



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

MINUTES

Minutes of the Mission Council, held at Damascus House, Mill Hill, London NW7 from 29th September to 1 October 1995, which was constituted by the Moderator, the Revd John Reardon, who presided. Worship throughout the Council was led by Revd Elizabeth Welch and centred on the 50th anniversary of Christian Aid. Bible study was on the theme of the poor and followed the use of four Hebrew words that are translated "poor".

95/68 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, in particular those attending for the first time. Provincial representatives - Revd Ann Jackson (Northern), Mrs Anne Sutcliffe and Revd David Yule (North Western), Revd Graham Maskery (East Midlands), Mr Simon Rowntree (West Midlands), Revd Derek Wales, Moderator, and Mrs Christine Robertson (Wessex), Mrs Grace Ntiamoah (Southern), Mr Geoff Lunt (South Western); Mrs Rosemary Johnston (Children's Advocate) and Revd David Lawrence (Editor of Reform)

95/69 ATTENDANCE

There were 61 members present, with 15 staff members in attendance and Revd Elizabeth Welch, Chaplain, and Mrs Christine Hardwick, Minute Secretary.

Apologies for absence were received from Revds Jack McKelvey, John Humphreys (alternate Peter Noble), Jessie Clare (alternate Arnold Harrison), Paul Franklin, John Dryburgh, Peter McIntosh, Geoff Prentice, Nanette Head, Jean Forster and John Sutcliffe.

95/70 AGENDA & TIMETABLE

The General Secretary outlined the Agenda and presented the proposed timetable which was approved with the addition of papers on Westminster College Governance and 25 years of the URC.

95/71 MINUTE SECRETARY

Mission Council elected Mrs Christine Hardwick as Minute Secretary for 4 years including General Assembly 1999.

95/72 MINUTES OF MISSION COUNCIL - MARCH 1995

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 17-19th March 1995, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following corrections.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| p.99 95/29 line 2 | 'a complete re-wiring...' |
| p.105 95/42ii | 'the Convener of the Pensions Working Group' |
| p.106 95/45 line 9 | 'by January 1996.' |
| p.107 95/45/6 line 2 | '1 September 1996' |
| p.107 95/52a line 1 | 'Revised wording: Maintaining the Roll of Ministers, this sub-committee will accredit those applying for inclusion after training or coming from other denominations. It is concerned...' |
| p109 95/52c line 3 | 'including those of other Christian traditions..' |
| p.110 95/55 | ' <u>NUMBERS OF MINISTERS (2)</u> ' |
| p.111 95/58 line 18 | 'Secretary' |
| p.112 95/61b | 'the Mission Council's ...' |
| p.113 95/61c line 7 | 'an alleged injustice..' |
| p.113 95/62 after para (e) | a new paragraph. 'This was commended to General Assembly...' |

95/73 NOTICE OF PRESENTATION

Members were asked to consult the lists of rural churches which were displayed and pass on stories of 'the rural church militant' to the Rural Consultant.

95/74 ELECTIONS

Notice was given that nominations should be handed to the Clerk by Saturday lunchtime for 3 vacancies on the Mission Council Advisory Committee, 1 on the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and 1 for the Convener of the Staffing Advisory Committee.

95/75 GREETINGS FROM THE CHURCH OF LIPPE, GERMANY

Malcolm Hanson brought greetings from this church which is of the Reformed tradition. Malcolm had brought a plaque, which they had presented. It was a copy of a cave sculpture of the 'Descent from the Cross'. He was asked to convey our greetings and thanks to the church.

95/76 ADDRESS TO THE THRONE

A reply had been received expressing sincere thanks.

95/77 NUCLEAR TESTING

A standard reply had been received from the French Ambassador to the protest sent. John Reardon reported that a protest had also gone from the World Council of Churches Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, at which the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church in Tahiti was present.

95/78 DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

The action of Assembly Officers in appointing Revd Michael Diffey as acting Deputy General Secretary until 30 November 1995, was endorsed.

95/79 HONORARY TREASURER

It was reported that it was not yet possible to bring a name to Mission Council. The first choice from the names submitted will be interviewed next Wednesday. If the interviewing group is unanimous about the suitability of the candidate, and if the person is available immediately, it was agreed unanimously that he/she could be appointed by Assembly Officers, as Honorary Treasurer until General Assembly 1996. The name would be circulated to members of Mission Council for any comments, before the Assembly Officers took any such decision.

95/80 RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A paper entitled 'Five Year Plan - Policies and Assumptions' was introduced by John Waller, Convener. He emphasised that this document needed to be taken seriously as all church structures would be expected to operate within it. The plan is a rolling one to allow the church to react to changing circumstances. The meeting divided into groups to discuss designated sections of the report.

95/81 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Mrs Wilma Frew, Convener, reported that the **creche facility** at Eastbourne had cost £1,000 and catered satisfactorily for 6 children. Similar arrangements will be made at York. On the question raised at Eastbourne about the use of **Néscafe**, it has been ascertained that the caterers at York will not use Néscafe, but it cannot be guaranteed that no Néstle products will be on sale.

95/82 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

An apology was given to Eileen Sanderson for the omission from the Report to Assembly of the extension of her term of service as Youth and Children's Work Training Officer, until 31 December 1996. The extension was made by Mission Council.

The following nominations were approved:

Churches Council for Health and Healing - Revd Jim Hollyman

Northern College Governors - Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee for 5 years until June 2000
Revd David Jenkins for one year until June 1996

Westminster College-Board of Studies - Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee until a new Board of Governors is established. It was also agreed, on a question from the Clerk, that the Cheshunt Governors could make a similar interim appointment to replace Dr Ian Morrison.

CCBI Assembly 27Feb - 1 Mar 1996

Revds Tony Burnham, Murdoch Mackenzie, Sheila Maxey and Peter Brain with Melanie Smith & John Bradbury (Youth)

Revd David Taylor (ACTS), Mrs Eileen McIlveen (CYTUN) and Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mrs Ruth Clark, Revd Donald Norwood and Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow.

95/83 DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Caswell, Convener, introduced the report which covered Evangelism plans from 1997 to 2000. She called attention to **1997 Celebrating the evangelisation of Britain**, which is a four nation ecumenical pilgrimage from Rome to Canterbury, to mark the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columba. This is to be followed by three pilgrimages across England and Wales or Scotland, arriving by different routes in Derry. A leaflet will be circulated giving details of the routes. Local events are being organised to tie in with the pilgrimages.

It was agreed that the URC should be represented on the CCBI group organising **The Open Book** project, which aims to encourage Christians to deepen their knowledge of the Bible and create evangelistic opportunities. It was agreed that the URC would be represented by Muriel Garrow or in her absence, Sheila Maxey. **Celebrating The Millennium** Mission Council agreed 'to welcome the initiative for united Christian participation in the millennium celebrations and welcomed the idea of establishing a temporary CTE "Churches Co-ordinating Group on the Millennium" and promised URC participation in it.' Sheila Maxey agreed to represent the URC on the Group and

there would be a budget of £1000 per annum for it. Considerable reservations were expressed about some of the ideas and the committee was asked to come back with proposals to the next Mission Council.

95/84 ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS (AGOGAL)

On the advice of Tony Burnham, it was agreed that the committee should report to the January Mission Council on its task of co-ordinating the funds available. A schedule of grants made this year had been circulated which indicated what could be achieved with the injection of relatively small amounts of money. The paper was received.

95/85 MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

Human Sexuality It was agreed that 'the Task Group be thanked for their work so far and invited to continue their work, keeping a watch on the process and then collating the replies to be received by the General Secretary before 1 December 1996 and preparing a report and suggesting resolutions to be offered to General Assembly by the Mission Council.' The likely problems in this process were discussed and David Thompson, a member of the Task Group, emphasised that it is a report on discussions that take place, that is required from Churches and Councils. He also responded to concerns expressed that, whatever decisions are taken, some people will be hurt. He said that the Group will be drawing on Methodist experience in this respect. It was made clear later that this group had not discussed the topic, only the process, and did not know each others views on the subject.

Mission Council Procedure A paper on Assembly Committees and resolutions was accepted as advice to Mission Council.

General Assembly resolution 50 p.47 "Oversight... in particular of moderators" Malcolm Hanson indicated the ways in which the moderatorial role has changed over the last 20 years and it was agreed to appoint a Task Group, to report to Mission Council in 1996, with members appointed by the Nominations Committee. Five people would be chosen, including a Provincial Moderator, someone with District pastoral experience, one with ecumenical experience, plus two others. A Convener and Secretary would be chosen from within the five.

95/86 RESOLUTION OF A DISPUTE ON MATTERS SUBMITTED BY MRS J F M MAYLOR

The three people appointed had decided to follow a procedure suggested by Mrs Maylor. This was to consider only the documentary evidence and to submit a report to the September meeting of Mission Council. This information was communicated to Mrs Maylor. With a few strengthening amendments this was approved and the Clerk was instructed to send it to Mrs Maylor.

95/87 DATES FOR MISSION COUNCIL IN 1997

The proposal that both residential meetings in 1997 should be midweek was criticised. It was agreed to change the March meeting to a weekend.

95/88 MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY

It was agreed that the basic **ministerial stipend** effective from 1 January 1996 would be £13,788 and that the **Pensions Working Group** should change its name to the **Pensions Executive**.

Church Hymnary Trust The proposal, that the United Reformed Church should withdraw from the Church Hymnary Trust and receive 7% of the Trust Fund at the point of withdrawal, was agreed.

95/89 PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REVIEW AND NOMINATING GROUPS

Tony Burnham suggested that the report be referred for consideration by MCAG in conjunction with the work to be undertaken on oversight. Later in the meeting this was agreed.

95/90 CHRISTIAN AID ANNIVERSARY

John Reardon gave a brief history of the organisation. Mission Council then agreed, on behalf of The United Reformed Church, that it gives thanks to God for faithful and persistent service to the poorest among humankind, given through Christian Aid and its predecessor body over 50 years; acknowledges with particular appreciation the effective support given by Christian Aid to the world development appeals of the United Reformed Church since 1972 and the current partnership in the 'Commitment for Life' programme; welcomes and endorses the statement "All shall be included..." adopted by the Board of Christian Aid to mark this anniversary; urges Christian Aid, an agency of the churches and society at large of the call of God to seek and to strive for justice as the way of peace.'

In response to the possible cuts in the overseas aid budget, Peter Brain read out a proposed letter to be sent to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury protesting about the possible cuts. It was agreed that the Moderator and the General Secretary should sign this. Other members were invited to add their signature to those of the Moderator and General Secretary. Draft letters were available for all Synods and it would also be suggested that members write to their MP's.

95/91 GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROGRAMMES

Mission Council then divided into groups to comment on the 1995 programme and consider whether they wanted a theme for 1996. Several groups commented on the slow start and rushed conclusion to Assembly and the lack of a firm timetable which discourages media attendance. There was little support for any theme for 1996. The day concluded at 9.15 p.m. after prayers led by the Chaplain.

Saturday

The meeting started with prayers and Bible Study followed by Group reflection on Jesus' sayings regarding wealth. This was followed by consideration of the value to Mission Council of having a Theological Reflector.

95/92 RESOURCE PLANNING -Group Reports

Important points were raised and resulted in the Resource Planning Group agreeing to bring revisions of some sections for consideration later in the meeting.

95/93 RACISM

Tony Burnham introduced the paper. The proposal to consider the establishment of a post concerned with multi-racial development had been referred to Mission Council by General Assembly 1994. A proposed post was specified in the paper submitted. After discussion it was agreed to ask the Staffing Advisory Group to look at the proposal and submit proposals to MCAG who would then pass them to Mission Council. It had also been suggested that a network be set up to support those from ethnic minorities. It was agreed that this could proceed as long as the committee stayed within its budget.

95/94 ASSEMBLY PASTORAL COMMITTEE AND A URC MINISTER

The members of Mission Council met in private session, opened with prayer, to consider a letter sent to them by the URC minister referred to in the matter (b) arising from the March minutes: "Assembly Pastoral Committee and a URC Minister". After a long and sensitive debate from 3.45p.m. to 6.00p.m. Mission Council agreed the substance of a letter to be sent by the General Secretary to the Minister concerned and certain other recipients. A confidential minute of that substance and of the discussion was also agreed and will be placed in the care of the Legal Adviser.

95/95 THE RURAL CONTEXT

Michael Cruchley, the Rural Consultant, described the centre at Stoneleigh from which he operates. He then outlined the rural mission field and requested invitations to help develop strategies for rural mission; he highlighted the need for ministers who serve in these situations to be adequately trained to take advantage of opportunities. He also commended the magazine 'Country Ways'.

95/96 RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

The ideas contained in the paper were discussed in the hope that it would be possible for a shared vision to materialise. The group were asked to continue their work. David Butler pointed out that there was a need to appoint another Convener following the death of Alistair Black.

95/97 RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY REPORT

A paper containing additions and alterations to the original paper was amended further and the overall priorities were agreed.

The evening closed with prayer at 9.15 p.m.

Sunday morning started with a Communion Service.

95/98 ELECTION OF TELLERS

Delyth Rees and Duncan Wilson agreed to serve until Assembly 1996

95/99 ELECTIONS

The following were elected.

Mission Council Advisory Group - Angela Hughes, Margaret McKay and
Peter Poulter

Resource Planning Advisory Group - Simon Thomas

Staffing Advisory Group - Geoff Lunt

95/100 WORKING PARTY ON DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

This was introduced by Keith Forecast, Convener, who stressed the need for a paper, as expectations in the areas of justice and rights have changed greatly. There were no procedures in place until 1988 when the Pastoral Measure was introduced, but this is no longer adequate. The paper was discussed in some detail and the following amended resolution was agreed; Mission Council receives the first report

of the Working Party set up in January 1995 to consider the disciplinary procedures, and endorses the intention to draft procedures which separate the disciplinary functions from pastoral care, to make provision for the support and guidance of District Councils and others involved, and to create an Assembly Commission, as outlined in the report, and asks the Working Party to do further work on its proposals in the light of the discussion in Mission Council, with a view to presenting to Mission Council, in early 1996, detailed recommendations to be placed before General Assembly.

95/101 WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

The paper on the governance of Westminster College was broadly accepted with the following amendments

- 1e. the last two words should read 'Reformed base'
2. Board of Governors
 - 2.1 There shall be a Board of Governors for the College appointed by General Assembly, consisting of fourteen members as follows:
 - a. a Convener, chosen for that purpose;
 - b. a clerk or secretary to the Board, chosen for that purpose;
 - c. eight other persons, of whom at least two shall have expertise in management, finance and the maintenance of buildings, at least two shall have expertise in education, and at least two shall have ministerial experience;
 - d. the Principal of the College ex officio;
 - e. a member of the teaching staff of the College, chosen by them;
 - e. a student member of the College, chosen by the students;
 - f. the Chair of the Cheshunt Governors ex officio.
 - 2.2 To include also 'a representative of Anglia Polytechnic University'
 - 2.3 Omit 'to' before 'six years'
 - 3.1 b) after resources read 'the financial management of the College within the policies set by the United Reformed Church '
 - f) add at the end 'other than the teaching staff'
 - 4.3 penultimate line to read '...responsibility for the financial management of the College ...'

The implementation of these changes would, in the long term, require a change in the Basis of Union in respect of staff appointments; in the short term, the General Assembly could be asked to delegate its function in this respect.

The paper will be sent for comment to the Management Committee and the Board of Studies of the College, before being finalised, but section 2 as amended was agreed by Mission Council as the basis for immediate action by the Nominations Committee.

95/102 ALTERATION TO THE PROPOSED DATES FOR 1997

The March meeting would be three days, to fall within the period 14 -17 March.

95/103 CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL CHURCHES

Brief comments from group discussions were given and group leaders were asked to send more detailed comments to the General Secretary.

95/104 1997: TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF THE URC

Members were asked to consult locally for ideas on the way this might be celebrated.

95/105 SYNOD AND COMMITTEE OFFICERS GROUPS

These groups met for discussion.

95/106 THANKS

The Moderator expressed thanks to all those who had made the preparations for Mission Council, to the chaplain and to the staff of Damascus House and he was in turn thanked for his Bible Studies.

The meeting closed with worship in which the last hymn was sung after processing outside.



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT
General Secretary The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

Telephone 0171 916 2020
Fax number 0171 916 2021

To: Members of Mission Council

14 September 1995

Dear Colleague,

***Mission Council 29 September - 1 October 1995
Damascus House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1HH***

This is the second and final mailing. I enclose an agenda and papers for the meeting. The detailed timetable of business will be available on arrival but you should note the following:

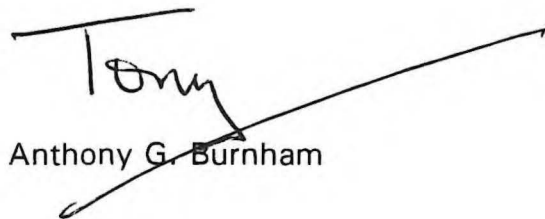
| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Friday 29 September | Arrivals from 12 noon Lunch 1.15pm |
| Sunday 1 October | Departure after lunch |

Please bring a bible and, if you need one, a bath towel. Hand towels are provided.

Groups - Information is overleaf. If any leaders or reporters cannot undertake the role, please let me know.

I look forward to seeing you at Damascus House.

Yours sincerely,


Anthony G. Burnham

GROUPS

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

A

Poulter
Earp
Cruchley
Gould
Helyar
Hughes
Jackson
Lunt
Nimmo
Reardon
Welch

B

Caswell
Gordon *Thornley*
Brain
Butler
Fairbairn
Forecast
Hardwick
Maskery
~~Thornley~~
Whitten

C

Macro
Forster
Cressey
Frank
Garrow
Jenkins
Lawrence
McKenzie
Rand
Yule

D

Frew
Wilson
Coates
Cook
Harrison
Hine
Oldham
Rogers
Sowerbutts
Sutcliffe (John)

E

Waller
Sanderson
Andrews
Crack
Hilton
Johnson
McKay
Prentice
Robertson
Wright (Chris)

F

Gathercole
Head
Bending
Duncan
Gunn
Hanson
Husselbee
Noble
Rees
Wright (Bill)

G

Meekison
Thomas
Adams
Burnham
Evans
Johnston
Mahood
Shaffrey
Sutcliffe (Anne)
Taylor

H

Collins
Woodside
Diffey
Lloydlangston
Maxey
McVey
Ntiamoah
Rowntree
Thompson
Wales



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

AGENDA

This is a list of items on our agenda. Because of the requirements of the timetable, the business will not necessarily be taken in this order.

1. Appointment of Minute Secretary: Christine Hardwick
2. MC 17-19 March 1995 - Minutes

Corrections

- | | |
|---|---|
| p.99 95/29 line 2 | '....a complete re-writing....' |
| p.105 95/42/ii | 'the Convener of the Pensions Working Group....' |
| p.106 95/45 line 9 | '.....by January 1996.' |
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| p.113 95/61/c line 7 | '...of an alleged injustice.' |
| p.113 95/62 after para (e) a new paragraph: | 'This was commended to the General Assembly.' |
3. Matters arising
 - i) 95/29/c Provincial Moderators Appointments
 - ii) 95/61 Appeals:
 - a) Mrs J.F.M. Maylor (Paper H to be tabled)
 - b) Assembly Pastoral Committee and a URC minister

Other matters will be found elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Presentation on the rural context and church life
 - i) notice on Friday
 - ii) presentation on Saturday
5. Greetings from the Church of Lippe, Germany.
6. Correspondence
 - i) Address to the Throne
 - ii) Nuclear Testing
7. Deputy General Secretary. The officers of the Assembly have appointed the Revd. Michael Diffey to act until 30 November 1995.
8. The Hon. Treasurer.
9. Elections (Paper B)

10. Christian Aid Anniversary

Mission Council, on behalf of The United Reformed Church:

gives thanks to God for faithful and persistent service of the poorest among humankind given through Christian Aid and its predecessor body over 50 years;

acknowledges with particular appreciation the effective support given by Christian Aid to the world development appeals of The United Reformed Church since 1972 and the current partnership in the 'COMMITMENT FOR LIFE' PROGRAMME;

welcomes and endorses the statement 'All shall be included...' adopted by the Board of Christian Aid to mark this anniversary;

urges Christian Aid, an Agency of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, to keep on reminding the churches and society at large of the call of God to seek and to strive for justice as the way of peace.

