters and in attending any meeting or Hearing\*, with or without the Minister.

- A.7.2 In the case of any Minister who, by reason of his/her incapacity, may be incapable of understanding the implications of his/her involvement in the Incapacity Procedure or the nature and substance of the Commencement Notice\*, or of dealing with any procedural issues or of taking any active part in any meetings or at any Hearings, the Review Commission, or the Appeals Review Commission, as the case may be, may, in response to an application made on the Minister's behalf, agree to the appointment of an appropriate person to act as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.3 In the case of a Minister coming within Paragraph A.7.2 on whose behalf no such application is made under that Paragraph, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may invite APRC\* to advise whether such an appointment would be appropriate in the Minister's best interests and, if so, to recommend a person for appointment and may thereupon appoint the person so recommended as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.4 In the event that APRC, for whatever reason does not respond to the invitation contained in Paragraph A.7.3, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may, following consultation with the Moderator of the Synod\*, itself appoint a person as the Minister's representative for the purposes of Paragraph A.7.1.

## **B. INITIATION OF THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE**

- B.1. If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary believes that a particular Minister may be incapable of exercising (or of continuing to exercise) his/her Ministry on any of the grounds specified in Paragraph 1 of Part I, s/he shall consult with the other of them and with the Convener of APRC and those persons ("the Consultation Group\*") shall together consider whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated.
- B.2. As part of that consultation they must satisfy themselves as to the following matters:-
- B.2.1 that all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister have been made; and
- B.2.2 that the procedures for ill health retirement do not apply or that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister; and
- B.2.3 that, if APRC has already been involved, that Committee believes that it can do no more for the Minister; and
- B.2.4 that no case against the Minister is already in progress under the Disciplinary Process.

- B.3. If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group believes, unanimously or by a majority, that the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission\* a Commencement Notice in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such notice and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken.
- B.4. The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing, and only so long as s/he forthwith invokes the consultation procedure set out in Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 above, suspend\* the Minister with immediate effect, either orally or in writing. Suspension\* imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister and written notice shall also be given to the Secretary of the District Council. In the event that the Consultation Group decides that a Commencement Notice should not be issued, the suspension shall immediately be terminated and written confirmation thereof sent by the Moderator of the Synod or Deputy General Secretary as the case may be to the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council.
- B.5. On the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall put in train appropriate procedures to ensure pastoral care for the Minister, his/her family and the local church(es) involved.
- B.6. Should the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receive in accordance with the provisions applicable to the Disciplinary Process a recommendation falling within Paragraph 4 of Part I, s/he shall forthwith invoke the consultation procedure set out in Paragraph B.1 and B.2 and, unless the Consultation Group consider, either unanimously or by a majority, that there are compelling reasons to the contrary, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary who received the said recommendation shall forthwith initiate the Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Paragraph B.3 and shall attach to the Commencement Notice a copy of such recommendation. S/he shall send a copy of the Commencement Notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission\* or the Appeals Commission\* as the case may be to enable that commission to make a final order declaring the proceedings under the Disciplinary Process to be concluded.

## C. STANDING PANEL

- C.1 Appointment to the Standing Panel shall be by resolution of General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee, who shall in considering persons for appointment select one person from each of the following categories, namely (i) a former moderator of General Assembly (who shall also have the responsibility of consulting with the officers of the General Assembly for the purposes set out in Paragraph D.4.1, (ii) a Synod Moderator or a minister in local pastoral charge, (iii) a doctor with experience of general medical practice and (iv) a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background (see also Paragraph D.6.1).



C.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph C.3, members of the Standing Panel shall be appointed for a term not exceeding five years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power to the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms not exceeding five years each.

C.3 When any member of the Standing Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Standing Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Review Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on a Review Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

#### **D. REVIEW COMMISSION**

D.1 No person shall sit as a member of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in the hearing of any case in which s/he has any involvement whether as a member of any local Church, District Council\* or Synod connected with the case or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by the officers of General Assembly or by the proposed person him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to take part in the hearing of the case.

D.2 A Secretary shall be appointed by resolution of General Assembly, on the advice of the Nominations Committee, to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by the Incapacity Procedure, including the servicing of the Review Commission, and the period and terms of office shall be such as General Assembly shall decide.

D.3 On receipt of a Commencement Notice, the Secretary shall forthwith take the following steps (marking every envelope containing papers despatched in connection with the Incapacity Procedure with the words 'Private and Confidential'):

D.3.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice and

D.3.2 Send to the Minister copies of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice giving the Minister the opportunity to submit a written response within a period of one month from the date of the Commencement Notice and

D.3.3 Send to each member of the Standing Panel a copy of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice drawing attention to Paragraph D.4 and requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Review Commission.

D.4.1 The member of the Standing Panel in the first category mentioned in Paragraph C.1 (or the member in the second, third or fourth categories (in that order) if the member(s) in the preceding category(ies) is/are unable to participate in the particular case) shall forthwith consult with the officers of General Assembly and jointly with them appoint as the fifth member of the Review Commission a person (not already a member of the Standing Panel)

chosen on account of particular expertise or experience in the subject matter of the case, ascertaining through the procedures set out above that no conflict of interest or other reason would prevent such person from serving upon the Review Commission.

- D.4.2 In the event that any member of the Standing Panel shall be unable to take part in the particular case, the Secretary shall invite the officers of General Assembly to appoint another person from the same category as specified in Paragraph C.1 as his/her replacement on the Review Commission.
- D.5 When the identity of all five members of the Review Commission has been provisionally ascertained, the Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing thereof and invite him/her to state within 14 days of receipt of the Notice whether s/he has any objection to any of the persons serving upon the Review Commission and, if so, the grounds for such objection. Any such objection shall be considered by the officers of General Assembly, whose decision on whether to uphold or reject the objection shall be final.
- D.6.1 The Review Commission shall appoint its own convener who shall be a member of the Church and who shall normally be the person appointed to the Standing Panel by virtue of his/her legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background under Paragraph C.1(iv).
- D.6.2 The Convener of the Review Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Review Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph D.7.1 consist of an even number of members.
- D.7.1 In the event that any member of the Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.
- D.7.2 Once a Review Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps to investigate the case, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Review Commission.
- D.7.3 In the event that the Review Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps to investigate the case under the Incapacity Procedure, that Review Commission shall stand down and be discharged and a new Review Commission shall be appointed under this Section D which shall have access to all information (including documentation available to the former Review Commission).
- D.7.4 If the Convener of the Review Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reason stated in Paragraph D.1, the remaining members shall appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

## **E. SUSPENSION**

- E.1 If the Minister has already been suspended before the case has come into the Procedure, the Review Commission must, as soon as it has been constituted,

decide whether the suspension should be continued or lifted, and inform all those concerned.

- E.2. If the Minister has not already been suspended, the Review Commission may, either immediately upon its appointment or at any time during the continuance of the case, resolve that the Minister be suspended.
- E.3 Any suspension, whenever imposed, may be lifted by the Review Commission at any time during the continuance of the case.
- E.4 Any decision made by the Review Commission under Paragraph E.1, E.2 or E.3 shall immediately be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice under Paragraph B.3).
- E.5 An existing suspension continued under Paragraph E.1 or a new suspension under Paragraph E.2 shall remain in force until either:-
  - E.5.1 the Review Commission makes a subsequent decision relative to that suspension or
  - E.5.2 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.2 that the name of the Minister be retained on the Roll of Ministers\*, in which case the suspension automatically ceases on the date upon which that decision is formally notified to the Minister or
  - E.5.3 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.3 that the name of the Minister be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, there being no appeal within the period allowed, in which case the suspension shall continue up to the date of deletion (i.e. the date of expiry of such period under Paragraph K.4.3) or
  - E.5.4 there is an appeal against the decision of the Review Commission, in which case the suspension shall continue throughout the appeal proceedings and automatically cease on the date of the formal notification of the Appeals Review Commission's decision to the Minister (whether this be that his/her name be retained on or deleted from the Roll of Ministers, in the latter case the termination of the suspension coinciding with the deletion).
- E.6 For the avoidance of doubt, in the case of a suspension first imposed under the Disciplinary Process upon a Minister who then enters the Incapacity Procedure through the issue of a Commencement Notice, the provisions of the Incapacity Procedure, and not those of the Disciplinary Process, shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension. Conversely, in the case of a suspension first imposed hereunder upon a Minister who then enters the Disciplinary Process as a result of the steps set out in Section H, the provisions of that Process shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension.

## **F. INITIAL REVIEW**

- F.1 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry\* should take (as to which, see Section G below).
- F.2 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:
- F.2.1 Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?
- F.2.2 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?
- F.2.3 Should an early meeting with the Minister be sought or should this be deferred pending further enquiry?
- F.2.4 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?
- F.2.5 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.
- F.3 Having carried out its initial review and agreed on its modus operandi, the Review Commission will move into the enquiry stage of its proceedings.

## **G. CONDUCT OF ENQUIRY**

- G.1 The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account.
- G.2 The members of the Review Commission will need to pay constant attention to all the issues referred to in Paragraph F.2 and any other factors present throughout the whole progress of the case.
- G.3 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.

- G.4 In the light of Paragraph 1 of Part I the Review Commission should, as early as possible in its investigation and wherever possible or practicable, take the following steps:
- G.4.1 meet with the Minister or, if circumstances render this impossible or impracticable, with the Minister's representative, either or whom may, if s/he wishes, have a friend present with him/her and
- G.4.2 seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister.
- G.5 If the Review Commission is unable to follow the steps outlined in Paragraph G.4 in any given case, it will need to consider the underlying reasons very carefully and be prepared to proceed with its enquiry in the light of the best information available.
- G.6 As envisaged in Paragraph F.2.2, the Review Commission may also meet with other persons during the course of its enquiry and should inform each such person that s/he may be called later to give evidence and answer questions at a Hearing with the Minister present. If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person, the Review Commission may invoke the provisions of Paragraph G.1.
- G.7 The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can show that it is protected by confidentiality, but instead they would be asked to supply a written report which would also be available to the Minister.

## **H. RECOMMENDATION FOR REFERRAL TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS**

- H.1.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Incapacity Procedure, an issue of discipline is or may be involved, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission, may, at any time during the proceedings and whether or not a Hearing has yet taken place, refer the case back to the person who initiated it in accordance with Paragraph B.3 with the recommendation that the Disciplinary Procedure should be commenced in respect of the Minister, whereupon the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of that recommendation.
- H.1.2 In such a situation, the Secretary of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who initiated the case a written notice containing such recommendation, signed by the Convener and incorporating a statement of the reasons on which the recommendation is based, in summary form if the

Commission so decides, together with such other documentation (if any) as the Commission authorises the Secretary to release.

- H.1.3 That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned to await the recipient's response and shall also state the time, which shall be not be longer than one month, within which the recipient must notify the Secretary in writing whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected.
- H.2.1 The Secretary shall at the same time send a copy of the said Notice to the Minister. It is assumed that the Minister will already have copies of all the accompanying documents mentioned in Paragraph H.1.2, but, if there are any which s/he has yet not seen, copies of these must also be sent to him/her.
- H.2.2 The Secretary shall at the same time send copies of the said Notice (but not the accompanying documentation) to the General Secretary, the Secretary of the District Council and the Moderator of the Synod (in any case where s/he is not already the recipient of the Notice under Paragraph H.1.1).
- H.3.1 If written confirmation is received from the recipient of the Notice, countersigned by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, that the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted and that a Referral Notice has been issued under the Disciplinary Process in respect of the Minister, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall declare the case within the Incapacity Procedure to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof. The Secretary shall give written notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.
- H.3.2 If written notification is received from the recipient of the Notice that the aforesaid recommendation has been rejected, the case shall forthwith be resumed within the Incapacity Procedure. The Secretary shall give notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.
- H.4 No recommendation for referral to the Disciplinary Process shall be made in any case which comes within the Incapacity Procedure as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- H.5 As to the position regarding the suspension of a Minister to whom this Section H applies, see Paragraph E.5.5.

*For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I.*

## **J. HEARINGS**

- J.1 The Review Commission shall decide when it is appropriate for a Hearing to take place and whom it requires to attend, whereupon the Secretary shall consult with the Convener, the other members of the Review Commission, the Minister and any other such persons as might be required to attend as to the venue, date and time for the Hearing and, when these are fixed, shall give written notification thereof to all concerned with the request that they confirm

their intention to attend and, in the case of the Minister, state whether it is his/her intention to have a person to accompany him/her.

J.2 The Hearing shall be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:

- The members of the Review Commission
- The Secretary or a duly appointed Deputy
- The Minister
- A person chosen by the Minister to accompany him/her
- Any medical, specialist, expert or other witnesses, but only while giving evidence, unless the Review Commission otherwise directs
- A representative of the Church's Legal Advisers, if requested to attend by the Review Commission.
- Any person responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing a verbatim report of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph J.9.

J.3 Subject to ensuring that the rules of natural justice are observed, the Convener should ensure that the proceedings are as relaxed and informal as possible.

J.4 All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission). The Minister shall be entitled to ask questions of such witnesses.

J.5 When the process described in Paragraph J.4 has been completed, the Minister or his/her representative may invite witnesses called by him/her to give evidence and may question them, as may the Convener and other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission.

J.6 When all the witnesses have given evidence, the Minister or the Minister's representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission.

J.7 In the special circumstances of any case the Convener may, if s/he considers it appropriate and helpful, vary any of the above procedures at his/her discretion.

J.8 In considering the evidence and information before it, the Review Commission shall apply a standard of proof on the balance of probability.

J.9 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing ('the Secretary's Minute\*'). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording, or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener. The Record of the Hearing\* shall consist of the Secretary's Minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.

J.10 At the conclusion of the Hearing the members of the Review Commission will wish to deliberate upon their final decision, together with any guidance and/or recommendation(s) which they may wish to append to their decision. The Convener will inform those present that the decision will not be made that day

but that written notification of the decision will be given within ten days to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.2.1). The Hearing is thus concluded.

## **K. REVIEW COMMISSION'S DECISION AND ITS NOTIFICATION**

- K.1** Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Review Commission shall, all meeting and deliberating together, but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons, consider all the information concerning the Minister which has been before them during the case for the purpose of reaching a decision in accordance with Paragraph K.2. In particular they must make a careful and detailed appraisal of all of the following:
- K.1.1** the circumstances which have led up to the commencement of the case as indicated in the Commencement Notice and
  - K.1.2** any expert opinion of a medical, psychological or similar or related nature in respect of the Minister which has been sought by the Review Commission or which has in any way been presented to it during the case and
  - K.1.3** information supplied by the Minister and others within the Procedure, whether or not on the Minister's behalf and
  - K.1.4** reports and other documentation requested by the Review Commission from other persons or bodies within or outside the Church with whom the Minister, through the exercise of his/her ministry, might have had a particular involvement, such as ecumenical posts, chaplaincies or positions within public bodies and
  - K.1.5** all other factors properly coming within the scope of the review being undertaken by the Review Commission and
  - K.1.6** the weight to be attached to each of the factors in the case as indicated above, bearing in mind the manner in which the information was provided and, where appropriate, whether the Minister or his/her representative had the opportunity of challenging or commenting upon it.
- K.2** The purpose of the deliberation referred to in Paragraph K.1 is to enable the Review Commission to reach (either unanimously or by a majority) a decision in accordance with Part 1 Paragraph 5 as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- K.3** The Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record\*) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and shall append a statement of its reasons (the Statement of Reasons\*) for the decision, but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.



- K.4.1 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2 and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph K.4.2 or Paragraph K.4.3, whichever is applicable.
- K.4.2 If the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission decides to retain the Minister's name on the Roll of Ministers, his/her status is unchanged.
- K.4.3 If the Review Commission decides to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, no appeal having been lodged by or on behalf of the Minister within the period specified in the notification referred to in Paragraph K.8.1, deletion shall take effect on the date of expiry of such period.
- K.5 Every decision reached under the Procedure (whether or not on appeal) is made in the name of the General Assembly and is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- K.6 Within ten days of the date of the Review Commission's decision the Secretary shall send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative.
- K.7 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be retained on the Roll of Ministers, the Secretary shall at the same time send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.
- K.8 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, then:
- K.8.1 The written notification shall draw the Minister's attention to his/her right of appeal and specify the precise date by which notice of appeal must be lodged by the Minister with the Secretary.
- K.8.2 The Secretary shall, at the same time as taking the action required under Paragraph K.6, send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee a Notice to the effect that a decision has been made by the Review Commission that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Such Notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to appeal and that a further Notice will be sent when it is known whether there is to be an appeal or not.
- K.8.3 If by the date specified in the written notification to the Minister under Paragraph K.6 as the final date for the lodging of an appeal no appeal has been lodged by the Minister, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall send copies of the Decision Record to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary

(but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.

K.8.4 If the Minister lodges a Notice of Appeal\*, the procedure set out in Section L applies.

## **L. APPEALS PROCEDURE**

L.1.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against the decision of the Review Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers, s/he or his/her representative must lodge written notice of such Appeal with the Secretary of the Review Commission within 21 days of receipt by the Minister of the written notification of the decision under Paragraph K.6 (which shall set out the grounds of the appeal either in detail or in summary form as the Minister chooses).

L.1.2 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Review Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph J.9. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

L.1.3 At the same time the Secretary of the Review Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.3) that the Minister has lodged an Appeal against the decision of the Review Commission.

L.1.4 A Notice of Appeal which is outside the time limit specified in Paragraph L.1.1 will not normally be accepted. The General Secretary may, however, at his/her discretion accept a Notice of Appeal out of time, but only if s/he is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which would justify the exercise of discretion by the General Secretary to allow the appeal out of time.

L.1.5 The Rules set out in this Part II as applicable to the Review Commission shall also apply to the Appeals Review Commission (with the necessary changes), except for those which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure.

L.1.6 No-one apart from the Minister shall have a right of appeal against a decision of the Review Commission.

L.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal lodged under Paragraph L.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal and send to the Minister a copy of the Record of the Hearing before the Review Commission (see Paragraph J.9).

L.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph L.1.2 (or within such further time as they may reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Review

Commission, which shall consist of three persons, in accordance with Paragraphs L.3.2 and L.3.3.

- L.3.2 The three persons to be so appointed shall be (i) a person with some legal, tribunal or other professional experience or other similar background (being a member of the United Reformed Church but not necessarily a member of General Assembly), who shall normally act as Convener of the Appeals Review Commission, (ii) a former Moderator of the General Assembly and (iii) either a person with general medical experience or one with professional expertise in the condition(s) giving rise to the subject matter of the case (such person not necessarily being a member of the Church).
- L.3.3 In the event that for any reason it is inappropriate for the person in the first category specified in Paragraph L.3.2 to be the Convener of the Appeals review Commission, the convenership shall be assumed by the person in the second category thereof.
- L.3.4 Persons appointed to an Appeals Review Commission are subject to Paragraph D.1.
- L.4.1 The General Secretary shall send or deliver to each of the proposed appointees a written invitation to serve on the Appeals Review Commission for the hearing of the Appeal, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.
- L.4.2 The invitation shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph D.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.4.3 The Invitee shall within seven days of receipt of the invitation to serve notify the General Secretary in writing whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so confirming compliance with Paragraph L.4.1.
- L.5.1 The General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing of the names, addresses and credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraph D.1 and pointing out that any objection to any of the proposed appointees must be made to the General Secretary in writing within fourteen days, setting out the grounds of such objection.
- L.5.2 To ensure that the appeals process moves along in a timely manner, any such objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- L.5.3 The officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or reject it.
- L.5.4 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative.

- L.5.5 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall give written notification thereof to the Minister or the Minister's representative and to the person to whom the objection has been taken and the above procedure shall be repeated as often as is necessary to complete the appointment of the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.6.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of two members, in which event, but not otherwise, the Convener shall have a casting vote.
- L.6.2 In the event that, for the reasons stated in Paragraph L.6.1 the Appeals Review Commission shall consist of fewer than two members at any time after that Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Review Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Review Commission shall be appointed in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Section L to hear the Appeal.
- L.6.3 Once the Appeals Review Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section L, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Review Commission.
- L.7 Each member of the Appeals Review Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:
- L.7.1 The Decision Record and
- L.7.2 The Statement of Reasons and
- L.7.3 The Notice of Appeal, setting out the grounds of the appeal and
- L.7.4 The body of papers considered by the Review Commission
- L.7.5 The Record of the Hearing
- L.8 The members of the Appeals Review Commission, when constituted, shall consult together as soon as possible to review the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their conduct of the appeal shall take, following the procedures set out in Sections F, G and H (if they deem the latter appropriate). In addition, they may, if the circumstances so require, consider any of the following, particularly if any such issues are raised in the Notice of Appeal:
- L.8.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not have reasonably been available to the Review Commission before it made its decision under Section K.
- L.8.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Review Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.

- L.8.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Review Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Procedure itself.
- L.9.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, there shall be a Hearing before the Appeals Review Commission which the Minister shall normally be expected to attend.
- L.9.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Review Commission and, where possible, with the Minister or his/her representative as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall notify all concerned in writing of the arrangements for the Hearing.
- L.9.3 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph D.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Review Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/he shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.
- L.9.4 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Review Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph D.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph L.9.3 but shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.
- L.9.5 The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph L.9.4 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Review Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.
- L.9.6 A representative of the Church's legal advisers may, at the invitation of the Appeals Review Commission, attend the Hearing in order to advise it on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Review Commission, nor shall s/he be present when it deliberates and decides upon the case.
- L.9.7 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Review Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Review Commission.
- L.9.8 At some point during the Hearing the Convener will invite the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.
- L.10.1 The members of the Appeals Review Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing, all meeting and deliberating together but in the absence of the

Minister and all other persons consider and arrive at their decision in accordance with Paragraph L.10.2. In so doing they are required to make a careful and detailed appraisal of all the factors set out at Paragraphs K.1.1 to K.1.6 and of all the information, reports, representations and other factors forming the subject matter of the appeal

- L.10.2 The purpose of their deliberation is to enable them to reach (either unanimously or by a majority vote) a decision in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I of the Procedure as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto, the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- L.10.3 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Review Commission which is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- L.11.1 The Appeals Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and whether its decision upholds or reverses the decision of the Review Commission and shall append a statement of its reasons for the decision (the Statement of Reasons), but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.
- L.11.2 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2.
- L.11.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, such deletion takes effect with immediate effect.
- L.12 Within ten days of the date of the Appeals Review Commission's decision the General Secretary shall:
  - L.12.1 Send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative and
  - L.12.2 Send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.

**M. FORMS, SENDING/DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS**

- M.1 Model forms have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Procedure. The forms may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate them, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.

- M.2 Any form, letter or other document required to be sent or delivered to a person under the Procedure shall be assumed to have been received by that person if sent or delivered in any of the following ways:
- M.2.1 By delivering the same personally to the person concerned or
- M.2.2 By delivering the same or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the person concerned in a sealed envelope addressed to that person or
- M.2.3 In such other manner as the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission (in the latter case if the sending or delivery relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.
- M.3 Any form, letter or document required to be sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission or on the General Secretary (in the case of an appeal) shall be delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT and marked "Ministerial Incapacity Process".
- M.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked "Private and Confidential".
- M.5 Where any form, letter or other document is sent by first class pre-paid post, it shall be assumed to have been received by the recipient on the third day after the posting of the same.
- M.6 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission, that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.
- M.7 Deletion as a result of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.

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

- N.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Review Commission and the Appeals Review Commission in the following manner:
- N.1.1 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a

decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.

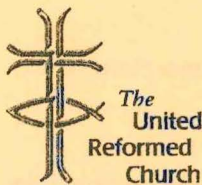
N.1.2 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete is not subject to appeal, the Report shall so state.

N.1.3 If a report has already been made to the General Assembly under Paragraph N.1.1 and the Appeals Review Commission reverses the decision of the Review Commission and allows the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers, the General Secretary shall report the decision of the Appeals Review Commission to the next meeting of the General Assembly without naming the Minister.

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

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





MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A3

Mission Council Advisory Group Report

1. Matters arising from January 2006 Mission Council

- a) Following the decision to set up a liaison group and a steering group to progress resolutions 1 and 2 (see January Mission Council minutes), specific action has been taken which will be reported to Mission Council. Notification of other business on this matter has been given, and discussions between the proposers and the legal adviser are taking place.
- b) Procedure for electing Assembly Moderators in exceptional circumstances: Paper A3ii is a reissue of the previous Mission Council's Paper C, which had to be remaindered through lack of time. Though MCAG does not wish to stifle discussion on this, it seeks to save time at Mission Council by recommending the adoption of Option C.

Decision required

2. Matters arising from General Assembly

Resolution 2 - 'Saying sorry'

*General Assembly, noting the actions of the Methodist Church with regard to those who have been sexually abused, instructs Mission Council to prepare recommendations for similar actions on the part of the United Reformed Church and to bring them to the Assembly of 2006.*

The Revd David Gamble (the Co-ordinating Secretary for Legal and Constitutional Practice in the Methodist Church) has advised that there may have been some misunderstanding about the Methodist Church's formal processes. As a senior representative of the Methodist Church, and where there has been a complaint, Mr Gamble, in certain circumstances where people feel they have not been heard, invites abuse victims (with a friend) to meet him at Methodist Church House.

Mr Gamble, where appropriate to do so, offers an apology on behalf of the Church, in terms of his concern that abuse has happened; that the person feels s/he has not been listened to; and that ongoing pain is being suffered. It is important, in Mr Gamble's view, to express genuine sorrow in a pastoral capacity,

recognising the experience and its effect on the person. At the same time, the Church's apology cannot replace that of the guilty party.

There is, however, no implication in this apology that the Church was responsible for setting up the situation which led to the abuse, and Mr Gamble is fully aware of potential legal difficulties. He believes that the longer matters drift without some kind of acknowledgement by the Church, the longer the victim will carry a persisting burden of alienation. The Church needs to treat all those who have been abused with respect, and be willing to acknowledge their suffering.

Mission Council Advisory Group in considering this response felt that clear guidelines were needed, which would make it possible to offer a compassionate and open-hearted response to the suffering of people who had been abused by those acting under the authority of the Church, while at the same time safeguarding the Church's legal responsibility to protect its assets from claims of legal liability.

There was often a conflict of interest between the pastoral and managerial functions of leadership, and considerable demands were currently being made in both areas on the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. MCAG therefore considered it appropriate to give the task of 'saying sorry' (in specific circumstances) to the Moderator of General Assembly, or a former Moderator. In view of the urgency of this matter, a member of the United Reformed Church would be approached to draw up some guidelines.

*Mission Council should consider whether this report is an adequate interim response to the 2006 Assembly.*

3. **Advice to churches on civil partnerships** Following changes in the law, requests have been received at Church House for advice and information about their consequences for the church. MCAG wishes to commend Paper A3i and invites Mission Council to authorize it as a resource for local churches.

Decision required

4. **Risk Management** General Assembly committees and Church House have participated in the annual Risk Management review, co-ordinated by the Revd Michael Davies. His report will be presented for authorization by MCAG (as Trustees) at a special meeting held during the weekend when Mission Council meets.

For information



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A3i

## Civil Partnerships - Advice to Churches

*This document was produced by James Breslin, Stuart Dew and Richard Mortimer, with an additional contribution by Susan Durber, on behalf of the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee and is submitted to Mission Council with the intention that it be made available to Local Churches as a document issued with the authority of Mission Council.*

### Introduction

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into force on 5 December 2005. It enables same-sex couples to obtain legal recognition of their relationship by signing a civil partnership document in the presence of each other, a registrar, and two witnesses. As with a civil marriage, no religious service can take place as part of the civil registration. A document from the Registrar-General spells out what this means. The registration may not include extracts from an authorised religious marriage service or from sacred religious texts, may not be led by a minister or other religious leader, may not include hymns or chants, or any form of worship. However, it may include readings, songs or music that contain an incidental reference to a god or deity in an essentially non-religious context.

One consequence of this is that churches will be and have been approached to hold services of blessing for same sex couples entering into civil partnerships. In the United Reformed Church the decision whether or not to allow such a service lies with the Local Church and this paper is designed to assist Church Meetings in making this decision.

The registration of a civil partnership is a legal matter and there are a number of requirements laid down by law affecting those seeking to enter into a civil partnership. For instance, there is normally a fifteen-day waiting period between application and registration although this can be waived in special circumstances eg. the terminal illness of one partner. The Act applies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Couples are not eligible to register if they are not of the same sex, if either is already married or already has a civil partner, is under 16, or if the couple are within prohibited degrees of relationship for marriage (eg. brothers or sisters).

A civil partnership can only be ended by death, dissolution or annulment. The grounds for dissolution are similar to those for ending a marriage: unreasonable behaviour, two years separation (with consent), five years separation (without consent), or where one partner has deserted the other for two years.

In a civil partnership the partners assume legal rights and responsibilities for each other and to other parties, including the State. They will have the same rights as a married couple in areas like tax, social security, inheritance and workplace benefits.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002, which came into force on 30 December 2005, gives same-sex couples - including civil partners - the right to make application jointly to adopt a child. Courts handling adoption applications may see a civil partnership as evidence of the stability of a same-sex relationship.

A Local Church being asked to allow a service of blessing does not have to concern itself with the legalities of registering a civil partnership except that should a church agree to hold or allow the holding of a service of blessing it must ensure that it is made clear that this service does not constitute the partnership but is an act of thanksgiving following the legal contract entered into in the presence of the Registrar.

### Theology and Practice

Within the United Reformed Church there are a number of different views on civil partnerships, just as there are a number of different views on marriage. The only places where we have anything resembling official formal definitions of marriage are in two of our earliest foundation documents, "the Westminster Confession of Faith" and "the Savoy Declaration". These both, in identical words, state that "*Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time.*" However the general understanding of marriage in Reformed Theology is that it is an "ordinance" rather than a "sacrament" and therefore a special type of civil partnership.

This classically Reformed position is not held by all Churches, some have an understanding of marriage which is a much more mystical and sacramental understanding. Within the United Reformed Church there are those who take such a view and therefore wish to differentiate much more rigidly between marriage and a civil partnership.

For these, and for other reasons, different decisions will be reached in different places. What is important is that due care is given to discernment and to listening to the different points of view and understandings held within individual Church Meetings. What follows is an attempt to outline something of the range of different points of view, recognising that not all of the views identified will be represented in every church, and that many individual church members may find themselves pulled in different directions and attempting to reconcile radically different ideas within themselves as well as within the context of a Church Meeting. There will be many other opinions on this matter sincerely held by church members and it is important that churches recognise that this is a matter where some views are held very strongly and where strong emotions can come into play. It is important that in any discussion all do their best to recognise and affirm the integrity of those holding views other than their own.

The different responses to the question of whether or not to permit blessings of civil partnerships may well include:

- *A belief that civil partnerships are contrary to God's word, in which is seen a clear condemnation of sexual activity between those of the same gender.*
- *A belief that we must take the Bible with profound seriousness but that there is a crucial difference between words of God spoken with universal validity and words of God spoken to a particular context. Therefore it is not proper to equate behaviour found unacceptable in the Old Testament Holiness Code with the situation of Christian participants in civil partnerships.*
- *(In addition to these responses there may also be those who look at the direction of culture and society and who will want to give space to civil partnerships including the offering of blessing following the advice of Rabbi Gamaliel that if such things are not of God it will become clear but if they are of God it would be wrong to prevent them. (Acts 5:35-40))*
- *A belief that the Church should not encourage the blessing of civil partnerships because we should affirm the institution of marriage for the strengthening of society.*
- *A belief that civil partnerships are quite acceptable and redress previous inequities in law.*
- *A desire neither to adopt a judgemental attitude towards those in civil partnerships nor to do anything to endorse them.*

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- ② - Ch of other is? - Ch of other is? - Ch of other is?
- ③ P2 - • A belief, in principle, that it can do nothing but good to introduce the blessing of God into any situation.
- ④ P3 + 4
- ⑤ hearing + counsel of minister of new. See also at
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There will be those with a wide variety of instinctive responses to civil partnerships who will nevertheless want to make use of the opportunity a blessing affords to build bridges and witness to the partners.

There will also be those with relatives or friends whose sexual orientation is towards those of the same gender, who have come to regard those relatives or friends highly for the fruit they bear (Matt. 7:16 & Luke 6:43) and who would therefore look positively on those seeking blessing.

### Questions of Conscience

It will be important for Church Meetings to take into consideration the views of the Ministers in their pastorate. No Minister should be asked to act contrary to his or her conscience and therefore where a minister feels unable to participate in a service of blessing this position should be respected.

Equally, Ministers must respect the conscience of their Church Meetings. Where a Church Meeting is not prepared to allow services of blessing a Minister should not agree to conduct such a service in another place without the knowledge and consent of the elders.

Whatever decision a Church Meeting comes to on the question of allowing a service of blessing for a civil partnership, it is most important that every effort is made to make this decision in such a way that the whole meeting can feel that this was a proper decision. In an ideal world the Church Meeting would come to a common mind with every member in agreement with the final decision but particularly in matters that deal with emotions and sensitivities, this is asking a great deal. However, particularly as a decision on this matter cannot be subject to an appeal to the District Council or the Synod those leading the Church Meeting must make every effort to allow all points of view to be heard.

### What next

It is important to remember that whatever decision a Church Meeting makes the matter does not end there. Where a Church Meeting has come to the conclusion that either as a general rule, or in a particular case, it is not appropriate to allow a service of blessing for a civil partnership there will be pastoral questions to be addressed. If the Church Meeting has been discussing

the question because of an approach from individuals seeking such a service of blessing there will be a need to address them sensitively and pastorally. Important in all circumstances, this will be particularly so if one or both partners is a church member or part of the wider family of the church. Even if the discussion has not been prompted by a specific request there may be members of the congregation who feel hurt by the decision that has been reached and they will need to be cared for and supported in their understanding of the Gospel. When the decision is that such a service is appropriate then a suitable service will need to be designed and some notes to help with this are attached. However, it should be recognised that just as some members of the church may be hurt in Church Meetings that say no, the same is true in Church Meetings that say yes. Care for them and an affirming of their understanding of the Gospel is equally important and should not be forgotten.