11. Committee Reports

- i) Assembly Arrangements
- ii) Nominations
- iii) Discipleship & Witness (Paper D)
- iv) Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (Paper K)

12. MCAG report (Paper M)

Decisions are required on:

4. Human Sexuality
5. MC Procedure (Paper J)
- 6v. Oversight.... in particular of moderators

13. Ministries (Paper A)

14. Church Hymnary Trust (Paper C - reverse of A)

15. Resource Sharing Task Group (Paper E)

16. Resource Planning Advisory Committee (Paper G)

17. Racism (Paper I)

18. Disciplinary Procedures (Paper L)

19. Provincial Moderators' Review and Nominating Groups (Paper Y)

20. Groups will discuss, amongst other topics from above,

1. Theological Reflector (Paper F - reverse of B)
2. Congregational leader (see Paper M para. 6.iii)
3. General Assembly 1995 - reactions
General Assembly 1996 i) theme ii) synod reports

21. Meeting of Committee Officers and staff



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

TIMETABLE

| FRIDAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY |
|---|--|--|
| <p><u>Additional Papers</u></p> <p>Timetable & Worship Material H Mrs Maylor (Saturdayafternoon) N Nominations Committee O Westminster College (Sunday morning) P 25 years of URC (See reverse of N) (<i>Italic Numbers refer to AGENDA</i>)</p> <p>12.00 Check in</p> | <p>8.30 Breakfast</p> <p>9.15 Prayers & Bible Study</p> <p>10.30 Groups: <i>20</i> Theological Reflector</p> <p>10.45 Coffee</p> <p>11.15 <i>16</i> Resource Planning (2) Group Reports</p> <p>12.15 <i>17</i> Racism</p> <p>12.45 Close</p> | <p>7.30 Communion</p> <p>8.30 Breakfast</p> <p>9.15 Elections Westminster College - Governors <i>15</i> Group Reports</p> <p>10.45 Coffee</p> <p>11.15 Synod Groups Committee Officers' Groups</p> <p>12.20 Prayers</p> <p>12.45 Close</p> |
| 1.15 Lunch | 1.15 Lunch | 1.15 Lunch |
| <p>2.00 Welcome and apologies Opening worship and Bible Study</p> <p>3.00 Our Agenda</p> <p>3.10 <i>1, 2, 4i, 9, 5-8</i></p> | <p>Freetime - unless business falls too far behind</p> | <p>Depart</p> |
| 3.45 Tea | 3.15 Tea | |
| <p>4.15 <i>16</i> Resource Planning (1)</p> <p>5.15 <i>11</i> Committee Reports <i>12</i> MCAG Report <i>13</i> Ministries <i>14</i> Church Hymnary Trust <i>19</i> Prov. Mod's Nominating Groups</p> | <p>3.45 <i>3</i> Minutes: Matters arising</p> <p>4.15 <i>18</i> Disciplinary Procedures</p> <p>4.45 <i>15</i> Resources Sharing Groups and Plenary</p> | |
| 6.30 Supper | 6.30 Supper | |
| <p>7.30 <i>10</i> Christian Aid Anniversary <i>20</i> Groups</p> <p>8.45 Prayers</p> | <p>7.30 <i>4ii</i> The Rural Context</p> <p>8.00 Resource Planning: The Next Five Years</p> <p>8.20 25 years of URC</p> <p>8.45 Prayers</p> | |



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

Chair: The Moderator (Revd John Reardon)
 General Secretary: Revd Tony Burnham
 Clerk: Revd Martin Cressey
 Moderator Elect: Dr. David Thompson
 Past Moderator: Revd Dr. Jack McKelvey
 Treasurer:
 Deputy Gen Sec: Revd Michael Diffey (until 30.11.95)
 Legal Adviser: Mr Hartley Oldham

Assembly Standing Committees

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

Task Groups

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

Fury Council

Mr John Dryburgh
 Ms Katherine Gould

12 Provincial Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each Province:

Rev Ann Jackson

| | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|
| 1 | Revd David Jenkins | Revd Peter Poulter, Miss Janet Turner , Miss Sheila Fairbairn |
| 2 | Revd Keith Forecast | Mrs Delyth Rees, Mrs Anne Sutcliffe, Revd. David Yule |
| 3 | Revd Graham Cook | Revd Angus Duncan, Revd Jean Forster, Mr Wesley Woodside |
| 4 | Revd Donald Hilton | Mr Brian Evans, Revd Duncan Wilson, Mrs Angela Hughes |
| 5 | Revd Malcolm Hanson | Mr Geoff Prentice, Revd. Graham Maskery, Revd Margaret Taylor |
| 6 | Revd John Waller | Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Jennifer Shaffery, Revd Patricia Nimmo |
| 7 | Revd Bill Gathercole | Mr William McVey, Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Revd Margaret McKay |
| 8 | Revd Ray Adams | Revd Sandra Lloydlangston, Mrs Joan Trippier , Mr Ivan Andrews <i>Geoff Lunt</i> |
| 9 | Revd Derek Wales | Revd Bernie Collins, Mr David Butler, Mrs Christine Robertson |
| 10 | Revd Janet Sowerbutts | Revd Geoffrey Bending, Miss Marian Crack, Mrs Marlene Hunter |
| 11 | Revd David Helyar | Mrs Christine Meekison, Mrs Grace Ntiamoah, Revd Simon Thomas |
| 12 | Revd John Humphreys | Revd Henry Gordon , Revd Nanette Head, Mr Denis Earp |

(represented by Revd. Peter Noble)

In attendance:-

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Minute Secretary | Mrs Christine Hardwick | Editor, Reform | Revd. David Lawrence |
| Moderator's Chaplain | Revd Elizabeth Welch | Training | Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee |
| Church & Society | Revd Peter Brain | Ecumenical Relations | Revd. Sheila Maxey |
| International Church Relations | Revd Tony Coates | Director, Windermere Centre | Revd Peter McIntosh |
| Ministries | Revd Michael Diffey | Communications | Carol Rogers |
| Chief Accountant | Mr Clem Frank | NYCTO | Eileen Sanderson |
| Youth Work | Mr Paul Franklin | Advocacy | Revd. Bill Wright |
| Discipleship & Witness | Mrs Muriel Garrow | Nominations | Revd. Arnold Harrison |
| Office & Personnel Manager | Mr Hilary Gunn | Children's Advocate | Mrs Rosemary Johnson |



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

GROUPS

BRIEFING FOR LEADERS AND REPORTERS

Leader Your task is (i) to enable your group to tackle the whole of its allotted agenda and (ii) to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak - encourage the shy and gag the garrulous.

Reporter Your task is to report the convictions of the group. Some matters have been given to groups to loosen tongues and stimulate ideas before plenary discussion. These do not need to be reported. Others require headlines to be reported verbally. Other matters require a more considered written report.

Friday afternoon Resource Planning (Paper G)

John Waller will introduce this before we divide into groups for one hour. Your objective is to produce a considered conclusion. The key points will be presented verbally in the plenary session on Saturday morning. However the Advisory Committee would be helped if a fuller written report could be handed to John Waller or David Butler by the start of the evening session (7.30 pm).

Please ensure that you divide up your time into three sections so that the whole paper is covered adequately. Each group will cover two sections as listed below, except G. In the third period, allow members to raise any matter they wish which arises from other parts of the paper.

| | | |
|---|------------|------------------|
| A | paragraphs | 2 and 4 |
| B | | 4 and 11 |
| C | | 2 and 11 |
| D | | 4 and 12 |
| E | | 2 and 12 |
| F | | 11 and 12 |
| G | | 2 and 3, 6 and 7 |
| H | | 4 and 12 |

Friday evening

30 minutes in total to discuss:

1. Reactions to GA 1995 (say 15 minutes)
2. Theme for 1996 (7½ minutes)
3. How could we present Synod reports* (7½ minutes)

*Eg - repeat pattern of 1994, or the interview of 1995, or invite each synod to report on one subject rather than give a general report, or what?

Reporting ought to be brief and verbal. However I would be glad of an additional written note if anything strikes you as either too long or too important to be conveyed satisfactorily in the plenary session.

Saturday morning Please end bible study at 10.30 and then discuss Paper F: Theological Reflector for 15 minutes.

A brief written report of your conclusions should be handed to me before lunch. If necessary, I will do a composite report to MC or, if more appropriate at this stage, to MCAG.

Saturday afternoon Resources Sharing (Paper E) David Butler will spend about ten minutes introducing the paper. You will then have one hour in your group to discuss 4 major matters.

1. Discuss Section 2: Inter-Provincial Sharing. The purpose is to loosen tongues and stimulate thinking for the plenary session. No reporting necessary. Say 15 minutes.
2. Section 3: Small Churches. Discuss and be reading to report your response with headlines on Sunday morning. Say 20 minutes
3. Section 4. Assume everyone has read this and so not plough through every suggestion - pick up any comments and the reporter can let me have a note of them. However do look at the last paragraphs on establishing a consultation or the alternating. Be prepared to report briefly on Sunday morning. Say 10 minutes.
4. Finally NOT Resources Sharing but Patterns of Ministry

Please look at Paper M para. 6.iii on Congregational Leader. Where do we go on this issue. (Does this link with small churches). Headline reports for Sunday morning. Say 15 Minutes.

At 5.45 we will hold a plenary discussion on Inter Provincial Sharing.

If you are unsure about anything please have a word with me.

Tony Burnham



The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT
General Secretary The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

Telephone 0171 916 2020
Fax number 0171 916 2021

To: Members of Mission Council

31 August 1995

Dear Colleague,

***Mission Council 29 September - 1 October 1995
Damascus House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7 1HH***

As usual we are meeting from lunch on Friday 29 September to lunch on Sunday 1 October. Arrivals are from 12 noon and lunch will be at 1.15 pm.

I enclose: a list of members (to enable you to arrange to travel together)
an expense slip
a map
a form for your accommodation and meal requirements

Please return the completed form, if possible, by return of post. A timetable and papers will be sent later.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony G. Burnham



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

A

Paper Mission Council

There are two matters which the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee wish Mission Council to consider, and both are endorsed by the Ministries Committee.

Basic Ministerial Stipend from 1 January 1996

In accordance with the practice that the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee is establishing, following the substantial increase in stipends over the past few years, it is proposed that stipends should be increased in line with the increase in RPI. Because of the long lead time in budget preparation, it is necessary to use the RPI figures published in November 1994 to provide a basis for the increase in stipends from January 1996. Stipend levels are reviewed, if necessary, in the light of more current inflation factors nearer the time of the implementation, and Mission Council is asked to confirm the figure.

The RPI increase reported in November 1994 was 2.61%. The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee decided that the stipend for 1996 should be the 1995 level (£13,428) plus 2.61%, rounded up to the nearest £1 monthly, i.e. £13,788 which is an increase of 2.68%.

Mission Council is asked to approve that the basic ministerial stipend effective from 1 January 1996 shall be £13,788.

Name for Pensions Working Group

At an earlier meeting, Mission Council, whilst acknowledging the necessity for the continuation of the former Pensions Sub-Committee of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, felt that the name Sub-Committee should not continue, on the basis that it is not appropriate for a Sub-Committee to have a Sub-Committee. Mission Council decided that the Sub-Committee formerly known as the Pensions Sub-Committee should be known as the Pensions Working Group.

There has been feeling in the Pensions Working Group that this is not an appropriate name, as the name "Working Group" could be indicative that the Group is not permanent. Members of Mission Council who were at Assembly will remember that the Convener of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, Michael Harrison, spoke to this point at the Assembly.

The Pensions Working Group feel that the name "Pensions Executive" correctly describes their activities, and in view of the fact that the Church now has no Executive Committee, (by that name) request Mission Council to approve the use of the words "Pensions Executive" to describe this group.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

C

CHURCH HYMNARY TRUST

1 In 1926 the Presbyterian Church of England decided not to proceed with plans to publish a new copy of its own hymn book, *Church Praise*, and instead to prepare a Supplement to the forthcoming *Revised Church Hymnary*. The details of the financial arrangements were entrusted to the Treasurership Committee. In 1927 that Committee reported to the Assembly that arrangements had been made for the PCE to join the Church Hymnary Trust, contributing £1,082 towards the capital outlay involved. (There was an anticipated consequential reduction by saving the costs of the Hymn Book Committee.) Thereafter arrangements were made to distribute the surplus on royalties to the constituent churches of the Trust. By the time the URC was formed in 1972 plans were at an advanced stage for the publication of *The Church Hymnary (Third Edition)* and for this reason there was no immediate move for the publication of a URC hymn book.

2 When the URC Assembly decided to publish a new hymn book of its own, the Doctrine and Worship Committee began to wonder whether continued membership of the Trust was necessary. The Trust decided a year or so ago to prepare a fourth edition of the *Church Hymnary*. At that point the Doctrine and Worship Committee initiated enquiries as to whether it would be possible to withdraw from the Trust, and realise the URC's current share of the assets.

3 As a result of those discussions the Annual Meeting of the Trust in March agreed to propose to the constituent churches that the URC be allowed to withdraw and that a distribution of 7% of the Fund be made to the URC. This figure is based on the percentages of royalties paid out to the URC since 1972, which were in turn based on the percentage of sales made in England. Since the actual share of the distribution in that period was 5.22%, the 7% includes an allowance for future royalties and for some years in which the English percentage of sales was higher. (The figure will also have included salse made to Church of Scotland congregations in England.) The URC representatives on the Trust, Mrs F.E. Smith and the Revd G.R. Barr, consider that the proposal is reasonable. The market value of the Trust at 31.12.94 was c £380,000, so a 7% share would be about £27,000. The actual figure would depend on the stock market valuation at the point of sale.

4 It is necessary for agreement to the proposal to be made before the next AGM of the Trust in March 1996. Originally it was intended to bring a resolution to Asembly, but this was delayed because of a wish to decide on the use to be made of this money at the same time. In order to consider what might be appropriate uses, it was thought necessary to obtain a copy of the Trust Deed, and since no copy has been found in England, a letter has been written to the Clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Since no reply has yet been received, it was felt by MCAg that the decision on whether the proposed terms of withdrawal was fair should be made first, the decision on the use to be made of the resulting assets being left until further information was to hand.

5 Resolution: Mission Council accepts the proposal of the Church Hymnary Trustees that the United Reformed Church should withdraw from the Church Hymnary Trust and receive 7% of the Trust Fund at the point of withdrawal.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

B

ELECTIONS

There are vacancies on the Advisory Committees as listed below. Our practice is to elect people to serve at MC. Please obtain the consent of the person you wish to nominate. Nominations by two members ought to be in the hands of the Clerk by lunchtime on Saturday.

MC Advisory Group - THREE VACANCIES (David Thompson is now ex-officio. David Butler has completed his term of service and is not eligible for re-election this year. Janet Turner will no longer be a member of MC).

The group plans the meeting of MC and the follow up necessary. It provides personal support and advice for the Assembly Moderator and the General Secretary.

Present Membership: The past, present and elect Assembly Moderators, the General Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer. In addition there are six elected members of whom at least two ought to be Assembly Committee Conveners. The present members in addition to those who are ex officio are Elizabeth Caswell 1996 (Convener - Discipleship & Witness), Wilma Frew 1998 (Convener - Assembly Arrangements) and Simon Thomas 1998.

Resource Planning Advisory Committee - ONE VACANCY (Aubrey Curry has completed his term of service and is not eligible for re-election this year).

The Committee is preparing a rolling five year plan which takes account of possible changes in society and in the life of the church on which the allocation of resources may be based. It will be responsible for budgets. It will hold one or two consultations with the financial representatives of the synods each year. It will also consult with those responsible for human resources. Mission Council will make all recommendations to the Assembly about the use of resources.

Present Membership: John Waller (Convener), David Butler (Secretary), Duncan Wilson (1998), Peter Poulter (1997) and Christine Meekison (1996).

Staffing Advisory Committee - VACANCY FOR A CONVENER in succession to Angus Duncan who completes his service on MC.

The Committee considers any Assembly post due to become vacant, or proposals for new posts and recommends to Mission Council whether this post should continue or be created.

Present Membership: Betty Scopes (1996), John Maitland (1997) and Denis Earp (1998)

Membership of this committee is not confined to MC. However MCAG believe that the convener ought to be a member. Of the present membership only Denis Earp is a member.



TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE - A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTOR AT MISSION COUNCIL

MCAG asked Janet Turner to put down a few thoughts on some aspects of the practice of having a theological reflector present at MC. They are offered as a stimulus to discussion.

The Council is not meeting only to conduct formal business. It is also to listen to the word of God, to pray and to provide the opportunity to meet each other as persons with needs and skills. The timetable will therefore provide adequate time for worship and reflection and will include prayers that arise from the work it is doing. AMAC advises that the Council should have in all its meetings one, or preferably two people who can stand aside from the debate and then reflect on the process in the light of the word of God, so providing a more objective theological critique of the discussion. This may well be the opportunity to invite persons from other Christian traditions or other countries to help us. 1992 Assembly Reports, p.58, para. 2.3.

From the first meeting of Mission Council, the General Secretary has honoured the above advice by inviting a theological reflector to attend and address Mission Council with his/her comments. Most commonly, the speaker has come from another UK Christian tradition or a partner church in CWM, although we have had one reflector from within the Council's membership. Each has brought different thoughts and perspectives, a variety of perceptions, some of which have been quite sharply accurate, and, not infrequently, his/her own "agenda". The comments, coming at the end of the meeting have had to go largely unquestioned because of time, and so have had to take a rather "shotgun" approach.

As Mission Council becomes more settled into processes of working, it seems appropriate to ask ourselves some questions about the theological reflector.

- ♦ The Assembly statement suggests that the purpose of this is to provide "a more theological critique of the discussion". Does the present arrangement really do that? If so, can we identify any ways we have changed. Are we meant to do anything with the reflection, either in Mission Council or in the wider church?
- ♦ If it doesn't, should we have this at all? Should we have a different kind of voice reflecting on our process? E.g. an invitation to someone who has experience in group observation or decision making. Should we ask one or two people to attend several meetings before commenting, so that they can gather a more long term picture of how we are really working within the context of the URC's spirit and ethos?
- ♦ If we do believe this is important to our process and development as a Council and choose to have a different reflector each time, does he/she have the most effective place on the agenda if we are to try and explore the meaning behind the critique, or question some of the assumptions made of us?



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

D

REPORT OF THE DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS COMMITTEE

EVANGELISM PLANS FROM 1997 TO 2000

1997 - CELEBRATING THE EVANGELISATION OF BRITAIN

1997 is the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columba and the arrival of St Augustine in Canterbury. An informal group drawn from the four nations is planning an ecumenical pilgrimage from Rome to Canterbury (leaving on Pentecost, 18 May, and arriving for the celebrations in Canterbury over the bank holiday weekend a week later). This will be for a relatively small group. Then three pilgrimages of perhaps 500 each will travel by three routes through England and Wales or Scotland to Derry (Columba's city), arriving on St Columba's day (9th June). The pilgrims hope to meet local Christians on their route, with suitable celebrations, prayers and worship. In Leicester, for example, it is hoped that there will be an inter-faith encounter. The route takes in places of significance for modern Christians as well as those of the first millennium. It is likely that the URC will be asked officially to appoint one or two pilgrims; and the Assembly Moderator may be asked to participate (possibly when the pilgrims are nearest to his home church).

The home mission secretaries of the denominations have together sponsored a leaflet with details of the pilgrimage and the significance of the two saints for the (re-)evangelisation of England in our own times. There are also suggestions of how churches and groups of churches could develop their own local pilgrimage or walk to pray, to celebrate local saints (ancient and modern), and to mark the contribution of the Christian Faith to their locality. The leaflet also gives details of other anniversaries in 1997 (there are a surprising number of them!), including the 25th/50th anniversaries of the Church of South/North India, and a proposed retracing the route of the crusades to apologise for Christian behaviour. The leaflet will be circulated to all churches in the November information Service. It is hoped that the leaflet may be available in time for Mission Council.

THE OPEN BOOK

Currently denominations are being asked whether they would like to become part of the Open Book, a proposal to "Open the Bible to people and people to the Bible". The Aims would be:

To open the Bible by telling its stories in order to increase knowledge of the Bible and its message; by showing how much we owe to the Bible in our education, language, laws, and heritage; and by demonstrating that the Bible is relevant to issues and challenges of contemporary society and daily living

To encourage all Christians to increase and deepen their knowledge, love and understanding of the Bible

To create interest in the Bible among non-Christians from which evangelistic opportunities may arise.

The Open Book will be part of Churches Together in England and open to all Christian Churches and Agencies in England; it will be publicly focused in 1998, probably starting with a bible-based CCBI Lent Course; it will use as diverse a range of media as possible (eg art, literature, music, drama and all the facets of modern technology); it will be for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures ("a multi-cultural book for a multi-cultural society"); and it will have a local focus with national publicity and materials which can be used and adapted locally

The background of the Open Book comes from an awareness that people no longer recognise basic bible stories; that they are searching for a spiritual dimension to life; and that it is necessary, towards the end of the century, to focus on the Bible's understanding of the millennium with its message of hope.

The committee recommends to Mission Council that the URC participate fully in the Open Book; and, noting that either Muriel Garrow or Sheila Maxey have attended planning meetings for the Open Book, recommends that one or other serves on the Advisory Council until a permanent appointment is made.

THE MILLENNIUM

Representatives of the denominations (including some who are not members of CTE) met under the auspices of CTE to consider how the Churches might prepare for the millennium. They reported on the state of planning for the Millennium in their Churches. Some Churches had established groups of committees, but so far these had not made any firm plans.

There was a general desire to have an ecumenical umbrella and co-ordination of what churches might do. The following is a summary of the thinking of those present:

1. Churches should be encouraged to participate fully in the events and programmes planned to celebrate the millennium in their community (local, regional or national); churches should be discouraged from purely internal church-centred activities which separate them from their communities. The Churches' aim should be to influence and use what 'the secular authorities' are planning.
2. It would be valuable to have an 'umbrella' concept (with a motif, logo and slogan, possibly using or adapting anything prepared by the Department of National Heritage) which would show that the Churches have a common approach to the millennium and which, by widespread use, would attract media attention; an 'umbrella' concept encourages diversity and allows the maximum number of Christians to come together.
3. The key elements in any proposals within the 'umbrella' might be:

celebration of the birthday of Jesus Christ
symbolic acts by Christians
emphasis on reflection rather than on events
dialogue in which there is witness

The focus could be on Jesus so that the weekend of the millennium (Friday 31st December 1999 to Sunday 2nd January 2000) could become a 'mega-Christmas'.

4. There is a unique opportunity for the Churches perhaps to initiate and certainly to contribute to a national debate on aims, objectives and values for our society in the next millennium (recognizing the pluralism of our contemporary society). Already there are a number of proposals from church leaders on how Churches might prepare for and then mark the millennium. These include the Pope's Apostolic letter on the Millennium. Among the ideas which we believe will command widespread support among Christians are:

a year of jubilee in which the issue of debt (third world and personal) might be addressed as something both significant and symbolic, and bringing together the home mission, education and social responsibility departments of the Churches: this is Good News;

focusing on a proper Biblical doctrine of time ('His story') and of the last times (kronos and kairos); recognizing both the achievements and failures of Christians over 2000 years, but stressing the Christian message of hope.

It is important and urgent that the Churches and Christian Agencies work together to build on these agreements and develop a shared vision.

Member Churches are being consulted over the summer, seeking their general support for these proposals; it is suggested that there be four national co-ordinating groups, with a small four-nations liaison group to keep each nation fully informed of developments.

The committee recommends that Mission Council welcomes the initiative for united Christian participation in the millennium celebrations; and welcomes the idea of establishing a temporary CTE "Churches' Co-ordinating Group on the Millennium" and promises URC participation in it. The committee suggests that Mission Council set up a URC Millennium Task Group to recommend how the URC should respond to the ideas being suggested and to liaise with the ecumenical co-ordinating group, and suggests that it should be linked to the Discipleship and Witness Committee or the Ecumenical Committee.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

E

REPORT OF THE RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

1 INTRODUCTION

At the March 1995 meeting of Mission Council, it was noted that the report of the Provincial Visits would be circulated to Provinces and to members of Mission Council before the General Assembly. That objective was achieved. The prime purpose of the report was to share 'statements of good practice' which would stimulate discussion and positive response in each Province. It is far too early to know how well that objective has been met.

The report highlights, and the General Assembly has confirmed the urgency of addressing, a major concern of the inequitable distribution of material wealth between the Provinces of the URC. Section 2 of this report summarises the views expressed during the Provincial Visits and sets down some of the thinking of the Task Group. Mission Council is asked to make arrangements for this matter to be taken forward.

The Task Group's previous report to Mission Council referred to further work which the Group planned to undertake to complete its remit. Mission Council suggested that standing committees might address ecumenical sharing of resources and the issues related to 'the marginalised'. The Task Group endorses this suggestion but has given some thought to 'the marginalised' which is summarised in Section 3.

The report of the Provincial visits included a number of statements and questions which had arisen from the visits and which are best directed to Mission Council. A significant proportion of these is addressed in Sections 2 and 3 of this report, others are considered in Section 4.

Throughout this report, the numbers in brackets refer to Appendix III of the Report of Provincial Visits.

The Task Group has initiated a process which will take a considerable time to complete. It believes that it would not be helpful to address new issues at this stage but asks whether the Group should continue in a monitoring role?

2 INTER-PROVINCIAL RESOURCE SHARING

The report of the Provincial Visits expressed the view that, if a sense of disillusionment in the URC ethos of sharing is to be avoided, urgent attention must be given to the concept of inter-provincial stewardship and sharing of financial resources. That opinion was strongly endorsed by the 1995 General Assembly when it passed by a large majority the Resolution:

"Assembly

- notes the report of the Resource Sharing Task Group of the Mission Council;
- thanks the Group for its work so far;
- but declines, at this stage, to endorse the conclusion that "the sharing of resources within and between Provinces cannot, and should not, be imposed by other councils of the church";
- and instructs the Mission Council to suggest ways in which the financial resources of the church may be shared for the total work of the church."

It has been suggested to the Task Group that the term "inter-provincial" is contrary to the concept of one church. This feeling is evident in the following extracts from the visit reports:

- ◆ The Executive expressed a view that the greatest challenge facing the URC is the need to be aware of its corporate nature (4.42).

- ◆ The secretary of the Provincial Strategy and Ministries Committee asked us to note three points which the Provincial Officers present heartily endorsed (5.36):
 - The URC is divided into provinces and not composed of provinces.
 - To be a united church, provinces must not ring fence their resources. The officers expressed dissatisfaction with the wide disparity of levels of wealth amongst the provinces and regret that resources cannot be made available to the whole church.
 - National policies should be delivered provincially.
- ◆ There is a wide interpretation of the URC Act where money and resources are concerned. This needs urgent clarification (13.2).
- ◆ The inequality across the national church is shown in the lack of standard accounts across all provinces - why do we shy away from total openness and honesty throughout the whole church OR are we actually a loose confederation of 12 churches? (14.4)

The Task Group identified a number of models of good practice in mission projects (3.2, 4.10, 4.29, 4.30, 10.5, 10.6, 12.5) but expressed concern that such projects could not be funded by the poorer Provinces. The poorer Provinces have to prioritise the use of resources very carefully and some either cannot or choose not to deploy their limited finance in the type of training appointments which are now commonplace in some Provinces (5.5, 6.12, 14.3).

From whichever viewpoint, it must be a matter of concern that a minority of the Provinces is apparently unable to carry out essential work, significantly in the area of training, due to inadequate financial resources, while some other Provinces are not so constrained.

The way forward in this sensitive and difficult area is not easy to discern. It is a sensitive area because different Provinces have adopted different policies with regard to the use of their financial resources and might therefore regard the priorities of other Provinces with a degree of scepticism. It is a difficult area because comparative financial data are obscured, usually unintentionally, by different accounting practices and different policies.

The Task Group offers some suggestions and alternatives under three headings:

What are the pre-requisites to sharing resources?

- acknowledgement of inequality and acceptance that steps should be taken to redress it.
- openness in sharing financial information with the implication that the accounts of the Provinces and Trust bodies should be more easily comparable as between Provinces.
- some consistency between Provinces in the application of the URC Act in matters relating to property.
- acknowledgement that some inter-provincial sharing already takes place.
- acknowledgement that sharing will not, of itself, overcome an overall inadequacy of resources in the URC
- recognition that present methods of sharing within some Provinces may require modification. For example, it might be appropriate to seek greater consistency between Provinces in their schemes for financial assistance to churches for building repairs, particularly in the rate of interest applied to loans.

What are the essential activities/facilities for each Province?

- oversight of and financial support for in-service, post-ordination and lay training
- oversight of NSM training
- YCWT/YLTO
- development officer or equivalent (names and job descriptions vary)
- loans and grants and professional guidance for building repair/development
- administration and information technology
- manses to an acceptable standard
- funding for mission projects and personnel
- book grants for students

Possible mechanisms for sharing

- pool all capital in a new 'central' fund (the administration of which would require careful consideration)
- create 'central' fund from 'levy' on Provinces and then distribute as 'block grant' or for essential purposes identified as above
- 'twinning' of wealthy with less wealthy Provinces
- bias applications to central church funds, e.g. Church Building Fund and Combined Grants Fund, in favour of poorer Provinces.

3 SMALL CHURCHES

There was a marked absence from the Provincial Visits reports of models for the support of small churches and the Task Group endorses the concerns expressed by a number of the visiting teams:

- ◆ The Northumberland District covers a large, sparsely populated area, and we sensed that grouping had gone as far as it could. There were few opportunities for "ecumenical solutions", and **there needs to be an urgent look at the challenge presented by small churches**. We note that the Teeside District are exploring the idea of a Rural Chaplaincy. A very imaginative project is taking place on Holy Island, where the small URC is being developed as a centre for pilgrimage, Retreats etc. (1.4).
- ◆ The provision of **pastoral care for medium size churches is a problem**. There is a feeling that they ought to have the full-time appointment of a minister if their ministry and mission is to be effective - half-scoping is simply not enough (7.16).
- ◆ We are a denomination of small churches. We still apply the thinking that was more related to the time when our churches had larger memberships. There is **urgent need for a radical study of the needs of smaller churches**. Up to now we have seen this as a rural phenomenon, but it now applies to the majority of our churches (13.3).
- ◆ Small churches often suffer from a guilt complex that they cannot cover the whole range of activity that they feel is expected of them. It may be **better to encourage congregations to specialize in a few things**, than to attempt to do everything (13.7).

The Statistical Supplement to the Patterns of Ministry interim report (Table 1.5) shows that, in every Province except one (Mersey) as well as for the URC as a whole, the most common size of congregation is below 30 members. Despite the predominance of small churches, the Task Group wonders whether small churches are marginalised in the life of the URC. For example, do small churches tend to receive a fair share of ministry of word and sacraments; are small churches well represented in the committee structures of the wider church; are the needs and views of small churches taken fully into account at the time of a pastoral vacancy?

The Task Group acknowledges that small churches sometimes look to the wider church only when they need assistance; particularly financial assistance. Small churches often have low expectations and can be very independent in their outlook. But there appears to be evidence that the URC still thinks in terms of large churches, despite the fact that only slightly more than half the churches in the URC have a membership greater than fifty.

The Task Group was asked to consider how those at the margins might be integrated more fully into church life. The Group believes that the place of small churches within the denomination could give helpful insights into how the URC might better involve others who feel marginalised. The Task Group therefore invites Mission Council to establish a group to recommend how URC life might be re-shaped to give greater priority to small churches as they seek to fulfil God's mission. The work carried out in Eastern Province in relation to small rural churches (7.7) could offer helpful insights.

4 OTHER ACTION

The format of this Section is to reprint the observations and questions raised by the Provincial Visits which require a response from the central church, preceded by the Task Group's suggestion for action by Mission Council (in bold type). Because most of the suggestions have arisen in only one Province, it is important to assess how widely they find support before undertaking any further work.

Mission Council:

Requests the Discipleship and Witness Committee to consider:

- ◆ Valuable Provincial training courses have been organised by the Provincial Strategy and Ministries Committee for those people who will be involved in District Pastoral Visits. While on this subject, the Provincial Officers think that a national policy on Pastoral Visitations would be helpful (5.18).
- ◆ The Province feels that an ongoing review/appraisal system for local congregations would be more effective than the present quinquennial visits (7.18).
- ◆ They would value greater support and backing from the URC as a whole for the Churches Advertising Network and its Christmas Advertising Campaign (9.16).

Requests the Ministries Committee to consider:

- ◆ Now that the URC has determined a firm policy on the retirement of stipendiary ministers at 65, a policy should now be developed on the retirement of non-stipendiary ministers. The presence of a NSM can cause problems when a congregation makes a call to a new minister (7.14).
- ◆ The Province would like to hear about the experience of good practice elsewhere in appraisals for ministers (11.11)

Requests the Ecumenical Committee to consider:

- ◆ The overall finding of the Report of Provincial Visits that, although there is clearly a great deal of ecumenical co-operation in LEPs and, to a small degree, in training, the visits did not reveal effective models of good practice in ecumenical resource sharing at the District or Province level.
- ◆ There are problems of developing ecumenical relationships. Provinces often cover the areas of three or four Anglican bishoprics. It may be better to have an Ecumenical Officer for each, than to expect the Moderator to relate to them all (13.6).
- ◆ There was a suggestion that overseas visitors should be invited to come and look at local churches to develop a global view of the church. (The Task Group understands that this is matter which forms part of the remit of the Churches' Commission on Mission of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland) (4.46).

Requests the Assembly Pastoral Committee and/or the Provincial Moderators' Meeting to consider:

- ◆ Having just gone through a difficult case of ministerial discipline, the Province would urge the establishment of a central 'help-line', available on a 24 hour basis, to provide advice on how to deal with the police, the press and the law. When a case becomes public, events move fast and an immediate, considered response is often necessary. A Province on its own does not have the experience or expertise to respond effectively (7.11).

Requests the Training Committee to consider:

- ◆ The Province would like to hear about the experience of good practice elsewhere in the area of training information (11.12).

Requests the Resource Planning Advisory Committee to consider:

- ◆ The Task Group urges all those with an opportunity for advocacy to challenge members to the principle that, within their overall charitable giving, 5% of take home pay should be given to the local church, taking advantage, where possible, of tax legislation to increase the value of their gift.

Establishes a Consultation to study the Sharing of Information within the URC.

There is reason to be thankful for the number, quality and content of publications that are being produced by the Provinces (2.2, 7.2, 9.1, 10.9, 11.5). But the Task Group is convinced that a much greater effort must be made to share them. It also believes that there are opportunities for coordinated inter-provincial production of some of those documents which provide basic information which is applicable throughout the URC (9.2). Provincial Moderators, Synod Clerks and Assembly Committees are asked to be alert to the opportunities for such sharing. Some of the more substantial publications deserve a review in Reform or in the Provincial Newsletter. In the longer term, it is hoped that the Information Technology Task Group might find a way of developing a database of published resources (14.6). As a final suggestion, the Task Group believes that a display of Provincial publications should be arranged at a future General Assembly.

As a result of the Charities Act 1993, new accounting regulations will come into force in 1996 and will require some churches and Provinces to change the presentation of Accounts. This is an obvious area for coordinated advice to all the local churches and Provinces. PLATO has this on its agenda and so does the Finance Committee. The two groups are urged to work together on this matter (11.10).

On a broader front, it is evident that Provinces count it important to foster relationships between Districts and between local churches, Districts and the Synod (3.17, 4.28, 6.1, 9.8, 11.1). Communication is seen as a vital ingredient here too (13.4) and the Task Group would like the Information Technology Task Group to consider the model which Eastern Province is developing for the use of Fax (7.3). Many Provinces are to be complemented on experimenting with different styles of Synod meeting and with imaginative publications to support those meetings. Some of the ways this is done may be of particular interest to others (1.2, 3.4, 4.5, 6.2, 10.15).

Or, if this is not felt to be justifiable, to divide up the tasks as follows:

Requests the Finance Committee and PLATO to respond:

- ◆ As a result of the Charities Act 1993, new accounting regulations will come into force in 1996 and will require some churches and Provinces to change the presentation of Accounts. This is an obvious area for coordinated advice to all the local churches and Provinces. PLATO has this on its agenda and so does the Finance Committee. The two groups are urged to work together on this matter.

Requests the Assembly Arrangements Committee to make a recommendation to Mission Council:

- ◆ The Province put forward the suggestion that the General Assembly might be an occasion for a display of material from the Provinces (11.13).

Requests the Information Technology Task Group to consider:

- ◆ The model which Eastern Province is developing for the use of Fax. (7.3).
- ◆ In the longer term, to find a way of developing a database of published resources (14.6).

Requests its members please to note:

- ◆ Whilst recognising we work within Provinces and Districts, they may not always have the same focal points as closely linked geographical areas. Should we, on occasion, be encouraging churches that are near to a church in a neighbouring District or Province to work together? (14.5).



RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Five Year Plan - Policies and Assumptions

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is presented to Mission Council for discussion and endorsement. Specific policies and assumptions are in bold type and these are intended to form the basis of the narrative supporting the first five-year plan and the substance of the financial five-year plan. The paper represents a considerable amount of new work by the Resource Planning Advisory Committee. The Committee is grateful for the help that has been given in the preparation of the paper by those with whom it has consulted. It is clear from the paper that the process of consultation is ongoing.

Mission Council will be asked to adopt the first five-year plan, including the 1997 Budget, at its meeting in March 1996.

2 THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS

The task of the URC is to respond to God's call to mission and worship. Any long-term plan for the use of the church's resources must arise from a strategy aimed at fulfilling that task most effectively. It is clear that the stipendiary ministry is the most significant resource of the URC for which money is required. It is also clear that the only significant source of regular income is the membership of the URC, using the channel of Provincial M and M contributions. This points to a critical balance between the cost of ministry and the capacity to pay for it. Work is being undertaken currently to determine the number of ministers on the payroll in the next few years. The discussion is largely about how the number might be controlled; but this is only a short-term question. For the longer-term, we should be tackling the issue in response to the church's vision of its task:

- what are the URC's growth targets?
- what ministry resources are needed to achieve these targets?
- what is the cost of these resources?
- how can the church meet these costs?

The decision process which deals with these questions is probably to present (and indicate the outcome of) two scenarios:

- continued decline at the same rate as in the past fifteen years (see *Priorities & Resources Report of 1979*). This would require a shift in the source of ministry to non-stipendiary etc. and/or a dilution of ministry
- a reversal of decline; e.g. to restore numbers to the 1990 level by 2000.

Both of the above need to take account of the outcome of the 'Patterns of Ministry' debate and include a careful consideration of the trend away from formal membership as suggested in the General Secretary's reflections 'The Reports of our Death are Greatly Exaggerated'.

The most recent changes in the trends of minister numbers have arisen unexpectedly and have not been in conflict with URC policy. Such changes may well occur in the future, e.g. there may be a growing trend for ministers to serve part-time; the number of those transferring from NSM to SM might increase rapidly. It is too early to say whether it will be necessary to develop policy to limit the rate of such changes but, at the very least, models must be developed within the five-year planning process which enable 'what if?' questions to be asked and thereby reveal the effect of changes in trends which might be anticipated.

Ministries Committee has been asked to advise the number of stipendiary ministers which should be included in the 5-year plan, year by year. It is intended that the figures should be derived from an assessment of need. There is concern that stipendiary ministry is often deployed in response to a church's ability to pay for it; rather than in response to mission opportunity.

On the advice of Ministries Committee, and pending a full response to the above request, it is assumed that the number of stipendiary ministers will remain at the 1995/96 level.

The Ecumenical Committee has been asked to advise the likelihood of a further union of the URC with another church during the next decade and to predict the numbers of united local churches over the 5-year plan period, year by year.

3 STIPENDIARY MINISTERS' CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

On the advice of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-committee, it is assumed that:

- Basic stipend

in accordance with present policy, stipends will be increased in line with RPI throughout the plan period. The increase for the stipend year Jan 1st. to December 31st. is based on the figure for RPI announced in the November thirteen months before the beginning of the stipend year.

- Pension provisions

there will be no change in the basic pension fund rules during the plan period.

- Housing

during the plan period there will be no changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration as regards ministers' housing.

4 TRAINING

It is evident that the cost of training in the URC represents a very significant proportion of the expenditure budget (approximately 8% in 1995/6). It is assumed that the cost of ministerial training (per person) rises at the rate of 5% p.a.

The cost of ministerial training should, in principle, be a charge on the M and M budget. As a transitional measure, part of the accumulated income in the Ministerial Training Fund is being used each year with the intention of reducing it to zero by the year 2000.

It is understood that the Accreditation sub-committee is to review policy with regard to the age of acceptance for stipendiary ministry training. The RPAC has expressed concern that shorter terms of ministerial service lead to increases in the cost of training and has asked the Accreditation sub-committee to give serious consideration to the financial implications of any new policy.

The Training Committee has been asked whether it is reasonable to assume that the Windermere Centre and Yardley Hastings will become self-financing during the next five years, with the stipends of the Director and Chaplain respectively being treated as part of expenditure. The Training Committee has also been asked if it is able to prepare five-year plans for Windermere, Yardley Hastings, Westminster College and St. Andrew's Hall.

It is assumed that the cost of training could well change significantly during the plan period as a result of the Review of Training the URC which is due to be reported to the General Assembly in 1996.

The Training Committee has been asked to consider the impact upon resources of its recommendations arising from the Review. Discussion at the Mission Council in March 1995 pointed to the need for a greater emphasis on training both ministers and lay people in the URC. Mission Council also approved an increase in the 1996 Budget to provide grants for lay training. Concern has been expressed to the Training Committee that, in the light of this emphasis and the assumption that the annual increase in the cost per person of ministerial training is likely to exceed the rate of inflation, it is essential that training is carried out as economically as possible.

5 HOUSING MINISTERS AND WIDOW(ER)S IN RETIREMENT

The policy of the URC Retired Ministers Housing Committee is agreed by the General Assembly. In recent years, about £2M has been withdrawn from unrestricted income to the church and lent to the Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited to meet the cost of operating that policy.

Changes are taking place in the age distribution of ministers, arising in part from a declining number overall and in part from the increase in the average age of ordination. Those entering the ministry later in life may be more likely to have housing of their own. The level of legacies and donations is variable. It is very difficult to assess the impact of such factors upon future requirements for retirement housing, but the URC Retired Ministers Housing Committee has made an assessment and offered advice. **In the light of that advice, it is assumed that no further request will be made for money from central church funds but that, in the near future, none of the loans will be repaid.**

Consideration must be given to the level of care that might be appropriate for retired ministers and widows who are not in a position to sell their property to pay privately for care.

6 PENSION FUND ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION

This is required to bring the value of the Pension Fund to the level required as a result of actuarial valuation. **The present assumption is that the contribution (£998,000 in 1995) will be increased each year at the rate of 10% compound up to and including the year 2005.** This represents a very significant, and increasingly significant, item of expenditure. Although there will be further actuarial valuations every three years, it is assumed that, during the plan period, they will have no effect on the contribution schedule set out above.

7 SALARIES OF LAY STAFF

The policy is that lay staff salaries are determined by the Salaries Committee. Salaries are reviewed with effect from 1st. July each year and a number of factors are taken into account. The latest available RPI figure is considered, and salaries are normally increased in line with this figure (to the nearest 0.5 percent).

Other factors, particularly for central office staff, include increases in commuting costs. For the purposes of the five-year plan, it is assumed that, during the plan period, lay staff salaries will rise in line with RPI.

It is also assumed that the number of lay staff remains constant throughout the plan period. It must be acknowledged, however, that decisions of the General Assembly could vary the number and/or change the balance of central church staff between lay and ministerial.

8 GENERAL COSTS

It is assumed that such costs as travel, housing-related costs, office supplies etc. will rise in line with RPI. It is acknowledged that the RPI is a crude index in relation to such elements of the budget but it is felt to be acceptable in view of the comparative insignificance of these items and the work involved in a more rigorous approach.

9 RESERVES

Considerable reserves of both capital and income have been built up in central church funds. Some of these are restricted in their use by the trusts on which they are held. Others are unrestricted, although not necessarily available for immediate use. The case for taking a longer term view and for responding to short term 'blips' only in the context of the long term plan has already been made. One consequence of this should be a willingness to use reserves to overcome short term deficits. A policy is needed to determine appropriate levels of reserves and the use of accumulations of income in restricted Funds.

A discussion paper has been produced in preparation for a consultation between representatives of the RPAC and of the Finance Committee to consider the matter of reserves and to make policy recommendations.

10 ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Two economic indicators, over which the URC has no control, directly influence the financial aspects of the five-year plan. It is notoriously difficult to forecast these, but it is essential to make some assumptions. Those which follow have been based upon figures supplied by Lloyds Bank Economics Department and will be reviewed by the Finance Committee prior to publication:

- RPI

Policies set out in Sections 3, 7 and 8 identify RPI as a significant influence upon expenditure. **URC Pool investment income is expected to rise in line with RPI. The rate of inflation is also a factor which is increasingly taken into account by local churches, Districts and Provinces when they consider what M and M contribution they might make. A figure of 3.5% p.a. is assumed throughout the plan period.** Whatever the outcome of the next General Election, inflation at more than about 4% appears to be politically unacceptable.

- Interest Rates

This factor is taken into account in projecting income from deposits and from government stock. More significantly, it is a key element in actuarial valuation of the Pension Fund and therefore contributes to the determination of future Fund valuations and therefore the need for any subvention (see Section 6). **A figure of 7.5% p.a. is assumed throughout the plan period.**

Two other economic factors influence the financial five year plan:

- Company Share dividends

Projections for dividends on equity investments are of little significance as most investment income arises from holdings in the URC Pool where 'dividends' are planned to rise in line with inflation (see RPI above).

- VAT

It is assumed that the rate of VAT will remain unchanged throughout the plan period and that no further exemptions will be granted to churches.

11 ADVOCACY AND TRIO

TRIO is based on the belief that our giving is part of our response to God's love in Christ. TRIO has been extremely successful in enabling local churches to increase their income from direct giving. **Only a minority of churches have, so far, used the programme but it is assumed that, by the end of the plan period, 75% of churches will be using TRIO to inform and challenge their congregation.**

- Ministers and Elders need to accept it as their responsibility to inform and challenge the congregation.