If a Church Meeting agrees to a Service of Blessing the form of that service should be agreed between the Minister conducting it and the parties involved. It will need careful preparation and it may be that the Church Meeting will wish to be advised of the content of this service. As a first step in that direction the Convener of the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee of the General Assembly has prepared the following paper.

### Guidelines for preparing a service of blessing for a same-sex couple

The place to begin is with the question of whether or not it is right or good to hold such a service at all. If the service is to be a service of the church then it needs to have the support of the Church Meeting and the Elders. It is not best seen as a service conducted privately by the minister.

In most churches the question will probably arise as the result of a specific request rather than as a question of principle. This is the reality of church life. We have then to wrestle with the balance between responding to the needs and hopes of the specific couple and the need to take time to think and pray about the issues at the Elders' and Church meetings. No good will be served by rushing to 'get permission', even if the couple in question are understandably impatient. It may be helpful to discuss the question in a general way though first, without reference to the specific couple - so as not to burden them with the need to be 'a good example' or 'a special case'.

It will be important that the service has the church's support. It is no use hoping that some members just won't find out! The minister needs to act knowing the congregation are with him or her - and that all the usual people who

support the offices of the church (through caretaking, playing the organ, doing the flowers etc) are supportive. If there is any real degree of reluctance on the church's part, the couple will not feel welcome and supported and might prefer to look elsewhere. They need to know the reality of the situation.

In discussions beforehand, the church members might rightly be expected to ask what such a service will be about. Will it include vows? Will it look like a wedding? Will the couple be expected to enter a life-long and faithful relationship - or is it simply a celebration of friendship? Will sex be mentioned? Will anything be signed? What status will it have in law? What are we asking of the couple? What are we asking of God? Are there likely to be protesters outside? There is plenty of room for discussion about what such a service is really for and, with few earlier models, considerable scope for anxiety about what the church might be risking. There may also be those within the church meeting who have strong views about what the service should be doing; that it should be about brave prophetic witness for justice, for example. There will be those who will be happy for something quiet and modest to take place - and others with anxieties about 'camp' excess or about the church's 'reputation' being taken over. These questions should be faced openly by the church from the outset, since they are likely to be faced in any case later, along the way, and decisions made quickly! It might be helpful for the church meeting to know that, even within the gay community, there are different views about what such services are for. The church has an opportunity to shape something here and to add its own voice to the debate. The introduction of Civil Partnership ceremonies adds another dimension now - with the question of how a church service might relate to such a civil ceremony with a legal status.

It is right for the church to have a good, thorough and mature discussion before coming to a decision. And it need not be a straightforward 'yes or no' kind of debate. For example, a church might decide that, because it wishes to encourage and deepen human love wherever it is found and believes that God blesses such love, it will support the minister in conducting services of blessing for same-sex couples, but on the understanding that vows of life-long commitment are to be taken and that the couple will promise to be faithful to one another. In other words they will not support services to celebrate a relationship which falls short of this level of commitment. On the other hand, a church might decide that the relationship of marriage between a man and a woman should be honoured above all others and in a distinctive way. However, they are happy to celebrate and to affirm the friendship between two people and to ask for God's blessing upon it - and so would offer such a service to a couple of the same-sex, but not a service that 'looked like' a wedding and involved talk about life-long faithfulness or sexual love. There might also be questions to consider about the place of children and families within a service of blessing for a same-sex couple. Gay couples can now adopt or foster children, may already have children from past relationships or may have in mind living in a family group of some kind. What



place do these relationships have in relation to the mutual relationship of the couple? These are all major questions of theology and policy which it may be right for the church meeting to think and pray about.

If the church is well prepared, has been introduced to the issues well and if the church has agreed to support the holding of services of blessing – then any specific couples know where they are, may feel welcomed and affirmed, and planning for their particular service may begin.

Even if the church does not believe that a same-sex relationship is the same as a marriage, it is a good idea to spend as much time on preparation as you would for a wedding. Indeed, it may even be good to spend more time, since same-sex relationships need at least as much support and, in terms of the service itself, there are fewer traditions to fall back on! Whatever the circumstances there is pastoral need.

When it comes to preparing the liturgy you may feel that you are starting with a blank sheet. But that's not quite the case.

If you believe a service like this should be about the life-long faithful commitment of the couple and about seeking the blessing of God, then traditional (and more contemporary) marriage services have many promises and prayers that, with some adaptation, may be used. It is important for the sake of clarity and honesty (perhaps near the beginning of the service and with a light touch) to make it clear that this is not a marriage service and that it has no legal status, but that being said, you may be able to use some words originally framed for marriage services.

However, there are other resources too. For many same-sex couples, it is positively important to get away from words familiar from marriage services and from some of the aspects of marriage which have been criticised in recent times (the unequal nature of many marriages, for example). So, it is most likely that they will prefer words which, while embodying the values of commitment and faithfulness, actually sound new and fresh. Same-sex couples seem more likely to want to write their own vows and even prayers, or to suggest new readings or liturgical actions. Though it needs to be said that gay couples are as varied as straight couples, some will want something traditional, others something more strikingly new. Some will want a quiet, modest ceremony, others a 'big bash' with all the colour and spectacle of the grandest wedding. The minister has to make judgements here – as with any wedding. This, like any service of worship, is a service of the church, not a private and individual creation. It is right that there should be a proper balance between the corporate faith of the Church and the preferences of individuals. The difference from a marriage is that both the minister and the couple have less tradition behind them. While freedom from tradition is a marvellous thing, to be left floundering in a vacuum is very

unsettling. The minister may be able to help in providing resources from the tradition of the church which can frame this situation, express the hopes of the couple, and bear witness to the Gospel.

The Bible should be, for this service as any other, the foundation stone of the service. While at first sight, it might look an unpromising resource for such an occasion, there are many appropriate readings which can serve well. (As anyone who has looked up all the passages about marriage in the Bible will know, there is no one biblical view of marriage and surprisingly few passages which readily lift into a Christian marriage service! The Old Testament presents some understandings of marriage which we would question, and for most of the New Testament writers marriage was not in itself an important topic) There are many passages about love and about friendship. There are also passages about specific friendships between two people of the same gender (David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, for example). While these are not about same-sex partnerships in the way we understand them now, they do bear testimony to great love and loyalty between two people. There are also readings about vocation, about creation, about the affirmation of community among disciples. If anything the Bible says more about community among the faithful and the overcoming of gender barriers than it does about marriage. There might also be value in choosing a passage in which Jesus overturns the 'purity' code, and/or one in which our identity before God is found in something other than gender or status in the world's terms (our baptism, for example).

There are already some collections of suitable prayers, vows and readings. Chief among them in the British context is Elizabeth Stuart's *Daring to Speak Love's Name* (Hamish Hamilton, 1992) now out of print, but readily available in libraries. Much of it is taken up with suggestions for 'celebrating lesbian and gay relationships'. Couples often appreciate being loaned this book, so that they can see some of the possibilities. Most will have little experience and need some encouragement to believe that a ceremony with dignity and appropriateness is possible.

There is great scope for creativity and for doing something new. But as so often happens in preparing a service (such as a funeral) the tendency is to start out with grand schemes and ambitious ideas, but finally to produce something which is not that far from at least a traditional shape. It may be that the very fact of the service taking place is itself already so full of newness and some measure of risk that it is good to give the liturgy a firm and steady rooting in the traditions of the Church. Very familiar readings and prayers will take on a new hue in a new context so that there may not be as much need for 'new' things as you would think. But, if the couple are willing, they may take a delight in writing their own vows (perhaps within certain guidelines), finding new readings or suggesting new actions. The minister may be helpful in judging what is likely to 'work' - or what

might fall flat or sound banal. Experience from other kinds of services is invaluable, particularly in shaping something new.

In preparing the details and practicalities of the service, it may be wise to bear in mind that not all the family members of the couple may be there. There may be some, even very close family, who are not happy that this is happening or even that the relationship exists. It may be that there are lots from one family and no-one from the other. It may be a smaller gathering than even a small wedding. So care needs to be taken over 'sides' of the church or over the number of chairs set out, or the space in which the service is conducted. In terms of the liturgy itself, if you are including within the service promises of support from the family then you need to know the reality of what that support is likely to be. There may be painful absences which may need to be taken into account.

For most couples, it is important to have some kind of certificate to take with them to say that the service has taken place. (This may become less important since the establishment of civil partnership ceremonies with legal status). It may also be good for the church to keep a register of such services which the couple can sign. This serves as a clear record and also shows that the church is taking this seriously as part of its ministry and history. But it should always be made clear that such certificates or registers have no status in law.

If the service of blessing follows a civil partnership ceremony, it is good to state this clearly at the service and to draw a connection between the two events. The Reformed tradition takes the view that God acts through the civil authorities as well as through the church and we can celebrate the actions of both. Our secular lives are as much lived under God as what we do in the sanctuary of the church.

A few practical things:

With a couple of the same gender, it may be harder to remember their names, or at least which one is which! And, if there are rings, they may be harder to distinguish from each other - they might be the same size! And you might need to think carefully about who to turn to first in the vows, for example, since the familiar pattern of the marriage service won't be there. These are small details, but can easily throw a more nervous than usual worship leader.

There may be fears among the congregation about press interest or about protestors invading the service. It might be wise to have a statement for the press ready prepared - there is advice to hand from Church House if needed. It might also be wise to have church members to act as stewards at the door, just in case of any unwelcome intruders. However, experience of such services has been that they usually happen quietly and with no trouble. Unless you deliberately provoke trouble, it almost certainly will not happen.

**May the God who created us out of love,  
whose son loved us even unto death,  
and whose Spirit warms us with holy friendship,  
bless and keep us,  
now and forever,  
Amen,**

(More information is available from an HM Government booklet *Civil Partnership - legal recognition for same-sex couples*. This can be downloaded from [www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk))

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MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A3ii

## The Election of the Moderator of General Assembly Clerk's Advice

The appointment of the Moderator of the General Assembly is governed by the Structure and by the Rules of Procedure.

The only relevant reference in the Structure is a single sentence in the un-numbered paragraph immediately following paragraph 2.(5) (ii).

The General Assembly shall elect a moderator and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable.

The detailed provision for this election is contained in paragraph 3 of the Rules of Procedure. In summary this paragraph requires nominations to be submitted by Synods to the General Secretary by the March 31<sup>st</sup> immediately preceding the Annual Meeting of the Assembly.

Paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 set out the procedures to be followed when there is only one nomination and when there is more than one nomination.

Nothing, however, is said about a situation when by March 31<sup>st</sup> the General Secretary has received no nominations. or when , following the General Secretary's notification of those so nominated, all candidates have withdrawn. This is clearly a weakness which should be addressed.

Unlike the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the Rules of Procedure are not deemed to be a constitutional document and therefore changes to the Rules are not governed by paragraph 3.(1) of the Structure which limits the power of the Assembly to make constitutional changes.

Paragraph 6a of the Standing Orders of General Assembly requires that "any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.

It is my view that a change to the method whereby, in certain limited circumstances, the General Assembly elects its Moderator would not "alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church".

In 2005 it became necessary to introduce a special resolution to amend the nominations procedure set out in the rules of procedure and allow for nominations to be received from Synod Executives after the date stated for nominations to be received by the General Secretary.

This measure although sufficient to deal with an isolated problem was not ideal. It placed considerable strain on the Assembly Office staff, who had to work to a very tight timetable and it did not allow for a proper consideration of nomination by the candidates nor of names nominated by members of the Assembly.

There are three possible methods that could be used to produce a name or names for election.

I suggest a new paragraph 3.5 to read.

*Either*

A. If after the 31<sup>st</sup> of March or after the period for withdrawal there are no nominations the General Secretary shall communicate this fact to a committee consisting of the Moderator, the immediate Past-Moderator, the Moderator-elect the Clerk of the Assembly and the General Secretary and this Committee shall be charged with nominating a suitable candidate whose election shall be as prescribed in paragraph 3.6.

The current paragraphs 3.5 to 3.12 will then need to be re-numbered.

This draft suggests a committee of 5 to carry out this task. and offers specific named individuals. It may be that others would be better suited to the task., Convener of Nominations?, Convener Assembly Arrangements? The significant elements are that the committee should be small enough to act quickly and confidentially and that it consist of people who will be perceived as neutral in their nomination.

It should also be possible to draft such an amendment to the Rules of Procedure to cover the election of a Moderator in situations where a Moderator- elect elected under the current rules is unable to take office.

*or*

B. If after the 31<sup>st</sup> March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations the General Secretary shall forthwith seek the consent of those nominated but not elected at the immediately preceding Annual Assembly and, the consent of one or more being received, the General Secretary shall place these nominations before the Assembly in the manner prescribed in Rules 3.7 and 3.8

This proposal suffers from the advantage that we know that all those nominated have agreed once to stand, but it does not allow for situations when there was only one candidate, or where there were two or more candidates but these individuals have in the interim accepted other posts which prevent them accepting nomination, nor their feeling that they having been once rejected do not wish to stand again. There is generally a desire on the part of Synods to nominate for a second year a candidate, seen as a strong candidate, who has been defeated once. As this alteration is designed to cope with a situation

where that has not occurred one should perhaps assume a reluctance either on the part of the nominating Synod or the nominated person.

*or*

C. . If after the 31<sup>st</sup> March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the Clerks of the Synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their Synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated and a brief biography, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15<sup>th</sup> May. This alternative is effectively the method adopted in 2005 with minor alterations intended to relieve the timing problems already delineated. It may be that these should in any case be regarded as minor, or if Assembly is willing to accept nominations from a limited number of Synods the date for the receipt of nominations by this method could be brought forward.

James A. Breslin (Clerk)  
November 29<sup>th</sup> 2005



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A4

### Listed Buildings Advisory Group

**English Heritage** has signalled its intention to work very closely with the Churches, acknowledging that the large majority of all listed buildings are places of worship. In particular they have recognized that present system of allocating repair grants has glaring anomalies.

As a result English Heritage is consulting the Churches about ways in which the system might be improved. The amount of public funding being made available at present is inadequate to meet the need and the Churches are making a strong case for a significant increase. The Methodist Church and Church of England have already done substantial work to produce figures to support this contention. They are able (through staffing teams dedicated to these matters) to undertake an exercise of this kind. The needs of the United Reformed Church have been well represented at these meetings by the convener of LBAC (Mr. Hartley Oldham). Although our Church does not have any mediaeval buildings, we have a significant number of late listed buildings which are subject to the full rigour of the listed building legislation, and yet are at a disadvantage in the competition for funding because most of them are Grade II (at the bottom end of the grading).

There have been sympathetic responses to the United Reformed Church's situation. The convener has been asked to provide detailed information on the amount spent on repairs to our listed churches, and Synod LBAC officers are seeking to provide this. English Heritage may work closely with one synod in order to evaluate the situation at first-hand. These discussions may turn out to be of significance to the whole Church in due course.

**Secretary of LBAC:** Mr. Tegid Peregrine has decided to retire after giving ten years of loyal service to the Church in this post. A possible successor has been identified, and a name will be brought to MCAAG (and reported to Mission Council) in due course.

#### **RESOLUTION for General Assembly - to amend the Structure as regards an Appeals Procedure covering Listed Buildings**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure and the Rules of Procedure of the United Reformed Church:



STRUCTURE - Paragraph 5 - Appeals

Paragraph 5(2)

In the opening sentence, after 'outside paragraph 5(1)' add 'or paragraph 5(3)'.

Paragraph 5(3)

Add a new paragraph 5(3) as follows:

'Applications for consent to carry out works to buildings coming within the Church's Control Procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations for the time being in force and appeals from decisions made thereunder shall be dealt with in accordance with that procedure and not under paragraph 5(2) above.'

## APPENDIX to Paper A4

### ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION - PROPOSED APPEALS PROCEDURE Memorandum for Mission Council

The purpose of this Memorandum is to explain why the Advisory Group considers that a special Appeals Procedure should be introduced in respect of appeals by local churches against decisions taken by Synod Property Committees under the Church's Ecclesiastical Exemption listed buildings procedure.

One of the conditions of being allowed to operate our own control procedure is that there must be an appeal process available for an aggrieved local church wishing to appeal against the decision of the Synod Property Committee. When the procedure was first introduced, the relevant Department accepted that there exists a general procedure for appeal which could cover Ecclesiastical Exemption cases.

However, the Group's Methodist colleagues have informed us that they have had cases going to appeal, from which it has been clear that their system for dealing with appeals of a general nature is inadequate for this purpose. As a result, they have introduced a special appeals procedure for their listed buildings.

Although the United Reformed Church has, as yet, had no appeals, there is a steady stream of cases going through the system and sooner or later there is bound to be an appeal. The Advisory Group concurs with the Methodist view that, because of the technical nature of the evidence in these cases and the need for site visits, our Church also needs to follow the Methodist example and put in place its own special appeals system as soon as possible.

The Advisory Group has shared its thinking fully with MCAG and has now produced and submitted to MCAG an appeals procedure which it considers satisfactory for this purpose.

In order to introduce this procedure, the Advisory Group asks Mission Council to present the attached resolution to Assembly. Its purpose is to amend the Structure at Section B of the Manual and the Rules of Procedure at Section C to exclude appeals falling under the Ecclesiastical Exemption procedure from the general appeals system. If passed, the resolution will fall within the procedure for referral to synods and ratification at next year's Assembly.

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MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A5

### Resource Sharing Task Group

Since the last report to the General Assembly, work has continued towards the goal of greater inter-synod resource sharing. In an effort to be more effective and efficient the number of meetings held each year has been reduced slightly. The Inter-Synod Resource Sharing Consultation now meets once a year in September. The Task Group currently meets in March and September. However, should circumstances require additional meetings the Group could meet at short notice. I am pleased to report that Ms Rachel Greening and the Revd Richard Gray have joined the Resource Sharing Task Group.

Information continues to be exchanged between synods on various topics, finance, book grants, car loans and recently the Consumer Credit Act. Two other important issues under constant review are M and M contributions and fund raising. The Honorary Treasurer attended the last Task Group meeting to outline some of the issues about M and M which affect the church Assembly-wide. In relation to fund raising, John Waller chaired a meeting in January 2005, to look at sources of funding and how external sources may be accessed by employing a professional fund raiser; work is now in progress to arrange a consultation in the autumn of 2006. Also, Wessex synod is looking at the possibility of sharing 'legal expertise' with others synods geographically close; consideration is being given as to whether it is possible to run a pilot scheme for a period to be determined, so an assessment can be made.

Arrangements are in hand to hold the synod quartet meetings during 2006, in the same groupings as for 2005; a decision as to whether the groupings for 2007, are to be changed, will be made following discussions at the Consultation to be held in September 2006.

All inter-synod resource sharing meetings are held in good spirit and clearly there is greater understanding of the various problems faced by different synods. There is still work to be done in seeking to harmonise synod policies on issues related to receipts from property sale and manse funds.



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

A6

## Ethical Investment Advisory Group

### Israel/Palestine: Progressive Engagement and Investment Options

#### Purpose

1. This paper responds to Mission Council's request for advice on URC options with respect to current pressure for disinvestment in Israel/Palestine.

#### Background

2. The October 2005 Mission Council passed the following Resolution:  
*Mission Council*
  - 1 Notes that some of our partner churches around the world are actively engaged in reviewing their investments with the aim of a progressive engagement with companies who are impeding efforts to secure a just peace among Israelis and Palestinians including a process of phased, selective disinvestment of stock in companies whose operations support the occupation of Palestine.
  - 2 Calls on the Ethical Investment Advisory Group to advise a future Mission Council what actions the United Reformed Church might take.
3. Paper C for the October Council gave some background to the situation in Israel/Palestine and the response of partner churches, particularly in the USA.
4. A response from the United Reformed Church would need to bear in mind its own circumstances. Appendix A sets out the current Assembly guidelines on Ethical Investment. As the whole subject is immensely complex, the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) offers in Appendix B an informal guide for any who might find it helpful.

#### The URC Stance on Israel/Palestine

5. The letters pages of *Reform* illustrate the range of views in the Church about the rights and wrongs of different parties in Israel/Palestine. Nonetheless the General Assembly in 2004 clearly condemned the separation barrier (the "wall") and thus joined those who believe that the behaviour of the Israeli Government has in certain important respects been unjust and unacceptable in terms of international law and in terms of a Biblical picture of human dignity. This paper starts from that basis.

It does not thereby imply that all other parties have been innocent of injustice.

6. The paper offered to the October Mission Council also mentioned pressure for a general boycott of Israeli goods. Such suggestions are outside the scope of EIAG and not discussed here.

### The PCUSA Catalyst

7. The main catalyst for Church reviews of investment policies has been a decision of the Presbyterian Church of the USA (PCUSA) at its 2004 Assembly to ask for "phased selective" disinvestment from American companies active in Israel/Palestine. As a result the PCUSA has produced criteria for selecting companies where it has a shareholding for review; has begun a process of talks with these companies ("progressive engagement") and will consider at its 2006 Assembly whether those talks imply that they should disinvest from any of the selected companies. No specific disinvestment has been recommended to date.
8. The PCUSA are now focused on five companies in which they have shareholdings. ITT Industries and United Technologies are unlikely to be of relevance to the URC as they are military contractors already excluded by the URC guidelines. The case against the financial services multinational Citigroup seems to rest on one uncorroborated newspaper report in April 2005, which alleged that some customer money was moved in a way that allowed it to be used by terrorists. Citigroup has denied any wrongdoing and the URC has no access to independent sources of evidence either way.
9. Motorola is a communications company and would not therefore necessarily fall foul of URC investment guidelines. It is the fourth company on the PCUSA list because it owns subsidiary companies that have contracts with the Israeli military. It also has a major shareholding in cell phone companies in Israel which are believed to have competed unfairly with Palestinian cell phone companies.
10. The fifth and most widely publicised company on the PCUSA list is Caterpillar. As more evidence is available about its activities, and because it illustrates well the issues of principle thrown up, the rest of this paper will focus on the Caterpillar example.

### Caterpillar and Ethical Investment Principles

11. A good deal about Caterpillar and its involvements in Israel/Palestine is agreed and undisputed, including the following.
  - Caterpillar is a major US manufacturer of a wide range of construction and mining equipment.

- Caterpillar operates in 180 countries.
  - Under 1% of Caterpillar sales are through the US Government's Foreign Military Sales Program; these are not normal manufacturer-customer bilateral contracts.
  - A small fraction of the Caterpillar products in this Government program are then provided to the Israeli government.
  - These sales do however include heavy bulldozers which have been used to demolish Palestinian homes and in creating the separation barrier.
  - After leaving Caterpillar's factories, these bulldozers have been armoured and fitted with weapons.
  - Currently there is no contract for further sales of such bulldozers to Israel.
12. Given that the clearing of homes and the building of the separation barrier have been widely condemned, the key ethical investment question in relation to Caterpillar is whether the company is morally responsible for the use of its bulldozers in these operations.
13. Caterpillar argue that they manufacture bulldozers for use in many countries, with no particular emphasis on Israel/Palestine; that the product itself is not immoral and in many settings is vital to humanitarian relief e.g. after the Indian Ocean tsunami; and that the company cannot possibly check on how all of the two million pieces of equipment they have sold around the world are used.
14. Caterpillar's critics point out that the company is well aware of the use to which the bulldozers sold to Israel via the US Government are put and on moral grounds they should be concerned. As a major multinational, they could exercise influence in Washington or with the Israelis if they chose to do so.
15. Furthermore, UN guidelines on Human Rights do lay down that "Transnational companies...shall refrain from any activity which supports...or encourages States...to abuse human rights. They should further seek to ensure that the goods .... they provide will not be used to abuse human rights."

#### The Stance of UK Partner Churches

16. In most, if not all, our partner denominations in Britain, there have been calls for action against companies active in Israel/Palestine. Some details were set out in the October paper. Detailed work has followed. The Church Investors Group (the ecumenical body that brings together staff with responsibility for ethical investment questions) has also addressed the question in some depth.

17. In addition to the arguments touched on above about what it is realistic to expect of a company like Caterpillar, the Church discussions have heard strong pleas for caution from those with a concern for Christian-Jewish relations. The Chief Rabbi has led calls for no action to be taken that will be interpreted as hostile to Israel at a time when a delicate peace process may be bearing fruit. This is not strictly an argument about the ethics of investment but might affect the tone and timing of any investment action.
18. Those denominations which have reached a policy stance have all decided that this is not the time to prohibit Caterpillar as an investment. These include the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the Salvation Army; the Church of Scotland is awaiting a report to its 2006 Assembly. All intend to keep the situation under review.
19. The Church of England appears to be the only British denomination with a shareholding in Caterpillar and Anglican representatives met with the company before reaching a policy stance. Their EIAG subsequently wrote to the company explaining that they will not be disinvesting at present. However they have urged Caterpillar (a) to be more diligent in assessing the risks involved in any future proposed contract for Israel; (b) to be more forthcoming in discussion with their shareholders and other stakeholders; and (c) to explore possible contracts that would support the Palestinians. More recently, General Synod has encouraged EIAG to devote significant resources to monitoring the issue more closely.

#### **Caterpillar and the URC Investment Guidelines**

20. EIAG does not have access to the list of shareholdings of all URC funds. This constrains the response it can make to Mission Council requests for advice about particular companies. It might help the Church if at least the major denominational and Synod fund investments were voluntarily disclosed and monitored.
21. Nonetheless, EIAG is not aware of any URC money being invested in Caterpillar or any of the other four companies being examined by PCUSA. Indeed, few of our funds will have substantial investments outside the UK. Our leverage on the five companies is therefore limited and the issues of selling shares in them may not arise. Mission Council may nevertheless wish to consider the principles.
22. Caterpillar does not obviously breach the URC guidelines for investment as they are currently drafted. The share of their sales in Israel/Palestine is a very small proportion of their company sales and bulldozers are not weapons.

23. Nonetheless, Mission Council may feel that the relative indifference of Caterpillar to an internationally recognised abuse of human rights justifies censure. To put the point another way, the weakness may be in the URC guidelines for not capturing adequately the situation with which Caterpillar confronts the Church.
24. The current guidelines focus on the output of a company and the possibility of refusing to invest in it at all. A wider set of guidelines could look in addition at aspects of company behaviour regardless of product. These might include the impact of the company's activities on its workforce, contractors, the environment and human rights. Partly because behaviour can and does change, such guidelines might typically stress the scope for discussion with companies in which shares are held rather than responding to any difficulty by disinvesting. (See paragraph 31 below.)

#### Options for the United Reformed Church

25. Mission Council asked for advice on options open to the United Reformed Church in the light of pressure for action against companies operating in Israel/Palestine. On its own, one small British denomination without any relevant shareholdings can exercise limited leverage on US multinationals. The following options may still be worth consideration.

*carried*  
*yes*

26. Data for EIAG Mission Council might decide that the time is ripe to ask Synod and other large funds to disclose their company investments to EIAG on a basis to be agreed, so that there is a more reliable picture of investments held by URC bodies.

*yes*

27. Briefing for Synods Mission Council could send this paper or other material to Synods to provide background as they decide on their own policies and response to queries. The paper is of course only a brief summary of a range of complex issues.

*yes,*

28. Monitor Ecumenical Developments With several other British denominations already committed to keep their investment policy on Israel/Palestine under review, EIAG could make a particular point of encouraging the Church Investors Group to provide advice as the situation develops. This option may however be seen as all talk and no action.

*yes*

29. Support the PCUSA Progressive Engagement The URC could express its support for the work the PCUSA is doing and encourage the ecumenical Church Investors Group to do the same.

*lost*  
*large no: abstained*

30. Recommend Avoidance of Caterpillar as an Investment Noting the lack of recognition by Caterpillar of a human rights responsibility, Mission



Council could invite the Assembly to make Caterpillar a company in which URC funds are asked not to invest on ethical grounds. If Caterpillar were singled out, it should be borne in mind that many other companies have dealings in Israel/Palestine and few have received the intensity of research that has raised the concerns about Caterpillar. The EIAG does not have the capacity to do such widespread research itself.

yes.

31. **Extend the Scope of the URC Ethical Investment Guidelines** Mission Council could invite the EIAG to offer for Assembly consideration amended guidelines that included the impact of a company's behaviour amongst the factors to be considered by URC investors. It should be noted that the assessment of such factors usually involves subjective judgments and considerable research, well beyond what is required for implementing the existing guidelines based on products.

#### **EIAG Recommendations**

32. While Mission Council did not explicitly ask EIAG for recommendations, we offer an opinion.
33. EIAG suggests Mission Council adopts the options set out in paragraphs 26 to 29.
34. EIAG would also welcome the option in paragraph 31 if the resources to undertake this could be found. Some further ecumenical exploration of how this might be done could be fruitful.
35. On balance, EIAG does not favour the option in paragraph 30 at this stage. It does not believe the moral responsibility of Caterpillar for the use of their bulldozers is sufficiently clear cut to justify singling them out for censure ahead of other companies.

Ethical Investment Advisory Group  
4 March 2006

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Ethical Investment Policy (revision agreed by Assembly in 2005)**

**General Assembly agrees that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the United Reformed Church should avoid any investments in:**

- a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction;**
- b) companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment ( other than weapons of destruction) ; or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.**

**General Assembly notes that the definition of these activities, or of what constitutes a significant part of a company's business, requires judgement and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) of Mission Council is available to offer advice. In general, EIAG will deem 'significant' to mean where the share of turnover derived from the activity concerned is more than around 10-20% of the company's total turnover.**

**General Assembly recognises that this policy can only be advisory as the responsibility of specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.**

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Ethical Investment in the United Reformed Church: Ten things you always wanted to know!**

- 1. Mission Council set up an Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) to advise it on ethical investment matters. Neither the Council nor EIAG directly control any investment funds.**
- 2. EIAG members are appointed by Mission Council and report directly to the Council. EIAG is not controlled by any Assembly Committee.**
- 3. The current EIAG membership includes representatives of the Church & Society Committee, the Finance Committee, the main denominational funds with money to invest and ecumenical partners.**
- 4. EIAG has no staff or budget of its own. Support is given, if other work allows, by Finance and Church & Society staff.**
- 5. As far as possible, EIAG tries to increase its competence and punch by working closely with ecumenical partners and drawing on their research capacity.**

6. The URC Trust holds the central reserves of the Church, including funds restricted to specific purposes, and its investments total around £19mn. The Trustees have invested this money in pooled funds managed by CCLA, which has strong Anglican links, and in M&G's Charifund. Only charities can invest in these funds, and both funds have their own ethical guidelines for selecting their investments. The URC Trustees receive regular reports and discuss ethical issues when they meet the fund managers.
7. The other major denominational fund is the Ministers' Pension Fund, which has around £70mn invested. Of this over £40mn is in UK Government bonds rather than company shares. The Trustees use an asset manager, who is not a specialist in ethical investment, to invest this money for them. The Trustees have agreed ethical guidelines, with defined prohibited stocks, for the manager to use.
8. There are smaller funds invested on behalf of some of the Synods and a variety of local church investments. Two of the wealthier Synods invest through Epworth Investment Management, which follows the ethical investment guidelines of the Methodist Church.
9. From time to time and most recently in 2005, the General Assembly agrees ethical investment guidelines that it hopes the Trustees of all these funds will follow. In every case the actual decision lies with the relevant Trustees. As the Ministers Pension Fund requires the delivery to ministers and their dependents of specific defined benefits, the URC underwrites any reduced returns attributable to these guidelines.
10. Both the Trustees and the Church need always to bear in mind that all Trustees must operate within relevant Trust law. In particular, this means that the Trustees must seek the best financial return unless there is a quite specific reason to do otherwise. Any such reason needs to arise from the basic beliefs of the Church as expressed by, for example, the General Assembly and recognised by the beneficiaries of those trusts.



## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

# B

### "Called to live?"

#### The 'Catch The Vision' Steering Group report to Mission Council

##### Summary

We set out our strategic thinking under five headings, ecumenism, changing church, spirituality and core values, ways of working, and finance and resources. We conclude:

- That we are now being called to be a (semi) permanent part of Christian life in our three islands
- That the structures have been put in place for local experiments in being church differently
- That we are summoned to renewal
- That the local church is central to our mission, and must take priority in our use of resources

Having established those principles, we then suggest ways in which the work of the Assembly might be re-configured to give priority to mission. The report ends by grappling with our limited financial resources and suggests options that the church might adopt to achieve a balanced budget.

##### 1. Introduction

1.1 'Catch the Vision' has been working to a published three-phase timetable. Last year we dealt with the structures of the church. This year we are focussing on the resources and staffing of the church, and next year our attention will be fixed on spirituality and values. In our 2005 report (para 110a) we put the church on notice that '...unless giving increases considerably, programmes will have to be discontinued for further savings to be made.' Giving has not increased, and we must therefore attend to other ways of reducing our expenditure. As we present this report, we hope and pray that this may be the year of pain before the year of gain.

move  
to  
later

##### The strategic questions

###### a) ecumenism

2.1. We are a radical people because our God is radical. All God's love is everyone's birth-right. The CTV prayer was our way of saying that:

....we seek to be God's people,  
transformed by the gospel..

committed to making a difference to the world's kingdoms as we live Christ's kingdom.'

2.2 'A united church', Desmond Tutu told the WCC at Porto Alegre, is no optional extra, rather it is indispensable for the salvation of God's world'. He went on to link unity firmly with mission and difference making, arguing that the survival of apartheid for so long was in part a result of Christian disunity. The church in his vision is a harbinger of what the world might one day be:

'Jesus was quite serious when he said that God was our father, that we belonged all to one family, because in this family all, not some, are insiders.' 'Bush, bin Laden, all belong, gay, lesbian, so-called straight - all belong, are loved, are precious.'

2.3 That is real ecumenical radicalism, and the unity of the church is but the faltering first step on the journey. We need no persuading. We were the church created to die, the transitional catalyst that would bring about the unity of English and Welsh Protestantism. It was a wonderful dream, and for about ten years a tantalising possibility.