The increase in income in churches which have used TRIO has not usually been reflected in increased contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. **It is assumed that, at an early stage in the plan period, this will be corrected and thereby facilitate increases in M and M contributions throughout the plan period at a rate above RPI. It is also assumed that increases in costs above the rate of inflation will be explained, and justified, at all levels of the church.** There is strong evidence that churches will give more if presented with the challenge.

- Provincial Financial Resources Committees have a key role to play in challenging churches to increase their M and M contributions.

- The relation between local and national

The underlying assumption of the five-year plan has been that the mission task is largely focussed in the local church. Clearly, local social and economic factors directly affect this mission. But so also do national factors and trends. It is the task of Assembly to anticipate, trace and make sense of such trends (the whole picture) and their effect upon the mission of the local church. It is its task also to address the issues of policy behind such trends, whilst also being supportive and complementary to the local mission. The latter may well have appropriate financial implications.

- The role of local church in community and national church in society

Local churches may be affected by national policies, in that pressure to reduce expenditure on the 'welfare state' may, during the next five years, transfer public expectations for community care and services increasingly to the voluntary/charitable sector, including the Church.

Meeting these expectations as well as maintaining the very wide-ranging services already provided by local churches will cost money. The 'capping' of local authority budgets indicates that financial assistance from such sources may be further restricted.

If society develops away from the welfare state as we have known it, then it is even conceivable that the URC would have to consider denomination-wide programmes of social care. The financial implications of this would be immense.

- Policies and legislation affecting the church locally and nationally

Apart from the policies referred to in the previous sub-section, there are particular pieces of legislation which have actual or potential impact upon church finances. The continued liability for VAT on some church building construction and repair work and the imposition of VAT on fuel are two examples. The costly procedures for Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Control is another. It is impossible to anticipate whether the impact of these and other products of legislation will ease or increase the financial burden during the plan period.

- General economic conditions

The church is, at all levels, very largely dependent upon the giving of local church members. Despite the ideal that giving to the church is the first call on income, their ability and desire to give generously may be affected by a number of economic conditions. Chief among these are both the availability and security of employment. Other factors will be the structure of income tax and the *rate of* interest on both savings and mortgage payments. Levels of state benefits and the performance of pension funds also have their effect. Stability along these fronts will aid planning and, perhaps, encourage generous giving.

- Other factors having an economic effect

Attention has been drawn to the age profile of URC membership and evidence drawn from the URC advocacy programme which points to an 'ageing' Church. Whilst more women are in paid employment it may still be true that many, and they form perhaps two thirds of the Church's membership, remain dependent upon a partner's income. It is recognised that these are important factors but, because their effect cannot be quantified at this stage, no assumptions have yet been made.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

G1

RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Five Year Plan - Policies and Assumptions

ADD NEW SECTION 2:

2 CHURCH MEMBERS

The task of the URC is to respond to God's call to worship and mission. In that task, the prayers, commitment and service of the members is the primary resource. The word "members" should not be taken literally, particularly because of the trend away from formal membership as suggested in the General Secretary's reflections 'The Reports of our Death are Greatly Exaggerated'.

IN (OLD) SECTION 2, REPLACE PARAGRAPH "Both of the above Exaggerated" WITH:

An important question, which needs further investigation, is how far and in what ways the placing of paid ministers affects the growth and development of the church. Is an increase in their number the only, or the best, way of achieving growth?

IN (OLD) SECTION 4, REPLACE FOURTH AND FIFTH PARAGRAPHS WITH:

The URC owns, or partly owns, the four training institutions of the Windermere Centre, Yardley Hastings, Westminster College and St. Andrew's Hall. The General Assembly must set clear policy for the use and financial management of the first three of these establishments. Use will be determined by the General Assembly on the advice of the Training Review. The Training Committee has been asked to coordinate the preparation of five-year plans for all four institutions.

It is assumed that the patterns and cost of training are likely to change significantly during the plan period as a result of the Review of Training the URC which is due to be reported to the General Assembly in 1996.

REPLACE FIRST PART OF (OLD) SECTION 11 WITH:

TRIO is based on the belief that our giving is part of our response to God's love in Christ. TRIO has been extremely successful in enabling local churches to increase their income from direct giving. **Only about one third of churches have, so far, used the programme. It is envisaged that, by the end of the plan period, all churches will be using TRIO, or a similar programme, to inform and challenge their congregation.**

- Ministers and Elders need to accept it as their responsibility to inform and challenge the congregation.

Local churches have increased their giving to M and M a great deal in recent years. This has sometimes been at the expense of meeting local needs. This may well explain why the increase in income in the churches which have used TRIO has not usually been reflected in increased contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. **It is assumed that, in the later years of the plan period, this will be corrected and thereby facilitate increases in M and M contributions at a rate above RPI.**

IN (OLD) SECTION 12, ADD TO THE END OF THE THIRD PARAGRAPH:

Need is frequently most acute in places where the local church has limited resources. The national church will need to help the local.

Five Year Plan - Policies and Assumptions

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper was adopted by Mission Council at its meeting in September/October 1995. Specific policies and assumptions are in bold type and these are intended to form the basis of the narrative supporting the first five-year plan and the substance of the financial five-year plan. The paper represents a considerable amount of new work by the Resource Planning Advisory Committee. The Committee is grateful for the help that has been given in the preparation of the paper by those with whom it has consulted. It is clear from the paper that the process of consultation is ongoing.

Mission Council will be asked to adopt the first five-year plan, including the 1997 Budget, at its meeting in March 1996.

2 CHURCH MEMBERS

The task of the URC is to respond to God's call to worship and mission. In that task, the primary resource is the prayers, commitment and service of the people in the local church.

3 THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS

Any long-term plan for the use of the church's resources must arise from a strategy aimed at fulfilling that task most effectively. It is clear that the stipendiary ministry is the most significant resource of the URC for which money is required. It is also clear that the only significant source of regular income is the membership of the URC, using the channel of Provincial M and M contributions. This points to a critical balance between the cost of ministry and the capacity to pay for it. Work is being undertaken currently to determine the number of ministers on the payroll in the next few years. The discussion is largely about how the number might be controlled; but this is only a short-term question. For the longer-term, we should be tackling the issue in response to the church's vision of its task:

- what are the URC's growth targets?
- what ministry resources are needed to achieve these targets?
- what is the cost of these resources?
- how can the church meet these costs?

The decision process which deals with these questions is probably to present (and indicate the outcome of) two scenarios:

- continued decline at the same rate as in the past fifteen years (see Priorities & Resources Report of 1979). This would require a shift in the source of ministry to non-stipendiary etc. and/or a dilution of ministry
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An important question, which needs further investigation, is how far and in what ways the placing of paid ministers affects the growth and development of the church. Is an increase in their number the only, or the best, way of achieving growth?

The most recent changes in the trends of minister numbers have arisen unexpectedly and have not been in conflict with URC policy. Such changes may well occur in the future, e.g. there may be a growing trend for ministers to serve part-time; the number of those transferring from NSM to SM might increase rapidly. It is too early to say whether it will be necessary to develop policy to limit the rate of such changes but, at the very least, models must be developed within the five-year planning process which enable 'what if?' questions to be asked and thereby reveal the effect of changes in trends which might be anticipated.

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4 STIPENDIARY MINISTERS' CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

On the advice of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-committee, it is assumed that:

- **Basic stipend**

in accordance with present policy, stipends will be increased in line with RPI throughout the plan period. The increase for the stipend year Jan 1st. to December 31st. is based on the figure for RPI announced in the November thirteen months before the beginning of the stipend year.

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there will be no change in the basic pension fund rules during the plan period.

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during the plan period there will be no changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration as regards ministers' housing.

5 TRAINING

It is evident that the cost of training in the URC represents a very significant proportion of the expenditure budget (approximately 8% in 1995/6). It is assumed that the cost of ministerial training (per person) rises at the rate of 5% p.a.

The cost of ministerial training should, in principle, be a charge on the M and M budget. As a transitional measure, part of the accumulated income in the Ministerial Training Fund is being used each year with the intention of reducing it to zero by the year 2000.

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The General Assembly must set clear policy for the the use and financial management of the Windermere Centre, Yardley Hastings and Westminster College. Use will be determined by the General Assembly on the advice of the Training Review. The Training Committee has been asked to coordinate the preparation of five-year plans for all three institutions.

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It is assumed that the rate of VAT will remain unchanged throughout the plan period and that no further exemptions will be granted to churches.

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- Provincial Financial Resources Committees have a key role to play in challenging churches to increase their M and M contributions.

13 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- The relation between local and national

The underlying assumption of the five-year plan has been that the mission task is largely focussed in the local church. Clearly, local social and economic factors directly affect this mission. But so also do national factors and trends. It is the task of Assembly to anticipate, trace and make sense of such trends (the whole picture) and their effect upon the mission of the local church. It is its task also to address the issues of policy behind such trends, whilst also being supportive and complementary to the local mission. The latter may well have appropriate financial implications.

- The role of local church in community and national church in society

Local churches may be affected by national policies, in that pressure to reduce expenditure on the 'welfare state' may, during the next five years, transfer public expectations for community care and services increasingly to the voluntary/charitable sector, including the Church.

Meeting these expectations as well as maintaining the very wide-ranging services already provided by local churches will cost money. The 'capping' of local authority budgets indicates that financial assistance from such sources may be further restricted. Need is frequently most acute in places where the local church has limited resources. The national church will need to help the local.

If society develops away from the welfare state as we have known it, then it is even conceivable that the URC would have to consider denomination-wide programmes of social care. The financial implications of this would be immense.

- Policies and legislation affecting the church locally and nationally

Apart from the policies referred to in the previous sub-section, there are particular pieces of legislation which have actual or potential impact upon church finances. The continued liability for VAT on some church building construction and repair work and the imposition of VAT on fuel are two examples. The costly procedures for Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Control is another. It is impossible to anticipate whether the impact of these and other products of legislation will ease or increase the financial burden during the plan period.

- General economic conditions

The church is, at all levels, very largely dependent upon the giving of local church members. Despite the ideal that giving to the church is the first call on income, their ability and desire to give generously may be affected by a number of economic conditions. Chief among these are both the availability and security of employment. Other factors will be the structure of income tax and the *rate of* interest on both savings and mortgage payments. Levels of state benefits and the performance of pension funds also have their effect. Stability along these fronts will aid planning and, perhaps, encourage generous giving.

- Other factors having an economic effect

Attention has been drawn to the age profile of URC membership and evidence drawn from the URC advocacy programme which points to an 'ageing' Church. Whilst more women are in paid employment it may still be true that many, and they form perhaps two thirds of the Church's membership, remain dependent upon a partner's income. It is recognised that these are important factors but, because their effect cannot be quantified at this stage, no assumptions have yet been made.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

H

REPORT TO THE MISSION COUNCIL ON THE RESOLUTION OF A DISPUTE REFERRED TO THE COUNCIL ON MATTERS SUBMITTED BY MRS. J. F. M. MAYLOR

In accordance with Minute 95/61(a) of the Mission Council meeting of March 1995 a meeting was held on Friday, 26th. May, 1995 of the three persons appointed by the Mission Council to consider the data provided by Mrs. Maylor and to prepare a report for the Assembly, namely the Revd M. H. Cressey (Clerk), the Revd W. W. Mahood and Mrs. Wilma Frew (Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee). Each of the three had had access to all data provided by Mrs. Maylor and had carefully read them.

The group decided (a) to follow a procedure which was one of those mentioned by Mrs. Maylor in her letter of the 14th. March 1995, namely that "conclusion is reached solely on the basis of data evidence and presented reports" and (b) to ask the Mission Council at its meeting in September to act for the General Assembly in resolving the dispute. The September Mission Council was judged to be the earliest time at which such resolution could take place, since those seeking to resolve the dispute would wish to know the process decided by the 1995 General Assembly for the wide-ranging discussion in the United Reformed Church of questions of human sexuality. The Mission Council could be asked to act for the General Assembly at its September meeting because it would not be fair to the parties to the dispute to delay resolution until the General Assembly of 1996 or even 1997.

The Clerk reminded the group that the matters before it had come by way of referral from the relevant District Council and Synod. Mrs. Maylor had sought in terms of paragraph 5 of the Structure of the United Reformed Church (Manual 3rd. Edition, page 28) for resolution of a dispute; she was not appealing against any specific decision of a council of the United Reformed Church. The decision of the General Assembly on a matter which has come before it on reference is final.

After careful discussion of the presented data the group decided (i) to confirm the adopted procedure and not to seek interview with any of the parties (ii) to present its report to the Mission Council at its September Meeting.

The group decided that the first paragraphs of this report, up to the words "present its report to the Mission Council at its September meeting" should be communicated by the Clerk to Mrs. Maylor as soon as possible to assure her that matters are in hand but that the content of the proposal for resolution of the dispute must be confidential until revised and authorised by the Mission Council.

The report would be in the form of a suggested letter to Mrs. Maylor, with copies to other parties to the dispute, as follows:

Dear Mrs. Maylor,

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, acting in the name of the General Assembly, has instructed me as Clerk to write to you in the following terms.

(i) The Mission Council appointed a commission of three persons to review all the documents submitted by you for consideration; the commission did so review them up to and including your letter and enclosures of the 24th. May, 1995.

(ii) The Mission Council apologises for the fact that this dispute has been so long drawn out and has not been brought before any council of the United Reformed Church for decision until now.

(iii) The Mission Council declares its belief in your Christian integrity.

(iv) The Mission Council affirms the duty of all councils of the United Reformed Church to give a due and measured hearing to the conscientious views of church members.

(v) The Mission Council takes note of the pastoral concern shown by officers of Muswell Hill and Regent Square United Reformed Churches and of the relevant District Council and Synod and of the General Assembly who have sought over a period of six years to resolve the dispute, while recognising that there are deep differences of judgement among the parties to the dispute as to the wisdom of actions and statements of those variously involved.

(vi) The Mission Council has accepted the judgment of the commission that there is no sufficient ground in the material submitted to it for a disciplinary case against any of the parties concerned.

(vii) The Mission Council points out that the matters of principle concerning human sexuality on which you have consistently sought to make your views known have now been referred by the General Assembly of 1995 for widespread discussion in the United Reformed Church with the aim of Assembly decisions in 1997; these matters should now be discussed in general terms of principle by the whole church and not as a locally disputed matter.

(viii) In terms of paragraph 10 of the URC Basis of Union (Manual 3rd. edition, page 4) the Mission Council declares (a) that the safeguarding of the substance of the faith with respect to these matters of human sexuality has now been committed to the General Assembly of 1997 (b) that for the maintenance of the fellowship of the United Reformed Church and the avoidance of injury to its unity and peace all parties to the dispute between you and other members and councils of the United Reformed Church are now called upon to accept that the dispute is at an end on the basis of paragraphs (iii) to (vii) above. It is the hope of the Mission Council that you can now find peace of mind and renew a fullness of communion with your fellow-members of the United Reformed Church, especially at the Muswell Hill and Regent Square churches.

MHC, 26.5.95.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

Racism

1. At the GA 1994, it was proposed:
 - 20 b) the URC General Assembly agrees to the allocation of a full-time special multi-racial ministry post with responsibility for monitoring and encouraging the involvement of people from different cultural backgrounds in the structures of the URC.

The Revd. Raymond Adams moved an amendment in the following terms:-

General Assembly instructs the Mission Council

1. **to consider the motion from Thames North Synod on the allocation of a special multi-racial ministry;**
2. **to make proposals to the General Assembly of 1995 in consultation with the new Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities and the Finance Committee as to what post, if any, is needed and how it should be funded.**

The amendment was seconded by Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow.

The Assembly passed the amendment with some votes against.

The amendment having become the substantive motion was carried.

2. The Equal Opportunities Committee, which was also set up at the 1994 Assembly, was not able to act on this until it was too late for the 1995 Assembly. The Committee has now forwarded its proposal.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

J

MC, Assembly Committees and Assembly Resolutions

At the March MC (Minute 95/56) the Clerk commented on two points of procedure. The first related to the way MC dealt with resolutions from Committees to the Assembly. The second related to the weight to be given to group reports which had not been tested in plenary session. These matters were referred to MCAG. The following is offered to MC as the Group's advice.

Committee Resolutions

1. Assembly Committees are standing committees and therefore have the right to take resolutions to the GA. The MC, which is also a standing committee was given its remit by the GA 1992. The Assembly Report p.57 para. 2.1 stated:

"The purpose of the MC is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and the policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities....Its service is directly towards the Assembly.....The Council will ask, is this programme, this appointment, this budget, this grant, designed to further the overall mission, or simply to maintain our human structures of institutional life? It is by such criteria that priorities will have to be assessed, not only when new work is proposed but as the existing work of the Church is reviewed".

2. In practice, committees have used the MC as a sounding board, rather in the manner of the old departmental central committees. MC has also commented on reports, programmes and resolutions going beyond a narrow interpretation of its role.
3. This widening of the role of MC can be of value to the committee, to the GA and to the Church. However it ought to be understood that the MC has no authority to prevent a committee from presenting a resolution to the GA. MC can invite the Committee to think again. If the Committee insists on going forward then MC has the right to offer the Assembly another view:

.....It will often be helpful for the MC to inform the Assembly of the various options, while expressing a preference for one of them" (p.59 para 2.8)

On occasions, with the approval of the appropriate Committee Convener, MC has taken over the responsibilities of putting forward the resolution.

Group Reports

4. The volume of committee business going to the GA has imposed constraints on the MC. Less contentious matters have been considered in some of the smaller groups. The question then arises as to how much weight is to be given to views which might have been considered briefly by only a small number of MC members, and perhaps reported inadequately.
5. It has been assumed that:
 - i) if the group felt that the views were inadequately or unfairly reported, members would say so. In particular, the group convener is a different person to the reporter;
 - ii) if other members of MC who were not in that particular group objected, then they too may speak out. (All members have all papers and have had an opportunity to read and make their own judgement);
 - iii) the role of the moderator is to ensure that if anyone wishes to speak, they are allowed to do so. The Moderator's eye ought to be moving over the MC picking up signals;
 - iv) finally, the Committee Convener ought to be listening and, subject to the interpretation of para. 3, give such weight to what is said as s/he thinks appropriate. In the past, conveners have heard some responses and withdrawn the business on their own initiative. On major matters, there is usually a report from each group, followed by a plenary decision.
6. If the whole of the business for Assembly of every committee had to be decided on formally, after plenary discussion, then we would need significantly longer meetings of the MC.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

K

**GRANTS MADE BY ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS (AGOGAL)
JAN - JULY 1995**

INTRODUCTION

AGOGAL was set up in the new committee structure to co-ordinate the grant making policy of the URC. As reported previously to Mission Council, from January 1995 it has combined the former New Enterprises in Mission Fund, the Ministry Expenses in the UK Fund and the two funds for supporting Ministry in Ecumenical Situations, though it has retained the principles behind these funds by retaining 'headings' to cover these areas of work. A new fifth 'heading', Social Action, has been created.

AGOGAL was set up until Assembly 1996, and it will bring recommendations to the January Mission Council meeting about how its work should be continued.

Meanwhile, there is set out below for information a schedule of grants made so far this year.

CENTRAL CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Christian Enquiry Agency

The Christian Enquiry Agency is supported by Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Alliance and everyone in between.

agreed that if there were an underspend in the grants to ecumenical bodies at the end of the year, this grant should be increased from £1,100 to £1,500.

NEW ENTERPRISES IN MISSION

2. Rural Evangelism Video

The Board of Mission of the Church of England, in conjunction with ecumenical representation from the J Arthur Rank Centre has planned a rural evangelism video for all denominations. The cost is about £40,000.

agreed that the grant of £2,000 be made.

3. Hastings Village Ministry Project

As those who were present at Assembly will remember, Hastings URC and the three village churches linked to it needed local lay leadership. A two year grant of £2,400 largely paid the salary of a couple.

agreed that grant of £2,400 pa be renewed for a third year

Later in the year there was a request to extend the grant beyond three years, the normal maximum period.

agreed to make a reducing grant for a further two years on condition that there was an acceptable proposal from the District and/or Province to secure the work in the long-term.

4. St Mark's Wythenshawe, Manchester

The Church Urban Fund made available £10,000 towards internal alterations of a redundant dentist's house as the Woodhouse Park Family Centre building. The Steering Group of St Mark's Community Initiative asked for a grant of £3,000 to appoint a Family Worker with Spurgeon's Child Care.

agreed that the grant of £3,000 pa for a further two years.

5. Hackney Churches Immigration Bureau

The Hackney Churches Immigration Bureau was started in response to the widespread problems faced by members of churches and residents in Hackney from the Immigration Service.

agreed to recommend this project to CWM. Part of the grant application to CWM involves the URC making a grant, and the application has to be in by the end of September, officers' action was agreed.

6. Bridgwater: mobile meeting area for displays

Grapevine is a Christian youth project pioneered by Westfield URC, Bridgwater in 1987. It is aimed at the 14-21 age group and draws about 40 young people from all backgrounds. Grapevine has, therefore, developed plans for a self-contained mobile venue, easy to move and enlargeable for larger audiences. The total cost is £17,900. Grapevine, which has raised £6,000 in six months for a video projection system, is confident of raising a substantial sum, but asks for a grant of £3,000

A grant of £3,000 has been made conditional on the rest of the money being raised.

7. Medway: employing three groups of TfG volunteers

Medway District requested help for three Time for God workers as part of a wider plan to work with several small churches.

agreed to make a grant of up to £3,000 for three years, subject to review before the end of the first year.

8. Portslade: furnishing new building for community

Portslade purchased an adjoining building to provide the opportunity for developing its mission, including bereavement counselling, reflexology classes, healing promotion services, an Alzheimer Society and a Citizens Advice Bureau. Early this year it completed a Link between the church and the new building to provide new space including disabled facilities, the money raised by the members themselves. This, however exhausted the funds available, and a grant was sought towards furnishing the Link.

agreed a grant of £1,500.

9. Witham: pastoral assistant

Witham URC has redeveloped its old buildings into the Oasis Centre in the middle of the town. To help the centre develop adequately the church decided to appoint a pastoral administrator. After generous local giving, help was sought from local trusts etc.

agreed to make a grant of £3,000 pa for three years on the understanding that if other grant applications were successful and more money was promised than was necessary, the church would return all or part of the grant.

MINISTRY EXPENSES IN THE UK FUND

10. Church Langley, West Essex Area

West Essex Area is a joint area with the Harlow Circuit; there is a need to serve the new community of Church Langley where an ecumenical project is taking place. The intention is to supplement the curate with a fulltime URC minister residing in nearby Ongar: Ongar URC has agreed to join the Area and share a minister. Eastern Province requested a grant to cover the expenses of the fulltime minister's work in connection with Church Langley.

agreed that the grant of £2,100 be made on the normal conditions (ie for up to five years or the length of the ministry, whichever is the shorter, commencing on the date of induction)

11. Ortons: CRCW

The central management committee agreed that the fast developing Ortons area of Peterborough should be able to appoint a CRCW. Until a person was in post it would be difficult accurately to estimate how much could be raised locally.

agreed to underwrite the full amount of the local expenses (£4,650) on the usual terms and agreed to pay the full amount in the first year, starting on 1st September 1995.

SOCIAL ACTION

12. Widnes: Kings Cross Project

The Kings Cross Project is a partnership between the National Children's Homes and Trinity (Methodist/URC) Church in Widnes. NCH has committed a worker to the project. With social services support, the Project sought to appoint a worker for counselling and group work.

agreed to make a grant of £3,000 pa for three years towards the cost of a counselling and advice worker.

13. Eastwood: youth project

Eastwood is an area of high unemployment. The response of the local church had been to establish a Youth Project in January 1993 with a youth worker starting in November.

agreed to give a grant of £2,000 pa for three years towards the salary of the youth worker.

14. Shiregreen, Sheffield: children & family project

The URC, situated in the centre of a council housing estate, has employed a project co-ordinator for three sessions per week; she worked with a team of volunteers to develop a number of new activities for children and families under stress.

agreed to give a grant of £3,000 pa for a further two years.

15. Friary URC: Drop In Centre

A grant was requested for £3,000 pa for three years towards the running costs of the project which is primarily a drop-in facility for the homeless, unemployed or those living in temporary accommodation.

agreed to a grant of £3,000 for one year, and to consider an extension of the grant for a further two years subject to being satisfied on certain issues.

16. Blackburn (Roman Road): Mustard Seed House

Opened in 1984 with Diocesan and Church Urban Fund support to develop a Welfare Rights Service, a Credit Union, a Liaison Lunch, a Drama Group, a Furniture Supply, Pensioners Lunch, Crafts and Skills classes and a prayer group etc.

agreed to make a grant of £2,000 pa for three years.

17. Community of Grace: development of workshops

Premises include residential accommodation, workshops and a chapel. The Community was received as a mission project at the last Assembly. A grant was requested to help acquire adequate workshop spaces.

agreed to provide £1,000 pa for three years; the grant would not be payable if the project did not take on new space for workshops.

18. Northfleet: Ecumenical work among the elderly and the young

A joint Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and URC project. It works with the young and the elderly.

agreed a grant for one year of £2,500 towards the project and it was agreed that this be extended for a further two years only if specified conditions were met.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995



CONSULTATION PAPER ON DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

For submission by the Working Party to Mission Council - Autumn 1995

(Draft 2)

COMPOSITION OF WORKING PARTY

1. Keith Forecast (Convener), Tony Burnham (General Secretary and Secretary of the Assembly Pastoral Committee), Martin Cressey (Clerk of General Assembly), Margaret Carrick Smith (Convener - Accreditation Sub-Committee), Hartley Oldham (Legal Adviser), Michael Diffey (Secretary for Ministries)

INTRODUCTION

2. The Working Party, which was set up by Mission Council in January 1995 (Minute 95/9) to consider possible changes to the existing Structure of the United Reformed Church ("the Structure"), the 1988 Pastoral Measure and the terms of reference of the Assembly Pastoral Committee in the handling of cases involving "discipline" or personal dispute, has met three times and now presents its first report to Mission Council. This concentrates largely on suggested changes to the Structure. Detailed comments on the Pastoral Measure and the Assembly Pastoral Committee will follow in a later Report.
3. The Working Party believes that there are two complementary aspects of the subject. The first relates to the District Council which has oversight of Ministry under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure. The Working Party believes that there is an urgent need to give guidance to District Councils in the handling of matters relating to discipline and/or personal dispute involving a Minister, particularly in the early stages when they often have to deal with situations of great difficulty at short notice.
4. The second aspect of the subject relates to the existing procedures contained in the Structure involving District Council, Provincial Synod and ultimately General Assembly. The Working Party wishes to bring a recommendation to Mission Council for changes to these Procedures.

PRESENT PROCEDURES

5. In considering the existing Structure, the 1988 Pastoral Measure relating to the suspension and resignation of Ministers and the terms of reference of the Assembly Pastoral Committee, the Working Party has identified various shortcomings in relation to the handling of matters of discipline and/or dispute (see Paragraphs 6 to 12)
6. The process of references and/or appeals from District Council, through Provincial Synod, to General Assembly often lasts for several months. The lengthy and cumbersome nature of this process exacerbates an already difficult situation.
7. A confusion exists between pastoral considerations and the formal processes required to handle matters of discipline and/or dispute. Pastoral care involves sensitive counselling, the disclosure of information in confidence and the support of those under personal stress. Handling a disciplinary issue involves objectivity, impartiality, and the need to hear and test evidence, to conduct a fair hearing and to reach a decision in accordance with natural justice. Each of these processes is right and proper in its own context.
8. This is not to say that once the formal process has commenced there can be no further pastoral care ! The real difficulty is that the present process does not easily permit the two to run side by side. People inevitably become involved in different capacities "wearing different hats", and conflicts of interest all too easily arise.
9. District and Provincial Officers are expected to conduct "hearings" with no clear terms of reference and little or no experience in what is a specialised area. Not surprisingly, they find this very difficult, sometimes even traumatic.
10. There is likely to be a lack of consistency between the various Districts and Provinces, which have to treat each case individually, and there is no pool of expertise or accumulated wisdom on which to draw.
11. If the parties insist on their right to be heard in plenary sessions of Synod or General Assembly, it is very difficult to observe the rules of natural justice in the conduct of the hearing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. In the hope of resolving these problems, the Working Party brings to Mission Council suggestions for improving procedures at District Council and a recommendation that an Assembly Commission ("the Assembly Commission") be set up under the authority of General Assembly to hear "cases" involving matters of discipline and/or personal dispute concerning Ministers. The Assembly Commission will report annually to General Assembly with a summary of its decisions.

ROLE OF DISTRICT COUNCIL

13. The role of the District Council is of crucial importance, since District Council is charged with the oversight of Ministry under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure, and with the care of local churches within the District under Paragraph 2(3)(iv). It is therefore involved at the very outset in situations involving discipline and/or dispute.
14. As soon as it becomes aware of anything concerning a Minister under its oversight which might require disciplinary action, a District Council must carry out an investigation adopting the criteria set out in Paragraph 15. Such investigation will always be in consultation with the Provincial Moderator and, wherever possible, in discussion with the Minister concerned.
15. The District Council must investigate anything relating to the Minister's character, conduct or belief which appears to be incompatible with the continued exercise of pastoral responsibility or injurious to the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church or any other thing which is seriously alleged against the Minister. Such investigation must be guided by consideration of the affirmation made by Ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C of the Basis of Union) and the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D of the Basis of Union) in accordance with which Ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.
16. If the District Council, having thus investigated the matter, decides that there is a prima facie case for disciplinary action to be taken against the Minister concerned, it shall take the following steps --
 - 16.1 Suspend the Minister - (It should, however, be noted that a decision to suspend does not carry any pejorative implications, nor does it amount as such to disciplinary action. Its purpose is to allow an investigation to take place,) - and

16.2 Refer the matter to the Assembly Commission - (This is a material departure from the existing procedure under the Structure - see Paragraph 6)

17. In carrying out these functions, a District Council may delegate the investigation of the matter to a Committee. This would have to be done by a Resolution of District Council, defining either generally or in particular what powers have been given and to whom. The delegation of functions of Councils to Committees is not a step to be taken lightly in matters which affect the standing of Ministers except in terms of emergency powers when it would not be possible to convene a full meeting of District Council. Decisions taken under delegated powers should be ratified by the full District Council. Decisions to take the steps referred to in Paragraph 16 under delegated powers must be brought to the full District Council for ratification within four weeks and this may require the calling of a special meeting of the District Council.
18. As there is usually a need for swift action, it is therefore advised that all District Councils should in advance pass Resolution mandating a specific group to act on their behalf in such cases. Such a group should consist of the President and Secretary of the District Council, the Convener of the District Council Committee which deals with pastoral matters, and the Provincial Moderator. Whenever members are absent or personally involved with the Minister concerned, the remaining members of the Committee may appoint alternates.
19. Where the Minister has been convicted of a criminal offence, or where criminal charges have been brought against him/her, or where information has been laid before the Police which may result in such criminal charges being brought, the District Council must not attempt to consider the "evidence" itself. It must, if the information immediately before it justifies such a course, suspend the Minister and refer the case to the Assembly Commission in accordance with Paragraph 16.2. Where these actions are taken by a Committee acting with delegated powers (see Paragraphs 17 and 18), they will be matters of report only to the District Council and not one of ratification.

CONSTITUTION OF ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

20. It is proposed that there will be a panel of twenty-five persons of varied expertise and experience ("The Commission Panel") appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee. One of the twenty-five persons shall be appointed by the General Assembly as the Convenor of the Commission. The Moderator of the General Assembly, the Convener of the Commission and the General Secretary shall appoint from the Commission Panel five persons to constitute the Assembly Commission for the hearing of each case.
21. A secretary will be appointed to the Assembly Commission by the General Assembly and will handle the administration relating to the Assembly Commission's procedures. He/she will be present in a nonvoting capacity at each hearing of the Assembly Commission and will communicate its decision in writing to the parties to the hearing, the General Secretary, the Provincial Moderator and the Secretary of the Accreditation Sub-committee (or of any future Committee or Sub-committee which may assume the function of the present Accreditation Sub-committee).
22. No member of the Commission Panel shall sit on any case in which he/she has already had any previous connection, e.g. is or has been at a relevant time a member of the District Council or Provincial Synod of which either party is or has been also a member, or of a local church of which either party is or has been a Minister or member, or is related too or in close friendship with either party or has been at a relevant time pastorally involved with either party.
23. Five members of the Commission Panel, who may include the Convener of the Assembly Commission, shall be chosen with a view to one of their number presiding over each sitting of the Assembly Commission. They shall be people with proven skills in the conduct of meetings and thus be capable of conducting the hearings of the Assembly Commission in accordance with the new rules to be laid down.

MODE OF OPERATION OF ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

24. The Assembly Commission will act in a judicial capacity, and in disciplinary cases the parties appearing before it will normally be the District Council and the Minister concerned. The Assembly Commission will have rules of procedure designed to ensure that the rules of natural justice are observed and that the parties are aware of all the relevant facts and allegations, and that they each have a chance to present their case properly. The parties will have to submit to the rules of procedure of the Assembly Commission, which will include such matters as the filing and inspection of papers relating to each party's case, the right of each party to be heard in person before the Assembly Commission, with or without witness, and to cross examine the other party and his/her witnesses.
25. The task of investigating and trying criminal matters is one for the police and the criminal courts. Therefore, if criminal charges are pending, the Assembly Commission will suspend its own proceedings on such charges until the outcome of the criminal case is known unless the Minister concerned has already of his own free will confirmed that he has been guilty of conduct which would justify his removal from the Roll of Ministers.
26. The Assembly Commission may, if it considers it appropriate, call for specialist or expert advice on any matter before it. In such a case the parties will be entitled to receive copies of any relevant reports containing any such advice and the authors of such reports should (unless their presence is dispensed with by the written approval of both parties) appear in person before the Assembly Commission to answer questions and supply any further information required.

DECISION OF ASSEMBLY

27. Having conducted the hearing in accordance with its rules of procedure, the Assembly Commission, in reaching its decision, will have in mind the criteria set out in Paragraph 15. It will reach its decision by a simple majority. The Convener will have one vote like other members, with no casting vote. If the Assembly Commission finds the case against a Minister proved to its satisfaction and it considers that the circumstances warrant it, it will have the power to direct that the name of that Minister be deleted from the Roll of Ministers.
28. Although the individual members of the Assembly Commission will not be pastorally involved on a personal level, the Assembly Commission may as a body take into account mitigating circumstances presented to it in deciding whether deletion from the Roll will be appropriate.

29. In all cases, the Assembly Commission will give written reasons for its decision and for any direction given.
30. In the case of a personal dispute affecting a Minister but not involving discipline the Assembly Commission can decide the issue in favour of either of the parties to the dispute and include as part of its decision any recommendations which it considers appropriate to meet the circumstances of the case.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

31. A procedure for appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission is necessary. The Working Party proposes that there shall be an Appeals Panel ("The Appeals Panel") as a separate body (not drawn from the Commission Panel) which will include the Clerk of the General Assembly as its nonvoting Secretary.
32. A party to a hearing before the Assembly Commission wishing to appeal against its decision shall within one month of the receipt by that party of the formal notification of the decision from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission send or deliver to the Clerk of the General Assembly at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT written notice of his/her intention to appeal.
33. An appeal to the Appeals Panel shall normally be ex parte by way of report without any rehearing of the evidence or submission of any further evidence, although the Appeals Panel can in circumstances which it considers exceptional and at its own discretion hear the parties in person and admit further evidence.
34. The Working Party has considered whether there should be a final appeal to General Assembly. To remove this would involve a material departure from the Basis of Union. In spite of this, the Working Party believes that it would be advisable to remove that final right of appeal because of the difficulties already highlighted of conducting hearings in the plenary session of General Assembly (See Paragraph 11). If this point is accepted in principle, a constitutional amendment to the Structure will be required.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION

35. The Structure will have to be amended to incorporate these proposals and the changes will amount to constitutional amendments. They are governed by Paragraphs 3(l) on page B12 of the Manual and the special procedures under that Paragraph must be observed. Consequently, if the proposals were to be presented to the 1996 General Assembly and received, the required 2/3 majority under Paragraph 3(1)(b) they would then have to be referred to Provincial Synods and District Councils for comment, before coming back to General Assembly in 1997 for its final decision.

CONCLUSION

36. This report covers the first stage in the task of the Working Party. If Mission Council approves the present proposals in general outline, the Working Party will then consider the following:
- (i) The implementation of the suggestions in this Paper for improving District Council procedures and for the setting up of the Assembly Commission.
 - (ii) The revision of the 1988 Pastoral Measure.
 - (iii) The Terms of Reference of the Assembly Pastoral Committee.
37. Mission Council is therefore invited to pass the following Resolution:

Mission Council received the first report of the Working Party set up in January 1995 to consider the disciplinary procedures, notes with approval, the proposals which it contains and authorises the Working Party to continue its work with a view to it presenting to Mission Council in early 1996 detailed recommendations to be placed before the General Assembly.



MC Advisory Group Report

1. **Hon. Treasurer** Following the death of Alistair Black, it was decided not to appoint an acting Treasurer as there was little formal work necessary until September. It was agreed that:
 - i) if the General Secretary and/or the Financial Secretary needed a treasurer's view, John Waller was to be consulted. (John, as convener of the Resources Planning Committee and a former convener of the MoM Committee, was believed to have the necessary experience for this task); and
 - ii) the report of the Finance Committee would be presented to the Assembly by the General Secretary, including a tribute to Alistair. The General Secretary also filled the place on the Deputy General Secretary's nominating group, to which Alistair had been elected, with the person with the next largest number of votes who was free on the day of the meeting: Jessie Clare.
2. **Theological Reflector** Ermal Kirby of CCBI had agreed to serve but had given back word on his appointment to the staff of Queens College. It was agreed not to appoint a substitute (See also paper F).
3. **Authority in the Church** This paper had been referred to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. A report had been received. It was decided to ask Philip Morgan, who had convened the original working party to see if the Report could be adjusted in the light of the committee's comments. It was also agreed to look at it in the light of the 'Called to be One' report from Churches Together in England.
4. **Human Sexuality** It was agreed to recommend to MC that:

the Task Group on Human Sexuality be thanked for their work so far and be invited to continue their work, keeping a watch on the process and then collating the replies to be received by the General Secretary before 1 December 1996 and preparing a report and suggesting resolutions to be offered to General Assembly by the MC.
5. **MC Procedure (95/56)** A paper on Assembly Committees and Assembly resolutions and the role of the MC was agreed and is offered to MC as the Group's advice. (Paper J)
6. **Assembly Resolutions** The following had been referred to MC. It was decided to recommend that they be dealt with as follows (the page references are to the Assembly Record):
 - i) *p.19 Resolution 54 re Support for divorced and separated spouses of URC ministers.*

54 Assembly requests that its appropriate committee should consider the question of the provision of assistance and support for divorced and separated spouses of United Reformed Church ministers and to report to next Assembly.

As a first step, the General Secretary is to consult all relevant committees and to prepare a briefing paper for the December meeting of MCAG.

ii) *p. 36 Resolution 27 re sharing of ministers*

27 Assembly, accepting the need to share the ministers paid from the Maintenance of the Ministry account, instructs the Mission Council through the Resource Planning Advisory Committee to consult with representatives of the provincial synods about the present deployment and to decide on and recommend an appropriate policy to the 1996 Assembly.

The Resource Planning Advisory Committee are acting on this and a consultation has been planned for 9 October 1995.

iii) *p.45 Resolution 41/42 re a congregational leader*

In view of the desire of many churches to have their own identifiable congregational leader and the much larger number of congregations than ministers, Assembly requests Mission Council to explore possible new forms of congregational leadership accredited by District Council and accountable to District Council, and to bring proposals to a future Assembly.

As a first step, this will be discussed by MC in groups.

iv) *p.45 Resolution 45 re Presidency at a celebration of a sacrament*

Assembly requests Mission Council to consider the desirability of a constitutional amendment to ensure that in an emergency the assembled congregation may appoint a person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament

It was agreed to ask the Ecumenical Committee, the Doctrine Prayer & Worship Committee and the Clerk to comment on this and advise the MC.

v) *p.47 Resolution 50 Oversight in particular of moderators*

50 Assembly asks Mission Council to carry out a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight, and in particular to consider the work and responsibilities of moderators of provincial synods, keeping the ecumenical context in mind. [para 5.4]

It is proposed that MC sets up a task group to report in 1996 to MC, with members appointed by the Nominating Committee. Five people would be chosen including a provincial moderator, someone with district pastoral experience, one with ecumenical experience plus two others. A convener and secretary to be chosen from within the five.

7. Future meetings, already agreed for 1996:

| | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 20 January | Central URC Derby |
| 15 -17 March | St. Joseph's Upholland |
| 1 - 3 October | High Leigh |

Proposed for 1997:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 18 January | Venue to be decided |
| 18 - 20 March | Swanwick |
| 30 Sept - 2 October | High Leigh |



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

N

REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL

29th Sept. - 1st Oct 1996

Nominations Committee

Minute Secretary to Mission Council and General Assembly

Mission Council is asked to act on behalf of Assembly and appoint Christine Hardwick to serve in this capacity forthwith, and for a period of 4 year including General Assembly 1999.

National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer

Due to an oversight the extension of the appointment of Eileen Sanderson was omitted from our Report to Assembly. Mission Council is therefore asked to act on behalf of Assembly and confirm the extension to 31st December, 1996

Review of Committee Vacancies for 1996 Assembly

Districts, Synods and Coveners are reminded that nominations for vacancies are required in time for our meeting on 6th December.

Sundry Vacancies

The following nominations are presented for approval

Churches Council for Health and Healing - Revd Jim Hollyman

Northern College Governors - Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee for 5 year term to June 2000
Revd David Jenkins for one year to June 1996

Westminster College - Board of Studies -

Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, until a new Board of Governors is established

National Funerals College - ~~Revd Derek Nuttall~~

CCBI Assembly 27 Feb - 1 Mar 1996

Revds Tony Burnham, Murdoch McKenzie, Sheila Maxy & Peter Brain with
Melanie Smith & John Bradbury (Youth)

Revd David Taylor (ACTS), Mrs Eileen McIlveen (CYTUN) and

Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mrs Ruth Clark,

Revd Donald Norwood, Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

P

1997: TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

1. When the matter was previously discussed at Mission Council the strongly expressed views of all except one group was that there ought to be a celebration.
2. Only one group argued for 'a Jubilee year from October 1997 to the 1998 Assembly'. The rest suggested a single, one day national event. Venues included: Birmingham NEC, Westminster Abbey, Wembley Conference Centre.
3. One group suggested that the Assembly ought to have a special agenda.
4. One group stated that there ought to be an additional celebration involving each local church.
5. Other suggestions included:
 - ♦ a celebratory video ending with questions about our life
 - ♦ a musical life of the URC
 - ♦ new leaflets, publicity etc introducing the URC
 - ♦ a popular book on our beginnings



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

O

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

In the light of the discussion at the last Mission Council and the resolutions approved by General Assembly 1995, MCAG makes the following proposals for the future governance of Westminster College:

1 College Mission Statement

Westminster College seeks:

- a) to offer training to the United Reformed Church that is of high academic quality, complemented by a constant and sharp awareness of the challenges facing the Church and its life and mission;
- b) to offer training for the ministry of word and sacraments, and for lay ministries - both preparatory training, and continuing education for those already in service;
- c) to support this training with personal and pastoral care, as those who commit themselves to extending their service in the Church are liable to be stretched intellectually and spiritually, and may also experience family and financial strain;
- d) to participate actively in the development of new training initiatives within the Church;
- e) to work within a spirit and environment of committed ecumenism, from a Reformed basis;
- f) to sustain a broad and lively range of contacts with the world church, thereby enriching the setting of our training;
- g) to act as a theological support and resource for the whole denomination: by the provision of an outstanding theological library; by the encouragement and support of study, research and scholarship; through the service of staff on councils and committees of the church; through personal support and counsel; and through the availability of staff to travel to teach groups.