2.4 However, despite the rhetoric of Porto Alegre, the language of organic unity which we speak is rarely spoken elsewhere. Rather the dialect is of rejoicing in diversity and learning to live diversely and respectfully. The kind of unity for which we longed is not about to happen. That will not, of course, diminish our commitment, for God's unique gift to us has been to form us from three unions and call us from three nations. Our passion for unity is to be seen in a growing number of ecumenical partnerships, in our national pastoral strategy with the Methodist Church, worked out in a growing number of united areas and in continuing conversations about how we can work together nationally. We have learnt a good deal about the difficulties of local united working, but we also know that successful united churches can be incredibly dynamic and exciting places to be. But now is not the time for discussions about organic unity. It may, though, be the time to develop parallel pathways which may converge in the fullness of God's time.

2.5 There are no unity schemes on the far or near horizon. For thirty years the driving dynamic of the United Reformed Church has been unity. It has made us a movement, a pilgrimage, a people of no abiding city. But is God now asking something else of us?

2.6 In a world where calls for unity receive no positive response, we could opt for the 'homeopathic' form of ecumenism. This is the 'dilute until no one knows you're there' option, and it has a certain validity. Well, it says, pull down the shutters. That was an interesting experiment. Let's sell off the silver and throw in our lot with the parish church or the Baptist meeting and strengthen the Christian presence.

2.7 Or we could opt for the 'passion fruit concentrate' version of ecumenism. That says, we might be a peculiar flavour, but the drinks cabinet would be much worse off without it.

2.8 The first strategic question with which we have been grappling in the Steering Group is, dilution or concentration? Which of those positions will best enable us to share God's gift with our Christian brothers and sisters? We have heard it said in ecumenical circles (granted when others thought we weren't listening, 'Don't bother about the URC, they

won't be here for long'.) We are not persuaded that our particular offering to the future great church and indeed to the future of Christian witness in our three nations will be best served by dilution.

2.9 We believe that we need to accept that in the goodness of God's grace, this is where we are called to pitch our tent, roll our sleeves up and get on with it. In other words, our ecumenical commitment needs to be put at the service of mission, and mission has to take its place at the centre of our agenda. We've been given so much. Historically we know about living a radical witness, surviving in the face of oppression, refusing to bow to the authority of the state in matters of conscience. We know about reconciling diversity (we have, after all, experienced three unions). We know what it is to be captivated by Scripture and have our lives turned upside down. It happens week by week and month by month. It's electric and wonderful, and we don't know why we don't shout about it. We might be an odd flavour, but we're a catchy one. People might get to like us.

2.10 It is what Christ has spoken and what we have heard that is the source of both our unity and our uniqueness. The unity is obvious, the uniqueness lies in the richness of the incarnate Word whose speech translates into countless cultures and traditions. What we have heard, as Congregationalists, Presbyterians, members of the Churches of Christ and an increasingly diverse United Reformed Church in three countries, makes us unique. That is Christ's gift to us, and his gift to all God's people, just as their unique hearing is part of his gift to us. For the moment then, we need to rest in that uniqueness, to allow that gift to nurture and nourish us, and to help us re-discover the roots of our own spiritual vitality.

2.11 So, we think we are called to be part of the scene. Here to live rather than called to die. Let's not be ashamed about being here. Let's be ourselves. Let's be glad to be ourselves. Let's not apologise for being the United Reformed Church. Let's celebrate God's gifts, and think about possibilities and mission and growth. Why not church plant? Why not set about pioneering pieces of work? Let's get confident, secure in the gospel. Our ultimate unity lies there after all, not in ecclesiastical designs, however sophisticated, for as Rowan Williams puts it, 'The Catholic Church is simply that gathering in which what Christ has promised is spoken and heard.'

*classic comp'd*

2.12 In the dome of the magnificent Catholic church of Sacre Coeur in Paris is a huge mosaic of Christ with outstretched arms. At the back of the church is a poster, which reads 'Whatever you have done, however life might have hurt you, you are welcome here. The arms of God reach out to you. This is for you.' Sacre Coeur's web site begins:

'Pilgrims, visitors, simple passers-by,  
Here God welcomes you to give sense to your life.  
Here God waits for you to offer you all his love.'

We dare to hope that might be true of our churches too.

## b) Changing church

3.1 Such traditional 'ecu-speak' lacks resonance in some parts of the contemporary Christian world. Richard Mortimer taught us to distinguish between fresh expressions of church, and what he helpfully calls 'new expressions of ecumenism.' We stand a fighting

chance of recognising the former, - cell church, café church and so on - because they are places where the eucharist is celebrated and fellowship happens. The latter are really rather different - the isolated rural teenagers with a faith who find each other at Summer events and whose deepest Christian community for the next 11 months is an electronic network meeting in an organised online chatroom; the single issue Christian pressure groups on such social issues as justice, refugees, asylum, the environment and climate change. Some of these would say that their being in some sort of community with each other as an outworking of their faith is a much more compelling encounter with God than Sunday church. What kind of challenge do they bring? Should we try and relate to them, and if so, how?

3.2 Whether we like it or not, understand it or not, ways of being church are being spawned beyond the scope of institutional denominations like ours. This is a very odd transitional period in history, and in it the most judicious mission strategy is one which rides the waves, in all their diversity. The Spirit will be about her winnowing work, and that of lasting value will be left. The difficulty, as ever, is reading the signs of the times, and coping with conflicting and multiple demands.

3.3 Thanks to Equipping the saints (resolution 30 of the 2005 Assembly) we are no longer tied to the impossible dream of providing ministerial leadership for every congregation. We now have a broader and more realistic understanding of the ways in which leadership is exercised locally. We are, in that sense, well placed to manage and pastor this complex scene in which traditional church and fresh expressions of church and ecumenism are all happening together. The complementary resolution 39 (2005 Assembly) allows us to use some of our ministers more creatively in responding to those challenges. Responding to our environment is filled with risk, but when was Christian witness anything other?

3.4 We need to manage that risk with skilful accountability, whilst at the same time maintaining an alert traditionalism, and we need to balance that continuum with a clear and insightful realism. However attractive we are, however cleverly we niche market ourselves, there is no guarantee of success. Gospel and church were never programmatic processes. The Spirit is too subtle for that, and God too generous. However, we should not underestimate the stress this can cause. Support for those in leadership, but particularly for those engaged in full-time ministries and Christian work on our behalf, is critical, and deserves close thought.

3.5 Doing and being church differently can never be imposed 'from above'. It would be quite improper for Assembly to tell any of our churches how to 'be' and 'do' church. What Assembly needs to do is to provide the structural framework within which experiment and evolution can happen. It is our belief that that freedom has been created and offered. We wait for the church to respond.

#### c) Spirituality and core values.

4.1 Renewal is at the heart of our agenda. If concentration rather than dilution is required of us, we must seek renewal from the God who calls us. Desmond Tutu was right to say that a united church is indispensable for the salvation of God's world. All around we see nation set against nation, culture against culture, faction against faction.

Scripture is full of alternative visions, of wolf and lamb together (Is 11), of Jerusalem's streets full of well cared-for old folks and bubbly kids (Zech 8:5), of the leaves of the trees being for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2). The church is the harbinger of that new creation, which has already begun in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:16ff). Granted, we hold that treasure in all too earthen vessels, but the world is right to have expectations that in the church they will see 'something different'.

4.2 Modelling that 'something different' calls us to repentance and renewal, for what the world actually sees is Christian pitted against Christian, fighting to the institutional death over issues like human sexuality and arcane aspects of Biblical interpretation. It is the most desperate witness. We who are committed to unity need to live that commitment within our own local churches and amongst ourselves. We need to show that the old antagonisms between 'evangelical' and 'liberal' are outmoded and can be transcended.

4.3 We held a small consultation on mission and evangelism in December 2005, with the deliberate intent of seeing if there was common ground to build on. It turned out to be a quite remarkable 24 hours, bringing together 'evangelicals' and 'liberals', Biblical scholars and community ministry specialists, together with the odd church bureaucrat. In one memorable phrase, we discovered that the wings of the church either keep people apart or enable them to fly. We discovered a passionate excitement amongst all present about the reading of Scripture.

4.4 John Campbell, who was our main facilitator, posed the question, 'Why is the Bible so purposefully awkward?' Why does God communicate in this oblique, unusual way? Perhaps to defeat our inbuilt propensity to domesticate God and control religion, to challenge assumptions of closure, to seek our friendship, to show the value of vulnerability, to help us create community (for the Scriptures grew out of a community of believers), and show us that the text must be read anew in each generation. He summed up his thinking in the phrase, 'we have an amazing, intriguing, talkative God who is beyond us all but right there seeking us.'

4.5 And around that we converged, seeing both a God-given opportunity to leave behind the evangelical-liberal divide, and the possibility of a process of renewal which could gather the church into a community of difference makers for Christ's sake. We have seen a vision. We intend to follow it, and make it the key feature of 'Catch the Vision' 2007.

#### d) Ways of working

5.1 Our fourth strategic observation is that we believe the local church to be absolutely critical. It is here, more than anywhere else, that gospel and culture meet, here more than anywhere else that change can happen and discipleship flourish. That is not to endorse the way some churches do things now, but it is to say that we have a 'strategic footprint' across our nations that some commercial organisations would die for! The possibilities of those places are only limited by our imaginations. We rejoice in Assembly's response to Equipping the saints because it allows us to resource local churches far more flexibly and creatively.



5.2 We wish to build on that. Gathering and dispersing is the tide of Christian living. That process is for us essentially parochial, although we are well aware that some still drive twenty miles to worship, and others shrink that distance in cyberspace, but the reality is still of gathering around the Word and then dispersing into discipling activity. Ministers and CRCWs are (with others in some places) the conductors and animateurs of that process. Or, to change the metaphor into management-speak – local churches are the only income generating part of the church process. Our ministers and CRCWs remain essential to that work, and that local work, presbyteral and diaconal, remains (and should remain) the focus of our resourcing.

5.3 If we are to continue to direct our resources there, we must press on with our quest for lighter governance and a leaner structure. Conciliar government is expensive government. Whilst we wish to reduce the cost of that government (which our auditors have identified as overly expensive for an organisation our size), we do not wish to forsake its principle. We have recognised that by proposing that Assembly will in future meet every two years, and by our acceptance that we wish to have one level of council between the Assembly and the local church. The representatives of that one local council will form both the Assembly, and the Council which will act on its behalf between Assemblies.

5.4 Our work this year on the governance of the church has fallen into two inter-related parts:

i) the structure of the church

5.5. A full report must follow after the voting on resolutions 40, 41 and 43 is complete. This report is partial because it is being written before that. In appendix 1 we offer in diagrammatic form a vision of the structure of the church. We will, as promised, be returning to Assembly with a series of options about the size of Assembly and the Council of Assembly. We simply note at this stage that the decision Assembly will be called upon to reach will be one about the balance of representation and trust. We very much hope that, as it deliberates, Assembly will bear in mind that representation (especially in the Council of Assembly) has a direct relationship to the cost of governance (the larger the council, the more costly it will be)

ii) trusteeship

5.6 In the United Reformed Church, the General Assembly (under God) is the source of authority and policy. The church operates under both its own laws and procedures, and under civil law, for it occupies a privileged position in civic life. The civil government therefore has a right to expect that churches and charities are managed and governed properly. It is the role of charity Trustees to give that assurance. Thus the Trustees of the Church should exercise the control and management of the **administration** of the church's policy ( see s.97(1) of the 1993 Act). In other words, they are 'watch-dogs' who should have in place a series of measures to ensure that the administration of the church is being carried out according to the policy set by Assembly, and within the provisions of charity law. They must ensure that the charity is properly pursuing its purposes, preserving its assets and operating on a secure financial basis, and assessing and responding appropriately to risks and opportunities.

5.7 It has been clear for some time that our understanding of Trusteeship needs attention. The General Assembly of 2001 agreed that the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) should act as Trustees of the Church. That has proved less than satisfactory, not least because MCAG's busy agenda leaves it little time to carry out the necessary assurance processes. Given the way that our life is presently structured, the Finance Committee, the URC Trust, the Catch the Vision Steering Group (by default) and others have all found themselves doing trustee-type work. The Steering Group considers that we need to establish a more formal, rigorous, transparent process to provide checks and balances and assurance for those within and outside the church.

5.8 We believe that we now have the opportunity to do that, the better to comply with the requirements of good governance in the 1993 Act. After informal consultation with our Legal Advisors and the Charity Commission, we believe that we can do this simply, in two stages.

i) a transitional trustee body

5.9 Assembly is asked to appoint the directors of the URC Trust as Trustees in place of MCAG for a period of one year, and to instruct the Finance Committee to undertake the role of the Audit Committee for the Trustees.

5.10 Currently all the assets of the Church are held in the name of the URC Trust as holding trustees, and the URC Trust already has an investment sub-committee which, de facto, is undertaking a managing trustee role on the substantial investments of the Church. The Finance Committee's work already includes the preparation of the annual report and accounts which are already technically presented on behalf of the Trustees to the General Assembly by the Honorary Treasurer.

ii) a permanent trustee body

5.11 The 2007 Assembly should be asked to elect Trustees, whilst ensuring a proper degree of continuity with the URC Trust.

5.12 The aim is that within the shortest time possible the Trustee body should be entirely elected by the Assembly. Detailed descriptions of the number of Trustees, the skills needed by the Trustee body, and a suggested method of election are given in Appendix 2.

iii) The Salaries Committee

5.13 We also recommend that the Salaries Committee, which at present has no reporting line, should become the Remuneration Committee for the Trustees.

5.14 If councils are presently one 'partner' in our governing structure, committees are the other. We have already (through the Staffing Advisory Group) undertaken extensive conversations with committees and staff secretaries to see how we might organise ourselves for the future. Once again, we do not believe that the status quo is an option, because we are a small church with limited resources. The days have gone when we could do all that we want to do. We therefore need to prioritise, and those priorities need to be set and evaluated by the councils of the church. There are parts of our work where

standing committees are vital, but other areas where a rapidly shifting environment demands a sure-footed, flexible response. We therefore offer an alternative vision, which we hope sets mission at the heart of our work (A more detailed picture is given in the diagram in Appendix 3)

- Dept?
- The Office of the Ministries of the Church, which will include training, eldership and youth and children's ministries, because they are part of the ministry of the whole people of God.
  - The Office of the General Assembly, which will provide support services like communications, human relations, church administration and so on
  - The Office of Mission policy and Theology, which we hope will encourage teamwork and collaboration in the way we work out how we are to be the church, rather than the prevalence of our present committees to zoom off into narrow silos of limited yet passionate interest.

5.15. The Office of the Ministries of the Church will need much the same committee structure which we already have, as will certain functions (eg. pensions) within the Office of the General Assembly. However, the Office of Mission policy and Theology offers the chance of a new start. We would suggest one committee, with short-term working parties and reference groups where necessary. If this broad pattern is acceptable, we would come to the 2007 Assembly with detailed proposals for changes in committee structures.

5.16 We are also quite clear that this will have to be introduced and managed within reduced staffing and financial resources. We believe that to be possible. We do not believe that to be an ideal position; indeed, we note that in risk management terms, the staffing of the Assembly's work is so lean that it is unacceptably vulnerable. However, unless and until the giving of the church to the central budget increases, it would be irresponsible of us to suggest remedying this by increasing staffing. We wish to emphasise, though, that our motivation for suggesting this change of structure is not financial, but missiological. The church's mindset needs to shift to creative engagement with the cultures in which it is set.

5.17 We believe that this proposal will place mission and creative thought about the gospel at the centre of our corporate life. As it does so, it both reflects and will encourage best practice in other councils of the church.

#### e) Resources and Finance

6.1. If we are right in our contention that we are now called to live, not die, that what is required of us is concentration, not dilution, certain consequences follow. The first has to do with the resources which we use. The way a church's identity is sustained is complex. In part it has to do with the kind of people we are, but it also has to do with the history we inherit, including our buildings, and the institutions which we have formed through the years. Throughout at least the last ten years, this has been a recurring dilemma for Assembly and its Training Committee, for a significant number of those institutions are training institutions.

6.2 The CtV Steering Group's strategy, namely that we are being called to live, has important implications. A degree of concentration is essential if we are to maintain our unique contribution to the future of the church in these islands. It is essential both to maintain our self-understanding of organic unity (the precious gift of our history since 1972) and our perception of what it means to be part of the Reformed family (the heritage all of us brought to that and consequent unions). That concentration is intimately tied up with the life of the institutions of the church.

6.3 They represent a huge gift to us as we seek to further develop as a learning church. Our strategic intent is therefore at one with the proposals of the Training Committee. If we are to make an intelligent, creative and grounded contribution to the future church, we need to safeguard and nurture those few institutions which are still 'ours'. Any further dilution will damage our partners as much as ourselves, for it will weaken our ability to sustain what we have to offer.

6.4 It is the Training Committee's business to work out what that might mean in terms of theological education, and we would not wish to trespass on their territory. However, we would wish to make two further comments about other 'institutions' which are 'ours'.

i) Church House

6.5 The offices of a church don't have the same emotional resonance as other institutions. As we reported to Assembly last year, professional valuation revealed that the value of the building would not cover the cost of re-location elsewhere. However, as we also reported last year, we are continuing to explore with the Methodist Church possibilities of working more closely together at Assembly/Conference level, and that may well have consequences for the future of our offices. Those conversations are at a preliminary stage, and we do not expect to have anything specific to report in the near future, but it is important that Assembly realise that we are making no assumptions about the status quo.

ii) the Windermere Centre

6.6. We believe the Windermere Centre to have been a remarkable and brave creation of our recent history. We are confident that the Centre has a central role to play in the fostering of learning, spiritual vision and *koinonia* (which means so much more than the flabby translation 'fellowship') amongst us. We endorse warmly the report of the task group that reported to Mission Council in 2003, and we ask the Finance Committee to continue their conversation with the Windermere Advisory Group about ways in which the necessary development of the Centre might be financed.

6.7 We believe that we should support our own institutions, and we propose that when committees and working groups seek meeting venues, the first call on their expenditure should be the United Reformed Church through the Windermere Centre, its colleges and Church House. Only if that is not possible should outside institutions be considered.

6.8 As we have pointed out in previous reports, the finances of the church are complex. The national budget (which is Assembly's responsibility) is only part of the whole. Significant resources exist in some Synods (but not all) and in some local churches (but not all). Similarly, we are property rich, but cash poor. Our wealth is tied up in assets,

mainly housing ministers in both active service and retirement, and in investments, many of which are restricted funds where we can only enjoy the income. We cannot realise that wealth, and where we can, it is not available immediately. However, that means that our current operation has to be funded principally by giving. The details of our proposals to maximise that giving are set out in the M&M review. The state of our finances is made clear in the budget. As it presently stands, that budget shows a deficit of £849,000. Had we unlimited reserves, we might be able to bear that, but we don't. That deficit needs to be cut drastically as our reserves are very limited and we are conscious of our existing responsibilities to provide for ministers' pensions and retirement housing.

6.9 We have five options as we seek to manage this situation.

- a) we can increase our income through M&M
- b) we can cut back on ministry, which is by far our largest item of expenditure
- c) we can make cuts elsewhere in the budget
- d) we can agree to explore moving items out of the central budget to Synod budgets through a process similar to resource sharing
- e) we can produce a mixture of the above three measures

We will deal with each option in turn:

- a) increasing income

6.10 We have set out our suggestions for maximising income in the M&M review (see especially para 11). We hope and pray that this will commend itself to the church. However, it will not deal with our underlying problem, our age structure, which means that we are locked into expecting more giving from fewer people. Even if giving increases, we must have the courage to lay aside our 'large church' mentality, and adopt a structure which fits our size and resources.

6.11 Experience also suggests that Assembly's enthusiasm for programmes and expenditure is not echoed in local churches and Synods. We worry about the serious accountability gap between Assembly and the local churches and Synods, and we understand only too well the ecclesiological implications of that statement.

6.12 Nonetheless, we challenge to the church to maximise its stewardship, but we do so as realists who know that despite such appeals, for the last three years Synods have been unable to pledge their targets, and that the gap between actual and targeted income has been increasing.

- b) cutting ministry

6.13 We have made it clear in our strategic thinking that we do not believe that the church would countenance any further cuts in 'front-line' ministry. That is an assumption that we will have to test at Assembly. However, it is hard to see how we would be able to manage the necessary reduction (which would be in the region of 26 ministers) except through deployment strategies. It remains a medium-term possibility, but not one we believe the church would welcome.

cutting the budget elsewhere

6.14 We wish to pay tribute to our staff who manage budgets. Over the past five years they have struggled to keep expenditure level, often with little margin, for the bulk of most budgets consists of stipends, salaries and other items that cannot be easily reduced. It may be that there is still room for reducing discretionary expenditure. We note that there is no centralised method of cost control in the Assembly's programmes because each budget holder is responsible to his or her committee (through the convenor) rather than to a central manager. We believe the Treasurer, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary should be asked to address this as a matter of urgency. However, although savings in travel, committee and other expenses may be significant, they will not be dramatic.

6.15 Lasting and significant savings will only be made if Assembly addresses the question of non-discretionary budget expenses. We believe that Assembly must exercise that responsibility this year.

d) moving items to the budget of other parts of the church

6.16 Part of the rationale of 'Catch the Vision' was exploring what services needed to be delivered at each level of church life. We note that the combined income of Synods is greater than the national budget, and we therefore wish to explore the possibilities of shifting parts of our programme into Synod budgets.

e) A combination

6.17 A combination of the above measures will probably be necessary if we are to manage this situation creatively.

6.18 We do not rejoice in this. It is not where we wish to be. We wish to be in the position where we have a revenue rather than an expenditure led budget. We wish to be in the place where the church gives joyfully out of gratitude to God to enable the mission of God. However, we are not there. It is our hope that one day we might be. In the meantime we offer the following. Our prayer is that this will be a provisional state, and that within five years increased stewardship will result in an improved financial position which will enable us to expand rather than contract our work.

6.19 Mission Council needs to know the rationale behind our proposals. The background is one of sustained cost-cutting and budget reductions in the activities of the Assembly. Some budgets have already been cut to the point where to cut anything else would be to imperil the programme (for example, Church and Society). The M&M report (para 5:1) bears witness to the fact that over the period 2002-5 the costs of training and administration have been held. Mission Council needs to be clear that that has meant reductions in support staffing and administration (for example, one administrator now services International and ecumenical relations, and the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary work to one PA). We have not, nor will we in the present financial climate, replace the Financial Secretary. In other words, administration is bearing a share of the costs. It is very difficult to see how we could cut central administration further without undue risk to the church's infrastructure.

6.20 Our options have therefore been severely limited. We therefore propose:

a) a cut of £90K in the Ecumenical Committee budget. That budget has increased by c.£100,000 2004-7 because the restricted funds which paid for the 'Belonging to the World Church' programme have been exhausted. The costs have therefore become a charge on the central budget, and at present we do not believe the central budget can bear that cost.

b) a cut of £10K in the Racial Justice and Multi-cultural ministry budget, which has increased by c. 23% 2004-7.

c) after ministry and training, the largest item of expenditure in the central budget is Youth and Children's work. The budgeted figure for 2007 is £650k (the committee, central cost of YCWT team, and PILOTS), to which must be added a further £280K which is the Synod portion of the cost of the YCWT team. In other words, we spend £930K on youth and children's work. We suggest

(i) that the Youth and Children's Work budget be reduced by £60K (a cut of 6.5% in the church's total expenditure on Youth and Children's work at Assembly and Synod levels).

(ii) that the costs of the YCWT team be met entirely by Synods, perhaps by an extension of the resource sharing principle.

(d) should the proposals for re-structuring into 3 'areas' of work be accepted, we would envisage the eventual discontinuing of the Life and Witness post, because the focus of the new area will be mission, and the support of eldership will move to the training area. Given the present financial constraints, we would not feel justified in appointing an extra member of staff. We would therefore envision savings in the area of £40K.

(e) we note the proposals of the Training committee. It is difficult to anticipate what savings might occur should it be accepted, but we note that savings might well occur from 2008. However, we are also aware that if we are to maintain our present level of ministry (tracking at 3% membership decline as Assembly has directed) we will soon need to foster vocations. A prudent and wise church would be opening a vocations campaign at this point. If we do that, it will be very hard for the Training Committee to cut costs.

(f) if Assembly is held every two years, we should effect a saving of c. £100K p.a. (ie. the saving of £200K in alternative years)

(g) a review of programmes is underway in Communications and Editorial. We hope that that will result in considerable savings, but would like the committee to aim at c. £65K.

6.21 In summary therefore, the following economies are suggested:

	£000
Ecumenical	90
Racial Justice	10
Youth and Children's work	60
Re-structuring mission	40

Reduced Assembly	100
Communications	65
Financial Secretary	50
	----
Sub-total	415
Moving costs of YCWTs	280
	----
Total	695

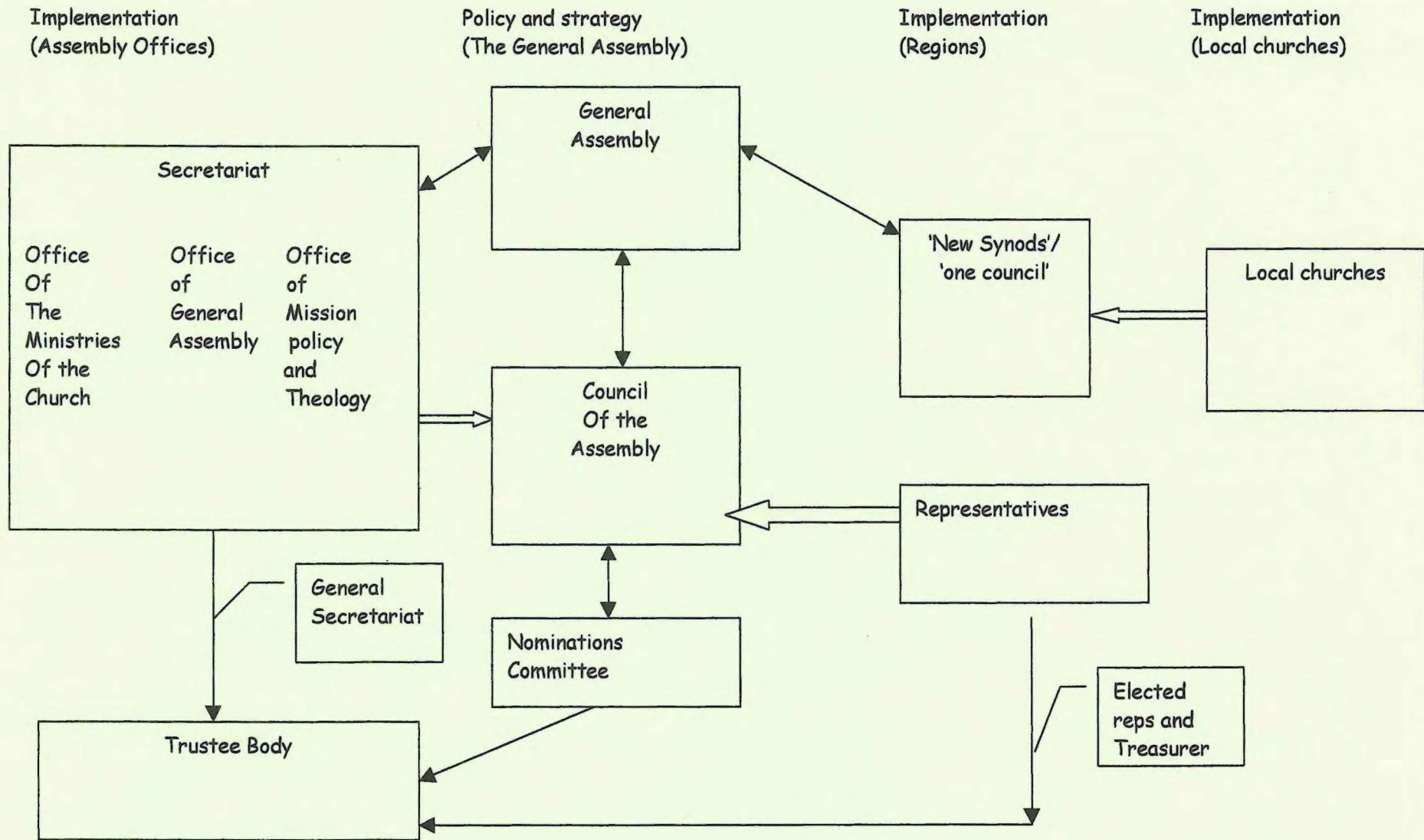
Mission Council should note that this will still result in a deficit budget of £154,000, which is far from ideal, but sustainable.

#### Summary of recommendations

- a) Mission Council invites Assembly to appoint the URC Trust as a transitional Trustee Body for the United Reformed Church whilst Assembly prepares to appoint a full Trustee Body in 2007.
- b) Mission Council instructs the Salaries Committee to become the Remuneration Committee of the Trustee Body.
- c) Mission Council approves of the broad outline of the proposed re-structuring of the work of Assembly.



Appendix 1: Proposed model of governance



## Appendix 2 : The Trustee Body

1. There needs to be a sufficient number of Trustees to have access to a broad range of knowledge and experience. The role of Trustee is an exacting role and demands a significant time commitment and has specific legal responsibilities.

### 2. Who will the Trustees be?

2.1 Four of the existing members of the Mission Council Advisory Group - the Moderator, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary and the Treasurer - are Trustees by virtue of their office and should continue. Other Trustees (with relevant experience) should be elected by General Assembly. These Trustees are to provide independent advice and assurance. They should complement the skills of those Trustees already serving as directors of the URC Trust.

2.2 In the process election, Assembly needs to be aware that the Trustee body must include members with legal, investment, financial and human resource experience. All Trustees should, of course, be fully involved in the life of the church. Those experiences are needed so that the Trustees can assure Assembly that the professional officers employed by the church are performing their duties with due propriety.

2.3 The quorum of the Board of Trustees is six or greater.

2.4 Trustees are ex-officio members of General Assembly and Mission Council.

2.5 The number of Trustees can be varied by General Assembly on the recommendation of the Council, following consultation with the Trustees.

2.6 The Board of Trustees may co-opt members with the agreement of Council in the event of:

1. Unexpected vacancy
2. Requirement of specific expertise

2.7 Trustee indemnity insurance will be provided.

2.8 Trustees will be given an induction to the role that equips them with the tools they need to become effective and valuable Trustees as quickly as possible.

### 3. How will Trustees be appointed?

3.1 The Officers of the Church are appointed by General Assembly for a specific term of years and serve during their term of office as ex officio.

3.2 The other Trustees will be elected by General Assembly for a term of six years. After this time the Trustee must stand down for a minimum of two years but will then be eligible for re-election.

3.3 Timetable and process for nomination (every two years to coincide with General Assembly):

- Synods consider candidates for Trustees and Honorary Treasurer and seek their consent and agreement to stand for election
- Synods provide nominations (together with CV and two references - one from the local church and one professional, for each nomination) to the Nominations Committee by the end of March
- Nominations Committee take up references, review eligibility and discuss with the Trustees
- The Trustees then interview candidates and nominate preferred candidates to the General Assembly for election

3.4 The Trustees will elect one of their elected URC members as Chairperson who will act as a facilitator and serve the office of Chairperson. His/her term of service as a Trustee may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity of Chairperson. This appointment will be endorsed by General Assembly. After this term the Chairperson must stand down for a minimum of two years.

3.5 If an elected Trustee is appointed Honorary Treasurer his/her term of service may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity.

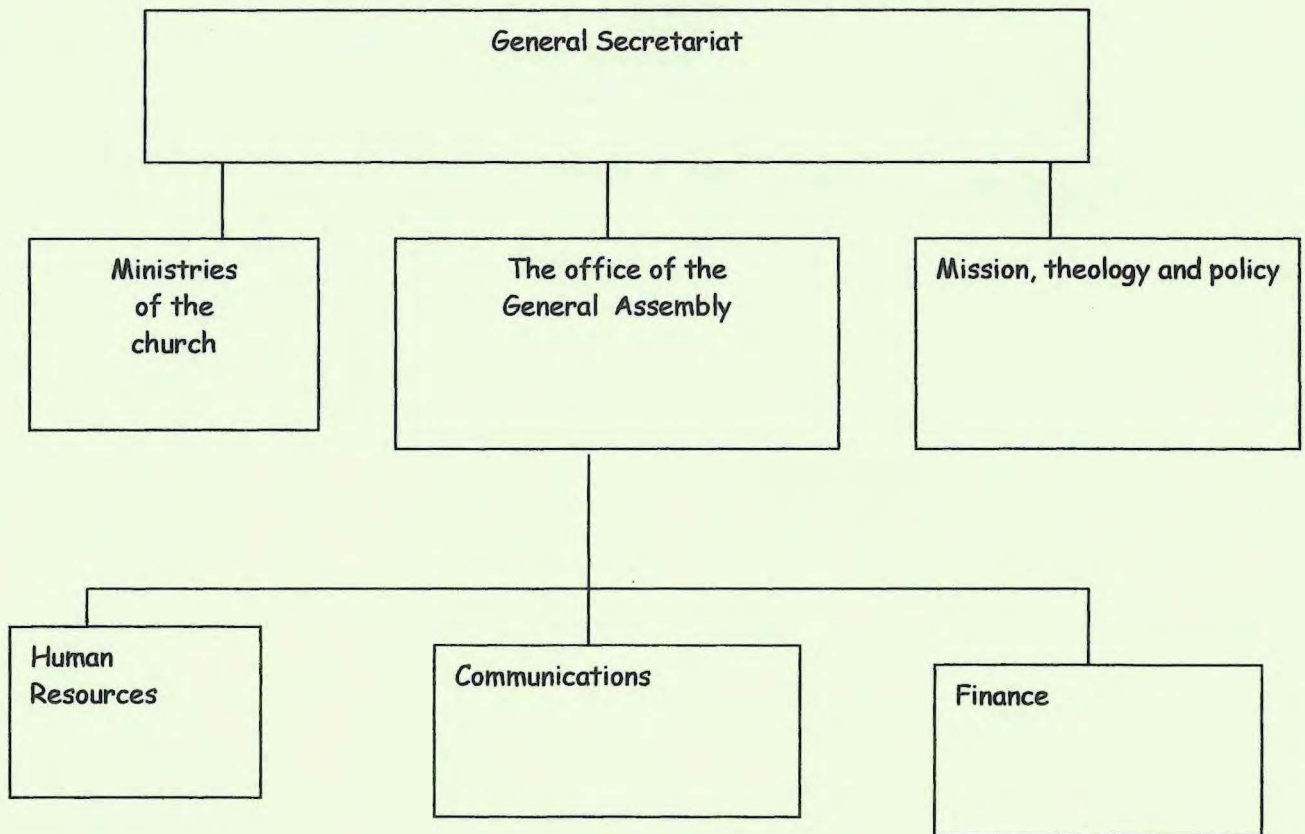
3.6 A special "start up" process of appointment will be required to prevent all Trustees retiring at the same time.

### Appendix 3: Proposed re-structuring and staffing

This proposal organises the work of Assembly into three 'areas' (albeit ones which will need permeable membranes between them).

The General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary would oversee all the work, as they do now, but with distinct areas of responsibility, for Mission and Theology and Ministries of the Church respectively. They would, in effect, be Co-ordinating Secretaries for those areas, and divide the work of the Office of General Assembly between them.

In the mission and theology area, one member of the team would be the team leader, as Secretary for Mission and interfaith relations, and would co-ordinate the operational work in church and society, racial justice, international relations, theology and ecumenical relations. We envisage that this area would eventually be the responsibility of four members of staff.



Res 40 12 Synods in favour - 1 against

Res 41 111 " " " 2 of 42 DC favour, 20 of, 12 to vote

If falls, how can have 1 Council?  
more time needed to move to consensus.

Res 43 10 synods favor 3 of (one wants Assembly every 3-5 yrs)

CTU timetable

2005 Structures

2006 Staffing

2007 Mission + Sp. Ability

- to meet our aim - to be a vibrant & sustainable faith community in next 10 yrs

Ecumenical

- no daily schemes on near horizon

a) - called to be here (2.8 - 2.12)

b) Mission at Centre

Reformation Agency

a) experiments in being Ch - increased SChs (2005)

b) starting from micro - pilot project

c) concentrate on local Ch - (M+M; + focus of Paper B)

d) Mission to centre of national programme.

Renewal to live God's diff as well as preach it

not a fin'l crisis, but a resource crisis

↓ Synods →  
in 5 B, m

1 unit = 3 bricks  
; 4 "  
5.5 "

strategic issue

Issue to be addressed

bricks + mortar  
Issue has to be addressed.

Corporate strategy for mins

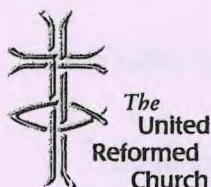
no corp strat for

what constitutes a local Ch?  
40 people in 3 buildings?  
all tog in one " ?

well get worse if not addressed.

'marks of viability' - Small Ch's + gp.  
- need to refresh ourselves as Reformed tradn.

how?  
encouraged  
how countercultural



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**



## **Budget 2007**

The principal source of income is the Ministry & Mission Fund. Synod Treasurers have indicated their best estimate of the figures for 2007 (Appendix 1). This shows very little change from the actual pledges for 2006 which have just been made. It will be noted that pledges for 2006 did, in fact, closely match the guess figures submitted this time last year. Whether this is indicative of the outcome for 2007 is, therefore, a leading question. Synods have been asked to review their guess figures to see if an improvement is possible. However Synods have said that obtaining the pledges for 2006 from local churches has been difficult generally.

The Ministry & Mission Fund Review has recommended that Advocacy should have a higher profile in the Church. Even if this is accepted at General Assembly 2006, it is unlikely that this will result in much improvement before 2008. Thus we ought to assume for budget purposes that the income side is unlikely to improve by the extent necessary to get a balanced budget.

The budget figures (Appendix 2) have been prepared following the Treasurers Consultation and the submissions from budget holders which shows a deficit of £849k. This is obviously unacceptable.

Subsequently the Mission Council Advisory Group and the Finance Committee have reviewed the budget. The considered views of the Finance Committee on areas where savings could be sought should help Mission Council in its deliberations.

A group representing Catch the Vision and the Finance Committee had previously considered the requirement to reduce the budget by £1 million and had undertaken a paper exercise to see how this could be achieved. Their results were similar to the conclusions reached by the Finance Committee at its meeting this month. Whilst it is perfectly possible, by taking draconian measures, to make reductions in expenditure it is felt that this should be achieved by consensus.

To that end, Committees and budget holders have asked to review their own figures and identify possible savings. It has been suggested that they might like to rank their expenditure in priority as follows:

1. Staff costs
2. Essential expenditure to ensure the programme remains
3. Travel and other costs
4. Committee expenditure.

Mission Council will be provided with a breakdown of the totals of travel, other costs and committee expenditure to illustrate the scope for reduction.

Although all programmes have the authority of General Assembly it cannot be assumed this is permanent. Therefore Mission Council will need to take a view on the priorities and indicate to General Assembly where they believe programme savings could be made.

On the expenditure side (Appendix 2) the following should be noted:

- 1 Training – the current review is doing a financial appraisal for its proposals but it is doubtful if any reductions will be achieved before 2008.
- 2 The World Church programme has exhausted the dedicated funds and now relies on the Ministry & Mission Fund.
- 3 Youth & Children's work planned expenditure has increased to the extent that this exceed the savings made by closure of Yardley Hastings.
- 4 General Assembly and Mission Council expenditure will change but savings will not be made before 2008.
- 5 Communication and REFORM – the thorough review of their work currently being undertaken may result in savings.

Eric Chilton  
March 2006

## APPENDIX 1

### MINISTRY AND MISSION TARGETS 2006/2007

Synod	2005	2005	2006	2006	2007
	Final Pledge	Actual	Guess	Pledge	Guess
	as at Mar 05		as at March 05	as at Jan 06	as at Feb 06
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Cumberland			-	-	
North Western	1,985	1,985	2,020	2,076	2,075
Mersey	1,250	1,250	1,275	1,279	1,280
Yorkshire	1,231	1,231	1,268	1,220	1,256
East Midlands	1,290	1,290	1,272	1,272	1,272
West Midlands	1,547	1,547	1,544	1,550	1,580
Eastern	1,701	1,701	1,724	1,720	1,720
South Western	1,346	1,346	1,373	1,373	1,400
Wessex	2,150	2,135	2,195	2,117	2,100
Thames North	2,131	2,131	2,129	2,197	2,250
Southern	2,921	2,921	2,974	2,933	2,955
Wales	712	711	726	659	650
Scotland	564	564	565	578	565
	<b>19,948</b>	<b>19,932</b>	<b>20,185</b>	<b>20,094</b>	<b>20,111</b>



## APPENDIX 2

### 2007 BUDGET

	Actual 2004 £'000	Draft Actual 2005 £'000	Budget 2005 £'000	Budget 2006 £'000	Draft Budget 2007 £'000
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
<b>MINISTRY</b>					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,391	15,419	15,754	15,589	15,679
Synod moderators - stipends and expenses	556	551	550	573	597
Ministries committee	220	229	251	273	271
	16,167	16,199	16,555	16,435	16,547
<b>TRAINING</b>					
College training for stipendiary ministry	1,088	1,119	1,190	1,160	1,150
Other training for stipendiary ministry	203	176	224	198	197
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	114	91	140	140	120
Lay training costs	75	85	89	95	85
Training committee	128	155	128	140	145
	1,608	1,626	1,771	1,733	1,697
<b>OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES</b>					
Grants	300	266	305	265	265
Ecumenical committee and international	295	263	272	387	390
Council for World Mission	50	50	50	50	50
Church and Society committee	99	61	87	95	98
Racial Justice programme	79	99	89	95	102
Life and Witness committee	92	90	107	107	115
Windermere Centre	101	99	57	82	85
Youth and Children's Work committee	176	215	233	270	265
Central cost of Youth and Children's Work trainers	169	227	248	272	280
Yardley Hastings	27	32	0	0	0
Pilots Development	74	81	83	95	105
Other committees	14	15	15	16	16
	1,476	1,498	1,546	1,734	1,771
<b>SUPPORT ACTIVITIES</b>					
General Assembly and Mission Council	261	284	303	294	308
Communication and Editorial	271	260	255	342	344
Finance office	268	352	384	385	383
Central secretariat	246	281	240	281	280
Professional fees	46	84	84	88	95
I.T. Services	62	38	60	60	63
URC House costs	203	256	249	267	269
General church costs	80	77	96	92	88
	1,437	1,632	1,671	1,809	1,830
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>20,688</b>	<b>20,955</b>	<b>21,542</b>	<b>21,711</b>	<b>21,845</b>

## 2007 BUDGET

	Actual 2004 £'000	Draft Actual 2005 £'000	Budget 2005 £'000	Budget 2006 £'000	Draft Budget 2007 £'000
<b>INCOME</b>					
<b>MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	19,691	19,932	20,375	20,185	20,111
<b>INVESTMENT INCOME</b>					
Dividends	259	183	230	255	220
Interest	67	85	0	0	50
	326	268	230	255	270
<b>GRANTS RECEIVABLE</b>					
Memorial Hall Trust	315	315	280	315	315
New College London Trust	286	318	290	290	290
	601	633	570	605	605
<b>LEGACIES</b>	631	162	0	0	0
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>					
Donations	50	0	0	0	0
Sundry	23	15	10	10	10
	73	15	10	0	10
<b>PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES and by transfer</b>	1,096 50	- -	- -	- -	- -
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>22,468</u>	<u>21,010</u>	<u>21,185</u>	<u>21,055</u>	<u>20,996</u>
<b>NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCE</b>	<u>1,780</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>(357)</u>	<u>(656)</u>	<u>(849)</u>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) as % of M&amp;M Income</b>		<u>0.28</u>	<u>(1.75)</u>	<u>(3.25)</u>	<u>(4.22)</u>

A: unavailably competitive - peak staff for zero-based budget  
 Sec 4

B: 1) Liaison Gp job rough (MHA/URC Liaison).

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0

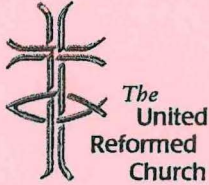
Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Revenue	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Net Income	0	0	0	0



# MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

# D

## Training Committee Review

### **The Assembly 2005 principles: Stage One.**

#### **1 Introduction**

1.1 There has been a major shift in the approach of all the historic churches in England, Scotland and Wales to education and training. Although the challenge of numerical decline is forcing the pace, at the heart of this shift is a conviction that life-long learning for the whole people of God is essential to the mission of the Church and that the training of ministers of word and sacraments, vital though that is, must take its place within this new integrated approach.

1.2 The Training Committee's aim is to enable all the variety of education and training within the United Reformed Church to take its proper place in this new ecumenical landscape. The committee believes that a move from the present fragmented patterns of training to an integrated pattern will best serve the present and future needs of all the people of God as they engage in mission. An integrated pattern will also assist a more coherent ecumenical engagement. The committee is clear that, as a minority player in the ecumenical scene, the United Reformed Church needs to carefully prioritise the use of its resources in order to be able to contribute to and benefit from the new situation.

#### **2 The 2005 principles**

2.1 The 2005 General Assembly agreed the education and training principles set out below. They were formulated by the Training Committee but presented as part of the Catch the Vision report. Assembly determined that:-

*In United Reformed Church educational provision there shall be:*

*i) integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission – promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the Equipping the Saints and Catch the Vision reports.*

*ii) ecumenical engagement at every stage*

*iii) the presentation of a distinctive Reformed ethos and history in that ecumenical engagement*

*iv) the delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.*

2.2 The pattern of training and education in the United Reformed Church for the coming decade which the committee seeks to set before this 2006 Assembly and the proposed ways of bringing this about are rooted in these principles.

#### **3 The background**

3.1 Since January 2003 the committee's main task has been to review the whole range of training in the United Reformed Church in order to bring proposals to General Assembly for ways forward in these changing times. There has been wide consultation and careful listening. In 2004 the committee sponsored two consultations with representatives from synods, theological colleges and courses, and ecumenical partners. When an earlier version of this report was brought to Mission Council in March 2005, the committee paid careful attention to that council's comments. The Secretary for Training has discussed the committee's emerging proposals with close partner churches such as the Church of England and the

Methodist Church and also more widely through the Churches Together in England Ecumenical Strategy Group for Ministerial Training. Since the autumn of 2005 the committee has been in communication about its proposals with the synods, colleges and courses which would be most affected by them.

3.2 The membership of the committee has changed during the three year period but it has throughout been well served by people with expertise in lay training and adult education, as well as personal knowledge of the synod training scene and the theological colleges and courses. It has also had the benefit of a representative of the Methodist Church who has kept the committee's discussions in touch with similar developments in that church.

#### **4 The present context**

4.1 The United Reformed Church, along with most of the historic churches in these islands is in a period of decline in membership. This has led to a significant reduction in financial contribution to central funds and therefore in the ability to pay ministers of word and sacraments. There has also been a decline in the number of suitable candidates for such a ministry. This situation has challenged all the historic churches to review the role of their ordained ministry and to re-discover and re-value the ministry of the whole people of God. The Ministries Committee's report, "Equipping the Saints", and the Training Committee's principles are part of the United Reformed Church's response to this situation. Both committees are urging the church to see the situation as a God-given opportunity to renew the life of the United Reformed Church. But both recognise that means some radical changes.

4.2 In response to the same issues, the Church of England is setting up Regional Training Partnerships in which the training for all the different kinds of ministry to which the people of God are called and the different bodies providing the training (training colleges, courses, diocesan training programmes, and the training resources of other churches) are brought into partnership with each other. The review which led to this development was called "Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church." The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church were invited to participate both in the review process and in the regional partnerships themselves. In some regions they are already fully involved in their development. These regional partnerships open up new ecumenical opportunities, and a wider range of training opportunities, but also challenge the two smaller churches as to how to contribute coherently from their particular ethos and tradition.

4.3 For both the Church of England and the Methodist Church these changes in approaches to training provision mean they are re-configuring their relationships with existing training institutions and part-time training courses.

4.4 In Wales and Scotland the United Reformed Church's ecumenical training partnerships are differently expressed. There are also significant differences of history, culture, language and, in the case of Scotland, legal system as well as the relatively new situation created by the existence of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. All these factors have to be taken into account in providing training which is both appropriate to the national context and yet allows ease of movement throughout the three nations in the exercise of any of the various ministries.

#### **5 The proposal**

5.1 The principles adopted by the 2005 Assembly commit the Training Committee to bringing proposals to subsequent Assemblies which will, step by step, put those

principles into practice. Therefore at this Assembly, as the first step in implementing the 2005 principles, the committee proposes that Northern College, Westminster College and the Scottish College should, in future, become Resource Centres for Learning in the United Reformed Church. These centres will be expected to offer their Reformed, theological, biblical, historical and educational expertise to the whole training scene through growing partnerships with programmes such as Training for Learning and Serving and – beyond the Training Committee's present remit – others such as the variety of training in the synods and the Windermere Centre.

5.2 The proposal involves more than a change of description for Northern and Westminster Colleges. The pace of change already taking place there will increase as initial training for ministry (Education for Ministry 1) becomes only part of their core business and as they contribute more significantly to the life-long learning of the whole people of God. They will develop further their resourcing of lay training and their expertise in distance and dispersed learning. They will be supporting groups and individual ordinands in all parts of England and perhaps Wales, providing and designing programmes, and negotiating and arranging some local provision through the appropriate ecumenical Regional Training Partnership.

5.3 All initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1) will be provided by or arranged through those three centres. Northern College, which already provides this pattern of education for all Church Related Community Workers, will continue to do so. The Scottish College already practises an integrated, individually tailored approach to the training of lay and ordained over a wide geographical area.

5.4 The main immediate consequence of this proposal is that the United Reformed Church would cease to use Mansfield College, Oxford, the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham and the seven (plus one in Wales) part-time courses currently recognised for the initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1). This does not close the door on the possibility of a new relationship with Mansfield College or the Queen's Foundation. For example, the Queen's Foundation has notable expertise in Mission Studies and in Black and Asian Theology which could be put at the disposal of the whole United Reformed Church. The Ecumenical Committee's intention is normally to use the Queen's Foundation for induction courses for the mission partners we receive and those we send overseas. The committee is not at this stage proposing to sever the longstanding relationship between the United Reformed Church and Mansfield College, Oxford. The nature of the relationship is being explored with Mansfield College. New relationships with the part-time courses will develop as they enter into their particular ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships. The new Resource Centres for Learning in England (Northern and Westminster Colleges) might, for example, require local components for the dispersed learning needs of some of the ordinands in their care. In Wales, St Michael's Llandaff – now incorporating the South Wales Ordination Course - will continue to be a resource for training and education (other than EM1). Currently this will be in their development of EM3 resources, chaplaincy specialisms and other provisions.

## **6 The reasons for the proposal**

6.1 The United Reformed Church currently recognises five colleges and 7 part-time courses (as well as one in Wales) for the initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1). All Church Related Community Workers are trained at Northern College by a combination of short courses and local placements. In October 2005 only 17 new students began ordination/commissioning training. One part-time course, Southern Theological Training Scheme (STETS), enrolled two of those students: the rest of the part-time courses enrolled one or none. Training Committee policy has been to maintain a minimum of 30 students over all years in both Northern and

Westminster Colleges. In October 2005 there were 26 and 18 respectively. A declining number of students are being spread across a fixed number of colleges and courses.

6.2 Ministers who are going to serve in United Reformed local churches, or represent the United Reformed Church in ecumenical churches or in the ecumenical life of our cities, towns and villages, need confidence in their own tradition and a peer group of United Reformed Church students to develop a fuller understanding of the church into which they are to be ordained. Where there are only a small number of United Reformed Church ordinands among a much larger number of Anglicans and Methodists, as is the case with the part-time courses and with the Queen's Foundation in Birmingham, the curriculum cannot give adequate emphasis to Reformed history, ecclesiology or liturgy. There are very few United Reformed Church tutors on the courses, no full-time United Reformed Church tutor at the Queen's Foundation, and one full-time and one part-time United Reformed Church tutor at Mansfield College. In both Northern and Westminster Colleges United Reformed Church ordinands train in an ecumenical setting with a wide range of denominational partners, but are in sufficient numbers and have the support of sufficient United Reformed Church staff (four at Northern and five at Westminster) to enable them to enter into the give and take of ecumenical learning with confidence. In Scotland, its distinctive education system means that ordinands from various traditions, but largely from the Church of Scotland, work for their academic qualification together in a Scottish university. This means that the small number of students training through the Scottish College have both ecumenical and additional Reformed exposure. In addition, mutually enriching United Reformed Church links are being developed between the Scottish and Northern Colleges.

6.3 The three colleges, in their different ways, are already a resource for the whole church. The Principal of the Scottish College is responsible for the whole range of training within the synod and currently serves the wider church through the Training Committee and its various sub-committees. Many of the present teaching staff in Northern and Westminster Colleges already, for example, lead study days and conferences both at the colleges and around the country. They offer their expertise to various Assembly and synod committees, represent the United Reformed Church in ecumenical and international dialogues, and lead Assembly Bible studies. They have, between them, a wealth of scholarship and experience in educational methods, including dispersed learning, on which the whole church could call in a more planned and integrated way than at present.

6.4 An important part of the Reformed tradition for centuries has been its emphasis on an educated ministry. If that is to continue, and if the United Reformed Church is to be able to grow and employ another generation of biblical scholars, theologians, liturgists and church historians it needs to keep one or two centres of learning where their expertise can be drawn on by the whole church. The committee proposes two centres in England rather than one so that the variety and breadth of the United Reformed Church, which is one of its strengths, can be the better maintained. This will also mean that, if increased capacity is needed for training the ministries of the United Reformed Church that capacity will be available.

## **7 Financial considerations**

7.1 The driving force behind the Training Committee's proposal is not financial, but educational and ecumenical. Nowhere is the fragmented, unco-ordinated nature of education and training in the United Reformed Church more obvious than in the financial sphere. The Training Committee has been working closely with the Finance Office to try, for the first time, to produce a clear picture of the real costs of the whole

range of training currently taking place. Some of it is funded centrally, some of it by the synods. It is not yet possible to compare like with like, but Appendix 2 is a significant first attempt at a comprehensive picture. An example of the difficulties is that the financial agreements with the present five colleges are all different and so comparison of costs is not easy. However, the committee's long term aim, as far as the English Resource Centres for Learning is concerned, is to remove all subsidies and replace them with financial support for the services provided. A broader, long-term concern is to ensure and make explicit an appropriate balance between the resources spent on ministers of word and sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and those spent on training for other ministries and on the life-long learning of the whole people of God.

## **8 Is this proposal true to the 2005 principles?**

*8.1 In United Reformed Church educational provision there shall be: integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission?*

This is a major thrust of both the move to Resource Centres for Learning and involvement in the Regional Training Partnerships in England. Scotland has embodied this principle for some time.

*8.2 ecumenical engagement at every stage*

The effect of the proposals is to develop and co-ordinate the United Reformed Church's existing ecumenical engagement, firstly through continuing to urge the synods to play as full a part in the ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships as possible, and, secondly, through concentrating resources in the new Resource Centres for Learning at Northern and Westminster Colleges where there is already substantial ecumenical engagement

*8.3 the presentation of a distinctive Reformed Ethos and History in that ecumenical engagement.*

The proposal to develop the two English Resource Centres for Learning where there is both the greatest concentration of United Reformed Church staff and students and a very significant, established and developing ecumenical partnership will enable just such a presentation.

*8.4 the delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.*

The clear but realistic commitment to the ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships in England is in keeping with this principle as is the proposal to include the Scottish College with its distinctive ecumenical links as one of the Resource Centres for Learning. Conversations with the National Synod of Wales in order to meet its particular training needs are ongoing.

## **9 For all that has been – thanks! To all that is to come – yes! (from 'Markings' by Dag Hammarskjöld)**

9.1 The Training Committee gives thanks to God for all the dedicated and formative teaching offered over many years to students, lay and ordained, by United Reformed Church tutors and by those from other churches. It also gives thanks for the nurturing of their faith and the pastoral care. It gives thanks for the ecumenical friendships formed among tutors and among students which are a foretaste of that time when 'all may be one'.

9.2 The Training Committee is not proposing a return to denominational colleges: rather it is proposing an educationally and ecumenically sound way for the United Reformed Church to take its place in today's fast-flowing ecumenical stream. It will not wait for us. The committee is committed to working to further implement the 2005 principles as this present essential first stage of implementation is acted on.



## APPENDIX ONE

### 'EXPLANATORY NOTES AND KEY IDEAS'

***Cohorts of students.*** This describes a number of students who share in a learning experience. This can be people preparing for a range of different ministries. Within that it is also suggested that students are best formed to minister within their own denomination when there is opportunity for them to gather as a group of United Reformed Church students. It is in speaking about this gathering that the word cohort is most frequently used in the Training Review. The Methodist Church's draft report printed in February 2006, 'Future use and Configuration of Training Institutions 2006' indicates that concern for denominational student cohort size is an issue for them too. In the section 3.4.3 they say that 'The nurturing of Methodist identity calls for all Methodist students to have the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of their training from a Methodist perspective, both with their peers and with tutors and supervisors. This does not have to take place in the traditional setting of the full-time formational community... 'yet'....there is something stubbornly formational and incarnational about the group in which actual human bodies encounter one another from time to time.'

***Dispersed learning.*** This is perhaps best explained by using an example. A person studying for the ministry but living some way from Manchester could have their course determined and supervised by the Northern College, which they would visit on a number of occasions each year. In addition they could go to particular courses/tutor groups nearer to their home and have a United Reformed Church tutor locally. Church Related Community Workers are already trained at Northern College in such a way, as indeed are some ministers. One advantage of this model of learning is that dispersed learning encourages the wider and the more local perspective to be held together. Dispersed learning is about using the person's home context as a learning resource rather than suggesting that the 'localness' of the training institution's base is in some way to be the dominant perspective.

***Distance Learning.*** Similar to dispersed learning, this means that you live some way from the base educational institution. There is usually some opportunity for a form of face-to-face meeting, either by tutorial (not always local) or by an IT based medium. However distance learning, sometimes called flexible or open learning, is a programme of study that consists of video, workbook or online materials that allow students to study at home. It does not imply no meeting with fellow students but that this is not the main mode of learning.

***Education for Ministry 1, 2, and 3.*** These terms have already been adopted by Assembly as a way of distinguishing, yet holding together, training before ordination/commissioning (EM1), post-ordination/commissioning training over the first three years (EM2), and continuing training and sabbaticals thereafter (EM3).

***Five colleges.*** *Mansfield College, Oxford*, is an independent college of the University which runs a ministerial training programme for United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation students in conjunction with Regents Park College

(Baptist). *Northern College, Manchester* is an independent college mainly for United Reformed Church students but also Congregational Federation students, which works in partnership with Baptists, Methodists and Unitarians. Some Moravians also train there. *Queens Foundation, Birmingham*, is an independent but organically ecumenical foundation which prepares people for ministry in the Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The *Scottish College, Glasgow* is an independent college which is the educational deliverer, broker and resource for ministers and lay people in Scotland as well as being available to Congregational Federation students. The United Reformed Church owns *Westminster College, Cambridge* (though it would not benefit financially from ceasing to use it), and the Assembly appoints its staff. It is part of the Cambridge Federation, which prepares people for ministry in the Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, and is also in association with the Orthodox and Roman Catholics.

**Integrated provision.** For historical reasons, at the moment the educational and training provision of the United Reformed Church is offered in a fragmented way. There are boundaries between what is offered to one group of people and what is offered to another. This is more an accident of history than the expression of educational philosophy. The Training Committee has in recent years received the consent of the Assembly to move towards an integrated provision for all the people of God (Resolution 51; Assembly 2005). Integrated learning is where a diverse range of learners:

- follow a common curriculum, or at least a common core of learning
- belong to a cohort that is mixed in terms of role/function/ status
- learn together rather than separately so that the different perspectives of their different proposed forms of discipleship and service are an enrichment.

In simple terms this means that when we speak of people learning together they need to learn together (e.g. elders and ministers). This ties in with the work done by the Ministries Committee on Equipping the Saints. Their policy for example to end the NSM/SM distinction encourages the integration of NSM and SM education. Previously the United Reformed Church has trained them separately, NSM's part time (normally on courses) and SM's full time (normally through a college).

**Part time courses.** There are eight of these (seven in England, one in Wales) which are recognised for EM1, mainly for non-stipendiary candidates who require local training. The programmes use residential weekends together with an annual week long school and tutor groups. They are Anglican founded and sponsored courses but are used by the Methodist church as well as ourselves. Their organisation has changed over the years and some are now ecumenical in governance.

**Reformed Ethos and History.** Two short courses with this subtitle have been established for a number of years. One of them meets a felt need for those starting to train for ministry. Students all train in an ecumenical environment. For many they are in a (small) minority of United Reformed Church students. In preparation for that training the course gives an understanding of the particular ethos and history of the United Reformed Church. The other course with the same essential content is for people coming into the United Reformed Church's service from other traditions (ministers in ecumenical appointments, synod and church house staff).

**Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs).** In March 2000 the Church of England embarked on a review of the structure and funding of its ordination training under the leadership of Bishop John Hind. The resulting report, 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church', proposed a radical restructuring. It was finally adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2003. Regional Training Partnership's are being established in England as a result of this process. The process aims to provide training for the whole people of God. The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church were invited to be partners in the review and subsequently to participate in the Regional Training Partnership's as they felt able. In 2005 the Assembly agreed that the Training Committee should continue its involvement with 'Hind' and its subsequent implementation. It also asked the Committee to be sure to safeguard the aims and parameters of its own programmes and the financial commitments and resources needed to sustain them. A key element in the Church of England proposals is the mending of fractures between training for different ministries, between different stages of training and between different training providers. A key tool in this mending process is the establishment of these Regional Training Partnerships between dioceses, colleges, courses, other providers and their ecumenical equivalents in each English region. This is intended to facilitate a church-based education programme directly related to the mission policies and strategies of the church. The Training Committee notes that the principles underpinning the Hind process (integrated training for the whole people of God) coincide creatively with the principles for a learning church that Assembly agreed in 2005. It is also aware that the Hind process is far from complete, and within it, in some areas, the Church of England itself is struggling with its implications.

**Synod training.** Each synod has a Training Committee or equivalent and most employ one or more people in the role of Training Officer (though there is a variety of titles). At the present time the Synods make the final decisions about where ministers and Church Related Community Workers will train, in consultation with the Training Committee. Training Officers are involved in Education for Ministry 2, 3 and lay training in their regions and some are involved in part time courses there.

**Training for Learning and Serving.** This well-established course for all in the United Reformed Church wanting to learn more about their faith is also the main route for training lay preachers. It is administered by a management group and staff appointed by and responsible to the Training Committee.

## APPENDIX TWO

### BECOMING A LEARNING CHURCH-FINANCING THE OPERATION

The Training Committee, encouraged by the Catch the Vision group, is advocating the best culture and arrangements for education that the United Reformed Church needs. Although aware of the need to be careful of the church's resources it is not aiming to save money in the first instance but to operate good stewardship once it has discerned what will best equip the church for today's mission.

This appendix outlines current expenditure and the financial implications of what is contained in the body of the report. These figures do not appear to have been brought together like this before and whilst we have confidence in them and know that they are well researched, exploration of the scene is still continuing.

Our conclusion is that we are a church whose financial and educational systems are not transparent in that they do not reflect the value of different forms of training. For example you can read the figures as saying that the training budget spends £87,000 on lay training and £1,386,000 (2005 figures) on training ministers (including Church Related Community Workers). This is clearly a massive disproportion of spending - over 15:1 in preference to ministers overall. This is without referring to the relative proportion of the numbers of ministers and lay people in the church (including elders) which makes the differential even greater. Similarly the apparent balance of resources towards pre ordination (Education for Ministry 1) rather than post ordination training (Education for Ministry 2/3) looks massive: £1,210,000 against £176,000 (2005 figures)

However a range of things illustrate that this is neither the whole picture nor a very clear picture:

- Ministers are trained partly in order themselves to be educators of others
- Other appointments in which the church invests (e.g. Synod Training Officers) give time and skills to lay training and Education for Ministry 2/3 – and the Training Committee supports these appointments by servicing their networking and in other ways
- Subvention money given to theological colleges subsidises lay training and Education for Ministry 2/3 training as well as providing for ordination training. The staffs of theological colleges contribute as tutors on Training for Learning and Serving, in doing local lay training, in contributing to Synod Schools and in all sorts of other ways. There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is greatly appreciated in the life of the church.
- The proportion of money spent on Ministerial training reduces dramatically when set against the estimated £2.5 million that the whole church spends on training (including synod training costs, Windermere Centre, Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers etc). (See 1 below)
- It is also the case that Westminster's and Northern's resources and specialisms (the Reformed Studies centre at Westminster, its increasing role as the repository of the church's archives and records, Northern College's specialism in community work, other faiths and dispersed learning) remain resources for the church above and beyond their importance for EM1 pre ordination training.

## TRAINING FINANCE

### 1) How much has the URC been spending on training?

#### Training Committee expenditure

	2004	2005
<i>Training for stipendiary ministry</i>		
Student Maintenance	£402,548	£408,588
Fees & subsidies	£623,109	£622,931
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£1,025,657	£1,031,519
<i>CRCW Training</i>		
Student Maintenance	£31,944	£51,740
Fees	£30,306	£35,706
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£62,250	£87,446
 Total College Training Costs	 £1,087,907	 £1,118,965
 <i>NSM student training costs</i>	 £118,866	 £90,915
<i>EM3 costs</i>	£198,083	£176,003
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Other Training Costs	£316,949	£266,918
 Training for Learning & Serving	 £75,415	 £87,626
 Training Office & Committee	 £127,470	 £152,369
 Grand Total	 <hr/>	 <hr/>
	£1,607,741	£1,625,878

**Synods** also spend on training (between £5,000 and £49,000 each). Synod Training and Education spending estimates for 2006 are: -

Ministerial	£228,577
Lay	£75,517
Total	£304,094

*(These figures have been supplied from original research on church costs undertaken in 2003 by the Church's Treasurer as part of the Catch the Vision process and more recently updated)*

#### Other

As indicated above, significant elements of training expenditure (in synods, YCWTDOS, the Windermere Centre) are not under the auspices of the Training Committee. However there is further spending on training that cannot currently be quantified. This includes the service of many ministers (and many are paid from M&M) as Training for Learning and Serving tutors.

**The total United Reformed Church expenditure on training is probably therefore in the order of £2.5 million.**

### 2) How much does Education for Ministry 1 (pre ordination/commissioning) Training cost?

This depends on the number of students, but the amount spent is not proportional to the number of students. There are 3 elements to the cost: (a) student maintenance for full-time students (depends on numbers and family circumstances), (b) fees (depends on numbers) & (c) subsidies paid to colleges.

### Subsidies

Each college has a certain level of fixed costs (plant and staff) that has to be covered if it is to continue offering the courses the United Reformed Church needs. For colleges which are wholly or largely dependent on United Reformed Church students it has been accepted that the United Reformed Church has to cover these costs. As student numbers at a college fall, the average cost per student rises (though the marginal cost of an additional student is low). Subsidies were introduced in addition to per capita fees in the aftermath of the decision of the 1999 Assembly of the United Reformed Church in the UK to continue with four English colleges. This was in order to give the colleges an assurance of the United Reformed Church's commitment to them. Subsidies are the result of reduced student numbers spread over an unchanged number of colleges and courses.

### Course length

The part-time courses undertaken by students, who in the main are preparing for part-time ministry, are typically no longer than the full-time courses in terms of the number of years for which fees have to be paid. This being so, no distinction need be made between part-time and full-time students when analysing the fees paid.

### Maintenance support

Part-time students are largely self-supporting and receive modest expenses. Substantial maintenance grants are paid to full-time students.

### Fees

The United Reformed Church pays the fees of both part-time and full-time students. Though the fees over the first three years of training are broadly similar, the fees for the fourth and final placement year of a part-time student can be significantly lower.