2 Board of Governors

2.1 There shall be a Board of Governors for the College appointed by the General Assembly, consisting of fourteen members as follows:

- a) up to three persons with expertise in management, finance and the maintenance of buildings;
- b) up to three persons with expertise in education;
- c) up to three persons with ministerial experience;
- d) the Principal of the College ex officio;
- e) a member of the teaching staff of the College, chosen by them;
- f) a student member of the College, chosen by the students;
- g) the Chair of the Cheshunt Governors ex officio;
- h) a clerk or secretary to the Board, chosen for that purpose.

2.2 Within the total membership there shall be a representative of the Cambridge Theological Federation, a representative of the University of Cambridge or the Faculty of Divinity of the University, and the Secretary for Training.

2.3 The nomination of Governors in classes (a), (b), (c) and (h) shall be made by the Nominations Committee of the General Assembly, and the period of service for such Governors shall be to six years. At least nine Governors shall be members of the United Reformed Church. The Nominations Committee shall ensure a regular rotation of Governors.

2.4 The quorum for meetings of the Board of Governors shall be eight.

3 Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

3.1 The Board of Governors shall be responsible to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church for:

- a) the determination of the educational character and mission of the College and for the oversight of its activities;
- b) the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the College and for safeguarding its assets;
- c) the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and grounds;
- d) the approval of annual estimates of income and expenditure;
- e) the approval of appointments to the teaching staff of the College;
- f) the establishment of a framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff.

3.2 The Board of Governors shall report annually to the General assembly through the Training Committee.

4 Committees of the Board of Governors

4.1 The Board of Governors shall establish a Board of Studies, consisting of the members of the teaching staff and other members nominated by the Board of Governors, to oversee the admission, teaching and examination of candidates for the ministry studying at the College, and other educational activities of the College.

4.2 The Board of Governors shall establish an Appointments Committee, including representatives from the Cambridge Theological Federation and such specialist members outside their own number as they consider necessary, to make recommendations to them for appointments to the teaching staff of the College.

4.3 The Board of Governors shall establish a committee or committees to determine or advise on such matters relating to finance, property management and employment policy as the Board of Governors may remit to them. The Board of Governors shall not, however, delegate the approval of annual estimates of income or expenditure, or their responsibility for the solvency of the College and for safeguarding its assets.

4.4 The Board of Governors shall maintain an Audit Committee to receive and approve independent assessment of the finance and management of the College.

5 The Principal

(Full statement still to be worked out, to cover such matters as appointment by General Assembly; responsibility to the Board of Governors for implementation of overall academic policy; responsibility for other members of staff, both teaching and administrative; representative duties in relation to the Cambridge Theological Federation and other bodies within the Church.)



Provincial Moderators' Review and Nominating Groups

Report on Group discussions January 1995

The general outcome was to look for significant variations on the present system. There was a very strong resistance to the concept of a standing committee (5:1) but clear support for a limit of two terms (4:1). In some cases the groups divided evenly and here the alternatives are underlined. On the basis of the suggestions made a revised procedure would be as follows.

The General Assembly will appoint/the Provincial Synod will call and the General Assembly will concur in the appointment of a provincial moderator, who may serve for a maximum of two terms, a first term of seven/six years and a second term of five years or a period not longer than the first term. This is to allow for flexibility with regard to retirement.

Procedure for Nomination

1. The vacancy is announced on the monthly list/and advertised in REFORM (Only three groups discussed this, thus divided 1:2). Information is given as to how to nominate or apply.
2. The Nominating Group of ten appointed by the synod and ten by the Assembly including a convener would undertake the work, serviced by the General Secretary.
3. The synod undertakes a review of its life and proposes a job specification.
4. More information about all possibilities including CV's was requested. This presents problems except with regard to applications. To ask for 25 CV's and reports for one post, to be made available for 20 people is a daunting task. One group suggested a short listing procedure involving a smaller group. Could the synod and Nominations appoint three each out of the ten to produce a short list of not more than 6/8/10 names about whom information is gathered for the larger group to consider at a first meeting?

5. The group chooses possible candidates and interviews them all/interviews only the first name (reserving the others in case the first choice does not wish to be considered).
6. The nomination is presented to MC to appoint for service to begin in September/to the GA to begin in January

Review (There was much uncertainty and more discussion is needed. However some clues emerged).

1. An appraisal system needs to be created to enable Moderators to be helped throughout their service. One suggestion: after three years conducted by 3-4 from synod and 3-4 from Assembly Nominating group.
2. A 'quinquennial' review of the province ought to be undertaken before the Moderator is reviewed.
3. The review group to be 5 plus 5. The Assembly 5 to be from neighbouring provinces.

About Christian Aid

Christian Aid was born in the mid-1940s.

It is the official agency of 40 Churches representing most denominations in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

It also works closely with the official agencies of the Catholic Church, especially CAFOD in England and Wales, SCIAF in Scotland, and TRÓCAIRE in Ireland.

It began by helping refugees and churches in Europe to recover from the aftermath of war.

Since then it has been working in over 70 countries where the need is greatest, helping people regardless of race or creed.

Overseas it does not run its own programmes but works through those of local churches and other organisations which alleviate poverty and help the poor to find their own solutions.

At home Christian Aid publishes a range of materials and works with churches, schools and the public, educating, lobbying and campaigning on world poverty issues.

Christian Aid receives financial support from churches, governments, the general public, and corporate bodies.

Its best known source of income is Christian Aid Week, in May each year, when over a quarter of a million volunteers visit the vast majority of homes in the United Kingdom.


Christian Aid spends most of its income on grants and support to poor and struggling communities overseas, up to 10 per cent on education and campaigning about the causes of poverty and injustice, and 11 per cent on fundraising and administration.

This 50th Birthday Statement, 'All Shall Be Included', was adopted by the Board of Christian Aid after listening to advice from churches, volunteers, partners overseas and staff. We hope you will make it your own. If you would like to know more about our work and how you can be part of it, please complete and return the form provided.

A prayer of commitment

*O God, you promise a world
Where those who now weep shall laugh,
those who are hungry shall feast,
those who are poor now, and excluded,
shall have your kingdom for their own.*

*I want this world too.
I renounce despair.
I will act for change.
I choose to be included
in your great feast of life.*

Christian Aid 

*All shall be
included
... in the feast of life*

A 50th Birthday Statement
adopted by the Board of Christian Aid
in June 1995

Fresh Challenges

Christian Aid's 50th birthday is a good opportunity to renew our dreams of a new earth and our commitment to make those dreams come true.

In 1987 we wrote a Statement of Commitment called **To Strengthen the Poor**. We still find much of it convincing and the injustice we call 'poverty' is as real as ever it was. But the world changes fast and there are fresh challenges for us to face.

Opportunities for peace and democracy have opened up after years of struggling for freedom.

Armed conflict and emergencies have increased.

Free market capitalism dominates the world.

The gap between rich and poor has grown.

The differences between regions of the world are not so clear with poverty increasing in the North and large numbers of people escaping from it in the South.

The earth is in danger.

The effectiveness of aid is much more closely questioned.

Money for development is harder to find.

The world's religions too often divide us instead of inspiring us as they can for the common good.

We have kept these challenges in mind as we have set out our underlying beliefs and made clear our intentions for the next few years.

A Statement of Intent

Millions of people are still desperately poor

- We will strengthen our support for the world's poorest communities as they struggle for life and for justice, and raise and share with them as many resources as we can.
- We will work for closer ties and greater mutual respect between people across the world in the fight against poverty.
- We will be in the forefront of popular campaigning on world poverty issues, offering as many people as we can, rich and poor, young and old, a chance to make a difference.
- We will encourage and resource the churches and not simply exhort them to be good news to the poor, so that people who often care deeply about the world need not feel helpless to change it.
- While churches are our natural partners, we will seek common ground and ways to co-operate with people and organisations of all faiths and of none who side with the poor.
- We will remain sceptical of prevailing social and economic systems, including free market capitalism, and challenge government and international institutions to listen to poor people and give them their due.
- At the same time we will work to include the poor in the prevailing systems so that they can gain from them as well as resist and reform them.
- We will help poor communities to protect their cultures and we will celebrate their gifts and achievements.
- We will join with churches throughout the world to improve our response to emergencies and work to prevent them.
- We will pay particular attention to three major issues: the interrelation of poverty and conflict; the fact that women are often the poorest of the poor; the sustainable use of the earth and its resources.
- Acknowledging our accountability, we will improve our work by learning from our mistakes and successes, from those we are called to serve, from relevant disciplines and traditions, and from our faith.

In all of this we will work in patience and hope towards new ways of living with each other that welcome all God's people.

A Statement of Faith

We believe that God hopes and works for a world where all shall be included in the feast of life and that in Christ we see how costly it is to bring that world about.

We believe that God's strategy for a new world is to put the poorest first and that nothing is more important for God's people than to bring the poor good news.

We believe that rich and poor alike can be generous, wise and creative because all are made in God's image and that all are made poorer when any are left out.

We confess that we use our strength to protect ourselves and order the world to benefit the rich and not the poor and that none of us can be trusted with too much power over others.

We believe that loving our neighbours means working for justice so that all have a say in what happens to them.

We believe that God made the good earth to sustain and delight us and that we are called to take care of it and enjoy it.

We believe that the God of all the earth is at work beyond the churches as well as within them making common cause with all who want the poor to be included.

We long for the time when the meek shall inherit the earth and all who hunger and thirst after justice shall be satisfied and we believe that, despite the persistence of evil, now is always the time when more good can be done and we can make a difference.



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

OPENING WORSHIP

Friday 29 September

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN

GREAT God, your love has called us here
as we, by love, for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

- 2 We come with self-inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close confined
yet seeking hope for humankind.
- 3 Great God, in Christ you call our name
and then receive us as your own
not through some merit, right or claim
but by your gracious love alone.
We strain to glimpse your mercy-seat
and find you kneeling at our feet.
- 4 Then take the towel, and break the bread,
and humble us, and call us friends.
Suffer and serve till all are fed,
and show how grandly love intends
to work till all creation sings,
to fill all worlds, to crown all things.
- 5 Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

BRIAN WREN (1936-)

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PRAYER

READING

PRAYER - Sung response

Ubi caritas et amor

Taizé Community
arr. BRENDA STEPHENSON (1947-)

The musical score consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system contains the lyrics 'U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - mor,'. The second system contains the lyrics 'u - bi ca - ri - tas, De - us i - bi est.' and includes a triplet of eighth notes in the vocal line.

(Where there is tender care and love, God is present.)

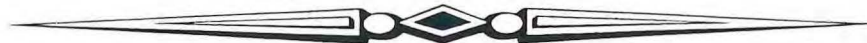
(c) Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Community,

HYMN

- FOR the healing of the nations,
 Lord, we pray with one accord,
 for a just and equal sharing
 of the things that earth affords.
 To a life of love in action
 help us rise and pledge our word.
- 2 Lead us, Father, into freedom;
 from despair your world release,
 that, redeemed from war and hatred,
 all may come and go in peace.
 Show us how through care and goodness
 fear will die and hope increase.
- 3 All that kills abundant living,
 let it from the earth be banned,
 pride of status, race or schooling,
 dogmas that obscure your plan.
 In our common quest for justice
 may we hallow life's brief span.
- 4 You, Creator-God, have written
 your great name on humankind:
 for our growing in your likeness
 bring the life of Christ to mind;
 that by our response and service
 earth its destiny may find.

FRED KAAH (1929-)

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Evening Prayers
Friday 29 September

Opening Psalm

Like a deer that yearns
for a cooling stream
so my soul is athirst
for you, my God.

My soul is thirsting for God,
for the living God;
when shall I come and behold
the face of God?

Tears are my only food
by night and by day;
always I hear them say:
Where is your God?

Once I went with the throng
to the House of our God,
with shouts of rejoicing and praise
on the lips of the crowd.

What weighs you down, my soul?
Why faint in my breast?
Hope in God: I will praise him still,
my Saviour, my God.

from Psalm 42

Sung response after each section

4 Kyrie Eleison 1

Kyrie

The musical notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a tempo marking of quarter note = 100. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, with a long, sweeping line above the staff indicating a continuous melodic line. The lyrics are: Ky - ri - e, Ky - ri - e, e - le - i - son.

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Bible Reading

Silence

Prayers

Sung response

46 By night

De noche iremo

Meditative $\text{♩} = 60$

De no - che i - rem - os, de no - che, que pa - ra en - con - trar la fuen - te,
 By night we hast - en, in dark - ness, to seek for the li - ving wa - ter,

só - lo la sed nos a - lum - bra, só - lo la sed nos a - lum - bra De
 on - ly our thirst lights us on - wards, on - ly our thirst lights us on - wards By

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Concluding Prayer



Morning Prayers
Saturday 30 September

Psalm 121 - Read responsively

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?

*My help comes from the Lord
the maker of heaven and earth.*

The Lord will not let your foot be moved,
and the One who watches over you will not fall asleep.

Behold, the One who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

It is the Lord who watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
so that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; the Lord shall keep you safe.

*The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time
forth forevermore.*

A. E. Amankwah: Twi, Ghana

HYMN

Ma - ye komm na meh - we On - ya - me. Ma - ye komm na meh - we On - ya -
I will qui - et - ly wait on the Lord. I be - lieve what God says in his
In Ge - duld wen - de ich mich zu Gott und ver - traue auf das, was er

me. Ma - ye komm na meh - we On - ya - me. Ma - ye
word. He'll re - new my strength as I pray. I will
sagt. Auf mein Bit - ten gibt er neu - e Kraft gibt mir

komm na meh - we On - ya - me. Ma - ye se a - bö - fra wa wo
fly with wings like a bird. I'm just like as a new born
Schwin - gen zum Flug der mich trägt. Ich war - te auf Gott mei - nen

no. Ma - ye komm na meh - we On - ya - me. we On - ya - me.
babe; I will qui - et - ly wait on the Lord. wait on the Lord.
Herrn, wie ein neu - ge bo - re - nes Kind. bo - re - nes Kind

2. I will quietly wait on the Lord
when I'm sad and I'm weary and tired.
For he'll help me to walk and not faint;
by his Spirit I'll be inspired.
I'm just like as a new-born babe;
I will quietly wait on the Lord.

2. In Geduld wende ich mich zu Gott,
wenn ich müde, wenn traurig ich bin.
Denn er zeigt klares Ziel meinem Schritt
und erfüllt mich mit fröhlichem Geist.
Ich warte auf Gott meinen Herrn,
wie ein neugeborenes Kind.

May you be blessed for ever, Lord,
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for not abandoning me when I abandoned you.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for offering your hand of love in my darkest, most lonely moments.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for putting up with such a stubborn soul as mine.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for loving me more than I love myself.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for continuing to pour out your blessings upon me, even though I respond so poorly.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for drawing out the goodness in all people, even including me.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for repaying my sin with your love.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for being constant and unchanging amidst all the changes of the world.
May you be blessed for ever, Lord,

for your countless blessings on me and on all your creatures

(St Teresa of Avila)

Amen.

READING

SLIDES

PRAYER

HYMN

THE Church of Christ, in every age
 beset by change but Spirit-led,
 must claim and test its heritage
 and keep on rising from the dead.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>2 Across the world, across the street, the victims of injustice cry for shelter and for bread to eat, and never live until they die.</p> | <p>4 For he alone, whose blood was shed, can cure the fever in our blood, and teach us how to share our bread and feed the starving multitude.</p> |
| <p>3 Then let the Servant Church arise, a caring Church, that longs to be a partner in Christ's sacrifice, and clothed in Christ's humanity.</p> | <p>5 We have no mission but to serve, in full obedience to our Lord; to care for all, without reserve, and spread his liberating Word.</p> |

F. PRATT GREEN (1903-)



**Evening Prayers
Saturday 30 September**

Opening Psalm

I lift up my eyes to the hills:
where is my help to come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made both heaven and earth.

He will not let you stumble or fall,
your guardian will not sleep.
No, as the guardian of his people,
he never falls asleep.

The Lord is your guardian and your shade,
he stays close at hand;
the sun will not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from harm
he watches over your life;
the Lord watches over you as you come and go,
both now and for evermore.

from Psalm 121

Sung response after each section

2 Alleluia 7

The musical score is written for a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked '♩ = 116'. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are: 'Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia!'. The piano accompaniment is written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The score includes first and second endings for the vocal line.

(c) Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Community,

Bible Reading

Silence

Prayers

Sung response

12

Wait for the Lo

Lento $\text{♩} = 48$

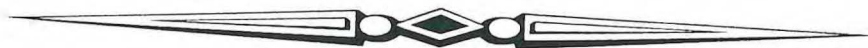
The musical score consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked 'Lento' with a tempo of quarter note = 48. It features a treble and bass staff with lyrics: 'Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.' The second system is marked 'mf' and features a treble and bass staff with lyrics: 'Wait for the Lord keep watch, take heart!'. Chord symbols are provided below the bass staff of each system.

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

Wait for the Lord keep watch, take heart!

(c) Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Community,

Concluding Prayer



**Service of Holy Communion
in Celebration of Christian Aid's 50th Anniversary**

Sunday 1 October

Call to Worship (Feast for Life, Christian Aid, Harvest 1995)

HYMN

1. Praise to our God,
our help in ages past,
who has nourished us, body and spirit,
and raised up in every generation
saints and workers for justice
who gave us the ground we stand on
and planted the seeds of change.
2. Praise to our God,
our hope for years to come,
who makes us dream generous dreams
of a harvest shared,
of sufferings ended,
of the time when all shall be included
in one great feast of life.
3. Praise to our God,
who daily offers us
this present moment
to renounce despair,
to leave behind our fear,
and choose that community of freedom
where those who are poor come first,
but all who kneel and open their hands
shall be unfailingly fed.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (p 20/21 no 9 - of Celebrating Community)

Published by World Council of Churches (permission sought)

- ◆ When we have neglected your claim upon our lives,
When we have failed to affirm others whom you have called,
When we have stumbled from your way,

Response: (p135 - No15 of In Spirit and in Truth)

Published by World Council of Churches (permission sought)

Musical notation for the response 'Kyrie eleison'. The first line shows the melody for 'Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e -'. The second line shows the melody for 'le - i - son, Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.' The notes are in a simple, rhythmic style, with some notes beamed together.

- ◆ When we have wounded others,
When we have been too rigid or too easily swayed,
When we have been self-protecting or over-sensitive,

Response

- ◆ When we have guarded our privileges while others suffer,
When we have used our weakness as an excuse for inaction,
When we lose the will to answer your summons,

Response

Words of forgiveness

Christ has called us into God's marvellous light. You were outside God's mercy once, but now you are blessed and forgiven.

Response

To God be the glory for ever and ever, Amen.

BIBLE READING

SERMON

INTERCESSIONS (Feast for Life, Christian Aid, Harvest 1995)

Sung Response: Taizé - "O Lord hear our prayer"

(c) Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Community,

Christian Aid's first task was reconstruction after the Second World War.

Let us pray for those whose harvest has been stolen, destroyed or never planted, because of conflict and war...

And for those who have the courage to rebuild, replant, and hope...

Refugees and their plight were an early priority for Christian Aid.

Let us pray for all those today who have been forced to flee from their homes, and have no harvest except what others offer...

For those who generously give hospitality...

For those who are returning home, perhaps in danger...

Christian Aid, with others, has always helped to offer emergency relief in response to food shortages.

Let us pray for those who give generously, whose hearts are touched when other people's harvest fails...

And those locally who are prepared to respond swiftly when disasters come...

Christian Aid seeks to help poor people become self-reliant

Let us pray for all who work to prevent crises by providing health care, good farming practice and credit for small businesses to start and thrive...

And those who, against all the odds, now enjoy the harvest their own hands have produced...

Christian Aid seeks to challenge the underlying causes of poverty

Let us pray for those who analyse the causes of poverty, and argue with those who have the power to change things...

And pray that we may take whatever actions are open to us to bring about a harvest in which all God's people will share.

THE PEACE

Leader: To crown all things there must be love, to bind all together
and complete the whole.
Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.
The peace of the Lord be always with you

All And also with you.

We exchange a greeting of peace with one another.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

OFFERTORY HYMN

LET us break bread together in the Lord;
let us break bread together in the Lord:

*when I fall on my knees,
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.*

2 Let us drink wine together in the Lord;
let us drink wine together in the Lord:

3 Let us praise God together in the Lord;
let us praise God together in the Lord:

based on an Afro-American Spiritual

Other verses or variations may be improvised: for example, when the hymn is sung during communion where a common loaf is shared: 'Let us break bread together, hand to hand . . . '.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

-12-



Leader: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have this wine to offer,
fruit of the vine and the work of human hands.
It will become for us the cup of salvation.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have ourselves to offer,
fruit of the womb, and formed by your love.
We will become your people for the world.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Leader: Now let us hear the story of how this sacrament began:

On the night on which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper
with his disciples. While they were eating, he took a piece
of bread, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them with
the words,

"This is my body. It is broken for you. Do this to remember me."

Later on he took a cup of wine, saying,

"This cup is God's new covenant, sealed with my blood. Drink
from it, all of you, to remember me."

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this
bread and this wine, the ordinary things of the world which
Christ will make special. And as he said a prayer before
sharing, let us do so too.

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high, voices full and joyful.....
These you deserve.

For when we were nothing, you made us something;
When we had no name and no faith and no future,
You called us your children;
When we lost our way or turned away,
You did not abandon us;
When we came back to you,
Your arms opened wide in welcome.



And look, You prepare a table for us,
Offering not just bread, not just wine, but your very self
So that we may be filled, forgiven, healed, blessed,
and made new again.

You are worth all our pain and all our praise.
So we join our voices to those of the Church on earth
and in heaven:

To be sung twice, once in Spanish and once in English

Sanctus (p141 no 26 of In Spirit and in Truth)

C G Am F G C

San - to, san - to, san - to. ¡Mi co - ra - zón te a - do - ra! Mi
 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly. My heart, my heart a - dores you! My
 Hei - lig, hei - lig, hei - lig. Mein Herz be - tet dich an! Mein
 Dieu saint, Dieu saint, Dieu saint: Mon coeur, mon coeur t'a - do - re, mon

F G C Am F G C

co - ra - zón te sa - be de - cir: ¡San - to e - res Señ - or!
 heart knows how to say to you: Ho - ly are you Lord!
 Herz weiss, was es dir sa - gen will: Hei - lig bist du Gott!
 coeur le sait, mon coeur te le dit: sa - cré est ton nom.