The fees the United Reformed Church has paid can be analysed for academic years. The table below shows the number of students at each training institution together with the fees and subsidies paid:-

	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No.	Fee	No.	Fee	No.	Fee
<i>Colleges</i>						
<b>NORTHERN</b>						
Number & Fees	35	£185,700	25	£148,950	29	£168,795
Block grant		£71,811		£103,857		£105,876
		£257,511		£252,807		£274,671
<i>Fees per student</i>		£7,357		£10,112		£9,471
<b>WESTMINSTER</b>						
Number & Fees	22	£144,909	18	£121,767	14	£97,591
Block grant		£108,263		£171,619		£202,409
		£253,172		£293,386		£300,000

<i>Fees per student</i>		£11,508		£16,299		£21,429
<b>MANSFIELD</b>						
Number & Fees	8	£44,790	6	£35,451	6	£31,523
Additional grant		£17,613		£18,225		£18,814
		£62,403		£53,676		£50,337
<i>Fees per student</i>		£7,800		£8,946		£8,390
<b>QUEENS</b>						
Number & Fees	5	£32,649	6	£43,056	6	£43,920
<i>Fees per student</i>		£6,530		£7,176		£7,320
<b>SCOTTISH</b>						
Number & Fees	5	£13,800	5	£18,700	4	£13,730
<i>Fees per student</i>		£2,760		£3,740		£3,433
COLLEGE totals	75	£619,535	60	£661,625	59	£682,658
<i>Fees per student</i>		£8,260		£11,027		£11,570

	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No.	Fee	No.	Fee	No.	Fee
<i>Regional Courses</i>						
<b>NEOC</b>	2	£7,272	2	£7,272		
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,636		£3,636		
<b>STETS</b>	9	£29,790	7	£21,480	6	£20,700
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,310		£3,069		£3,450
<b>SWMTC</b>	3	£16,190	3	£16,839	1	£5,427
<i>Fees per student</i>		£5,397		£5,613		£5,427
<b>EMMTC</b>	3	£12,762	1	£4,645	0	
<i>Fees per student</i>		£4,254		£4,645		
<b>SEITE</b>	2	£6,660	3	£12,753	3	£12,771
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,330		£4,251		£4,257
<b>St Michael's</b>	1	£3,465	0		0	
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,465				
<b>EAMTC/ERMC</b>	0		2	£8,590	2	£8,910
<i>Fees per student</i>				£4,295		£4,455
COURSES totals	20	£76,139	18	£71,579	12	£47,808
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,807		£3,977		£3,984
GRAND TOTALS all students	95	£695,674	78	£733,204	71	£730,466
		£7,323		£9,400		£10,288

**Observations:**

- a) The cost of fees per student increases as student numbers fall, because of the commitment to cover the fixed costs of some colleges with subsidies. Student numbers in recent years have been:

	Feb-99	Feb-00	Feb-01	Feb-02	Feb-03	Feb-04	Feb-05
SM	72	74	76	68	66	63	54
NSM	36	42	41	38	32	31	19
CRCWs	7	6	5	6	6	5	5
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	115	122	122	112	104	99	78

Please note that these figures are taken from the Student statistics in the Assembly Year Book. They do not entirely agree with the figures above of student fees paid which were supplied by the finance office. There is a range of reasons for this. Finance figures do not include students on 800 hour placements managed by synods and are for a whole academic year. Assembly statistics are a February snapshot. Taken together, they illustrate costs of fees paid and trends in student numbers.

- b) College fees (for mostly full-time students) are markedly higher than course fees (for mostly part-time students). It is likely that there are hidden subsidies to the courses in the form of tutor time given.
- c) Fees per student at Westminster and Northern are high in this analysis. This is not only the result of the commitment to cover fixed costs when student numbers are down. It is clear that our payments to these colleges (and the Scottish College) buy us much more than just Education for Ministry 1 training. College staff contribute extensively to Education for Ministry 2, (post ordination training) Education for Ministry 3 (formerly Continuing Ministerial Education) and Lay training as well, but the way in which the numbers have been presented in the Training Committee accounts make it appear that the United Reformed Church pays a high price for Education for Ministry 1 and gets other training for nothing.

**3) A further analysis of fees paid to Westminster College**

Westminster College has estimated an allocation of its income by area of training activity for 2006: -

EM1	£230,000	
EM2	£46,000	
EM3	£15,000	
Lay	<u>£15,000</u>	
	£306,000	(2005: £298,000)

Assuming a fixed cost of £230,000 for EM1 training, cost per student depends on numbers, and may be reviewed on the basis of alternative assumptions: -



Number of Students	Cost per student	Explanation
14	£16,429	No change in student numbers
29	£7,931	Number currently at Northern
33	£6,970	Half of 2005/6 English students
45	£5,111	Half of 2003/4 English students

If 32 students were sent to Westminster for EM1 the fee per student (with no subsidy paid) would drop below the present fee charged by Queens.

#### 4) What are the consequences of implementing the proposals?’

For a range of reasons other than finance and spelt out in the main report, the Training Committee suggests concentrating Education for Ministry 1 students through three colleges designated as Resource Centres for Learning. An immediate effect of this would be to reduce the subvention to Northern and Westminster. Effectively on the 2004/5 figures over £168,000 in student fees and Mansfield subvention would be available to offset Northern and Westminster costs. The extra costs to cope with additional students at those institutions would be minimal. There is likely to be some expenditure needed to purchase local components for the dispersed learning needs of some of the ordinands. However the major part of that figure above would be available to lower the Training budget or reinvest in the provisions being encouraged for a learning church.

**The alternative** would be only using the part time courses for part time training and would on the face of it save a good deal in terms of fees and would do away with any subsidies entirely. The Training Committee’s argument is that the Church needs to distinguish between what are costs to the church and what the Church values. Its ability to be ecumenically engaged and yet distinctive in its understanding of church and ministry is of high value and would be diminished by this route. Such a route would also have other costs or consequences. These include;

- Westminster (the only institution the United Reformed Church ‘owns’) cannot have its financial value released for the church due to its trust deeds.
- Westminster, Northern and the Scottish Colleges generate income or contribute Trust income to the work of the church that would be lost if the colleges were not used.
- If the colleges were not available then the United Reformed Church would still need to provide staff in the 11 English synods, Wales and Scotland to be a significant resource for ordination students who would be training in the regions. There would also need to be staffing resources for the training of Church Related Community Worker students. This would be in addition to current synod staff and would need to be financially supported. Even one member of staff to cover two synods would be six staff members and a possible cost of £180,000 for salaries and on costs alone without calculating office and other necessary resources.

- There will also be a need to hold somewhere else some library resources and the reformed study centre resources currently based at Westminster. Whilst not a major factor for the report it is significant as a financial consideration. Additionally the use of Westminster especially as a place of repository for significant denominational archives will mean that that problem will have to be tackled by other routes
- The church's wider programmes of education such as Training for Learning and Serving, Lay preachers in service training, Education for Ministry 3 will still require contribution from those qualified and able to tutor. This will mean employing United Reformed Church staff in other places for these purposes.

#### **5) Implications for Training Committee's recommendations**

Our General Assembly policy is to develop and value learning for the whole church, to encourage collaborative and flexible forms of ministry, to value the education and contribution of all and undermine the fractures that exist between lay and ministerial training and pre and post ordination training. The Training Committee believes that this needs to be undergirded and reinforced by the way training is organised and paid for.

In working through the implications of the 2005 principles, the committee is committed to seeking further developments that will better express the church's need for good stewardship and be a better expression of the importance of training for the whole church. It will thus work to reduce the sense in which Lay and Education for Ministry 2/3 provisions are only offered as a spin off from what seems to be the main work of training Ministers for ordination. Noting that the present proposal will reduce subventions paid to Northern and Westminster Colleges by up to £168,000 the committee will still explore as a matter of urgency reducing and removing such subsidies as remain. As Resource Centres for Learning it will encourage them to work in partnerships with other providers to arrange and charge the Church for the range of education which the church needs.

### **APPENDIX THREE**

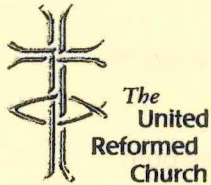
#### **STUDENT STATISTICS**

Please note that members of assembly will be able to refer to the pages of student statistics included annually in the book of reports as an Appendix. Revised figures are currently being worked on for this year.

Members of Mission Council can refresh their memories about student numbers by referring to Appendix 7 page 116 of the 2005 Book of Reports. They can also refer to an abbreviation of those statistics towards the end of section two of the attached Appendix 2.

**Training Committee Draft Resolutions for General Assembly 2006:**

- 1. The General Assembly urges the Training Committee to continue promoting the development of partnership in pursuit of Assembly's commitment to integrated and dispersed Christian education, nurture and training for the whole people of God. The General Assembly welcomes the development of ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships and commends these to Synods for the training and nurture of the whole people of God other than for ordination/commissioning training (Education for Ministry 1).**
- 2. General Assembly welcomes the commitment of the Northern, Scottish and Westminster Colleges to act for us as Resource Centres for Learning and to undertake dispersed, integrated training and Christian education for the whole people of God. It agrees to keep its relationship with them under ongoing review and report on them to the Assembly of 2012**
- 3. A**  
***General Assembly agrees that Northern, Westminster and the Scottish Colleges acting as Resource Centres for Learning, are to have sole responsibility for ensuring the delivery of training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers (Education for Ministry 1). This will apply to all candidates sent for training in the 2006/7 candidating process and thereafter.***
- B**  
**General Assembly instructs the Training Committee to work with those Synods which have students currently training in institutions affected by resolution 3A (including those sent by the 2005/2006 candidating process) in order to secure their continuing care and the satisfactory completion of their ordination/commissioning (Education for Ministry 1) training.**
- 4. General Assembly instructs the Training Committee and the Governors of Westminster College to proceed with the appointment of a Principal for the College, but only when the Training Committee is satisfied that the job description and person specification comply with those developments referred to in Resolutions 1 and 2 that are intended to take place in the next four to eight years.**



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**E1**

**Ministries Committee  
A Scheme for Ministerial Review**

**Introduction**

- 1 In 1997 General Assembly approved a scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal which has since operated throughout the Church with varying degrees of success. In October 2003 Mission Council made a request that "the Ministries Committee in consultation with the Training Committee create a development policy for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers which incorporates continuing ministerial education and appraisal." The following scheme is offered to Mission Council in response to that request, bearing in mind that there have already been a number of changes to continuing ministerial education since 2003.

**The aims of the scheme**

- 2 The aims set out in 1997 were as follows:
  - a) to affirm Ministers in their work and encourage them to follow God's calling with a renewed sense of vision.
  - b) to aid the continuing personal and professional development of Ministers in ways which are of benefit to them and the church they serve as they
    - take stock of their ministry thus far and identify areas on which to build and areas of need which should be addressed
    - become realistic about strengths and weaknesses
    - set goals for work and personal development
    - identify training and personal development needs and ways of addressing them
    - become aware of sources of support.
- 3 These aims we believe still to be the necessary and relevant aims of any system of ministerial appraisal for both Ministers and Church Related Community Workers.

**A review of the existing scheme**

- 4 It is true to say that feedback from Ministers and Appraisal Partners has become increasingly positive over the life of the scheme to date, to the extent that it is widely seen as an excellent and much-valued tool for helping both reflection and forward thinking on ministry.
- 5 On the other hand, some have regarded it as unhelpful or of little value, and others have criticised the style and length of the Taking Stock booklet. Many believe that there is a lack of connection to the actual ministerial tasks of a pastorate or post, and that the scheme lacks rigour because it is not

obligatory and because the Minister is given the option of not involving the Elders and congregations in the process.

- 6 Before making proposals for a new scheme, which aims to address both positive and negative points, it may be helpful to set down the context in which those proposals are made. It is worth noting those elements of change in relation to ministry, and the culture in which ministry is exercised, which have taken place since 1997.

## Context

- 7 First, there has been a change in the attitude of many Ministers to the concept of appraisal/review. In 1997 there were many who still believed that appraisal did not fit comfortably with the exercise of a vocation. An optional scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal was the only style that had any likelihood of being approved by Assembly.
- 8 There is increasing evidence of Ministers suffering long-term illness due to work-related stress. This stress has several causes but a mismatch of church and Minister's expectations of the Minister's task is often a key factor. There is also the debilitating effect of working in an atmosphere of decline against which an individual's best efforts seem to count for little. The 'wilderness years' are not comfortable. Now more than ever, support systems for Ministers are necessary. A scheme that requires clear, specific, and manageable objectives and responsibilities, within which ministerial service is exercised, coupled with a regular review and opportunity for development, could be one such system.
- 9 The Catch the Vision process envisages a Church that has purpose and commitment, with clear aims and objectives. This suggests an environment which should encourage Ministers/Church Related Community Workers to have a clear sense of purpose in their particular pastorate /post.
- 10 In addition, the Ministries Committee work is set against the background of *Equipping the Saints*. That report, accepted by Assembly, is based on the assumption that the Church's ministry is the responsibility of the whole Church not just the task of a few hundred ordained people. The ministry and mission of each local church is a collaborative partnership with Minister, Elders and congregation all taking responsibility or having key objectives in relation to that ministry and mission. Furthermore, Ministers and Church Related Community Workers in the United Reformed Church have responsibilities beyond the local situation and any appraisal of their ministry needs to provide space for reflection upon the wider role and the nature of the calling itself. It was therefore proposed that a review of ministry must contain the elements of joint and self appraisal as both Minister/ CRCW and pastorate or post reflect on the strengths and weaknesses, achievements and setbacks of the period under review.
- 11 In the United Reformed Church, those who are called by God to the ministries of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work have that sense of call tested and acknowledged by the Church. The Church also gives the authority for the exercise of that ministry. However the ministry can only be properly carried out when Ministers/CRCWs recognise their mutual accountability within the community of Christ. Ministry is a shared experience

through which the ministers serve others, and in which they build up others as they themselves are built up in the Body of Christ. There has been an increasing acceptance of collaborative ministry and the mutual accountability that accompanies such a work style though it is by no means a new concept. The basic theological concept behind this scheme is that all in ministry are accountable to God for the discharge of that ministry. A framework in which Ministers/CRCWs regularly stand back and reflect can be seen as a recognition of that basic accountability.

- 12 There are other New Testament discipleship themes behind this scheme. These include the full use of gifts in God's service; the concept of stewardship; and the need for each Minister/CRCW to play his/her proper part in the life of the Church, the body of Christ, so that it grows and develops.
- 13 Running parallel to the internal Church debates has been the consultation since 2002 that the United Reformed Church, along with other Churches, has had with the Department of Trade and Industry. In January 2005 the DTI produced a draft Statement of Good Practice in relation to the working conditions of both office holders and employees. One area of this is the provision of a review and development policy. That being so our own review of the ministerial accompanied self-appraisal scheme seems apposite.

#### **The Scheme**

- 14 With the above context and assessment of the present scheme in mind, we offer the following draft scheme for ministerial review and development.
- 15 The scheme would be an obligatory part of ministerial service and would supersede the present scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal.
- 16 It would continue to be known as 'Taking Stock' since this title aptly sums up the review exercise.
- 17 It would provide the opportunity for each local church/post to identify key objectives for ministry and mission and conduct a regular review of those objectives.
- 18 It would require each Minister and Church Related Community Worker to have a role description setting out their key responsibilities and objectives as well as Terms of Settlement for each pastorate/post. This role description is to be worked out within the context of the mission and key objectives of the pastorate/post and the responsibilities and objectives of colleagues.
- 19 It would provide an opportunity for confidential, accompanied self-appraisal for each Minister and Church Related Community Worker to:
  - i) review their role description, key responsibilities and objectives within the context of the particular pastorate/post;
  - ii) reflect on the ways in which the work is an expression of their ministerial calling and the ways in which the different parts of the work complement or conflict with one another;
  - iii) reflect on his/her personal life and work/life balance, thereby affirming a holistic view of ministerial vocation.

- 20 It would include, as part of the process, conversations between Ministers/CRCWs, Elders and other key colleagues in order to:
- i) assess the objectives and key responsibilities of all concerned, the minister's role description and Terms of Settlement;
  - ii) identify future objectives and key responsibilities for pastorate/post and ministers;
  - iii) amend the minister's role description if necessary;
  - iv) make any necessary changes to the Terms of Settlement.
- 21 *Taking Stock* would lead to conversations with the Synod Training Officer about continuing ministerial education and development and any development needs identified within the pastorate/post.
- 22 It would operate within specified guidelines on confidentiality.

### **Role description, objectives and key responsibilities**

- 23 A scheme that is designed to allow Ministers/CRCWs to review their objectives can only work if those objectives are clearly set out. Therefore all Ministers/CRCWs, in consultation with the pastorates/posts, should draw up a list of key responsibilities and objectives. Where a pastorate is made up of more than one church or combined with another role, it would be for each pastorate/post to decide whether to draw up an overarching set of objectives or separate objectives for each component.
- 24 The pattern of ordained and commissioned ministries within the United Reformed Church has changed radically in recent years. No longer is the one-Minister-one-congregation a norm. A minister may be the only ordained or commissioned minister in a group or one of several, whether that minister is serving in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity. A Special Category post may be part scoped and linked with a part time pastorate – which may be a single congregation or a group. A part-time post may be supplemented with a secular job. It is intended that the ministerial review should be a support for all the patterns of ministry that exist. It is important, where appropriate, that the review takes into account the entirety of the ministerial task and its several parts.
- 25 Following from the objectives of the pastorate/post will be a written role description incorporating key responsibilities and objectives for Ministers/ Church Related Community Workers. Regardless of the number of constituent parts in any one appointment, each Minister/CRCW will have only one role description which integrates all aspects of their specific ministry. The role description should:
- a) Relate to the descriptions of the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work in the Basis of Union (paragraphs 21 and 22) as well as being post specific.
  - b) Recognise that the ministry and mission of a pastorate is collaborative and therefore it should contain a description of the individual responsibilities of the Ministers/ Church Related Community Workers as but a part of the responsibilities of the whole church.

- 26 For those moving into a new pastorate/post, these lists could be agreed prior to the Induction in the same manner and at the same time as Terms of Settlement.
- 27 Ministers in posts not involving pastoral responsibility for a church and congregation should use or agree a job description drawn up with the body which appointed them.
- 28 The lists of key responsibilities and objectives for both Ministers/CRCWs and pastorates/posts would then become the basis on which to build the exercise of review.

#### The procedure for 'Taking Stock'

- 29 The scheme would operate biennially as the present scheme does. The Synod would appoint an Appraisal Partner to work with the minister and a pastorate/post partner to work with representatives of the pastorate or post.
- 30 Each review would begin with a consideration of lists of key responsibilities and objectives and the extent to which, through the collaborative efforts of Minister/ Church Related Community Worker and pastorate /post, they have been accomplished. This exercise would include conversations with Elders and others with key responsibilities within the pastorate/post, such as the Local Management Committee in the case of a CRCW. This meeting should include the pastorate/post partner.
- 31 Following that meeting, the Minister/CRCW would carry out a process of accompanied self-appraisal using an amended version of the *Taking Stock* booklet. The Appraisal Partners would need to see lists of key responsibilities and objectives, as well as the Minister's/CRCW's personal reflection.
- 32 The pastorate/post meanwhile would have a further meeting, without the Minister/CRCW but with the pastorate/post partner, to reflect on the issues raised in the first meeting.
- 33 The review would end with a final meeting between Minister/Church Related Community Worker and Elders and/or colleagues to set the key objectives and responsibilities for the pastorate/post for the next two years; to agree any changes to the Minister's/ CRCW's key objectives and responsibilities; and to agree any changes to the Terms of Settlement in the light of that.
- 34 After the completion of the review the Minister/Church Related Community Worker would contact the Synod Training Officer to talk about perceived training needs in the following two years. The Elders may also wish to contact the Training Officer about the training needs identified for others in the pastorate/post.
- 35 Where a pastorate/post involves more than one local church, reviews in each place should be carried out within a time scale which allows for a coherent list of key objectives and responsibilities to be agreed by the Minister/Church Related Community Worker.
- 36 Where a pastorate/post involves more than one local church, ideally the same pastorate/post partner would accompany each individual church.



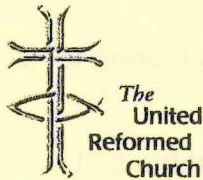
- 37 In the intervening year Ministers/CRCW and Elders/colleagues should devote a meeting to an interim consideration of the key objectives and responsibilities.

#### **Administration of the scheme**

- 38 Although the scheme would be an obligatory part of ministerial service, there would still be a need for administration by the Synod. Appraisal Partners and pastorate/post partners would be nominated by the Synod and chosen with care: they would need to have shown an aptitude for careful listening and thoughtful interpretation of what they hear. Care would also have to be taken over the quality of the training and support they receive.
- 39 Ministers and pastorates/posts would, as now, be offered the list of partners and given a choice as to whom accompanies the review process.
- 40 Each Synod would appoint an Administrator for the scheme who would:
- keep lists of Appraisal Partners and pastorate/post partners;
  - ensure that training and support for the partners is in place;
  - keep a note of the dates of the reviews;
  - contact the participants in order to activate the *Taking Stock* exercise;
  - keep the Synod Training Officer informed of the timing of the reviews;
  - be responsible to the appropriate Synod Committee.

#### **Timetable for Introduction**

- 41 If such a scheme were agreed quickly, it might operate from July 2007, at which point participation in *Taking Stock* would become an obligatory part of ministerial service.
- 42 However, not all Synods, Ministers and pastorates/posts might be able to be ready to implement the scheme fully by July 2007 and so there could be an implementation period of, say, 2007 to 2010.
- 43 A minimum of twelve months should be allocated for the identification and training of Synod Administrators, and appraisal and post partners.
- 44 During the same period local pastorates/posts would draw up lists of objectives and key responsibilities and agree role descriptions and key responsibilities within the overall objectives of the pastorate/post with individual Ministers/CRCWs.
- 45 There are local URC congregations, LEPs and posts already working with objectives and used to the regular review of them. There are also Ministers/Church Related Community Workers already committed to regular review. These pastorates and posts could be encouraged to be the first to participate in the new *Taking Stock* exercise. Synods would also want to ensure that *Taking Stock* is dovetailed with existing good systems of review and adapted accordingly, so that the same person is not subject to a multiplicity of overlapping reviews from different directions.



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**E2**

### **Ministries Committee**

#### **The Government, the United Reformed Church and Clergy Working Conditions**

The United Reformed Church, mainly represented by the Ministries and Finance staff, has been enjoying lengthy discussions with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the Government's concerns about clergy working conditions. If you want the full story you will have to take Christine Craven out for a very long lunch, but the abbreviated version is something like this....

- The Government believes it is important that the rights and protections successive pieces of legislation have built up for employees should apply as comprehensively as possible to everyone in paid work.
- Clergy, including URC Ministers, are in law office-holders and not employees and are therefore not necessarily subject to the legal protections guaranteed to employees.
- The Government wants the clergy to enjoy equivalent protection to employees but realises that extending legislation in a way that would be workable in the many different structures used by Christian denominations and other faith groups would be very complex.
- The churches suspect any extension of legislation, however well-intentioned, would be immensely difficult to operate eg who exactly is the "employer" of a Minister?
- The DTI has therefore produced a draft Statement of Good Practice and effectively challenged the faith communities to demonstrate that by their own means they achieve these standards. This Statement is attached; the URC will in due course be invited to become a signatory. .
- Each denomination has to respond to the DTI with an account of how far it currently achieves these standards and an explanation of what work is in progress to improve.
- Later the DTI plans to send questionnaires to samples of Ministers to find out whether what the denominations say is their practice is known to the Ministers affected and whether it operates in practice as it is supposed to do in theory.
- If the results of analysing the questionnaires are unsatisfactory, the Government may revert to thinking about legislation.

A proposed draft response to the DTI on behalf of the United Reformed Church is the second attachment. After whatever discussion and amendment is felt

necessary, **Mission Council is invited to authorise it.** The DTI is looking for a formal response as soon as possible.

Once a response is agreed and sent, Ministries Committee suggest the DTI Statement and our response are placed on the URC website and their existence reported to Assembly. As Ministers, Pastoral Committees and others need to be aware of the coverage of the documents, Synod representatives at Mission Council might be asked to accept a particular responsibility for ensuring it becomes known in their home Synods.

John Ellis  
Convener



MISSION COUNCIL

24-26 MARCH 2006

E3

Ministries Committee

FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Clergy Working Group

## CLERGY WORKING CONDITIONS – STATEMENT OF GOOD PRACTICE

### PREFACE

The content of this statement represents minimum standards, which the undersigned parties are committed to achieving. We would encourage other faith groups also to work towards meeting these standards, and we would welcome additional signatories to this statement.

The expectation of the DTI is that parties shall ensure that this statement is disseminated at all levels within their organisations to ensure awareness of the terms of the statement. Subsequently, faith groups may wish to produce their own statements tailored to their needs to enable them to meet the standards set out here.

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF WORK

**Standard:** Faith groups should make available statements of clergy terms and conditions, (and if appropriate individual job descriptions), with the aim that clergy have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the support they can expect. This information could also be set out in job advertisements.

Such statements might cover some or all of the following areas:

- Arrangements for special leave in cases of sickness and caring responsibilities.
- Entitlement to annual leave and rest breaks.
- Arrangements, where appropriate, for maternity, paternity, ante-natal and adoption leave.
- Provision of accommodation, where appropriate.
- Role of spouses and locums, and the division of responsibilities within team ministries.
- Agreement to provide a written statement of grounds for termination of appointment.
- Provision of time off to look for another appointment or arrange training in the event of loss of post.

- Rights to belong to and be active in a trade union.
- Minimum periods of notice.
- Pension arrangements, where appropriate.
- Availability and extent of any expenses and allowances

### **Resolving disputes**

**Standard: There should be clear procedures for resolving disputes (including grievance and disciplinary cases, and issues over appointments), and there should be a point of recourse when formal procedures and agreed good practice are not followed.**

These procedures could include the following:

- Rights to be accompanied to hearings and other procedures.
- Clear timelines for all procedures.
- Appeal and review procedures.
- Pastoral advisers to give informal advice and support.
- Involvement of third parties not directly involved in disputes.

### **Development and personnel support**

**Standard: Faith groups should provide support for clergy when they apply for posts and over the course of appointments to help with ongoing development**

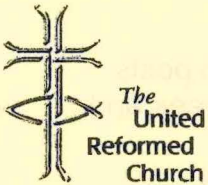
Such activities might include the following:

- Mentoring, coaching, and job shadowing, and support in applying for positions
- Staff annual reports, objective setting and performance appraisal.

### **Information & Consultation**

**Standard: Faith groups should aim to ensure that clergy are kept informed of and consulted about changes affecting them.**

- Information about and consultation on significant changes, which will impact on clergy working conditions. This could include changes in terms and conditions, statements of practice, policy changes and financial decisions.



## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

# E4

### Ministries Committee

#### **The United Reformed Church response to the Department of Trade and Industry's CLERGY WORKING CONDITIONS - STATEMENT OF GOOD PRACTICE**

#### **Preface**

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) brought a document *Clergy working conditions - statement of good practice* to its Clergy Working Group at the end of 2004. That document (now revised) calls for responses from religious bodies to be disseminated widely within their organisations. The United Reformed Church's response to an earlier DTI discussion document on employment status in relation to statutory employment rights (2002) shows how ministers enjoy similar rights to employees and other workers. (see URC web-site *Our Work* → *Ministries*).

The present statement is not a comprehensive statement of Ministers' terms and conditions. It is largely based on existing documents which give further particulars including the *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* and *Guidelines for declaring and filling Vacancies* (on the URC web-site) which springs from *Employment Practice in the United Reformed Church* (brought to General Assembly 1988, revised with appendices in 1990). *The Ministerial Discipline* process (Section O) is also part of Ministers' terms and conditions. The planned scheme of review and development for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) *Taking Stock* will result in role descriptions for every ministry. There are also moves to introduce procedures to establish when ministers do not have (any longer) the capacity or the capability to exercise Christian ministry in the setting of the United Reformed Church.

These *Terms and Conditions* define Ministers' rights more clearly while holding Ministers more clearly accountable. They will therefore need to be drawn to the attention of Ministers, and all throughout the United Reformed Church whose decisions affect Ministers' working conditions. All pastorates will be expected to adhere to the provisions of the *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* and pay heed to the guidance given in its appendices.

**Note A: *Structure of the Church*** *The oversight of local churches and the Ministers is a function of the District Council. In view of current discussions this draft assumes the responsibilities and powers involved will be exercised, in ways yet to be discerned, by New Synods. Until the Structure is amended in that direction the responsibilities and powers remain with Districts*

**Note B: *Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs)*** *The focus of the DTI working party is on clergy terms and conditions. In general, provisions applying to stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church also apply to stipendiary CRCWs. The present document however, speaks only of Ministers but nothing it contains prejudices the rights and duties of CRCWs .*

### **Terms and conditions of work by Ministers in pastoral charge**

Ministers in pastoral charge are office holders, not employees. Holders of certain posts (e.g. chaplaincies and appointments made by other bodies) are however employees and have their own contracts of employment.

At induction of stipendiary ministers, terms of settlement are agreed between the church(es), the minister and the *New Synod*. Those terms spell out detailed arrangements within the limits of the Basis of Union, the following Statement and the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration with its appendices. Sample terms of settlement (given on the URC web-site) should lead to a written agreement between the pastorate, the minister and the *New Synod*, through the good offices of the interim moderator and that agreement should be held by the *New Synod* with any subsequent changes noted thereon. Non-stipendiary ministers are appointed to serve in approved contexts for specified periods by *New Synods*; they receive no remuneration but the principles of what follows apply also to them.

The following paragraphs appear under headings in the DTI clergy working party document:-

**Standard: Faith Groups should make available statements of clergy terms and conditions (and if appropriate individual job descriptions) with the aim that clergy have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the support they can expect.**

The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church sets the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in the context of the total ministry of the whole people of God. After approved preparation and training ministerial students may be called to be ministers of local churches or to some special ministry and so ordained. That preparation, training and call give the broadest definition of their responsibilities. Proposals coming to General Assembly provide for the creation of role descriptions for each ministry. Ministers work in conjunction with elders and elders meetings; many serve in teams of Ministers or in local groupings or 'clusters' where they should find immediate support. *New Synods* and Synod Moderators offer support for Ministers when required.

### ***Arrangements for special leave in cases of sickness and caring responsibilities***

Ministers who are unable to work for more than three days are required to advise the Maintenance of Ministry (MoM) Office as soon as possible during their illness in order that the necessary records can be maintained. When special circumstances arise in the life of a Minister's family compassionate leave can be granted by the *New Synod*.

While Ministers in pastoral charge to a large extent control their own work pattern they are committed to conduct certain services and lead meetings at specific times; they also engage themselves to appointments with individuals for interviews, visits, funerals, weddings. There must be straightforward arrangements in place for such obligations to take services or hold meetings to be handed on to others when Ministers are taken sick or required at short notice to care for members of their families. Each Minister should have a contact (e.g. the church secretary) to whom s/he can notify sickness or overriding care demands. There should be a backup arrangement in case the first contact is not available when the Minister needs to notify unavailability for work.

### ***Entitlement to annual leave and rest breaks***

Ministers are entitled to 5 weeks holiday in each calendar year and one further Sunday away from the pastorate. When a minister only serves for part of a year the holiday provision should be pro rata. One week of holiday may be carried forward to the following

year. Holiday entitlement is not affected by sick leave, in-service training courses or sabbatical leave. Such periods of leave/absence may result in more than one week's holiday being carried forward into the following year. If a Minister resigns from a pastorate or post immediately following any such period of leave/absence, stipend should be paid for any outstanding holiday entitlement untaken at the date of resignation, which may include outstanding holiday entitlement from the previous year, always provided that the *New Synod* concurs with the arrangements.

### ***Arrangements, where appropriate, for maternity, paternity, ante-natal and adoption leave***

The United Reformed Church follows the provisions of the law regarding employed persons in every respect regarding maternity, paternity, ante-natal and adoption leave, including rules relating to statutory maternity pay, statutory adoption pay and statutory paternity pay. Statements of how these legal provisions are applied to ministers will be made available by the MoM Office.

### ***Provision of accommodation, where appropriate***

The provision of housing (a manse) for the Minister is part of the normal conditions of service. *New Synods* should take note of the condition and facilities of the manse or, if alternative housing arrangements are to be made, should approve the details of the arrangements before concurring in calls and regularly thereafter.

Manse Accommodation: a manse means a home for the Minister and their immediate family (spouse and children), owned or leased by the church, provided and maintained in good repair and decoration, free of rent, ground rent, council tax, all rates (where payable), water/sewage charges and property insurance (see *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* Appendix D - National Manse Guidelines).

Housing allowances General Assembly has acknowledged the wish of some Ministers to live in their own property. If the accommodation is owned or rented by the Minister, a housing allowance, agreed by the pastorate and the Minister, and approved by the *New Synod*, shall be payable.

Guidelines for calculating allowances have been issued by the MoM Sub-Committee (*Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* Appendix B).

In the case of part-time Ministers the church should meet a proportion of the standing charges of the manse, or pay a pro rata housing allowance, based on the proportion of stipend paid.

Removal costs shall be met by the receiving local church (see *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* Appendix C).

### ***Role of spouses and locums, and the division of responsibilities within team ministries***

If Ministers' spouses or other members of their families take telephone messages or contribute in any other way to the effectiveness of the ministry this is done as a favour or a personal contribution of service; there is no right to expect such service from any member of the manse household nor is the absence of such service to be regarded as detrimental to the Minister in any way.

It would be a very rare occasion that the URC could supply a locum Minister to a pastorate. The terms of any temporary arrangement (e.g. ministerial exchanges, sabbatical cover) should be made clear to the locum Minister, church members and others.

Ministers are members of *New Synods* and may be asked, when occasion arises, to take appointment as Interim Moderators of congregations without Ministers. It is through the



role of Interim Moderators (and in a few situations Interim Ministers) that *New Synods* provide formally that pastoral functions will be fulfilled in 'vacant' pastorates. Division of responsibilities within team ministries will be defined in each locality in accordance with local circumstances and mutual recognition of varied gifts. In teams, groups and clusters it is normal for the ministerial team, which may include non-stipendiary Ministers, to provide cover for congregations which lack a Minister. The arrangement prevailing at the time when a Minister is to be called is shown in the Pastorate Profile (part C).

***Agreement to provide a written statement of grounds for termination of appointment***  
In cases of disciplinary dismissal (Section O), incapacity or inability a written statement will be supplied. If a ministry should end following decision of Church Meeting and *New Synod* the terms of the resolution(s) adopted at that time can be the only official statement of grounds for termination.

***Provision of time off to look for another appointment or arrange training in the event of loss of post***

Ministers' control of their own work programme enables them to investigate the possibility of a Call to another pastorate. When arranging a weekend visit to a prospective pastorate, the Minister is responsible for finding and providing pulpit cover. In the event of a sudden loss of post, a Minister may apply to the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee whose normal practice is to continue payment of stipend for up to three months.

***Rights to belong to and be active in a trade union – duty to take part in the councils of the Church***

All ministers have the right to join and be active in a trade union; all Ministers also have the right not to be involved in a trade union. Whether or not they belong to trade unions, serving Ministers are entitled and expected to take part personally in *New Synods* and periodically in General Assembly where decisions are reached on the government of the United Reformed Church. At ordination Ministers promise to take their part in the councils of the Church.

***Minimum periods of notice***

The normal period of notice for ministerial departure from a pastorate is three months. A shorter (or longer) period can be agreed between Minister and church(es) on an amicable basis. In the event of a Minister being given notice to cease exercising ministry within a shorter period, the stipend, the right to remain in the manse and normal manse expenses shall continue for the whole three-month period.

***Pension arrangements, where appropriate***

Paragraphs 6.1.5 to 6.1.5.2 of *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* set out briefly the provisions more fully stated in the Trust Deed and Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. For ministers in stipendiary service joining before age 55, the fund provides a pension calculated on final stipend and related to years of contributory service. Stipendiary Ministers are also contracted in to the State Second Pension.

**Retirement Housing:** During their active ministry United Reformed Church Ministers are normally housed in a manse. *Provision for Housing Retired Ministers ("The Guidelines")* on the URC web-site sets out the basis on which the URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society operates.

**Standard: Faith Groups should provide support for clergy when they apply for posts and over the course of appointments to help with ongoing development**

Synod Moderators have a major role in supporting Ministers when they are considering a move. Interim Moderators, as the representatives of *New Synods* to vacant pastorates, also have a part to play in brokering settlements. While in a charge, the Minister can look to the synod Training Officer as well as to the Synod Moderator for mentoring and opportunities for personal development. A pastoral adviser is appointed to mentor Ministers for the first three years from ordination. Continuing ministerial education financed by the URC (EM2 and EM3) is available to all Ministers and they are expected to avail themselves of it. In the event that serious issues arise in a Minister's life requiring special provision for a period of time the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee will consider the case following reference to them by the Synod Moderator.

As indicated in the preface to this Statement, the *Taking Stock* scheme for ministerial review is being developed to foster objective-setting and assessment of performance against goals set at the beginning of each review period.

**Standard: Faith Groups should aim to ensure that clergy are kept informed of and consulted about changes affecting them**

*Information about and consultation on significant changes which will impact on clergy conditions. This could include changes in terms and conditions, statements of practice, policy changes and financial decisions.*

The United Reformed Church is committed (*Structure, 4*) to consultation. Reports and proposals coming to General Assembly are available to every minister. The Record of Assembly is sent to every Minister. Through *New Synods* and General Assembly they are able to influence the outcome of decisions on significant changes which will impact on ministerial conditions. This could include changes in terms and conditions, statements of practice, policy changes and financial decisions.

The United Reformed Church accepts the aim of informing every stipendiary Minister directly serving The United Reformed Church about significant changes which will impact on them and any financial decisions that will affect them.

**Resolving Disputes**

**Standard: There should be clear procedures for resolving disputes (including grievance and disciplinary cases, and issues over appointments) and there should be a point of recourse when formal procedures and agreed good practice are not followed**

*Such procedures might include:*

*Rights to be accompanied to hearings and other procedures*

*Clear timeline for all procedures*

*Appeal and review procedures*

*Pastoral advisers to give informal advice and support*

*Involvement of third parties not directly involved in disputes*

The URC Grievance Procedure is as follows:-

1. The purpose of a grievance procedure for ministers is to give a legitimate place of complaint and to solve the problems as quickly and as simply as possible. A timescale should be agreed in each case which should normally be dealt with inside three months.

2. It is important that grievances are treated seriously, because they are genuine to the person concerned.
3. It is important to discover whether the grievance is legitimate.
4. In the first instance the minister with the grievance should approach the Synod Moderator; however if the grievance involves the Moderator, the minister should approach the District Secretary or Synod Clerk.
5. The Moderator should approach both parties within one month of the request, respond to the grievance and where possible effect a reconciliation. If the Moderator is a party to the grievance, the Synod Clerk or another mutually acceptable person should act.
6. Where immediate reconciliation is not possible, a small independent group should be established by the appropriate Council of the Church, consisting of lay people and ministers, men and women.
7. Either party should be able to challenge the composition of the group which should reflect the nature of the grievance (e.g. if it concerns equal opportunities, finance, etc. members of the group should be seen to have some knowledge of the issue).
8. The group should then meet with both parties who may be accompanied. The group should again attempt a reconciliation but, if this is not possible, should arbitrate between them. *(Approved by General Assembly 1990)*

Any Minister or church member involved in the grievance procedure has the right to be accompanied to any meeting, formal or informal, where the object of the meeting is to resolve a grievance. Notice should be given in advance of the meeting that the Minister will be accompanied, and by whom.

#### Discipline Procedure

The details of the procedure to deal with complaints regarding ministerial discipline are listed in Section O of the Structure of the URC, to which reference should be made. They include the right to be accompanied, and to appeal.

Latest Revision 4/3/06



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**24-26 March 2006**

**E5**

**Ministries Committee**

**The Movement of Ministers**

The Ministries Committee, working closely with the Synod Moderators, has approved a new document called *The Movement of Ministers* which is now ready to put on the Church's website.

It replaces the previous documents *Guidelines for Declaring and Filling a Vacancy* and *Interim Moderators in the United Reformed Church*. It brings together a large amount of useful advice and information for anyone involved in what has previously been called a ministerial vacancy.

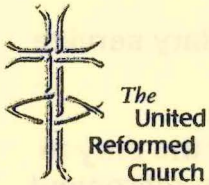
Because it includes twelve appendices with sample forms and other material, the full document runs to 30 pages but if any member of Mission Council wishes to have a hard copy, the Ministries team would be happy to supply one.

John Ellis (Convenor)  
Christine Craven (Secretary)  
Terry Oakley (Synod Moderator and member of the Ministries Committee)

Extract from document:

**Contents**

- 1. Contents
- 2. Introduction
- 3. The Outline Process
- 4. Preparing to call a minister
- 5. Seeking and issuing a call
- 6. The Appointment, Responsibilities and Role of Interim Moderators
- 7. Special cases: Ordinands, married couples, advertised posts, fixed term appointments.
  - Appendix 1 Notes for a visit at a time of ministerial transition
  - Appendix 2 Making good use of a time of transition
  - Appendix 3 Pastorate Profile
  - Appendix 4 Aid to drafting Terms of Settlement
  - Appendix 5 Sample Terms of Settlement
  - Appendix 6 Interim Moderator's Notes for introducing an Ordinand
  - Appendix 7 A meeting of the Pastorate Call Group and the Minister
  - Appendix 8 Declaration of equal opportunities policy & Grievance Procedure
  - Appendix 9 Personal Profile for a Minister
  - Appendix 10 Guidelines for the Introduction of Stipendiary Ministers
  - Appendix 11 Summary Pastorate Profile
  - Appendix 12 Summary Minister/CRCW Profile



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**E6**

**Ministries Committee**

**Two resolutions for General Assembly  
(Ministries resolutions also on Paper ASS)**

**Resolution (M6)**

**Pension Fund changes ~~to~~<sup>re</sup> Civil Partnerships**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 5 December 2005, so that the following definition is added to the definitions section of the Rules:**

**'Civil Partner: in respect of a member, a person who has entered into a civil partnership with the member which is recognised under the Civil Partnership Act 2004 (and which has not been dissolved or annulled by a court).'**

**The following Rule is also added as a new Rule 49:**

**'A member's Civil Partner shall be treated for the purposes of the Rules as if he or she were the member's spouse but only in respect of:**

**benefits that are attributable to Pensionable Service on or after 5 December 2005 or, in the case of money purchase AVCs, to contributions payable on or after that date; and**

**benefits that are not attributable to Pensionable Service and are payable as a result of the member's death on or after 5 December 2005.**

**The pension sharing appendix shall be deemed to be amended to the extent required to comply with the Civil Partnership Act 2004.'**

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This amendment to the Pension Fund rules reflects the changes introduced under the Civil Partnerships Act 2004. These require pension schemes to treat civil partners in the same way as spouses in respect of benefits attributable to pensionable service/contributions made since 5 December 2005. The proposed wording reflects the statutory requirement in full but does not go beyond it.

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**General Assembly approves the adoption of the following procedure for the duty to consider extension of full time ministerial stipendiary service beyond the retirement age set by the United Reformed Church.**

- 1 In the month of a Minister's 64<sup>th</sup> birthday the payroll office shall confirm the expected date of retirement as the end of the month in which he/she is 65.**
- 2 If a Minister does not wish to retire on that date he/she must apply for an extension of full time service for a maximum of three years.**
- 3 He/she shall speak to the Synod Moderator and thereafter submit an application for an extension of full time service to the appropriate Council of the Church (currently District Council).**
- 4 On receipt of the application, the Council shall consult with the Minister, Moderator, Elders of the Church/es/post and the Church Meeting(s), where the Minister is in a pastorate, to see whether or not the individual circumstances warrant an extension of full time stipendiary service. The circumstances to be considered shall include:**
  - a Minister drawing near to the end of a particular project or piece of work who might need to spend a year or two to bring it to a conclusion;**
  - plans for a new grouping of churches in a particular area where it is felt desirable for the Minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition;**
  - a Minister, coming into ministry later in life, who might have just a short time to go before qualifying for retired ministers' housing;**
  - a Minister whose spouse has a short period to go before retirement.**
- 5 If the Council agrees with the request, the Minister's application, together with an account of the particular circumstances and a record of both the local church's/post's support and that of the appropriate Council, will be sent to the Secretary for Ministries for a decision by the Accreditation Sub-Committee. In reaching this decision the Accreditation Sub-Committee shall consider the individual circumstances alongside the overall responsibility of the United Reformed Church to monitor Minister numbers so that:**
  - (a) the financial responsibility to support the ministerial work force is not threatened; and**
  - (b) the introduction of newly ordained and commissioned ministers is not curtailed.**
- 6 The Secretary for Ministries shall inform the appropriate Council and the Minister of the decision of the Accreditation Sub-Committee. If the decision is to accept an extension then a new date of retirement shall be agreed.**
- 7 A year before the revised date of retirement, the payroll office shall once again write to the Minister and if a further extension of full time stipendiary service is requested the United Reformed Church must consider the request. The procedure set out above will therefore be repeated.**

---

1 The General Assembly in 1997 resolved that:-

- Ministers should normally retire from full time stipendiary service not later than six calendar months from the date on which they attain the age of 65
- In exceptional circumstances a minister may remain in full time service for a maximum of three years beyond the age of 65. The application shall be supported by the pastorate, and receive concurrence of District Council before the agreement of the Accreditation Sub-Committee is sought. Ministers should make application for such an extension by the date of their 64th birthday.

2 In 2002 General Assembly resolved that;

- Full time stipendiary service for Ministers and CRCWs should cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches her/his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

However the option to stay in full time service for a maximum of three years beyond the age of 65 remained.

The 'exceptional circumstances' were set out in Reports to Assembly 1997 (Paragraph 3.7) as follows:

*As we bring this resolution however we are aware that there are sometimes circumstances in which it may be desirable for a minister to continue, albeit for a limited period. For example a minister might be drawing near to the end of a particular project or piece of work and need to spend a year or two to bring it to conclusion; or a District Council might be planning a new grouping of churches in a particular area and it might be felt desirable for a minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition; or a minister, coming into ministry later in life, might have just a year to go to qualify for retired ministers' housing; or a minister's spouse might have a short period to go to retirement.*

3 Under the draft Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 the United Reformed Church is expected to have a duty to consider applications to remain in paid service after the Church's normal retirement age. In addition, the 2005 Assembly asked for attention to be given to issues relating to age discrimination in the policies of the Church and the proposers of the relevant Resolution specifically referred to the age of ministerial retirement. The Ministries Committee therefore proposes a revision of the existing procedure.

It is proposed that any Minister/CRCW who so chooses may apply to continue in full time stipendiary service after their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday and receive sympathetic consideration. We also propose the removal of the upper age limit for final retirement. The factors set out in 1997 will still be deemed relevant. We believe however that the Church should also have regard to the impact of requests for later retirement on its finances and the potential opportunities for Ministers and CRCWs preparing for service. A very large surge of requests for later retirements could potentially have significant impacts in these areas.



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

F

## Church and Society Committee

### 1. Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation

General Assembly in 2003 asked the Church and Society committee to prepare a report on the ethics of war for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to work ecumenically and internationally in this task. In 2004, the Methodist Council approved a joint collaboration.

Following consultation, a working group was formed, drawing together people from within the two churches with diverse backgrounds - including seasoned peace activists, a military chaplain, a minister who formerly saw service on nuclear submarines and academic theologians. Four meetings were held between May and November 2005, with an intensive programme of work in between.

The intention was to provide a study that stimulates reflection within and beyond the churches, and an ethical analysis to help support the judgement of church leaders in complex and uncertain situations, where British military intervention is proposed.

The resulting document has a strong emphasis on peacemaking, thus the change of title from the original *Ethics of War* to *Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation*. It will be published separately from the Book of Reports for General Assembly, but the working group would like it to be seen as part of the Assembly Report. Consideration is being given to producing some kind of guide, to encourage study.

The Church and Society committee, meeting on 3-4 February 2006, endorsed the proposal for a separate publication. It was agreed that the following resolution should be moved at General Assembly by John Johansen-Berg, as United Reformed Church convenor of the group.

#### Resolution:

**General Assembly adopts the Report 'Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation' and commends it for study by Synods and local congregations, and as a helpful guide for church leaders who may be called upon for comment on the ethical considerations relating to war and peace.**

The Church and Society Committee felt strongly that the report should be accompanied by questions to encourage lay study and that these should, if possible, be ready by Assembly.



## 2. Proposal for Ecumenical Public Issues Team

1. When I came into post as secretary for Church and Society in October 2005, a new requirement of the post was that I should negotiate, with the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union, the setting up of a joint Public Issues team. I have had a series of meetings, primarily with Anthea Cox, co-ordinating secretary for Public Life and Social Justice in the Methodist Church, and Graham Sparkes, head of the department for Faith and Unity within the Baptist Union.
2. A free-standing agency, owned and managed by the participating churches, was identified as an eventual goal, however, a number of obstacles prevent this being achieved easily. A model has therefore been produced that would enable the benefits of increased joint working to be realised quickly, with the bigger vision remaining on the agenda for the future.
3. As shown diagrammatically on page 3, the Church and Society (or equivalent) department of each participating church would commit a proportion of its staff and/or financial resources, to a team that would provide a public issues service for those churches committing to it. Initially, these would be the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church, although others have expressed strong interest in becoming involved. It is important to note that the team will not represent *itself* in a wider context, but will facilitate the response of the contributing traditions.
4. Levels of commitment are still to be agreed, but the United Reformed Church might contribute between 50 and 60% of the time of both its Church and Society Secretary and Administrator. This would result in these staff members spending time at Methodist Church House, although a physical presence at 86 Tavistock Place (important for networking within the United Reformed Church) would be maintained. The two offices are within walking distance of each other.
5. Each Church would retain the task of communicating the team's work and servicing denominational structures. For the United Reformed Church, this would include raising the profile of Church and Society issues in synods and local churches, and servicing Mission Council and General Assembly.
6. For the purposes of reaching this first stage, outlined in the diagram, the appointment of a team leader (or co-ordinator) would be made from the Methodist Church's contribution. This reflects the reality that the Methodist Church would be the largest single contributor. The appointment would be shared, but made to Methodist terms of employment.
7. The possibility – and level – of a financial contribution from the other participating churches to the cost of the team leader (or co-ordinator's) post remains to be discussed. It is not clear at present, whether the sum required from the United Reformed Church could be found from the existing Church and Society budget.
8. The team leader (or co-ordinator) would be crucially important to what is proposed. S/he would have expertise in a particular area of work, but would also require networking and team building skills. A job description is being drafted. Regular team meetings would have an important function in building a common sense of purpose, and identifying and allocating upcoming work.

9. The team leader (or co-ordinator's) work would be overseen by a management group consisting of a representative of each of the participating churches. For the United Reformed Church this would be the convenor of the Church and Society committee. If others opted in, they would nominate an additional member. Terms of reference for the management group remain to be drafted. Initially, it would need to meet monthly; later, meetings might be every six to eight weeks.

10. It is important to note that this is not a way of reducing the (already small) Church and Society Budget; rather of the Church getting much better value for what it spends. There would be significant benefits:

- Advancing ecumenical working whilst retaining denominational identity
- Increasing opportunities for churches to speak with one voice, when appropriate
- Significant reduction in duplication. One member of the team could research and produce a document on a subject, rather than several people in different denominations effectively doing the same work. The resource produced could be issued either jointly, or could be adapted by the churches to meet their particular needs, or to include a denominational emphasis. The single team member would be the identified point of contact and would be available to brief the churches
- Team members would have more opportunity to gain expertise on particular subjects rather than trying to cover an impossibly wide brief.

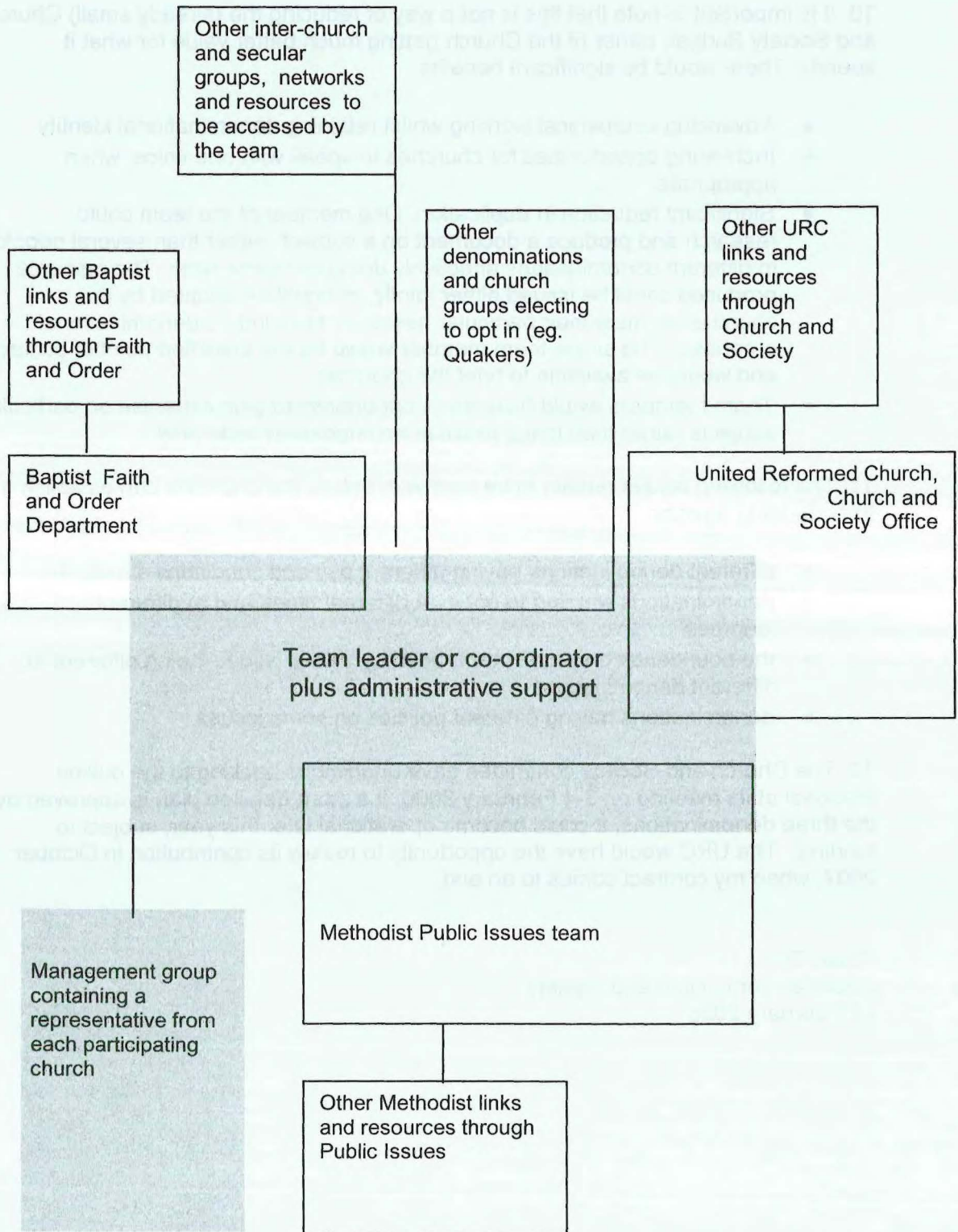
11. The following issues remain to be resolved, before the churches can establish a free-standing agency:

- different denominations having different pay and conditions structures
- denominations wanting to opt in at different times and to different degrees
- the boundaries on what is embraced by 'public issues' being different in different denominations
- denominations having different policies on some issues.

12. The Church and Society committee gave unanimous backing to the outline proposal at its meeting on 3-4 February 2006. If a more detailed plan is approved by the three denominations, it could become operational later this year, subject to funding. The URC would have the opportunity to review its contribution in October 2007, when my contract comes to an end.

Stuart Dew.  
Secretary for Church and Society  
22 February 2006

## Proposed structure for Public issues team





**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**24-26 March 2006**

**G**

**Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry**

**Assembly Resolution 34 – Developing Multicultural Ministry**

- c. *“General Assembly instructs the Secretaries for Training, Ministries and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to evaluate the accessibility to minority ethnic people of the systems of candidacy and training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, lay preachers and lay leaders, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than March 2006.”*

The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee wishes to report that we are well into the process of implementing Resolution 34. All our initiatives and strategies in relation to this resolution from 34(a) – (e) are going well, and we are making headway in developing multicultural ministry at different levels of the Church’s life and witness. If time allows we hope to share some audio-visual images of the steps and initiatives we are taking at this meeting of the Council.

It has become clear, however, that key principles and activities in the implementing stages are linked and various strands of the process overlap. In that sense we have decided that it would be more helpful to address Resolution 34(c) and (d) together. This means that we plan to include our report and recommendations in regard to 34(c) together with our report and recommendations on resolution 34(d) below.

- d. *“General Assembly authorises the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to conduct an audit of church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to full participation of minority ethnic people, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than October 2006.”*

We have set up an ecumenical group to conduct the audit as outlined in (d) above, initially led by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ), but now led by the Anglican Diocese of Southwark. In commencing the audit, it became evident that evaluating the accessibility to minority ethnic people of the systems of candidacy and training for ministry in the URC would be a key element of the auditing process. It is the intention of the Audit Group to evaluate this and other areas of the church’s life. The Secretaries involved are agreed that to avoid duplication and pressure of time and effort, this approach seems wise. Both the Committee and the Audit Group agree.

The Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry therefore proposes that:

- (i) **Mission Council accepts this preliminary report in regard to Assembly resolution 34(c).**  
(ii) **Mission Council will receive the Committee’s report and recommendations on Assembly resolution 34(c) and (d) together at its meeting in October 2006.**

The Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry  
Andrew Prasad, Convener  
Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Secretary  
March 2006



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

H

## Declaration for a Safe Church - a Charter for Action

### Synod responses

**General Assembly 2005 Resolution 6c: "urges synods, district councils and local churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work; and synods to report their response to Mission Council by March 2006".**

1. The Northern Synod has appointed five people as a Safeguarding Team to advise the Synod and act for it to provide information, training, support and advocacy in areas of the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, issues of domestic violence, and sexual abuse within the Church.

The team is in the process of establishing ways of operation to draw together previous work in one or another of these fields and putting in place appropriate structures of support and accountability throughout the Synod.

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2. The North Western Synod plans that the Synod Training Team will investigate the details of the implementation process of the Declaration for a Safe Church at a meeting in April 2006.

The intention is to hold two open meetings in each district (Autumn 2006) in which the issues are explored. Churches who do not send representatives to these meetings will be contacted individually by the Moderator and asked for their plans on implementing the Declaration.

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3. The Mersey Synod has adopted the Charter unanimously. Synod is arranging training for all churches and is encouraging all churches to adopt the charter. Work has still to be done on how to monitor this. The training has been organised by the Training Officer and Mrs Helen Brown.

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4. The Yorkshire Synod: It was emphasized at two synod meetings that this was a matter for every local church. At the March 2006 synod the Charter was amended to read:

'This Church will iii) take steps to ensure all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse are investigated and appropriate action is taken'.

The charter was adopted and amendments to the synod safeguarding policy have been made which include the acceptance that in the Annual Returns there will be the question, "*Is your church aware of the Declaration of a Safe Church?*"

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5. The East Midlands Synod, since 2004, has run six training days on *Time for Action: sexual abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors*. There are three more planned for 2006. It is hoped that all serving ministers and CRCWs and at least one representative from every local church will attend these days. In addition a further day of training for those who wish to consider these issues more deeply was offered in 2005 and will continue to be offered on an annual basis. Alongside this there has been much training offered with regard to child protection synod wide.

The synod would have preferred the safe church to have had a more inclusive remit so that other areas of concern could have been drawn together to include this area along with the other aspects of a safe church. There was some disquiet at the guidance that instances of abuse should be 'investigated', as this is not recommended in other quarters.

Abington Avenue United Reformed Church in Northampton had drawn up its own response to the declaration and it met with a large majority approval at the Synod:

1. The term 'safe church' itself. As a church with a particular ministry to children and vulnerable adults we have sought to adopt the best possible practice. As we have a link with a women's refuge, we are especially aware of the issues of abuse and harassment. We are also aware of the need for physical safety and have a 'Health and Safety Policy' and aim to minimize danger as far as possible. To apply the words 'safe church' only to issues of sexual abuse and harassment is likely to cause confusion.
2. No environment and no church is totally safe. Life itself is risky and part of the meaning of the incarnation is that in Jesus God came amongst us and experienced the risks and dangers. Whilst we can and must aim to make the church as safe a place as possible, no church can guarantee a safe environment.
3. The declaration has been issued without consultation, bearing the line "Every church will operate this Charter for a Safe Church". Whilst we accept the broad aims of the declaration, we cannot commit ourselves to much of the detail.
4. What is the basis for saying "everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place"? Not the Bible.

The call of Christ is to take up a cross and follow him. We sometimes sing:

Be our strength in hours of darkness,  
in our wandering be or guide;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Father, be thou at our side.

We therefore find ourselves unable to affirm the declaration or to resolve to apply it in all aspects of our life and work.

We would like Mission Council to give much more thought to this subject with a view to issuing a much simpler document. The danger of trying to cover every detail is of leaving loop-holes. A broad policy document should be offered instead.

We suggest the following as a first draft:

### Towards a Safe Church

This church acknowledges that dangers exist.

We have therefore sought -

1. to minimize the possibility of accidents by
  - a) regular inspections of the premises
  - b) applying a 'Health and Safety Policy'
  - c) annual testing of electrical equipment
  - d) learning from the experience when things go wrong
2. to protect children by -
  - a) offering training to those who work with children and young people
  - b) applying a 'Child Protection Policy'
  - c) having all who work with children and young people cleared by the CRB
3. to acknowledge that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem that can occur in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and to lessen its likelihood by -
  - a) respecting each person's dignity
  - b) refusing to tolerate abusive behaviour
  - c) offering appropriate support to both victims and perpetrators
  - d) taking allegations seriously

We seek to live up to Paul's words to the Philippians:

*'We have not yet reached perfection, but we press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of us. We do not claim to have hold of it yet.'* [Phil. 3.12f]

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6. The West Midlands Synod has affirmed the Declaration and has accepted its responsibility in the terms of Resolution 6c. It has also agreed to set up a Working Group to see how to implement it within the Synod.

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7. The Eastern Synod: A presentation on 'Declaration of a Safe Church' was given at the March 2006 Synod. The presentation was aimed at giving the background, stating the need, raising awareness and confirming the action proposed for Eastern Synod. Rosemary Johnston (an Elder from our Synod) will lead a small task group over the next few months to agree a more detailed strategy covering publicity, training, reporting mechanisms and link people and support agencies with a view to reporting further at the October 2006 Synod.

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8. The South-Western Synod, through its General Purposes Committee, has stated its unequivocal support for the Declaration of a Safe Church. It is in the process of assembling a small working group to propose a strategy for responding, which shall include research into local resources and the development of policy recommendations for implementing a reporting process to receive and investigate any claims of sexual harassment or abuse. The strategy shall also include designing broader publicity about sexual harassment and abuse in churches. The Moderator has sent out a letter to all churches in the Synod, introducing the Resolution and providing a document called *Sex and the Church*, which provides a definition of sexual harassment and other information about clergy sexual ethics.

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9. The Wessex Synod adopted the declaration at its November 2005 Synod, to be applied to all Synod activities. Districts and churches are being urged to adopt it as well.

The synod has decided to give oversight of this to its Life & Witness Committee with a recommendation that a specific person be nominated to act as the focal point. It is also planned to offer churches a process, which they can adopt.

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10. The Thames North Synod has established a working group to create a strategy to implement the 'Declaration'. The Working Group consists of a retired Minister (convenor), a serving Minister and a Pastoral Consultant.

Others are co-opted as required. Its remit and tasks are

- To consider Assembly resolution 2 - 'Saying Sorry'
- To design and provide for delivery of awareness training
- Reference & advice/reporting mechanisms and personnel in the Synod
- To help survivors to 'come out' - what support is required?

**Resources:**

- Awareness, training and enforcement material from New York Diocese of Episcopal Church USA
- *'From Silence to Sanctuary'*, Jane Chevous, SPCK 2004
- *'What To Do If You're Worried A Child Is Being Abused'*, Department of Health, 2003
- *'Pastoral Care and Safeguarding'*, Methodist Church, 2005



**Key current considerations:**

- Avoiding the re-invention of wheels (to this end, progress has been suspended until we hear at Mission Council of what is happening/being provided elsewhere).
- How to make awareness training in effect compulsory in a non-authoritarian Church; this might be aligned in some way with establishment of Synod pastoral functions as Districts are 'replaced'.

Widening of/relationship with current Synod 'link' people concerned with Good Practice for children.

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11. The Southern Synod has affirmed the Declaration, but in order that the Guidelines and Procedures are implemented properly, it has been decided to set up a Working Group of people with knowledge of the issues involved. This is in process of being established.

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12. The Synod of Wales will be acting on the contents of the Declaration within the Synod in order to fully implement Resolution 6 on a Safe Church.

There are some common concerns about the Resolution around the Synod:

1. That we seem to have policies and documents on matters such as Good Practice, and potentially Bullying, etc. The question raised is why can we not have one coherent policy / implementation covering all these areas.
2. There is a genuine feeling that whilst wanting to affirm Resolution 6 without any hesitancy at all, that we are in danger of creating an atmosphere of suspicion and maybe fear. The most common plea is for us somehow to change the language we use in order to create a positive atmosphere of Christian community. What community do we want to be or to create, what are its marks etc. What is it to be part of this community. It is really a matter of changing language from a perceived negative one into a more positive one.

Concerns were raised in the North Wales District Council meeting in Dyserth on 7 Jan 2006 relating to the Charter for a Safe Church resolution and as a result requested that David Salsbury Mal Breeze and Kate Gartside consider the Charter. They met to explore how to meet best the needs of elders and churches as they seek to put the resolution into place. Their report

affirms the need and importance of this Charter, but raises the following concerns:

- We believe that this charter would be best included with the 'Good Practice Guide' extended and adding to the information and guidance given in that document. It seems to us that this charter has been drawn up in isolation and feel that it is important that on issues such as this, that we use the expertise available through Central Office (e.g. Rosemary Johnson) and other Assembly committees.
- The subject covered is too narrow (sexual abuse) and a wider definition is needed
- That no training material was in place prior to Assembly receiving and voting on this issue

**Needed:**

- Clear guidelines: consistent across all Synods within the United Reformed Church
- Seems to be appropriate to be incorporate into 'Good Practice' guide
- Training needs to be at local level - local congregations may need help to find local contact information. This training needs to be in place ASAP, to equip our elderships/congregations. We understand that certain Synods have such material available.
- Training needs to take into account smaller churches and elderly congregations

**Back-up:**

- Supervision: we need to consider the form this will take. External organisations may be willing to provide this.
- There is mention of external advisors. Where are these expected to come from and what qualifications will be required?
- Link name: These could be internal or external and we consider there is some benefit in putting a name and number on the posters that is external to the church congregation.

These are initial thoughts and provide an outline for discussion and further exploration. We are also aware that other groups within the URC have/are exploring this issue and that in some instances training materials are available. Could we not work together and save reinventing the wheel!

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13. The Synod of Scotland at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2006, passed a resolution

" having noted the acceptance by General Assembly 2005 of Resolution 6: 'Declaration of a Safe Church', and received the supporting Charter, guidelines and procedures from Mission Council,

- a) affirms the principles of the Declaration of a Safe Church, and offers the amendments as Footnote 1 and urges Mission Council to urgently review the Charter and accompanying material
- b) resolves to apply it in all aspects of its life and work and, therefore, proposes the implementation of the eleven recommendations as Footnote 2, and,
- c) resolves to convey this response to Mission Council for its meeting in March 2006."

#### Footnote 1

We would ask that Synod convey to Mission Council the following areas of concern with regard to its material issued to churches towards the end of 2005 (Appendix 1 attached):

- Declaration of a Safe Church: A Charter for Action (Page 3 - the Poster).

i) We recommend that by displaying this poster local churches might convey that there was a problem, rather than giving reassurance. Therefore, we suggest that the four '*This church will:*' bullet points and the two lines below them, be omitted and the rest be produced as an attractive poster; with the '*This church will:*' points, as amended, added to the supporting material instead,

ii) We recommend that the 4th paragraph '*This church is rightly..*', has deleted "*which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged*".

iii) We recommend that the following amendments be considered for the supporting material,

At the "This church will:" bullet points:

Point 2. Omit '*.....before healing can begin*'.