Published by World Council of Churches (permission sought)

Leader: Lord God, as we come to share the richness of your table,
 we cannot forget the rawness of the earth.
 We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry.
 Your world is one world,
 and we are stewards of its nourishment.

All: Lord, put our prosperity at the service of the poor.

Leader: We cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty.
 The ground and the rootless,
 the earth and its weary people,
 cry out for justice.

All: Lord, put our fullness at the service of the empty.

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now,
 For all that you have done and all that you have promised,
 what have we to offer?

All: Our hands are empty,
 our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things.
 We are not fit to gather up the crumbs
 from under your table.
 But with you is mercy and the power to change us.

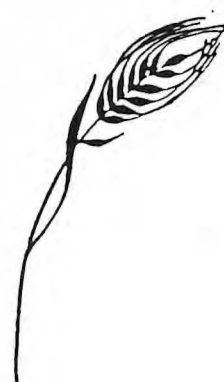
Leader: So as we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room,
 send down your Holy Spirit on us, and on these gifts of
 bread and wine, that they may become for us your body,
 healing, forgiving and making us whole;
 and that we may become, for you, your body,
 loving and caring in the world, until your Kingdom comes.
 Amen.

Among friends, gathered round a table, Jesus took bread and said,

"This is my body. It is broken - for you."

And later he took the cup of wine and said,

"This is the new relationship with God, made possible because
of my death. Take this - all of you."



All: Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.

All Sing:

Betty Pulkingham, USA

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:
 have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
 sins of the world: grant - us - , grant - us peace.

Chords: D, F#m, G, Bm, Em, D/F#, G, D4-3, D, F#m, G, Bm, Em, F#m, G, D4-3

Published by World Council of Churches (permission sought)

Leader Look, look,
 here is your Lord coming to you in bread and wine.

These are the gifts of God, for the people of God.

This is the table, not of the Church, but of the Lord.
 It is to be made ready for those who love him
 and want to love him more.

So come, you have much faith and you who have little,
 you who have been here often and you who have not
 been for a long time,
 you who have tried to follow and you who have failed.

Come, not because I invite you:
 It is our Lord.
 It is his will that those who want him
 should meet him here.

ADMINISTRATION OF COMMUNION

FINAL PRAYER

Leader: Heavenly Father, giver of all things:
 make us more thankful for what we have received,
 make us more content with what we have,
 make us more mindful of people in need,
 and make us more ready to help and serve them
 in whatever way we can,
 as servants of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

May the God who binds up the brokenhearted,
 who proclaims freedom
 to those held captive by poverty,
 and promises justice
 to all who mourn its loss,
 bless you with beauty instead of ashes,
 the oil of gladness in place of grief,
 and instead of your spirit of despair,
 a garment of unending praise;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Welcome to the feast

SUO GAN

Words: Janet Nightingale
 Music: Welsh trad.. arr. M.H.

1. Light the candles, bring your presents, let us celebrate good days,
 With rejoicing and thanksgiving, for great actions give God praise.
 Now's the time for jubilation, lift your voice in joyful song;
 Thanks for justice, Christ-like anger, friendships made through righting wrong.

2. In the shining of the candles, dust shows up – as in the sun –
 Thus revealing all our failings, power misused and work not done. } T & B
 In our praying: "God forgive us", let's remember those reviled:
 Folk exploited, women wordless, children who have never smiled. } S & A

p 3. Light a candle in the darkness, flames will penetrate the night; } S words,
cresc. Pass the brightness to your neighbours, 'til the world is full of light. } ATB hum
f Act with justice, use your anger, be on God's side – choose the least; } full SATB
mf God, in weakness, will receive us, calling us to share their feast. } on words

Words: © 1995 Janet Nightingale

Music arrangement: © 1995 Maggie Hamilton



Closing Worship Sunday 1 October

HYMN

- L**ORD of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways!
Your glory and greatness no mortal can tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.
- 2 Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.
- 3 Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find;
what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.
- 4 Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart,
your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide,
your presence to shield me, whatever betide.
- 5 Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if e'er I disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, led in your service your word to obey,
I'll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

JACK WINSLOW (1882-1974) altid *

Used by permission of Mrs J. Tyrrell

"Going to serve in the strength of the Cross"

HYMN

1. Jesus Christ is waiting,
Waiting in the streets;
No one is his neighbour,
All alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger,
Fit to wait on you.
2. Jesus Christ is raging,
Raging in the streets,
Where injustice spirals
And real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes
Let me rage with you.
3. Jesus Christ is healing,
Healing in the streets;
Curing those who suffer,
Touching those he greets.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I have pity too.
Let my care be active,
Healing just like you.
4. Jesus Christ is dancing,
Dancing in the streets,
Where each sign of hatred
He, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus,
I should triumph too.
On suspicion's graveyard
Let me dance with you.
5. Jesus Christ is calling,
Calling in the streets,
"Who will join my journey?
I will guide their feet."
Listen, Lord Jesus,
Let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me;
I will follow you.

1988 The Iona Community

The Blessing



NOTICE OF ELECTIONS

MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You may vote for three people

| NAME | NOMINATED BY | SECONDED BY | VOTE YES OR NO |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Angela Hughes | Wilma Frew | Elizabeth Caswell | |
| Margaret McKay | William McVey | Bill Gathercole | |
| Peter Poulter | David Thompson | Robin Hine | |

RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You may vote for one person

| NAME | NOMINATED BY | SECONDED BY | VOTE YES OR NO |
|------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| | | | |

STAFFING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You may vote for Convener

| NAME | NOMINATED BY | SECONDED BY | VOTE YES OR NO |
|------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| Geoff Lunt | Angus Duncan | Denis Earp | |



MISSION COUNCIL

29th SEPT- 1st OCT 1995

MINUTES

Minutes of the Mission Council, held at Damascus House, Mill Hill, London NW7 from 29th September to 1 October 1995, which was constituted by the Moderator, the Revd John Reardon, who presided. Worship throughout the Council was led by Revd Elizabeth Welch and centred on the 50th anniversary of Christian Aid. Bible study was on the theme of the poor and followed the use of four Hebrew words that are translated "poor".

95/68 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, in particular those attending for the first time. Provincial representatives - Revd Ann Jackson (Northern), Mrs Anne Sutcliffe and Revd David Yule (North Western), Revd Graham Maskery (East Midlands), Mr Simon Rowntree (West Midlands), Revd Derek Wales, Moderator, and Mrs Christine Robertson (Wessex), Mrs Grace Ntiamoah (Southern), Mr Geoff Lunt (South Western); Mrs Rosemary Johnston (Children's Advocate) and Revd David Lawrence (Editor of Reform)

95/69 ATTENDANCE

There were 61 members present, with 15 staff members in attendance and Revd Elizabeth Welch, Chaplain, and Mrs Christine Hardwick, Minute Secretary.

Apologies for absence were received from Revds Jack McKelvey, John Humphreys (alternate Peter Noble), Jessie Clare (alternate Arnold Harrison), Paul Franklin, John Dryburgh, Peter McIntosh, Geoff Prentice, Nanette Head, Jean Forster and John Sutcliffe.

95/70 AGENDA & TIMETABLE

The General Secretary outlined the Agenda and presented the proposed timetable which was approved with the addition of papers on Westminster College Governance and 25 years of the URC.

95/71 MINUTE SECRETARY

Mission Council elected Mrs Christine Hardwick as Minute Secretary for 4 years including General Assembly 1999.

95/72 MINUTES OF MISSION COUNCIL - MARCH 1995

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 17-19th March 1995, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following corrections.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| p.99 95/29 line 2 | 'a complete re-wiring...' |
| p.105 95/42ii | 'the Convener of the Pensions Working Group' |
| p.106 95/45 line 9 | 'by January 1996.' |
| p.107 95/45/6 line 2 | '1 September 1996' |
| p.107 95/52a line 1 | 'Revised wording: Maintaining the Roll of Ministers, this sub-committee will accredit those applying for inclusion after training or coming from other denominations. It is concerned...' |
| p109 95/52c line 3 | 'including those of other Christian traditions..' |
| p.110 95/55 | ' <u>NUMBERS OF MINISTERS (2)</u> ' |
| p.111 95/58 line 18 | 'Secretary' |
| p.112 95/61b | 'the Mission Council's ...' |
| p.113 95/61c line 7 | 'an alleged injustice..' |
| p.113 95/62 after para (e) | a new paragraph. 'This was commended to General Assembly...' |

95/73 NOTICE OF PRESENTATION

Members were asked to consult the lists of rural churches which were displayed and pass on stories of 'the rural church militant' to the Rural Consultant.

95/74 ELECTIONS

Notice was given that nominations should be handed to the Clerk by Saturday lunchtime for 3 vacancies on the Mission Council Advisory Committee, 1 on the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and 1 for the Convener of the Staffing Advisory Committee.

95/75 GREETINGS FROM THE CHURCH OF LIPPE, GERMANY

Malcolm Hanson brought greetings from this church which is of the Reformed tradition. Malcolm had brought a plaque, which they had presented. It was a copy of a cave sculpture of the 'Descent from the Cross'. He was asked to convey our greetings and thanks to the church.

95/76 ADDRESS TO THE THRONE

A reply had been received expressing sincere thanks.

95/77 NUCLEAR TESTING

A standard reply had been received from the French Ambassador to the protest sent. John Reardon reported that a protest had also gone from the World Council of Churches Central Committee, meeting in Geneva, at which the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church in Tahiti was present.

95/78 DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

The action of Assembly Officers in appointing Revd Michael Diffey as acting Deputy General Secretary until 30 November 1995, was endorsed.

95/79 HONORARY TREASURER

It was reported that it was not yet possible to bring a name to Mission Council. The first choice from the names submitted will be interviewed next Wednesday. If the interviewing group is unanimous about the suitability of the candidate, and if the person is available immediately, it was agreed unanimously that he/she could be appointed by Assembly Officers, as Honorary Treasurer until General Assembly 1996. The name would be circulated to members of Mission Council for any comments, before the Assembly Officers took any such decision.

95/80 RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A paper entitled 'Five Year Plan - Policies and Assumptions' was introduced by John Waller, Convener. He emphasised that this document needed to be taken seriously as all church structures would be expected to operate within it. The plan is a rolling one to allow the church to react to changing circumstances. The meeting divided into groups to discuss designated sections of the report.

95/81 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Mrs Wilma Frew, Convener, reported that the **creche facility** at Eastbourne had cost £1,000 and catered satisfactorily for 6 children. Similar arrangements will be made at York. On the question raised at Eastbourne about the use of **Néscafe**, it has been ascertained that the caterers at York will not use Néscafe, but it cannot be guaranteed that no Néstle products will be on sale.

95/82 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

An apology was given to Eileen Sanderson for the omission from the Report to Assembly of the extension of her term of service as Youth and Children's Work Training Officer, until 31 December 1996. The extension was made by Mission Council.

The following nominations were approved:

Churches Council for Health and Healing - Revd Jim Hollyman

Northern College Governors - Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee for 5 years until June 2000
Revd David Jenkins for one year until June 1996

Westminster College-Board of Studies - Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee until a new Board of Governors is established. It was also agreed, on a question from the Clerk, that the Cheshunt Governors could make a similar interim appointment to replace Dr Ian Morrison.

CCBI Assembly 27Feb - 1 Mar 1996

Revs Tony Burnham, Murdoch Mackenzie, Sheila Maxey and Peter Brain with Melanie Smith & John Bradbury (Youth)
Revd David Taylor (ACTS), Mrs Eileen McIlveen (CYTUN) and Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mrs Ruth Clark, Revd Donald Norwood and Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow.

95/83 DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Caswell, Convener, introduced the report which covered Evangelism plans from 1997 to 2000. She called attention to **1997 Celebrating the evangelisation of Britain**, which is a four nation ecumenical pilgrimage from Rome to Canterbury, to mark the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columba. This is to be followed by three pilgrimages across England and Wales or Scotland, arriving by different routes in Derry. A leaflet will be circulated giving details of the routes. Local events are being organised to tie in with the pilgrimages.

It was agreed that the URC should be represented on the CCBI group organising **The Open Book** project, which aims to encourage Christians to deepen their knowledge of the Bible and create evangelistic opportunities. It was agreed that the URC would be represented by Muriel Garrow or in her absence, Sheila Maxey. **Celebrating The Millennium** Mission Council agreed 'to welcome the initiative for united Christian participation in the millennium celebrations and welcomed the idea of establishing a temporary CTE "Churches Co-ordinating Group on the Millennium" and promised URC participation in it.' Sheila Maxey agreed to represent the URC on the Group and

there would be a budget of £1000 per annum for it. Considerable reservations were expressed about some of the ideas and the committee was asked to come back with proposals to the next Mission Council.

95/84 ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS (AGOGAL)

On the advice of Tony Burnham, it was agreed that the committee should report to the January Mission Council on its task of co-ordinating the funds available. A schedule of grants made this year had been circulated which indicated what could be achieved with the injection of relatively small amounts of money. The paper was received.

95/85 MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP REPORT

Human Sexuality It was agreed that 'the Task Group be thanked for their work so far and invited to continue their work, keeping a watch on the process and then collating the replies to be received by the General Secretary before 1 December 1996 and preparing a report and suggesting resolutions to be offered to General Assembly by the Mission Council.' The likely problems in this process were discussed and David Thompson, a member of the Task Group, emphasised that it is a report on discussions that take place, that is required from Churches and Councils. He also responded to concerns expressed that, whatever decisions are taken, some people will be hurt. He said that the Group will be drawing on Methodist experience in this respect. It was made clear later that this group had not discussed the topic, only the process, and did not know each others views on the subject.

Mission Council Procedure A paper on Assembly Committees and resolutions was accepted as advice to Mission Council.

General Assembly resolution 50 p.47 "Oversight... in particular of moderators"

Malcolm Hanson indicated the ways in which the moderatorial role has changed over the last 20 years and it was agreed to appoint a Task Group, to report to Mission Council in 1996, with members appointed by the Nominations Committee. Five people would be chosen, including a Provincial Moderator, someone with District pastoral experience, one with ecumenical experience, plus two others. A Convener and Secretary would be chosen from within the five.

95/86 RESOLUTION OF A DISPUTE ON MATTERS SUBMITTED BY MRS J F M MAYLOR

The three people appointed had decided to follow a procedure suggested by Mrs Maylor. This was to consider only the documentary evidence and to submit a report to the September meeting of Mission Council. This information was communicated to Mrs Maylor. With a few strengthening amendments this was approved and the Clerk was instructed to send it to Mrs Maylor.

95/87 DATES FOR MISSION COUNCIL IN 1997

The proposal that both residential meetings in 1997 should be midweek was criticised. It was agreed to change the March meeting to a weekend.

95/88 MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY

It was agreed that the basic **ministerial stipend** effective from 1 January 1996 would be £13,788 and that the **Pensions Working Group** should change its name to the **Pensions Executive**.

Church Hymnary Trust The proposal, that the United Reformed Church should withdraw from the Church Hymnary Trust and receive 7% of the Trust Fund at the point of withdrawal, was agreed.

95/89 PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REVIEW AND NOMINATING GROUPS

Tony Burnham suggested that the report be referred for consideration by MCAG in conjunction with the work to be undertaken on oversight. Later in the meeting this was agreed.

95/90 CHRISTIAN AID ANNIVERSARY

John Reardon gave a brief history of the organisation. Mission Council then agreed, on behalf of The United Reformed Church, that it gives thanks to God for faithful and persistent service to the poorest among humankind, given through Christian Aid and its predecessor body over 50 years; acknowledges with particular appreciation the effective support given by Christian Aid to the world development appeals of the United Reformed Church since 1972 and the current partnership in the 'Commitment for Life' programme; welcomes and endorses the statement "All shall be included..." adopted by the Board of Christian Aid to mark this anniversary; urges Christian Aid, an agency of the churches and society at large of the call of God to seek and to strive for justice as the way of peace.'

In response to the possible cuts in the overseas aid budget, Peter Brain read out a proposed letter to be sent to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury protesting about the possible cuts. It was agreed that the Moderator and the General Secretary should sign this. Other members were invited to add their signature to those of the Moderator and General Secretary. Draft letters were available for all Synods and it would also be suggested that members write to their MP's.

95/91 GENERAL ASSEMBLY PROGRAMMES

Mission Council then divided into groups to comment on the 1995 programme and consider whether they wanted a theme for 1996. Several groups commented on the slow start and rushed conclusion to Assembly and the lack of a firm timetable which discourages media attendance. There was little support for any theme for 1996. The day concluded at 9.15 p.m. after prayers led by the Chaplain.

Saturday

The meeting started with prayers and Bible Study followed by Group reflection on Jesus' sayings regarding wealth. This was followed by consideration of the value to Mission Council of having a Theological Reflector.

95/92 RESOURCE PLANNING -Group Reports

Important points were raised and resulted in the Resource Planning Group agreeing to bring revisions of some sections for consideration later in the meeting.

95/93 RACISM

Tony Burnham introduced the paper. The proposal to consider the establishment of a post concerned with multi-racial development had been referred to Mission Council by General Assembly 1994. A proposed post was specified in the paper submitted. After discussion it was agreed to ask the Staffing Advisory Group to look at the proposal and submit proposals to MCAG who would then pass them to Mission Council. It had also been suggested that a network be set up to support those from ethnic minorities. It was agreed that this could proceed as long as the committee stayed within its budget.

95/94 ASSEMBLY PASTORAL COMMITTEE AND A URC MINISTER

The members of Mission Council met in private session, opened with prayer, to consider a letter sent to them by the URC minister referred to in the matter (b) arising from the March minutes: "Assembly Pastoral Committee and a URC Minister". After a long and sensitive debate from 3.45p.m. to 6.00p.m. Mission Council agreed the substance of a letter to be sent by the General Secretary to the Minister concerned and certain other recipients. A confidential minute of that substance and of the discussion was also agreed and will be placed in the care of the Legal Adviser.

95/95 THE RURAL CONTEXT

Michael Cruchley, the Rural Consultant, described the centre at Stoneleigh from which he operates. He then outlined the rural mission field and requested invitations to help develop strategies for rural mission; he highlighted the need for ministers who serve in these situations to be adequately trained to take advantage of opportunities. He also commended the magazine 'Country Ways'.

95/96 RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

The ideas contained in the paper were discussed in the hope that it would be possible for a shared vision to materialise. The group were asked to continue their work. David Butler pointed out that there was a need to appoint another Convener following the death of Alistair Black.

95/97 RESOURCE PLANNING ADVISORY REPORT

A paper containing additions and alterations to the original paper was amended further and the overall priorities were agreed.

The evening closed with prayer at 9.15 p.m.

Sunday morning started with a Communion Service.

95/98 ELECTION OF TELLERS

Delyth Rees and Duncan Wilson agreed to serve until Assembly 1996

95/99 ELECTIONS

The following were elected.

Mission Council Advisory Group - Angela Hughes, Margaret McKay and
Peter Poulter

Resource Planning Advisory Group - Simon Thomas

Staffing Advisory Group - Geoff Lunt

95/100 WORKING PARTY ON DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

This was introduced by Keith Forecast, Convener, who stressed the need for a paper, as expectations in the areas of justice and rights have changed greatly. There were no procedures in place until 1988 when the Pastoral Measure was introduced, but this is no longer adequate. The paper was discussed in some detail and the following amended resolution was agreed; Mission Council receives the first report

of the Working Party set up in January 1995 to consider the disciplinary procedures, and endorses the intention to draft procedures which separate the disciplinary functions from pastoral care, to make provision for the support and guidance of District Councils and others involved, and to create an Assembly Commission, as outlined in the report, and asks the Working Party to do further work on its proposals in the light of the discussion in Mission Council, with a view to presenting to Mission Council, in early 1996, detailed recommendations to be placed before General Assembly.

95/101 WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

The paper on the governance of Westminster College was broadly accepted with the following amendments

- 1e. the last two words should read 'Reformed base'
2. Board of Governors
 - 2.1 There shall be a Board of Governors for the College appointed by General Assembly, consisting of fourteen members as follows:
 - a. a Convener, chosen for that purpose;
 - b. a clerk or secretary to the Board, chosen for that purpose;
 - c. eight other persons, of whom at least two shall have expertise in management, finance and the maintenance of buildings, at least two shall have expertise in education, and at least two shall have ministerial experience;
 - d. the Principal of the College ex officio;
 - e. a member of the teaching staff of the College, chosen by them;
 - e. a student member of the College, chosen by the students;
 - f. the Chair of the Cheshunt Governors ex officio.
 - 2.2 To include also 'a representative of Anglia Polytechnic University'
 - 2.3 Omit 'to' before 'six years'
 - 3.1 b) after resources read 'the financial management of the College within the policies set by the United Reformed Church '
 - f) add at the end 'other than the teaching staff'
 - 4.3 penultimate line to read '...responsibility for the financial management of the College ...'

The implementation of these changes would, in the long term, require a change in the Basis of Union in respect of staff appointments; in the short term, the General Assembly could be asked to delegate its function in this respect.

The paper will be sent for comment to the Management Committee and the Board of Studies of the College, before being finalised, but section 2 as amended was agreed by Mission Council as the basis for immediate action by the Nominations Committee.

95/102 ALTERATION TO THE PROPOSED DATES FOR 1997

The March meeting would be three days, to fall within the period 14 -17 March.

95/103 CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL CHURCHES

Brief comments from group discussions were given and group leaders were asked to send more detailed comments to the General Secretary.

95/104 1997: TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF THE URC

Members were asked to consult locally for ideas on the way this might be celebrated.

95/105 SYNOD AND COMMITTEE OFFICERS GROUPS

These groups met for discussion.

95/106 THANKS

The Moderator expressed thanks to all those who had made the preparations for Mission Council, to the chaplain and to the staff of Damascus House and he was in turn thanked for his Bible Studies.

The meeting closed with worship in which the last hymn was sung after processing outside.

BIBLE STUDIES - Mission Council, September 1995

BIBLE STUDY ONE

This weekend marks the 50th Anniversary of Christian Aid and we shall join in the general commemoration ourselves in our Bible studies and our worship.