Point 3. "*Take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken*" be amended to "*Take the necessary steps to ensure that appropriate action is taken in all allegations*".

- Declaration of a Safe Church - A Charter for Action (Page 4)
  - i) At paragraph 2. The second-last word '*vulnerable*', be omitted.
- Guidelines for Churches - Preventing Sexual Harassment and Abuse (Page 5).
  - i) Point 5. That the words '*responsibilities to the vulnerable*' be changed to '*pastoral responsibilities to all people*'.

## Footnote 2

### The Eleven Recommendations

1. That all local churches receive the "Declaration of a Safe Church - A Charter for Action"; both for reference and discussion.

2. That general information about sexual harassment and abuse in the church is made available to clergy and congregations.

To facilitate this we recommend that the existing plan to take forward Good Practice at both Synod and congregational levels be expanded to include Safe Church. A holistic approach is favoured. This must therefore be actioned in conjunction with the Synod Youth and Children's Work Development Officer.

The Synod draft paper on Bullying is also a useful document (Appendix 2 attached) for the wider issues of Good Practice. Other issues being emotional, physical and spiritual abuse and neglect.

3. That the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College is asked to consider the matter in terms of both pre- and post-ordination training.

4. That Synod considers the best way to implement the training material at present being prepared by Mission Council.

5. That both Synod and local churches compile a list of support agencies.

6. That Mission Council create a universal reporting mechanism to receive and investigate any allegation or complaint of sexual harassment, abuse or bullying for the United Reformed Church as a whole.

Noting:

- a) the distinctiveness of the Scottish legal system,
- b) that many in our congregations are not on the Membership Roll and, therefore, care should be taken in all language used.

7. That guidance is prepared for situations when pastoral support is required for both the abused and the abuser in the same congregation.

8. That procedures for supporting abusers who attend the local church be explored. (eg, contracts, circles of care).

9. That local churches be encouraged to explore the possibilities of addressing these issues within the context of worship.

To facilitate this we ask that the proposed new Synod Church Life Committee provide liturgical resources and examples.

10. That this be included within the Synod Church Visitation programme and that this information is forwarded to the ACTS Scottish Churches National Sponsoring Body, for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

11. That this be reviewed by Synod annually.

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Prior to the synod meeting, its Pastoral Committee ( on behalf of the Synod) had stated its intention to

"endeavour to ensure that our churches are safe places for all people, and to that end prevent the inappropriate sexualisation of relationships.

A task group was established by the Pastoral Committee to formulate initial steps.

Reporting to Mission Council on the response of churches and councils within the synod *before* the synod's resolution was passed, John Humphreys, the synod Moderator, reported as follows:

**Church Meetings:** there is no evidence to suggest that Church Meetings have taken on board this resolution in great number. This will be addressed if the March meeting of Synod accepts the resolutions that have been prepared by a task group established by the Synod Pastoral Committee

**Area Councils:** each Area Council has received a report of Assembly. At the time of writing there is no indication that any Area Council has furthered this matter other than by receiving the report.

**Synod:** the resolution was given to the Synod Pastoral Committee. This committee established a task group which is presenting the following resolution to the meeting of the Synod of Scotland on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Synod members are now in possession of a 10 page document which in addition to what is below includes Mission Council material for local churches and a Synod paper on bullying.



## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

# J

### Communications and Editorial Committee Review

(Subject to alterations that may be made by the Committee at the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006)

#### Introduction

For too long the church has operated with the assumption that everyone knows who we are, what we stand for and where we can be found. The church is now in competition with a commercial world that includes sport, shopping and home entertainment. People have become accustomed to a high standard of communication, reading their newspapers on line, communicating with their friends and family through 'texting' and watching thousands of channels on their high definition TV. The screen in the corner, and soon to be, if not already, on the wall, may well become the provider of everything.

Even the endless delivery of leaflets advertising everything from home cleaners to the local pizza shop are on good quality paper, in colour, and produced to a high standard. What chance the note from the local church, sometimes photocopied in black and white on poor quality paper?

This crisis of identity and relevance provoked the 'Catch the Vision' project. Others have explored how to be church in this new world. In communications, where technology has grown and developed at a pace many thought impossible, our review has become most urgent. It is a world of new opportunities and challenges.

#### Communications

For communications, with its small staff and limited resources, the task of keeping up with the explosion of technology has been a struggle. The forthcoming retirement of Carol Rogers and the need to consider the future direction of the section prompted the Communications and Editorial Committee to review where we were and where we might be in five years time. We have been radical. We neither have the money nor the expertise to do all the things we would like, including many of the things that we have done in the past. We need to prioritise and finesse what we can do; we need to make some hard decisions. The recommendations are our suggested ways forward in the long term - a plan for the next few years.

Effective communications build communities. Putting messages across, sharing information and challenging each other can only be effective if it is put across in such a way that the recipient can receive it and understand it. Today people

receive information in small bites, through images rather than words and at a time when it is convenient to them.

A review and restructuring may imply that what we have been doing is not appreciated. It is important to recognise the huge strides that have already been accomplished by the present staff. The church owes a huge debt of gratitude to them all. They produce a high standard way beyond the resources given to them.

### **Website**

The website is where our thinking begins. Present resources have not allowed us to implement the changes it needs. It does not keep up with daily updates. It is difficult to navigate. The committee recommends that we employ a Website manager who can redesign the whole site, edit the information provided on it and keep it up-to-date with daily updates. It could provide a decent 'chat room' for discussions, mediated by the editor, an attractive advertising programme for anyone looking for a United Reformed Church in the local area, and a source of information with links to other sites, eg Christian Aid etc. Individuals should be able to sign up to a mailing list and be sent emails with encouragement to revisit the main website for the latest news from the other committees and from other churches struggling with the same issues.

There are great opportunities that we could explore with an effective and professional website. Critics will say that members of churches do not have a computer resource to access this way of communication. Up to a point that is true but increasingly families have at least one member who has a computer and soon the technology that we associate with computers will be available through the TV. The committee is sensitive to the present membership profile and will continue with other, more traditional, forms of communication but the ambition is that most of our communications in the future will be channelled through the website.

### **Recommendation 1: to develop an effective and more professional website**

#### **Reform**

The committee is keen to re-shape the journal of the United Reformed Church. During the last ten years, *Reform* has played a crucial role in challenging and informing members. It is intended that for the next year, once a new editor is appointed, the style will remain much the same but through that time a new concept is developed so that by early 2007 we will be able to launch a fortnightly and more accessible journal to our membership. Although valuing the present, we need to begin making the journal one that all our members can enjoy. Members of the committee would like to see more 'good news' stories, regular Bible studies and a journal that can be given to interested lay people who might be thinking of joining the United Reformed Church. It might be more 'Daily

Mail' and less 'Guardian' in style (although not in politics). The new journal could also in future be downloaded from the website. The committee has commissioned 'focus groups' to explore how a new journal might be re-shaped.

**Recommendation 2: to appoint a new editor to work with an editorial board to oversee the final months of Reform and to develop a new United Reformed Church journal**

### **The Bookshop**

For as long as many members of the committee can remember the United Reformed Church has provided a bookshop - many of us order all our books through it and it provides an excellent service with reductions on most products. However, with the internet increasingly providing a similar service - without the costs of the space and stock needed for a bookshop, the committee recognises that its life now is limited. We may in future offer the same service through our website or by joining forces with another supplier, like Amazon. It would free up some of our resources and space. Before we take any action on the bookshop the committee is clear that we need to discover other possible ways of providing the same service.

We know how much our membership appreciates the book shop service we provide at special events, like Synods and National Assemblies, and we aim to look at ways of continuing to provide this service.

We are aware that members who come to Church House like to browse in the bookshop - it also provides a good meeting point - but the service it mainly provides - the selling of books and materials - can be done now in so many different ways and the eventual closing of the bookshop will enable us to release resources to be put into other activities that can better serve the church.

**Recommendation 3: to develop new ways of providing a bookshop service**

### **Publications**

At present, we produce a number of products, including the Year Book, diaries and URC goodies, and major publications. We do not market any of these products extensively and consequently many remain unknown to a wider public. It is the intention of the committee only to continue publishing 'spiritual' and 'worship' materials and those specific to the URC. Major books on 'reformed' themes will in future only be printed "on demand". We have identified a specialist firm who will produce books if and when needed, single copies if required.

The department also produces materials for other committees within the United Reformed Church. Providing a good standard of design and presentation has been a major factor in the editorial work of the department. The design team spend a great deal of time ensuring that what comes out of the Church is of a high standard. At present, the cost of design comes under Communications and



Editorial's budget. In future the committee will look at ways that cost can be passed on to the originating committee. It is essential that we do not produce sub-standard work (to remain unwanted in the depths of Church House) and a more robust attitude to work produced is needed. Again, greater use of the website with downloading facilities may be a cost effective way of encouraging individual committees in presenting their material.

**Recommendation 4: to concentrate on publications of a worship/spiritual nature**

#### **Press Relations**

Until recently, the work of Press Officer, or media relations, was performed in conjunction with the role of editor of Reform. The committee wishes to separate these two roles. It is debatable how much we should have a national profile. There are some who believe that this work is best done at the local level and we should seek trainers to encourage Synods and local churches to be the face of the United Reformed Church to the media. Equally, because of the need for immediate press statements when ministers have been accused of criminal activity Moderators especially need the professionalism of a journalist to deal with the media. ~~At first, it was thought that this role could be incorporated with the role of Secretary of Communications but looking at the work for the next few years in re-structuring and supporting the staff in this, it is believed that we will require a designated post for this work.~~ Undoubtedly this does not come cheaply. But it is also a very necessary role and assists in helping the world understand what the United Reformed Church stands for. One piece of negative reporting can undermine all the good work that the church does. It hardly needs saying but the damage done by the scandals within the Catholic Church has had very serious implications for the whole Christian institution.

**Recommendation 5: to explore ways of providing a professional Press Office service to deal with the media at national and local levels**

#### **Marketing**

The word 'marketing' sounds very commercial and not like the URC at all. But it should be seen as a modern understanding of evangelism - promoting the work we do and encouraging others to commit to Christ. Recently, it has been heard that the United Reformed Church is 'worthy but dull' and that we 'rent out our halls and hope'. In other words, we are not an attractive church to join and, perhaps because, we sit back thinking the little we do ( i.e. allow our halls to be used by the community) is enough to bring about God's Kingdom on earth. As a church we are no longer confident in ourselves or our message. We do not properly engage with the world because we perhaps fear ridicule (apologies for the massive generalisations and sweeping statements here). But if we think what we are and do is important, then we must tell the world about it. The Moderators' Report to General Assembly 2005 shared the work of the Uniting

Church of Christ in the US and how their 'God is still speaking' campaign has revolutionised local churches there. To be clear about what we believe in, and to promote it, is what marketing is about. This work is a new area of work and will bring together several areas of assembly work and needs the expertise of a professional. The Convenor of the Communications and Editorial Committee believes that this work needs a base in communications but is not just the work of that committee. As part of the ongoing work in next few years, a set-up aspect must be included in the budget.

**Recommendation 6: to explore and develop new ways of promoting the United Reformed Church to the world**

### **Staffing**

It cannot be said enough times that the present staff are to be congratulated and thanked for their dedication, imagination and hard work. Change for us all is difficult and exhausting. The committee hopes that each member of staff feels valued and can still play their part in a new look communications department. We anticipate offering retraining to those who wish to develop new skills.

Through this review the committee is offering the church a new way of bringing the best to the fore, of building a stronger church by strengthening the links between us all, of reaching out to a rapidly changing world in ways the world understand and, by doing this, offering new hope.

### **Resolution:**

**General Assembly receives and accepts the review carried out by the Communications and Editorial Committee and instructs it to continue to explore the proposals to:**

- 1. develop an effective and more professional website**
- 2. appoint a new editor to work with an editorial board to oversee the final months of Reform and to develop a new United Reformed Church journal**
- 3. develop new ways of providing a bookshop service**
- 4. concentrate on publications of a worship/spiritual nature**
- 5. explore ways of providing a professional Press Office service to deal with the media at national and local levels**
- 6. explore and develop new ways of promoting the United Reformed Church to the world**

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## **Communications and Editorial Committee Supplement to paper J**

Paper J is presented as part of a **continuing review** for the work of Communications and Editorial. It is now entitled "**Catching the Vision for the Future Work of the Communications and Editorial Committee**".

Following the meeting (19-20 March), the committee would wish to add some extra comments and amendments to the original document.

### **Secretary**

The committee is absolutely clear that the work of Communications is essential to the inner workings of the church and vital to its outreach. The Committee therefore requests Mission Council to put in train immediately the task of **appointing a new Secretary** as a successor to Carol Rogers who will be retiring on 30th September 2006. The Secretary will manage and lead the department and also be responsible for one of the major portfolios of the department (i.e. Press Relations , "Marketing", Website Design and Development)

### **Budget**

Having looked at our 2007 budget, the committee believes that a reduction of £40K is achievable and will aim to reduce the budget further to £65K. However, we note that Assembly agreed the Catch the Vision belief that becoming an e-church is essential to our further development and notes that there will inevitably be a cost to making this possible which is not so far in our budget.

### **Training and Policy**

We will seek to develop a policy and training programme to improve the professionalism and consistency across Church House and all Assembly Committees to make us all better communicators.

### **Website**

The Committee believes that Paper J fails to convey the excitement of the possibilities of an effective website. These include the provision of continuously flow of worship material, sharing ideas and best practice, conveying important information, running campaigns etc.

### **Reform.**

The Committee enjoyed a long hard look at the future of Reform following receiving a report from initial focus groups. Contrary to the committee's original thinking, it appears that there is no excitement for a future **fortnightly** journal. The committee will continue with 'guest' editors until the end of the year/early 2007, and once a new Secretary is in place, wishes to pursue appointing a new editor who will be given a free hand to explore and experiment with different ideas for Reform.

**Bookshop**

The committee welcomed the Treasurer, Eric Chilton to the meeting and with him explored the budget for the bookshop. It is now understood that at present the bookshop breaks even. This news pleased the committee as it means that new possibilities can be explored without ending the much appreciated "face to face" service of the bookshop.

**Press Relations.**

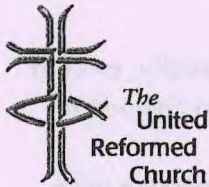
Please remove the sentence beginning 'At first, it was thought...' found half way through the Press Relations paragraph.

**Advisory Editorial Boards**

The committee will appoint Advisory Editorial boards for the website and Reform in future.

**Recommendations and resolution**

Recommendation 6 is amended to read: explore and develop new ways of promoting the role of the United Reformed Church in extending Christ's Kingdom to the world. (This amendment to be taken up in the resolution.)



## MISSION COUNCIL 24-26 March 2006

# K

### Review of Ministry & Mission Fund

#### 1. Remit

1.1. In July 2005 General Assembly considered the Catch the Vision report and passed the following resolution

"General Assembly instructs the Treasurer to conduct a review of the Ministry & Mission Fund and report to the 2006 Assembly"

#### 2. Conclusion

2.1. This review has attempted to identify the present problems with the Ministry & Mission Fund and establish a more satisfactory way going forward. There is a need for strategic planning and a better understanding of what the fund is for and how it is spent. Several matters, that are being addressed elsewhere, have an impact on future budget requirements and how Synods raise their contributions.

Thus this review ought properly to be seen as an interim report until these are resolved and the recommendations of this report are brought to fruition.

#### 3. Summary of Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that

1. The process of setting the budget in consultation with Synods should follow the principles originally outlined in the Plan for Partnership with a revised timetable.
2. Communication generally should be improved and, in particular, local churches reminded that Ministry is the first call on their funds.
3. Synods investigate ways to improve their method of raising their Ministry & Mission Fund contribution.
4. All who consider this report be invited to add their active support to give 5% of their take home pay to the Church.
5. Advocacy should have a higher profile within the Church and that a Stewardship Sunday should be introduced.
6. The Church develops a five-year Strategic Plan with an annual plan for the coming year which will help the budget process.
7. There should be a system monitoring the deployment allocation and M & M Fund contribution across Synods.

8. All CRCW's, Special category ministers and staff employed locally, except for General Assembly appointments, should be accountable to Synods or local boards of management.
9. An attempt should be made to establish a common two-tier scheme with guidelines for dealing with non-ministerial costs for general application.

#### 4. Reason for the review

4.1. The recent pattern of setting the Annual Budget has placed a target requirement of income to be raised by the Church through the Ministry & Mission Fund. This has been represented by a percentage increase on the previous year's pledge from each Synod. However the experience over recent years has been that many Synods have not been able to pledge their target figure. Furthermore some Synods have then been unable to meet their pledge although it must be recognised that they may still be net contributors to the cost of ministry. The overall result has had the following outcome:

	2003	2004	2005
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Target	19,454	20,077	20,375
Pledge	19,305	19,843	19,903
Actual	19,312	19,691	19,878

Shortfall of actual against target

	142	386	497
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Clearly this is unsatisfactory and underlines the ineffectiveness of the present process.

4.2. The effect of the shortfall would have been to deplete the balance of the general funds of the Church in these years had it not been for legacies and other income, which it is not possible to anticipate or budget for accurately. The balance of these funds in 2004 was £14649k., but £4958k. was invested in property and £4557k. lent to Retired Ministers Housing. After some other dispositions only £5741k. remained, which would have been available from the sale of short-term investments to meet immediate cash flow needs. This is just three months requirements for revenue expenditure and excludes any capital needs.

4.3. Looking longer term it is necessary to increase our giving or face a reduction in expenditure. Although this could be achieved by savings in the central costs of Administration, Assembly Programmes and Training, there is a limit to this. Eventually a reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers would be necessary over and above any adjustments made by General Assembly through maintaining the ratio of ministers to membership.

## 5. How is the Ministry & Mission Fund spent?

5.1. Although there is some income from other sources, including legacies and from restricted funds, nearly 90% of expenditure of central funds must now be met from M & M Fund contributions. A summary of this expenditure for the last four years shows:

	2002	2003	2004	2005(draft)
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Ministry	15,575	15,626	16,167	16,199
Training	1,582	1,465	1,608	1,626
Programmes	1,512	1,512	1,476	1,498
Support Activities	1,644	1,447	1,437	1,632
Totals	20,313	20,050	20,688	20,955

- A detailed breakdown of 2004 and 2005 together with the budget for 2006 is given in Appendix 1. These figures are net of other income and Commitment for Life.

## 6. Communication

6.1. It has been obvious for some time that the understanding of how the Ministry & Mission Fund is spent should be improved. The format of the Annual Accounts has been changed a little but this falls a long way short of meeting the requirement. This has already been recognised by General Assembly in 2005 by passing Resolution 31

"General Assembly resolves that a report showing how the Ministry and Mission Fund contributions have been spent should be sent to each year to every local church."

6.2. In the meantime several Synods produce a "simple guide to M & M" to help local churches. Hopefully this report will give a further insight into several of the essential aspects of the finances of the Church prior to the production of the report envisaged by Resolution 31.

6.3. There is always the opportunity for individuals (with the gift aid possibility) and local churches to make one off contributions to the M & M Fund when they are able. However this is not widely known and should be communicated. There is also the need to produce new Stewardship material, see Section 11 Advocacy and Stewardship below.

6.4. Although the remit is a review of the Ministry & Mission Fund it is worthwhile going back to the main guiding principle of the Plan for Partnership. That is that Ministry is the first call on the funds of local churches. This needs fresh emphasis.

6.5. The information flow between Church House and Synods could be improved especially in relation to the budget setting process, see Section 9 below, where a better dialogue with Synods is envisaged with a revised timetable.

6.6. It is vital, of course, that the correct vision behind the M & M Fund is communicated. The United Reformed Church has always set its face against any idea that stipendiary ministers should be deployed on the basis of which congregations can pay the most. Instead in the community of the Church we follow the New Testament principle that each Christian gives, not least financially, according to their means. They give in gratitude for the overwhelming love of God not in order to secure some particular benefits. Such giving by individuals will mean that some congregations will be in a position to give very much more than others to the M & M Fund.

6.7. The local councils of the Church, where every congregation is represented, have the responsibility for seeing how the resources made possible through the M & M Fund, including the valuable resource of our stipendiary ministers, are best employed. In thinking about ministerial deployment, the report *Equipping the Saints* stressed the need to look at all available resources, including Non-stipendiary Ministers and recognised Local Church Leaders, and not to behave as if paid ministers are the only proper form of congregational leadership. In its response to that Report, General Assembly endorsed this. It underlined the need for decisions about deployment of paid ministers not to be made on the basis of history or on the basis of every congregation having a proportionate share of a diminishing number of paid ministers; instead deployment decisions should be made on the basis of current and future mission opportunities.

6.8. It is, therefore, recommended that Communication generally should be improved and, in particular, local churches reminded that the Ministry & Mission Fund is the first call on their funds.

## 7. The true cost of Ministry

7.1. It will be seen that the majority of spending is on Ministry which is currently running at 75% of all expenditure. The bulk of this relates to supporting the stipendiary ministers.

7.2. The direct cost of stipendiary ministry for 2006 is:



Stipend	£19788
National Insurance	1908
Pension contribution	3097
Total	£24793

7.3. The true cost of ministry borne centrally should include the remaining costs of Ministry; Training; and the majority of the cost of the Finance Office. In 2004 these amounted to £3,419k or £5036 per minister bringing the cost from the M & M Fund to £29829 per annum. In addition there are those items of expenditure borne by the local church - the manse, car or car allowance, book allowance etc. - which probably makes the full cost of ministry £36000 per annum.

7.4. Using £30000 as a guide figure for the costs borne centrally, it will be seen that the shortfall of £445,000 in 2005 is the equivalent of 15 ministers. However in the short term only the direct cost of ministry of £24793 can be saved, and thus the shortfall is the equivalent of 18 ministers or about 1 1/2 per Synod.

## 8. Training

8.1. After Ministry, Training is the next highest individual spend. Whilst the training of stipendiary ministers for pastorates still dominates there are many other requirements. These are illustrated by the growing number of the people employed by the Church in other tasks. Lay leadership, pastoral assistants, youth ministry, schools ministry are all emerging and may be more relevant in many local situations.

8.2. The need to be clear about the various types of ministry which are now required in the changing world is obvious. Perhaps an answer to the question - what is Church today? - will help. Certainly it is not just found in church buildings.

8.3. There is a current review of the training needs of the Church and how these should be met. It is to be hoped that this will, in the longer term, reduce the current level of expenditure incurred centrally.

## 9. Historic approach and current methodology

- 9.1. There are two aspects which we have attempted to cover in the review
- The Plan for Partnership, which sets out our agreed basis for Ministerial support
  - The Ministry & Mission Fund including Advocacy, which aims to raise the money from local churches through Synods.

9.2. The Plan for Partnership, when was first agreed by General Assembly in 1980, gave a summary of the principles and process of the Ministry & Mission Fund. Looking at these there are several points worth noting:

1. The total requirement of the central fund shall be placed before Provinces (now Synods), a Provincial contribution accepted, and each Province will then be free to determine in its own way the contributions required from its local churches in order that the provincial total shall be guaranteed. In using the word "guaranteed" it is meant that each Province will do everything within its power to meet the agreed financial contribution. In this context it should be noted that the church "guarantees" the stipends of ministers, and must therefore have assurances that the funds are available. It has always been the policy of the United Reformed Church that the provision of stipends shall be the first charge upon the finance of the local church.
2. Central Maintenance of the Ministry Committee will make available guidelines and figures to show how the total requirement could be apportioned amongst the Province.
3. Possibly by July and certainly by September in each year, the MoM Committee would consider the first draft of the budget for the year after next.
4. The total requirement of the central fund would then be placed before the Provinces.
5. The Provinces would be asked for their preliminary response and then further discussions would take place during the autumn.
6. By March/April, on the basis of the guaranteed contributions from the Provinces, the budget for the next year would be completed and the General Assembly asked to approve it.
7. It would be understood that the Provincial total for each year would be freely renegotiable rather than, say, having to accept a percentage increase on the previous year.

9.3. Since 1980 both the process and timetable have changed. The concept of agreeing the budget by consultation has been largely lost and replaced by an expenditure driven process with the setting of a target for "the total requirement" adjusted by a percentage increase over the previous year for each Synod. This has led to the impression in some places that the Ministry & Mission Fund is a tax. A more important reason may be the way Synods sometimes make allocations insensitively or without understanding the local situation, giving the impression that the concept is numbers led.

9.4. It is anticipated that in the new governance arrangements the new Council meeting between the biennial General Assemblies will have the power to set the budget each year. On this basis the timetable could be improved if the budget were agreed in the autumn immediately prior to the actual year. This would

enable much more up to date figures to be used when budgeting for expenditure. It would also enable a more meaningful dialogue between Church House and Synods based on the best information available on the contributions to be expected. The current situation suffers because of the extended timescale resulting often in very imprecise figures on both income and expenditure.

9.5. Although it was envisaged that each Synod would be responsible for making the offer of its contribution, the principle of apportionment has been there from the outset.

Historically, the figures produced for sharing the overall costs between Synods have normally been on the bases of membership, ministerial deployment and population. From these Synods have, through a consultation process, been able to determine what they believe to be a fair offer. In 2002 the then current basis was re-examined and various ways of assessing the apportionment were considered. The conclusion was reached that the basis used was sound and did not require adjustment. However the responses by Synods since that time has not been consistent with the target set by General Assembly. This means that the apportionment has now become skewed.

9.6. It is, therefore, recommended that the process of setting the budget in consultation with Synods should follow the principles originally outlined in the Plan for Partnership with the revised timetable suggested.

## 10. Methods of raising the Ministry & Mission contribution

10.1. Synods use various methods to raise their M & M contribution. Most rely on the work of District Treasurers and M & M conveners. Thus the approach can vary considerably within the Synod. When the URC was formed in 1972 churches were generally assessed based on their income and expenditure accounts. To an extent this has remained the system in some Synods. Although this could be said to follow the principle of "ability to pay" it really only mirrors the historic giving pattern of that congregation. It has the disadvantage that churches can fail to show some income because they consider it is not for revenue expenditure. This difficulty in obtaining full financial information means local funding from investments and other income is not always being taken into account, resulting in an inequality in the challenge offered to churches. This is further distorted by the degree of importance placed upon personal giving within different churches. Some churches may have adopted TRIO and the call from General Assembly to give 5% of net take home pay whilst others may only be raising their minimal requirements.

10.2. Some Synods have introduced a Synod wide system for M & M, generally based on membership figures. This, of course, is a disincentive for making church members which can be seen in some churches where the number of

adherents is considerable and average church attendance is higher than membership. However there is anecdotal evidence from the sample of church accounts obtained in 2003, that where a Synod wide system is used there is a better understanding of the cost of ministry, the average giving per member is higher and Synod pledges are met.

10.3. In the light of Resolution 41 passed at General Assembly in 2005, "General Assembly resolves, subject to any legal constraints, that as from General Assembly 2007, there shall be one level of council between the General Assembly and the local church, the thirteen 'new Synods'." it would be beneficial for Synods to have discussions together on the alternative approaches to raising M & M and their relative effectiveness.

10.4. It is, therefore, recommended that Synods investigate ways to improve their method of raising their Ministry & Mission Fund contribution.

## 11. Advocacy and Stewardship

11.1. It is considered that Advocacy is not being taken seriously enough within the Church. General Assembly resolved in 1979, and has subsequently reaffirmed on more than one occasion, that members should give 5% of their take home pay. However the Church Life Profile in 2001 indicated that only 38% of regular church *attenders* gave 5% or more. From this it is estimated that the average level of giving in the Church is probably in the region of 2% of net income.

11.2. The review group feel strongly about their personal commitment to giving at least 5% of their take home pay to the Church and would like to invite members of each Council as the report is discussed to give it their active support. If the estimate that the average level of giving in the Church is only 2% is correct, the potential for resources for both additional Ministry and enterprising Mission projects is enormous.

11.3. The Advocacy courses, funded at Windermere by the generosity of some Synods, have not been well attended and one had to be cancelled through a lack of response. Perhaps this suggests that courses in the South are needed too. Or is this confirmation of the need for greater understanding of advocacy and stewardship and commitment to it?

11.4. Furthermore a gathering of over 100 delegates at a Swanwick Consultation in February 2005 were asked two questions. "Did they recall a sermon on stewardship" and "How many present belong to churches which regularly engage in a Stewardship Campaign". There was a minimal response. Yet this is a constant theme in the gospel where the proper use of all God's gifts is core. Whilst it might be considered that the best advocates of giving, both financial

and in service, are ministers it is a shared leadership task with the elders too having a key role. Ministers and elders together are best placed to influence directly the responsiveness of local congregations.

11.5. There is plenty of evidence of generous giving at the prime festivals when the need is well expressed. To give advocacy and stewardship adequate attention it is proposed that there should be a Stewardship Sunday throughout the Church to remind congregations of their response to the gospel in the use of their gifts and money. To this end it is also proposed that suitable worship and discussion material should be produced.

11.6. All other initiatives are arms length and left to a matter of choice. Whilst there is an attraction in having a fundraiser to focus attention on the importance of giving at the end of the day it is the regular advocacy at local congregation level that alone will sustain giving. The question does, of course, arise about the potential for further giving as congregations get smaller and more and more are pensioners. The diminishing membership of local churches throws a greater burden on the remaining members even when there is no overall increase in the central budget. Moreover, the pattern of less regular attendance results in lower giving unless members and adherents use the envelope scheme or contribute by standing order. Yet again, it is appropriate to point out that a much slower decline in the number of church buildings in use in the United Reformed Church than in numbers of members leads to an increasing burden of maintenance costs on the remaining members.

11.7. As the Church undertakes more community based mission work it requires additional funding. The nature of these projects means that they are often too specialised and time consuming for many of our local churches to undertake. They require the use of particular skills for which an employed person is needed. Initially they are not self-funding, and may never be so, yet they are part of the vital outreach of the Church. It is in this area that we do see the benefit from a fundraiser so that resources from outside agencies may be attracted to support the work.

11.8. It is recommended that all who consider this report be invited to add their active support to give 5% of their take home pay to the Church.

11.9. It is also recommended that Advocacy should have a higher profile within the Church and that a Stewardship Sunday, with suitable worship material, should be introduced.

## 12. Strategic planning

12.1. The Plan for Partnership envisaged a framework within which the M & M contribution should be considered. This would demonstrate the needs over the

next period and the immediate requirement for the coming budget year. However this would be predicated on the initial offers made by Synods prior to any expenditure being budgeted. As already noted this practice has not been followed in recent years.

12.2. The production of a strategic plan was thus envisaged as an essential element.

In the absence of a current strategic plan, we give some estimated figures of what the immediate future requirements might be, assuming the only increases would be in stipends and salaries with no inflation of other costs. This hardly captures the imagination and suggests very much a business as usual approach based just on financial needs. Catch the Vision anticipates a much more positive future and this should be reflected in our plans.

12.3. It is recommended that the Church develops a five year Strategic Plan with an annual plan for the coming year which will help the budget process.

### 13. Accountability and Value for money

13.1. There is a concern in local churches over the ever increasing amount expected to be contributed to M & M. This leads many to question central spending and whether we are getting value for money. Inevitably this raises the additional question of accountability generally for the use of resources in the church.

13.2. With regard to pastoral ministry accountability is achieved to an extent now by the sharing of leadership with elders. There are more formal review procedures in place in many situations - that is both of ministerial and church performance. Additionally the present ministerial self-appraisal system leaves a lot to be desired because it lacks objectivity. However this is being addressed and proposals will be brought by Ministries in due course.

13.3. Given the principles behind the M & M Fund, there is no expectation that every church ought to be giving a sum in line with the costs of the particular form of ministry it is receiving at the time. When a District or Area Council provides high quality ministry to a congregation through a Non-stipendiary Minister, for example, that congregation's reasonable contribution to the common fund is likely to exceed the direct cost of their minister. Nevertheless where churches contribute much less to the M & M Fund than the true costs of the minister they receive, other churches are effectively subsidising them and can feel a sense of unfairness. If not addressed, this can lead to resentment and damage to the peace and unity of the Church. It can be a particular problem where bigger churches are contributing large sums to the M& M Fund but do not see the reasons behind the deployment of ministers locally. The accountability

for decisions about ministerial deployment needs to be clearly established between local churches and their District/Synod.

13.4. It is difficult to determine the correlation of the M & M contribution to the level of ministry received in every case. However from an analysis of the M & M pledges for 2006, only 236 churches will contribute over £25,000 making a total of £8.5 million or over 42% of the M & M Fund. One would have expected more churches/pastorates to at least meet the cost of ministry.

13.5. Additionally many churches employ workers alongside their stipendiary ministry for which they, presumably, have a support and review structure. This wider use of skills locally, such as Youth Leaders and Pastoral visitors, should be encouraged. However the employment of other workers should be on the proviso that the local church makes its full contribution to the M & M Fund.

13.6. It would be an advantage to link the deployment allocation, the actual number of stipendiary ministers serving and the contribution to the M & M Fund at Synod level. This would enable Synods to be aware of their overall position in terms of the cost of ministry, their M & M contribution, and the extent of resource sharing amongst them. Furthermore within Synods there would be recognition of the resource sharing amongst churches/pastorates undertaken in order to meet the obligation to provide ministry.

13.7. It is, therefore, recommended that there should be a system monitoring the deployment allocation and M & M Fund contribution across Synods.

13.8. On the assumption that churches will increasingly exercise accountability over the use of their resources locally there remains the need for this to improve elsewhere in the Church. Accountability is easier to achieve when it is close to the activity. This suggests that responsibility for all non Church House based staff, other than those appointed by General Assembly, should be with Synods or local boards of management. Generally none of these roles is income generating and are currently costs on both Synods and the M & M Fund. Whilst some could be classed as the mission element of the Ministry & Mission Fund many are really administration. For all of these roles there should be adequate oversight and accountability locally. Those responsible should agree the work programme with its budget requirements; support the activity and assess results; counsel and encourage. Exceptionally, the stipends for the ministers concerned and salaries for CRCWs would still be paid centrally.