One problem is that when we think of the work of Christian Aid we think of the poor, but when we do so we are usually thinking of them in their absence. I asked you to share your experience among poor people, to help us to bring them into our midst. It is rare for us Christians in Britain to reflect on poverty with the poor among us. I understand that recently in my local church on a Sunday when the worship was focussing on poverty and our response to it, a homeless person drifted into the church and stood at the back while our minister continued to speak about how we could be more helpful to those who are unemployed, homeless and poor. After listening for a while he shouted out "You should practise what you preach" and turned on his heel and stalked out. You can imagine how disconcerting that must have been and I understand that at the Church Meeting that followed there was much anxious discussion about how we should react to the presence among us of poor people. Like many of our churches we are all fairly comfortably off, although as a church there has been much change and adaptation to make the buildings more friendly towards the poorer members of society and the church's record with the 1% appeal over a long period is almost second to none in the denomination as a whole. But the first hand encounter with those who are shut out of normal society as experienced by the average churchgoers in Britain can be disconcerting and even alarming especially when it is unexpected. Let us then in our thinking never forget those we have talked with each other about. Theirs is the reality that the Biblical writers constantly addressed - the revelation of God in history was a message of hope and salvation for those who were disadvantaged - or poor.

There are many references to the poor in the Old Testament and an exhaustive search through the Concordance will reveal that the words in Hebrew which give us our English translation as "poor" can also be found extensively translated with other words too, showing that our word "poor" covers a range of different human conditions and experiences.

There are four words in Hebrew that can be translated as "poor".

The first of them is *RASH*.

In 2 Samuel 12.1-7 we read, "*There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor...*"

In Ecclesiastes 4.14 we read, "*One can indeed come out of prison to reign, even though born poor in the kingdom.*"

In Proverbs 22.2 we read, "*The rich and the poor have this in common; the Lord is the maker of them all.*"

This use of the word poor is to describe the contrast between wealth and poverty. This is a relative term. The poor are defined over against the rich. Material possessions are the defining criteria. It is the difference between having in abundance and having very little. It is the word used extensively in the Book of Proverbs - it describes the relative wretchedness of those who are poor but it is used not only to contrast rich and poor adversely but also in such a way that there are adduced some advantages which only the poor can experience. Proverbs 19 begins, "*Better the poor walking in integrity than one perverse of speech who is a fool.*" and Proverbs 28.6 reads, "*Better to be poor and walk in integrity than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich.*"

There is in these references in Proverbs a sneaking suggestion that the morality of the poor is somehow superior to that of the rich. It is perhaps in this way that we sometimes fall into the trap of idealising the poor, giving the impression that butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. Perhaps it is a misjudged or misdirected sense of guilt that leads us to such false judgements. If we are tempted in that direction it is worth returning to Proverbs 22

"The rich and the poor have this in common; the Lord is the maker of them all."

As human beings, rich and poor alike, are under God's judgement and mercy.

The second Hebrew word that is most often translated as poor is *EBYON*. Its meaning includes the needy, the destitute and those who long for something because they don't have it.

It is the word translated "poor" that we read in the very familiar passage from Exodus 23.10

"For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat: and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard."

Modern translations sometimes depart from the word "poor" and use other descriptive words to describe the reality of destitution, for example the King James version's repetition of the word poor in Deuteronomy 15 becomes in the NRSV:

Deut. 15.7-11 *"If there is among you anyone in need ..."*

The poor or needy in this passage are described to elicit compassion and concern - *"do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted"* - the poor are seen as a chance to be generous and open-hearted. They are a challenge to those who are comfortable but realism suggests that the problem of poverty will not wholly disappear, *"there will never cease to be some in need on the earth"*. Jesus echoes these words in Matthew 26.11 and when we look at the New Testament we'll return to them.

In the prophecy of Amos the treatment of the destitute becomes the springboard for the judgement of God: Amos 2.6 *"Thus says the Lord: for three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals."*

Amos consistently sees the poor and society's treatment of them as the touchstone of whether or not righteousness is present - and his condemnation is across the board. He uses all the words for the poor that the Old Testament uses to categorise different degrees or causes of poverty. He tackles the distinction that we sometimes make between relative poverty in which the poor are defined in relation to the rich and the absolute poverty which leaves people in complete destitution. It is, however, for the latter that he reserves his most pointed and scathing attack on the rich and the corrupt. There is absolutely no salvation for those who deal unjustly with the destitute.

Psalms 69 makes it clear that God is open to the cries of the needy, picking up the Hebrew word *EBYON*: Psalm 69.30-33 *"I will praise the name of God with a song ..."*

For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds."

The Lord hears the needy - and in the parallelism that is a feature of the Psalms they are equated with "those that are in bonds". I'll return to that parallelism shortly but to continue with our exploration there is a third Hebrew word that is often in English translated as poor, and that is *DAL*.

This word has less reference to economic poverty or material destitution, which the first two had. Its synonyms in English are lean and weak, or wretched. It's the word that is used to describe the cows in Pharaoh's vision that he asked Joseph to interpret

"Then seven other cows came up after them, very ugly, and thin" Gen. 41.19.

The opening of Psalm 41 gives a clue to a shift of emphasis in this reference to the poor

Psalm 41.1 - blessed are those who consider the poor ..."

They are bracketed with those who are sick. This poverty, which may of course be closely associated with economic deprivation, manifests itself in physical weakness. We know enough about poverty in our society to realise that material deprivation results in higher incidences of ill health, (both mental and physical), infant mortality and earlier death.

I'm sure it is for that reason that Amos would not let his contemporaries be led astray into thinking of poverty as something neutral. It is this apparently less judgementally charged word which he uses in his most vitriolic outburst in his fourth chapter: Amos 4.1

"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy."

There the two words *DAL*, translated poor, and *EBYON*, translated needy, are bracketed together. Amos won't allow his hearers to begin to try to distinguish between different kinds of poverty - he knew that that attempt is almost always a way of trying to escape from any sense of responsibility. Throughout history poverty has been rationalised as misfortune, accident, even fate. In that way we can all distance ourselves from the urgency of response.

A couple of years ago I read the novel "Clarissa" by Samuel Richardson. It is a magnificent parable of the struggle of good with evil. The central character, Clarissa, is a paragon of virtue and the trials and tribulations she endures are unbelievably cruel. It is almost too painful a story to read as her virtue is trampled upon for page after page. Imagine then my horror when this most lovely of people reflects the social norms of her time and makes a distinction between the deserving poor and the undeserving poor. The one she extols and has compassion for, the other she condemns and refuses to help.

The Old Testament is a very useful corrective to this distinction, which alas is still alive and well. We are all of us apt to make value judgements about the poor, recognising some who deserve compassion and assistance, but recognising others as feckless and undeserving. We've all no doubt heard and if we're honest shared the judgement that if they didn't drink and gamble it all away they'd be as well off as we are. Amos avoids the distinction - the poor are the sign among us that God's righteousness is being denied.

And that brings us to our fourth word *ANI*.

If we stay with Amos we read in chapter 8.4:

"Hear this, you that trample on the needy, and bring to ruin the poor of the land."

You can be sure that when Amos begins in that vein that he is not about to hand out any bouquets.

"On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight."

The judgement on those who oppress the poor is cataclysmic - *"sackcloth on all loins and baldness on every head"*.

If Amos makes sure that poverty is recognised for what it is, an indictment on society itself, the Psalms endorse that.

Psalms 35 appeals to God for deliverance:

Psalms 35.10 *"All my bones shall say, 'O Lord, who is like you? You deliver the weak from those too strong for them, the weak and needy from those who despoil them."*

Psalms 37.14 *"The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy."*

In fact the Psalms use several of these words to describe the poor, and particularly this word ANI which takes its origin from roots which mean crushed or bent over.

And in the way the word is used in both Amos and the Psalms there is a clear reference to oppression. It is in fact clear that the Biblical record as a whole sees poverty not so much as accident or misfortune, still less as inevitable. It sees it primarily as a result of oppression. I mentioned the parallelism of Psalm 69 - *"the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds"*.

Poverty and bondage are closely equated. People are poor because those with wealth have taken from them. That is never far from the Old Testament's understanding and the laws about harvesting and the Sabbath and the Jubilee are not primarily about compassion, they are about justice for those who otherwise are excluded from normal society.

In Exodus 23.6 we read, *"You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits."*

This is the time of year of the Harvest Festivals when we often read the passages from the Pentateuch that describe the period of settlement and the need to care for the poor in the land; if however our reciprocal or echoing response today is simply to distribute harvest boxes of fruit then we run the risk of suggesting that the principal response to God's goodness is in terms of charitable giving. Enjoy yourselves and be generous to others, however, doesn't go far enough. If the world is divided into poor and rich then the people of God are called to recognise that divide as exploitation and oppression and the appropriate response is in terms of striving for justice.

That's why the passages about the poor, the needy, the afflicted, and the wretched in the Old Testament have been such a fertile stimulus to the liberation theologians who have emphasised the imperative for justice which is the constant plea of the Biblical writers - a plea which they believed was an expression of the divine will.

It is clear from the Old Testament that poverty was a marked feature of society throughout Israel's history from the period of settlement through to the post-Exilic period. Poverty and wealth coexisted but remained a rebuke to their ideal of a society reflecting God's justice.

At the same time there developed a spirituality of the poor and today we heard one of the most arresting examples of that spirituality as represented in Psalm 22. Because of its opening words and their association with the Crucifixion this is probably the best known of a genre of literature in the Old Testament that takes its inspiration from the plight of the poor. The relationship between poverty and suffering is vividly outlined. Here in this Psalm poverty and oppression are turned into the universal experience of alienation from God and from others. The three key relationships in life are broken. The Psalmist is alienated from God, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* is the arresting opening outburst. *"Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?"*

In his affliction it is this sense of being rejected by God that disturbs him most. And as he contemplates his loneliness because God has abandoned him, he feels that his own dignity has departed too. *"But I am worm, and not human."*

The despair at being rejected or abandoned by God leads on to the inevitable sense of worthlessness. These spiritual accompaniments of poverty are only too evident among poor people - their plight can seem like a rejection by God and a sense of worthlessness, and that is echoed in the third broken relationship between the impoverished one and the community: *"scorned by others and despised by the people"* is how such people see themselves, cut off from the community.

It is an intensely felt Psalm plumbing the depths of human alienation and misery. No wonder Jesus gave voice to it on the Cross. Its powerful expressions of sorrow and complaint are entirely fitting to such a time as that. Utter helplessness is the mood of the lament. Of course we can regard it as entirely spiritualised, referring only to the interior life, but there is so much similar writing in the Old Testament that it seems likely that some of it at least was a reflection of the suffering of those on the margins of society. The emotion is raw and so vivid that it must surely have sprung from real and not just imagined experience.

"They divide my clothes among themselves and for my clothing they cast lots" That surely is drawn from experience of a society where extreme poverty threatened society's cohesion and where abject poverty was commonplace.

But, of course, it is not only a lament giving voice to the experience of affliction it is also a Psalm of triumph, for God vindicates the sufferer and leads to praise.

"God does not despise the affliction of the afflicted"

"The poor shall eat and be satisfied"

This is not the only place where there is a cross-over between the interiorisation of suffering and its outward or physical manifestation. That's why this Psalm, which the rich and comfortable can use as an exercise in penitence, is so much more pertinent for those who know what alienation is really like in poverty and oppression.

It is a Psalm that convinces them that the suffering is not the last word. God is faithful and his righteousness is finally triumphant.

*"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord
and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.*

For dominion belongs to the Lord

and he rules over the nations" Ps. 22.27-28

So fervently did the notion of God's rule prevail that there emerges in the Old Testament a spirituality which not only derives its inspiration from the poor but which anchors Israel's hope on the poor. From the earlier assertions that God's justice would prevail - for example as in Deuteronomy 10.18 where God is seen as one who *"executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves strangers, providing them food and clothing,"* from which passages modern Biblical scholars have developed the notion of God's preferential option for the poor - we find that while many of the prophets foretell the destruction of everything because of the denial of justice, the prophet Zephaniah reveals the astonishing vision of the poor and the lowly as the promised remnant through which God's promises will be fulfilled:

"On that day you shall not be put to shame because of all the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord - the remnant of Israel;" Zeph. 3.11-13

The words for humble and lowly in the original are *ANI* and *DAL* - the poor have become God's chosen people through whom his love will continue to be expressed. So Zephaniah anticipating his own prophecy of renewal through the poor exhorts his readers at the beginning of chapter 2, verse 3 *"Seek the Lord, all you humble (or we might say poor) of the land, who do his commands, seek righteousness, seek humility"* (that line could be rendered "seek justice, seek poverty")

ENOW HUBS'S GALLERY

BIBLE STUDY TWO

We ended yesterday with the prophecy of Zephaniah that God's continuing purposes would be carried forward through the poor. In that context the word which modern translations render as "humble" or "lowly" is the same as that which is also rendered as "poor". Perhaps in Israel itself there was a gradual shift from poverty to humility. The one describes the economic and social reality, the other the relationship to God - but we must never allow the harshness of the poverty which was caused by oppression to be muted by some process of spiritualising that reality to make it less of a challenge.

And to help us avoid that I want to begin in the Old Testament again with prophecy more or less contemporary with that of Zephaniah who looked to the poor to carry forward the divine purpose for Israel. The prophet was Jeremiah who in one of his prophecies of denouncement Praised the Lord

"for he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers". Jer. 20.13

Clearly he is referring to his own deliverance - the word he describes himself with is *EBYON* - the poor, the needy, the destitute.

In a series of laments the prophet describes his suffering in terms which are reminiscent of Psalm 22 and the many other Psalms which characterise a spirituality which arises from the underside of history - not from the rich and powerful and famous - but from the poor, the oppressed, the unknown.

And it is in that same vein that the suffering servant songs of the Second Isaiah have become such a rich well of suggestion for us as we wrestle with their staggering implications. The oppression is focussed in the one through whom the suffering will be transmuted into salvation. *"The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous and he shall bear their iniquities."* Isaiah 53.11

In Second Isaiah the poor and the humble who had come to be seen as God's special concern, whom Zephaniah had begun to describe as the faithful remnant and whom Jeremiah had personified in his outcast suffering, were now regarded as the key to God's fulfilment of his purpose in the world.

In the Third Isaiah faithfulness to God is described in terms of identification with the oppressed:

Isaiah 58.9-10 *"If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall arise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday."*

The identification however was pretty exacting:

Isaiah 58.6-8 *"Is not this the fast that I choose ..."*

The Third Isaiah is convinced that only the poor and the afflicted (the *ANI*) will receive the good tidings of God: *"The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners: to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."* Isaiah 61.1-2

This leads to a powerful developing strand of conviction that the humble, or the meek, shall ultimately prevail. But unlike the slaves in America whose spirituality focussed on release from bondage in a heaven beyond the misery of this world, the Psalms give voice to a hope for this world:

Psalm 37.11 *"... the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity"*

God's will is to be fulfilled by a reversal of the story of the world where the rich and powerful call the shots. The earth will become the dwelling place only of the righteous and the humble.

When we reach the New Testament there are strong echoes of those prophecies in Third Isaiah in the Magnificat in Luke 1.46-55:

"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

Luke is here consciously placing Mary, and by association Jesus, among those - the poor, the oppressed, the lowly ones - through whom his purposes will be fulfilled.

Paul it is suggested was possibly quoting from an early church creed in 2 Corinthians 8.9 when he said:

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

A similar credal formulation is to be found in Philippians 2.6-11.

Jesus then is affirmed in those transitional passages at the beginning of Luke's Gospel and in the Epistles of the New Testament as one whose identity with the poor is the clue to his divine purpose.

It is then worth reflecting on the attitude of Jesus to the poor and the powerless of his time.

In a book by Conrad Boerma, "Rich Man, Poor Man - and the Bible" published by SCM Press in 1979 he described the whole of the Gospel as the Gospel of the Poor. He argued that the covenant law delivered by God to Moses begins with the assertion "I am the Lord your God who called you out of the land of Egypt". The law is grounded in opposition to slavery and exploitation and all the way through the Bible the poor are vindicated and the rich and powerful are judged according to their treatment of the poor.

In the ministry of Jesus we see that there are incidents and references again and again in which the poor and solidarity with the poor are centre stage.

"If you wish to be perfect" Jesus said in answer to the young man, in Matthew chapter 19.21 "go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor and your will have treasure in heaven: then come and follow me."

In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus begins: (Luke 6.20)

"Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you, revile you, defame you [on account of the Son of Man]'

And the catalogue of the Blessed is mirrored in a diatribe against all who are unlike the blessed ones, beginning *"Woe to you who are rich"*.

It certainly seems as if to describe the Gospel as the Gospel of the poor is not far short of the mark.

Jesus himself is introduced in Luke's Gospel as being born into a world that had no place for him (Luke 2.7).

Both Matthew and Luke describe Jesus as having nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9.58 and Matt. 8.20), and he dies naked and impaled on a gibbet outside the walls of the city - only his grave is with the rich.

Jesus is able to do what few of us can do - he tells stories from the perspective of those who are poor. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a case in point. It is through the eyes of the man left for dead in the gutter that we begin to see and new and startling perspective on society and the behaviour of its citizens. It is from the perspective of the poor and the despised that we see the priest and the Levite - the respectable and the religious are judged by reference to the victim whom they ignore.

I remember once visiting the slums of the Philippines with an Orthodox priest from Bulgaria and an American Presbyterian from New York. The Orthodox priest was simply gob-smacked if I can use that term to convey the shock which he experienced. He kept telling me that he didn't think he could take any more. And as that afternoon in the sweltering sun, the stench and squalor, unfolded and as we met more and more people whose lives were gripped by poverty and the fear of those who made sure that the poor would never rise above their station, the American Presbyterian kept saying to me "I just have to keep saying to myself this is not my reality" *in a way that shocked me more than the shocking conditions I was experiencing*. I suppose what was all the more surprising and disturbing was that he was a black American - but so far removed from the roots of poverty and oppression that are all too much like the conditions in the Philippines that he could no longer enter into their misery and suffering.

It made me see so vividly why the Biblical message has been such an inspiration and hope for the poor, because it was Jesus the poor man who said "Blessed are the poor". For Jesus to say it, it brought consolation, but in the mouth of a rich man it would become little more than a sanctimonious smoke screen behind which to hide and protect his own privileges.

The opening of Jesus' ministry in Galilee is announced in Luke chapter 4.18 with the words of hope and promise for the poor and outcast: the poor hear good news, captives are released, the blind see and the oppressed are freed. These are all signs of the Year of Jubilee - the year of the Lord's favour.

And throughout his ministry Jesus warns much more frequently about the dangers of riches than, for example, about the Roman authorities which so many of his contemporaries were worried about.

When I was in the Philippines I bought a book by a Roman Catholic theologian Jose Cardenas Pallares from Mexico - a Biblical scholar. The book is called "A Poor Man Called Jesus"; it is a series of reflections on the Gospel of Mark and in one telling chapter the author shows how in Christian history it has been money and wealth that has caused the greatest tensions. In the New Testament we read on the one hand an idyllic description of a community in Acts 2.42-47 that possessed everything in common, in which no one wanted for anything and in which joy was the hallmark of community cohesion. But we also read of division caused by economic distinctions in the First letter to the Corinthians 11.20-22. That ambivalence towards wealth has continued throughout Christian living and we have all of us found the Bible I am sure uncomfortable and even puzzling on this score.

It is easy to laugh at the rationalisations and mental contortions that have accompanied interpretations of the clearest passage in the Bible that deals directly with wealth, Mark 10.17-31 and particularly from verse 23 onwards - after the conversation of the rich man with Jesus about inheriting eternal life we read:

Mark 10.23 *"Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were amazed at his words. But he said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'"*

One manuscript instead of the word for camel has a word that is very similar meaning rope. Two manuscripts have the phrase "those who put their trust in riches" instead of "the rich" or "the wealthy". It's an old ploy to

suggest that the needle's eye was a gate in Jerusalem through which camels had to crouch a bit to squeeze through. The moral of such suggestions was that if you are rich a dose of humility will see you through. The Roman Catholic theologian was somewhat scathing about Rudolf Bultmann's suggestion that the only historically authentic part of the whole passage was the disciples' question "*Then who can be saved?*". He is equally scathing about a Jesuit commentator who suggests that references to wealth are not the heart of the matter. What Jesus was really saying was "How hard it is to enter the kingdom of heaven". Perhaps we can take heart from the fact that the disciples themselves were astounded and dismayed by Jesus. Jesus was a shock to them: they were as shocked by these words following this encounter as they were when he walked on water. It's a sad reflection on some commentators who feel they have somehow to take away the offence in Jesus' teaching.

Yesterday I explored the place of the poor in the Old Testament. The word rich is usually reserved for those who grow wealthy, who thrive, who grow sleek and prosper. They are often described as wicked people, ruining others and failing to defend the cause of the poor (Jer. 5.26-28). Ezekiel (22.24-29) describes the leaders as those who have taken treasure and precious things. Power and wealth are linked in a syndrome of corruption and exploitation. Condemnation of the rich is the other side of the coin that seeks to uphold the poor. Micah rails against the wealthy in chapter 6.12, "Your wealthy are full of violence". In the Old Testament wealth is characterised as involving exploitation and violence.

Jesus does not contradict this view. In Mark 10.23-35 he clearly endorses it so forcibly that he astonishes the disciples.

We are going to discuss together the passage from Mark chapter 10 that gives us the greatest problems. How can we interpret it?

Jesus doesn't counsel the wealthy to engage in acts of charity. What he is doing is pointing to the need for freedom from money and the necessity of giving it to the victims of wealth, the poor. The story of the rich young person is the single case in all the gospels in which Jesus explicitly rejects a person desirous of following him. Wealth makes it impossible for people to answer Jesus' invitation.

Jesus contrasts the treacherous power of money which leads to death with the power of God which leads to enduring life.

There is one intriguing passage with which I draw to a close. Mark makes it clear in the way the Gospel story unfolds that the great evil of wealth is that it prevents a person from following Jesus. But he goes on to record that Jesus said "*For mortals it is impossible, but not for God: for God all things are possible.*"

It appears that God's faithfulness can overcome or subvert that which is inconceivable in terms of human possibilities.

The fact is that only God can work the miracle of a rich person's salvation. God alone can give what wealth cannot -

It's a comforting thought but never let the comfort smooth over the challenge. It's a passage I scarcely dare to read!

John Reardon

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