13.9. It also has to be recognised that although the allocation of CRCWs and Special category ministers is within agreed formula by General Assembly, the need is determined locally. Furthermore, their numbers appointed reduces the overall available number for stipendiary ministers for deployment by Synods in pastoral ministry. Thus there is the potential for tension between the claims of

local churches for pastoral ministry and the need for mission in the community. This can only be satisfied by local dialogue and agreement.

13.10. The advantages of this whole approach to accountability are:

- members are more directly involved in what they pay for
- results and performance, and thus value for money, can more easily be identified.

13.11. It is, therefore, recommended that all CRCWs, Special category ministers and staff employed locally, with the exception of General Assembly appointments, should be accountable to Synods or local boards of management.

#### 14. Paying for non ministerial costs

14.1. It is suggested that a different approach would be sensible for those costs currently borne by the M & M Fund that are not directly attributable to supporting the Church's recognised ministries. Clearly every church should make some contribution to belonging to the wider Church. How this is determined then becomes an issue.

A distinction could be drawn between the cost of providing ministry and the other costs and the M & M contribution seen as a two-tier obligation. Membership is used in many Synods as the basis for the M & M allocation and this could be the formula for non-ministerial costs.

14.2. The M & M contribution in LEPs can be a complex issue especially bearing in mind the great variety of arrangements that exist. It does cause some dissatisfaction and frustration locally and often makes the agreement of a satisfactory figure for M & M difficult.

14.3. Again the one issue that always emerges in LEPs is the cost of providing ministry as opposed to other costs. Generally there is a distinction between them as the Church providing ministry expects a full contribution for doing so. However other costs are shared. How the other costs relating to belonging to the denomination are met seems to vary. If the M & M Fund is seen as a two-tier obligation, i.e. the contribution to pastoral ministry and to other expenditure, this should help resolve the situation especially if a similar view is taken by other denominations. Then the other costs could be borne in proportion to the respective memberships.

14.4. A two-tier common scheme would have several advantages

- a uniform approach throughout the Church to shared responsibilities
- it should lead to better understanding generally
- individual issues could be dealt with in a common structure to maintain consistency



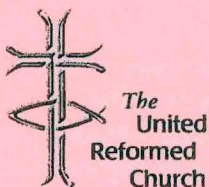
- it should help address the migration to a single system in Synods where individual Districts have enjoyed their own approach
  - it should facilitate a solution for LEPs
- against this there are some disadvantages which would need to be overcome
- where local churches are currently accessed on their ability to pay
  - where ministry is provided on the basis of requirement without any expectation of an ability to contribute
  - the transition might be difficult.

**14.5. It is, therefore, recommended that an attempt should be made to establish a common two-tier scheme with guidelines for dealing with non-ministerial costs for general application.**

DRAFT

#### APPENDIX 1

	Actual 2004 £'000	Draft Actual 2005 £'000	Budget 2006 £'000
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<b>MINISTRY</b>			
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	15,391	15,419	15,589
Synod moderators - stipends and expenses	556	551	573
Ministries committee	220	229	273
	16,167	16,199	16,435
<b>TRAINING</b>			
College training for stipendiary ministry	1,088	1,119	1,160
Other training for stipendiary ministry	203	176	198
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	114	91	140
Lay training costs	75	85	95
Training committee	128	155	140
	1,608	1,626	1,733
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>			
Grants	300	266	265
Ecumenical committee and international	295	263	387
Council for World Mission	50	50	50
Church and Society committee	99	61	95
Racial Justice programme	79	99	95
Life and Witness committee	92	90	107
Windermere Centre	101	99	82
Youth and Children's Work committee	176	215	270
Central cost of Youth and Children's Work trainers	169	227	272
Yardley Hastings	27	32	0
Pilots Development	74	81	95
Other committees	14	15	16
	1,476	1,498	1,734
<b>SUPPORT ACTIVITIES</b>			
General Assembly and Mission Council	261	284	294
Communication and Editorial	271	260	342
Finance office	268	352	385
Central secretariat	246	281	281
Professional fees	46	84	88
Computer network	62	38	60
URC House costs	203	256	267
Depreciation on buildings	0	0	0
General church costs	80	77	92
	1,437	1,632	1,809
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>20,688</b>	<b>20,955</b>	<b>21,711</b>



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**24-26 March 2006**



**London Synod Commission - Interim report**

**2005 Assembly Resolution 42: 'General Assembly appoints a Commission of Assembly to investigate the creation of a London Synod, to report back to the 2006 Assembly'.**

**a) Background**

The London Synod Commission was established by Mission Council in Autumn 2005. The members of the Commission are: Revd Bill Mahood (Convenor); Mrs Sheila Brain (Secretary); Revd Wilf Bahadur; Ms Rachel Greening; Revd Malcolm Hanson; Revd Heather Pencavel.

The Commission first met in December 2005 and has met monthly since then, giving priority to identifying the principles underlying the proposal and assessing the basic advantages and disadvantages, along with the questions which need to be raised. In addition it has given consideration to the process of consultation with local churches and Districts, ecumenical partners and other relevant bodies and has sought advice on this. This will clearly take time and cannot be completed in time for Assembly 2006. It is hoped to be able to bring an interim progress report this year, with a full report presented to Assembly 2007.

The Commission has drawn up for itself the following Terms of Reference in the light of the brief given to us by the General Secretary.

**Terms of reference**

1. To investigate the feasibility of creating a London Synod and to submit an initial report to the 2006 Assembly (Resolution 42, Assembly 2005). To submit a full report to the 2007 Assembly.
2. To open up a broad consultation process, in order to assess the rationale for such a change and to consider whether the advantages significantly outweigh the disadvantages
3. To consult in-depth with the Southern and Thames North Synods, and in lesser detail with the surrounding Synods whose boundaries might be significantly altered by the creation of a London Synod (Eastern, East Midlands, Wessex).
4. To consider the ecumenical dimensions of the proposal and the implications for future ecumenical work and mission in Greater London.
5. To explore alternative ways in which the URC could relate more effectively to London in mission and service.
6. To recommend practical means by which any changes might be implemented.

**b) Progress Report**

1) Principles to be established and questions to be raised include (among others): Is there a strong vision for a London Synod and what has changed since 1972? What is a Synod for and what would be the purpose of change (mission to the capital, pastoral care of churches, role of Moderator, ecumenical relations...etc)? What

would be the size of the Synod and where would the boundary be? What happens to the churches/Districts outside and how would this affect surrounding Synods? How strong is the opposition and what are the specific concerns expressed? Would the loss of the broad spread of church life (urban, suburban, rural) be outweighed by the commonality of interest of the churches lying within the whole Greater London Authority (GLA)? Does the River Thames still create a North/South divide as has been claimed? What are the legal and financial implications? How are other denominations dealing with the London situation? In conclusion: do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and is it worth the effort?

## 2) Consultation Process

It was agreed to start by seeking both written and verbal submissions via letters and personal interviews. In order to make the process as open and inclusive as possible, a letter was printed in REFORM inviting contributions from anyone wishing to express their views, producing a small but significant response. Letters have been written directly to the following to seek their personal views (in confidence) and asking advice about the most appropriate methods of undertaking consultation with local churches:

- Synod Moderators and Synod Clerks of Thames North, Southern, Wessex, Eastern, East Midlands Synods
- District Secretaries within Thames North and Southern Synods

A personal meeting has been held jointly with the two London Moderators, and a further interview with someone with (URC) experience of the recent Methodist re-organisation.

An initial written submission has been received from the Thames North Trust (in response to the letter in REFORM).

Contact has been made with the pan-London *Urban Churches Support Group* and also with the *London Strategic Development Group*, established jointly by the two London Synods to undertake research on URC church life in London with a view to identifying mission priorities and looking at future joint strategy for London. We expect to work closely with this group in order to share in the consultation already in progress.

## 3) Ecumenical considerations

The Methodist Church has already taken the decision to re-organise into a single London District which will be instituted in September 2006. We are grateful to Methodist colleagues for providing details of the process involved and the careful way the decision was reached. The Baptists also now have a single London area and the Salvation Army has also re-organised. Other denominational boundaries still tend to divide on a North/South basis.

We have also consulted with the *London Churches Group for Social Action* which is the only ecumenical body operating on a London-wide basis, under the auspices of the *London Church Leaders*.

Sheila Brain: March 2006

Derek Hopkins present. Old Mine  
subst for Wilf Bahadur



**MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006**

**ADD**

**Additional Business**

**1. Corrections to Minutes**

**a) October 2005 Mission Council**

Page 12 - Resolution on Israel Palestine - should read  
Mission Council

notes that some of our partner churches .....etc.

1. calls on the Ethical Investment Advisory Group to advise a future Mission Council what actions the United Reformed Church may take".

**b) January 2006 Mission Council**

First line: "agreed" not "agrees".

Resolution 1: second paragraph should begin "The named contact individuals will be appointed for two years in the first instance, will be provided....."

Resolution 2: revise ending to add third bullet point "co-ordinate any further reporting to Mission Council."

**2. Correction to Agenda Paper**

Paper A4: Hawk-eyed members of Mission Council will have noticed that the Appendix to Paper A4 has been numbered as page 4. This is a mistake. There is no missing page 3.

**3. PAPER A - Election of Advisory Groups - Supplementary note**

The Section O Advisory Group agreed to an offer from Hartley Oldham to remain a member of the Group for a short period in order to facilitate the hand over to the new Convener and Secretary. Mission Council is invited to appoint Mr Oldham to the Group for a further year after his term as Secretary expires.

**4. PAPER A3 - MCAG Report - Supplementary information**

MCAG appointed a Liaison Group consisting of the following members:  
The Revd Peter Poulter (convener) Mrs. Hazel Brown (Mersey), Mrs.

Geraldine Swaine (Eastern), Mr. John Thorndyke (South-Western) and an ecumenical representative.

The Steering Group consists of the Revds Carla Grosch Miller, Roberta Rominger and Ray Adams. Though MCAG is content with three in this group, the convener, anticipating he workload requests the appointment of a fourth member.

5. The Report of the Nominations Committee

a) Appointment of Moderator of Northern Synod

**Resolution: Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly appoints the Revd Rowena Francis to be Moderator of the Northern Synod from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.**

b) The following have accepted invitations to be nominated at the 2006 General Assembly:

As Clerk to the General Assembly from the close of General Assembly 2007 to the close of General Assembly 2012:

Revd James A. Breslin

As Conveners Elect:

Communications and Editorial Committee

Revd Kirsty Thorpe

Ecumenical - International Exchange Sub-Committee

Revd Linda Elliott

Inter-Faith Relations

Revd Peter Colwell

Pastoral Reference Committee

Revd Alasdair Pratt

Pastoral Welfare Sub-Committee

Mrs Delyth Rees

Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

Revd Carla Grosch-Miller

Training

Professor Malcolm Johnson

As Deputy Convener Elect

Disciplinary Process - Commission Panel  
Miss Kathleen Cross

6. Dates for Mission Council 2006-2009

2006

Tuesday 3 - Thursday 5 October (All Saints, London Colney)

2007

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January (Stoneleigh)  
Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March (High Leigh)  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October (Ushaw College, Durham)

2008

(Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January) (Stoneleigh)  
Friday 7<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March (All Saints, London Colney)  
Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October (Swanwick)

Anticipating 2009 - suggest

Friday 13 - Sunday 15 March (Ushaw College, Durham)  
Monday 16 - Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November (Swanwick)

7. Synod Resolution to Mission Council

"The Wessex synod notes

a) that in many of our Districts we are reducing the number of stipendiary ministers and so are finding it increasingly difficult to provide leadership in all of our churches.

b) that the Charity Commissioners allow charities to use their assets for activities which further the aim of the charity

c) that the Anglican church benefits from the possibility of finding non stipendiary ministers for churches by offering 'house-for-duty'

We therefore propose that Mission Council be asked to investigate the possibility of changing URC regulations to allow vacant manses to be occupied rent-free by unpaid ministers on a 'house-for-duty' basis."

8. Inter-faith Committee

Assembly 2001 Resolution 7 agreed that the Inter-Faith Relations Committee should be extended for a further five years until 2006 with a review at the beginning of the fifth year.

As the *Catch the Vision* process (inaugurated by Mission Council in March 2003) includes a widespread review of all Assembly Committee structures, Mission Council is invited to agree the following:

**Mission Council agrees that the review of Inter-Faith Relations Committee should be deferred so that it may be part of a wider review of Assembly committees and consequent proposals brought by the *Catch the Vision* process to a future General Assembly.**



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

ASS

## Assembly Committee Resolutions to General Assembly

### 1. Ministries Committee

**Resolution (M1) Revised Remit of the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee**

**General Assembly**

**(i) agrees that the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee should be renamed the Leadership in Worship Committee and be given the following remit:**

- a) To support Lay Preachers
- b) To support other lay people involved in leading worship
- c) To encourage members of congregations to become more involved in leading worship

**(ii) requests the Nominations Committee to propose, as soon as possible, an initial list of names to serve on this Sub-Committee, including at least one Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.**

One of the main topics of discussion at the 2005 Lay Preaching Commissioners Consultation was how Lay Preachers fit in to the wider vision of *Equipping the Saints*. Following the Consultation, the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee has come to the view that its present remit will not serve the best interests of the United Reformed Church in the future. While continuing to support Lay Preachers, the Sub-Committee also wants to encourage collaborative forms of worship leadership. In particular, it wishes to provide resources for those engaged in leading worship without any formal training. The Sub-Committee wants to remove any lingering sense of Lay Preachers being defensive about their traditional role and instead see them contribute joyfully, with others, to the many patterns of worship within the Church.

The Ministries Committee therefore proposes that the Sub-Committee be renamed the **Leadership in Worship Committee**. We propose that the Sub-Committee should have a widened remit to support all lay people involved in leading worship alongside Ministers of Word and Sacrament, eg Lay Preachers, worship leaders and worship teams. It would then promote good practice in all aspects of leading worship.

At present members of the Sub-Committee are elected by the Lay Preaching Commissioners. With a wider remit, we believe that in future the Nominations Committee should select the committee members as if does for all other standing Sub-Committees of the Ministries Committee.

**Resolution (M2)**

**Changes to Ministerial Service**

**General Assembly approves the following procedures in respect of changes to ministerial service:**

## **1 Statement of Reasons**

**A Minister/CRCW who decides to move or resign should be asked by the Synod Moderator to make a written statement about the reasons for that course of action. A copy of this statement should be sent by the Moderator to the Secretary for Ministries.**

## **2 Move from one pastorate or post to another within the United Reformed Church**

- a) Where a Minister is moving from one pastorate or post to another, a copy of their stated reasons for the move should go to the local church/post that is entering a vacancy. A copy should also be sent to the Synod Moderator for inclusion on the Minister's file.**
- b) In the case of termed appointments for CRCWs and those in Special Category Ministry, most moves come at the recognised end of that appointment. The same procedure should nonetheless be followed to help with reflection on the ministry.**
- c) When a Minister is changing pastorates because of difficulties, some form of counselling or debriefing should be offered through the Moderator.**

## **3 Move away from ministerial service in the United Reformed Church without resignation from the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs**

- a) Some Ministers and CRCWs move out of posts under the auspices of the United Reformed Church in order to exercise another form of Christian service. If the Minister/CRCW wishes to remain on the Roll/list, their move should be subject to the concurrence of the Church.**
- b) In such a case, the Minister/CRCW should provide a copy of their stated reasons for wishing to move out of URC ministerial service to the appropriate Council of the Church (currently District Council) and seek concurrence with the proposed move.**
- c) If concurrence is granted, the Minister/CRCW would remain on the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs and his/her name would continue to appear in the Yearbook. He/she would be under the oversight and care of the Synod in which they reside. The Minister/CRCW would be eligible to seek a future pastorate/post within the United Reformed Church upon request to the Moderators.**
- d) If concurrence is not granted and the Minister/CRCW proceeds with the move, the District should send a report of the District decision to the Accreditation Sub-Committee. This report should:
  - i) set out details of the post the Minister/CRCW has accepted;**
  - ii) the reasons why the District did not consider it appropriate to give concurrence .****

**If the Accreditation Sub-committee gives approval for the move, the Minister's/CRCW's status would remain as in (c) above.**

**If the Accreditation Sub-Committee upholds the decision of the District, the Minister/CRCW would be deemed to have resigned from the Roll of**



Ministers/list of CRCWs. His/her name would no longer appear in the Yearbook. If a Minister/CRCW does not receive concurrence and was removed from the Roll/list, he/she would have the right of appeal to the Ministries Committee.

- e) The Ministries Committee copy of the Minister's/CRCW's statement should be added to their file, together with a record of whether the move was with or without the concurrence of the Church.

#### 4 Resignation from the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs

- a) When a Minister/CRCW <sup>resigns</sup> resigns from the Roll/list, <sup>is accepted</sup> his/her written statement should be added to his/her Ministries Committee file.
- b) This statement should be consulted if the former Minister/CRCW seeks reinstatement to the Roll/list at some future date.
- c) If a Minister/CRCW were not prepared to give reasons for their resignation this fact should be noted on their file.

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At the end of a piece of ministerial service, Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) may:

- a) move from one pastorate/post to another within the United Reformed Church;
- b) move into secular employment or other appointment not funded by the Church but without resigning from the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs;
- c) resign from the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs.

There is no call for a procedure for moves and resignations that would in any way mirror the elaborate procedures for assessment, call or reinstatement. But whilst the United Reformed Church has taken great care over beginnings, it has spent less time considering endings – even though these will affect the next beginning for local churches and for individuals. Concern has been expressed to the Ministries Committee that the standing of Ministers moving in situation (b) becomes unclear and that generally the Church is not learning all that it should from the experiences of those moving. The Ministries Committee agrees that clearer procedures should apply to changes in ministerial service.

Behind each ending is a story of successful or difficult ministry, joys and problems. Currently, the reasons for the move do not reach the Ministries Committee, which therefore has no overview of emerging trends or any common factors which lead to moves and resignations. Such an overview might help the Church to address problems before they lead to the emotional and financial costs that flow from people ending ministerial service prematurely. It would also highlight examples of good practice.

When a Minister or CRCW leaves the direct service of the United Reformed Church, we believe a conscious decision needs to be made about their future status. This has not always been satisfactorily addressed in the past. There should be an option to remain on the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs when the individual and the relevant Council of the Church share a conviction that the new work continues to be an expression of the person's ministry. Equally, names should not remain on the Roll when, for example, key personal convictions expressed at ordination have disappeared.

Explanatory Notes to Paragraphs in the Resolution:

Para 1:

Accompanying most, if not all, moves and resignations there will already be a conversation with the Synod Moderator.

Para 2(a):

There is no presumption that a move hides a problem. The reason for the move might be the recognition that it comes at the right time for Minister and church so that new gifts and visions can be explored; or the Minister may simply have felt an overwhelming, unexpected Call to move elsewhere. Where the ministry has been harmonious and effective the Minister may wish to offer insights through the statement upon which the church might reflect. It might be, however, that some difficulty has prompted the move and therefore the local congregation and the wider church should reflect on the outgoing Minister's perspective.

Para 2(c):

The Committee suggests this is good practice that should always be followed since such support might prevent eventual resignation from ministry. The Ministerial Counselling Service can provide expert help.

**Resolution M4**

**Return to work after ill-health retirement**

**General Assembly adopts the following procedure for return to work after ill-health retirement of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers.**

**When a Minister or CRCW who has previously retired on grounds of ill-health wishes to return to work:**

- i) The Minister/CRCW will inform the Moderator of the Synod in which they are living.**
- ii) The Moderator will:
  - a) Inform the Secretary for Ministries**
  - b) Arrange for a Synod interview with the Minister/CRCW to assess personal and spiritual readiness to return to work and assess any further training needs. The council of the Church that gave concurrence for retirement of that Minister/CRCW should be consulted, as well as the Moderator of the Synod.****
- iii) The Secretary for Ministries will arrange for medical references to be gathered. These will include a report from the Minister's/CRCW's own doctor and if applicable his/her consultant and an independent medical/psychiatric assessment paid for by the United Reformed Church. The United Reformed Church's medical referee, or whomsoever the referee names as a specialist in each individual case, will conduct this assessment.**
- iv) A recommendation will be sent by the Synod to the Secretary for Ministries following the Synod interview.**
- v) The Secretary for Ministries will take the medical and Synod reports to the Accreditation Sub-Committee who will then take the decision as to whether the**

**Moderators may introduce the Minister's/CRCW's name to a local church or post, subject to the completion of any agreed training programme.**

- vi) The local church or post will be made aware by the Moderator that the individual is returning to work after retirement on the grounds of ill health.**
- vii) The Minister will remain in receipt of the pension and, where applicable, in Church housing until he/she receives a call.**
- viii) If there has been no call by a local church after a year the situation will be reviewed. This review will involve a meeting between the Minister and the Moderator in the first instance. Following that meeting the Moderator will advise the Accreditation Sub-Committee as to whether the Minister's name should remain available for introduction to a pastorate.**
- ix) Should the original health problem recur to the point where early retirement on the grounds of ill health becomes necessary, there should be a streamlined procedure for approving retirement on the grounds of ill-health. There will normally be no further opportunity to return to ministerial service.**

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A number of Ministers and CRCWs retire from stipendiary service early on the grounds of ill health. Some may request a return to work because they have recovered from the illness and believe themselves fit for work. At present there is no procedure to deal with such a request.

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## **2. Training Committee**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Lewis and Gibson Scholarship Regulations, approved by Resolution 40 of General Assembly 2000, by inserting a new regulation (vi) as follows, and numbering (vi) to (x) as (vii) to (xi):**

- vi) Scholars shall be elected for one year at a time, and , subject to satisfactory reports on their progress being received by the Electors, may be re-elected for a total period not exceeding four years.**

The original Will provided for scholarships to be held for three years' undergraduate study and for three years at Westminster College. The Presbyterian Church of England General Assembly used to specify 'undergraduate scholarships' when confirming them, but the majority of scholarships have been held for up to three years at Westminster College. For some time the standard length of the Westminster course has been four years. Moreover, graduate study programmes (for M.Phil and PhD) are now also typically four years. Thus the scholarships are not attractive to overseas students unless a guarantee can be given that they may be held for four years. The Electors and the Governors therefore consider that the period for study at Westminster College should now be extended to four years, and recommend General Assembly to change the regulations accordingly.

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### 3. Charity Trusts

**General Assembly notes the clarification of and alterations to the advice concerning Charity Trusts given to the General Assembly in 2001 and 2004 and asks synods, synod trust companies, district councils/area meetings and local churches to ensure that all are aware of their responsibilities.**

1. Most United Reformed Church property (churches, halls and manses) is held under the statutory trusts in the United Reformed Church Acts (and printed in Section D of The Manual). There has been much discussion about who are the "charity trustees" of these properties.

2. At the heart of the discussion have been the differing perceptions of "charity trusteeship", not just by the Charity Commission in 2001 and 2004, but by the synods and their trust companies. Although the synods have over the years evolved different policies, they all have the same basic understanding of the underlying duties and responsibilities falling upon the councils of the Church and the "trustees".

3. The primary concern of those who formulated the statutory trusts was that those trusts should accurately reflect the conciliar nature of the United Reformed Church, in which authority is based on the complementary roles of its councils. Consequently, it is not possible to single out any one body as clearly having "charity trusteeship" in the sense in which it is understood by the Charity Commission, i.e. as the body responsible under the charity's governing document for the general control and management of the charity. It is important that all the relevant bodies are fully aware of their responsibilities.

4. The table below shows for each paragraph of the statutory trusts where the responsibility lies for the required action. It will be seen that the local church (through both its elders' and church meetings), the district council/area meeting and the synod all have their part to play in respect of statutory trust properties, as do the trustees (the company or individuals having legal title) of those properties. No one body has sole responsibility, and the carrying out of the purposes of these trusts is a collaborative exercise in which each has its part to play. As a general guide, when any of the tasks is contemplated,

the elders' meeting	recommends,
the church meeting	resolves,
the synod	approves,
the trustees	implement

– and in that order. If in doubt, churches should ask the secretary to their "trustees" (usually but not invariably the synod trust company) for advice.

5. As stated in Reports to Assembly in connection with resolution 8 in 2001 and resolution 39 in 2004, the members of the elders' meeting collectively are the charity trustees for the working funds of the local churches and for any properties or investments to which the statutory trusts do not apply. The day to day oversight, management, safety and insurance of all property and financial resources lies with the local church, principally with the elders' meeting, which refers to the church meeting as appropriate.

6. Although this statement has been prepared with particular reference to England and Wales arising from dealings with the Charity Commission, the principles and processes within the URC are the same for churches in Scotland. Churches in Scotland now come under the jurisdiction of the new Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

**RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PROPERTY TRUSTS**  
(URC Act 1972 Schedule 2, URC Act 1981 Schedule 2, URC Act 2000 Schedule 1 as applicable to churches becoming part of the URC at different dates but with equivalent provisions)

The table below summarises the responsibilities of the different councils of the United Reformed Church, and of the "trustees", in relation to the statutory trust property. The "trustees" are those individuals or bodies specifically appointed for this purpose who have legal title to the property, normally but not invariably the synod trust company.

Para	Task	Recommendation	Resolution	Approval	Implementation
1	use of the premises on a day-to-day basis for direct and ancillary church purposes or, where applicable, as a residence for ministers or other church workers	Elders' meeting	Church meeting		Church meeting *
2	alteration, enlargement, mortgage, re-development, sale or lease etc. of the premises and, where appropriate, the application of sale or leasing proceeds	Elders' meeting	Church meeting	Synod (except for work not substantially affecting character appearance or value)	the trustees, using their discretion, on instructions from church meeting (land and buildings) or, when applicable, as directed by synod (unexpended proceeds)
3	hiring (as distinct from the leasing or letting) of part of the premises	Elders' meeting	Church meeting		Church meeting *
4	repairing and maintaining the premises				Not the financial responsibility of the trustees **
5	sale or lease of premises considered by synod to be no longer useful and, where appropriate, the application of the proceeds	District council/ area meeting, having consulted local church	Synod		The trustees on instructions from synod, but the trustees have no discretion

*\* Church meeting is used in preference to Elders' meeting as the latter has only an advisory role in the statutory trusts. However, it is acknowledged that, in practice, the task will often be delegated to the elders' meeting by the church meeting. It is the responsibility of the trustees to authorise or permit implementation by the church meeting.*

*\*\* The statutory trusts do not refer explicitly to the day-to-day management and upkeep of the premises. It is implicit in the functions of the elders' meeting and church meeting as declared in the structure of the URC (see Manual, Section B) that these are matters for the local church and do not involve the trustees. (It is a function of the elders' meeting to recommend to the church meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings, and of the church meeting to make or provide for the making of such arrangements).*

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#### **4. Youth and Children's Work Committee**

**1. General Assembly instructs Mission Council to revisit the 'Declaration of a Safe Church' and bring to the next Assembly proposals to extend its provisions to cover emotional, physical and domestic abuse and neglect.**

This resolution comes from FURY Assembly with the complete endorsement of the Youth and Children's Work Committee. FURY Assembly and the Committee both feel that, whilst the Safe Church declaration is both necessary and overdue, there is a need for a more co-ordinated, inclusive approach to issues of this kind.

**2. General Assembly endorses that view that all those working with children in the United Reformed Church should be adequately trained for their role. The ecumenically produced material *CORE skills for children's ministry* is welcomed as the most useful means to this end and commended to local churches.**

*CORE skills for children's ministry* is the long-awaited successor to *Kaleidoscope*. The material is being formally launched in the early summer, followed by a conference in September. This resolution is being complemented by a corresponding one at the Methodist Conference, and continues the committee's commitment to good and appropriate training for children's workers.

**3. General Assembly commends the Child Friendly Church Award scheme to local churches and recognises the award as a sign of good practice.**

The Child Friendly Church Award scheme has been developed from an original scheme in the Church of England and is being piloted in East Midlands Synod. The aim of the programme is not just to tick boxes, but to stimulate discussion and development. A church that is given the award will be presented with a sign to display. Materials will be available at General Assembly, where we hope to make the first award(s).



MISSION COUNCIL  
24-26 March 2006

AP

**Matter arising from January Mission Council: Minute  
(to be discussed in Closed Session)**

**Apology**

Mission Council is asked if they are willing to agree these apologies. If they are agreed then this will be reported to General Assembly in the terms below. The apologies will be read followed by Prayer 1. The prayers will not be printed in the Book of Reports but on a separate card which will be given to members of Assembly.

**Report to General Assembly**

The Review Group asked to consider the lessons which the URC could learn from past experience and present practice concerning the long standing disputes between Minister A and the Councils of the Church reported to Mission Council in October 2005 and January 2006. It included a recommendation that there should be an acknowledgement of the church's failure and responsibility. 'The church, not Minister A, needs to accept the shame of the past if a different future is to be achieved.' (C.2 p32) In apologising the URC seeks to confess the failings of the past, acknowledge their painful consequences for so many, and commit itself to doing things differently.

**Mission Council agreed the following apologies:**

In 1974, Minister B engaged in physical intimacy with Minister A while she was a student on placement with him. His actions violated his ordination vows, constituted sexual misconduct and caused her harm.

The United Reformed Church acknowledges that it did not respond adequately at the time and subsequently and thereby contributed to the suffering experienced by her.

The United Reformed Church deeply regrets the pain and suffering Minister A and her family have endured and sincerely apologises to them.

The United Reformed Church has made a commitment to become a Safe Church and is working to ensure that its policies and practices reflect best practice.

The Review Group also noted that many other people have suffered 'over the years of disputes between Minister A and the church.' They suggest that 'an appreciation of their work in an exceedingly difficult matter' and 'where appropriate, apologies for failures of support and guidance should be expressed.' (C.3 p33f)

In the long story of hurt and pain involving Minister A, some members of local churches, District Councils, Synod and General Assembly have suffered. The United Reformed Church regrets that suffering, is grateful for their efforts to offer care, find reconciliation and seek justice and hopes for their peace and wholeness.

### Prayer 1

Loving God,

Your heart aches with the pain of those who are abused.

We confess that, within the United Reformed Church, women and men suffer sexual abuse.

We confess that we have failed to protect the vulnerable, to hear the cries of those hurt, or to respond to them with true justice and compassion.

We are sorry

and we ask for your forgiveness.

Help us to know and to understand the sin of the past,

and to care more about justice and compassion than about institutional survival.

By your grace, remake us as a church,

and be with us as we seek healing, reconciliation and renewal.

We pray for those who, in our care, have been abused, for their families and for all affected by the ripples of abuse.

In your mercy,

give us courage to face our faults,

wisdom to know and to believe the truth,

love and compassion for the wounded,

and determination to achieve justice,

through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Amen.

### Prayer 2

Gracious God,

We give you thanks for good gift of sexuality.

We thank you for the tenderness of touch and the consolation of companionship.

We thank you that you made us with the capacity to give and receive love, and to know ourselves blessed and a blessing in doing so.

We thank you for allowing us to participate



in your recreation of the world by our acts of lovemaking.

At the same time, we recognise that we have abused this gift.

We have failed to recognise the power we hold and the vulnerability of those who trust us.

We have selfishly sought gratification without thought to the needs or dignity of others.

We have diminished ourselves and each other by separating sexual stimulation from life-giving love.

Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us.

Help us to greet each person as *thou* rather than *it*,

and to express bodily love that reflects your love for each one of us.

Increase our sense of being blessed in our sexuality,

that we may rightly be a blessing to each other.

Heal us where we have been wounded,

and accept our deep regret for whatever wounds we have inflicted.

Restore us to right relationship with you, with ourselves and with each other.

We pray this in the name of Jesus, lover of our bodies and our souls, Amen.

Kath Cross  
Susan Durber  
Carla Grosch-Miller  
Elizabeth Nash  
Terry Oakley  
Colin Offor  
Kathryn Price

# B15 - Consultation

Offer resolu - to MCAAG (as Trustees)  
(see rev'd resolu) to offer to users  
to Liaison Sp  
- or what point can  
make - -

↓  
recogn'd  
as "fruit  
of intense  
Xan goodwill" →

Shown this  
form of words  
& be asked  
their opinion.

runs risk of sitting  
neither side in  
this debate.

- Formally remitted to MCAAG  
for further thought

**Ray Adams**

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**From:** John Ellis [EllisJ@methodistchurch.org.uk]  
**Sent:** 09 April 2006 13:55  
**To:** Ray Adams; Ray Adams  
**Subject:** RE: clarification requested for mission council report to assembly

Ray -

With your numbers:

- 1 Yes; I will offer a resolution, supporting text and appendix. E1 will all be in it somewhere but it has been significantly reworked. It was 95% done quickly but Elizabeth Caswell raised a number of concerns after Mission Council and, especially as she will not be in a position at Assembly to raise them there, I have been trying to find something faithful to the story so far which also accommodates her points. With Maundy Thursday in my head as your final deadline I was planning to end my exchanges with Elizabeth on Wednesday morning even if we had not reached totally a common mind and send the final version to you then.
- 2 Yes; I have amended the supporting text to indicate MC's support but thought it easier for Assembly if all the clutch of Resolutions on Pension Fund rule changes came together from Ministries.
- 3 Fine by me. Thanks.

Regards

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Ray Adams [mailto:wrpadams@onetel.net]  
**Sent:** 09 April 2006 11:59 AM  
**To:** John Ellis  
**Subject:** Fw: clarification requested for mission council report to assembly

Dear John

Having almost completed the Mission Council report to Assembly, I would be grateful if you could clarify the following for me:

- 1. that you will provide me with text for the report covering the paper E1 at March Mission Council plus material to be put as an Appendix to the MC report
- 2. that Paper E6 (and Resolution M6) - which my notes say had 'M.C.'s approval' - will appear in the Ministries' Committee report and not in Mission Council's.
- 3. that what I have written about paper E2, in the following extract from the MC report is correct and sufficient.

4.2 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

4.2.2. Mission Council authorised the response from the Ministries Committee to the Department of Trade and Industry's document 'Clergy working conditions - statement of good practice' on behalf of the United Reformed Church. It is intended that both the DTI statement and the Church's response will be published on the United Reformed Church's website.

Any comments will be welcome

With thanks

Ray

\*\*\*\*\*

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and

11/04/2006