

FRIDAY, 29th SEPTEMBER 2000

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Paul Bedford, and included Bible study led by the Moderator. Tribute was paid to the Revd Duncan McClements of the Church of Scotland who had recently died.

00/50 Welcome

The Moderator, the Revd Bill Mahood, welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular the Revd Dr David Cornick (General Secretary elect), Mrs Janet Knott (Legal Adviser), Ms Catherine Smith (FURY representative), Mr Lewis MacKenzie (deputising for the Revd Derek Lindfield, Youth and Children's Work), Mr Donald Swift (deputising for the Revd Gwynfor Evans, Mersey Synod), the Revd David Miller (East Midlands Synod), the Revd Sam Ansa-Addo & Mrs Ann Sheldon (West Midlands Synod), the Revd Richard Mortimer (Eastern Synod), the Revd Roy Lowes, the Revd Paul Snell & Miss Angela Bebbington (South Western Synod), Mrs Veronica Taylor (Wessex Synod), the Revd Dr Robin Pagan (Thames North Synod), the Revd Dawn Mather & Mr Ian Chalmers (Southern Synod), the Revd Kristin Ofstad & the Revd David Fox (Wales Synod), Ms Helen Mee (Scotland Synod), Dr Andrew Bradstock (Church & Society), the Revd Peter Brain (in his new capacity as Moderator, North Western Synod), Ms Avis Reaney (Finance) and the Revd Dr Christina Le Moignan (Theological Reflector). As there were late newcomers due to unforeseen circumstances, they were welcomed individually as they arrived.

00/51 Attendance

There were 76 members present with 13 staff and others in attendance and Mrs Barbara Hedgecock (Minutes Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revd Dr Colin Thompson (Doctrine Prayer & Worship), the Revd Derek Lindfield (Youth & Children's Work), Mr Huw Morrison (FURY), the Revd Derek Wales (Wessex Synod), the Revd Clifford Wilton (East Midlands Synod), the Revd Ken Forbes (Scotland Synod), the Revd Philip Woods (International Relations), Ms Lesley Anne Di Marco (Youth Work), Mrs Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer), Mr Stephen Summers (CRCW development worker), Mrs Jenny Carpenter (Rural Consultant), Mr Desmond Curry (Nominations), the Revd Duncan Wilson (Convener RPAG), the Revd Liz Byrne (Yardley Hastings Centre Minister), the Revd Angus Duncan (Grants & Loans Group), the Revd Malcolm Hanson (East Midlands Synod), the Revd Gwynfor Evans (Mersey Synod), the Revd Glyn Jenkins (Nominations) and Mr Hilary Gunn (Office and Personnel Manager).

00/52 Minutes of Mission Council 21-23 March 2000

The minutes of the meeting held on 21-23 March 2000, which had been circulated, were presented by the Clerk. They were approved and signed as a true record by the Moderator after the following corrections: 00/38 – the name in the second paragraph should be “the Revd Roberta Rominger”; 00/41 – the third sentence from the end should refer to “District” not “Synod” Treasurers.

00/53 Matters Arising

00/26 Congregational Union of Scotland (CUS)/United Reformed Church (URCUK) Union
It was noted that the Unifying Assembly had taken place on Saturday 1st April 2000.

A request was made that an opportunity be given for the Theological Reflection from the March 2000 Mission Council to be discussed. *See Minute 00/76.*

00/54 Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) (Paper C)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report on behalf of MCAG. Paragraph 2, which confirmed the membership of the IT Task Group, the Grants and Loans Group and the Personal and Conciliar Oversight Task Group, was a matter of report. It was noted that the last of these groups had not yet been able to begin its work, and that therefore its report would probably appear later than the previously notified date of March 2002.

The following recommendations were made to Mission Council:

- Paragraph 3 that The Revd Brenda Stephenson, the Clerk and the Deputy General Secretary be asked to consider comments from district councils concerning the grouping of churches, and advise Mission Council on the next steps;
- Paragraph 7 that the group set up by Resolution 41 of 1997 should be continued for a further year;
- Paragraph 8 that nominations for Mission Council advisory groups and task groups should be dealt with in the way suggested in this paragraph;
- and that the Revd Ken Forbes be appointed to take the Assembly minutes for the annual meetings of the Assembly in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Mission Council accepted these recommendations.

- Paragraph 4 Mission Council noted that following consideration of the Assembly resolution concerning the setting up of an occupational health scheme for ministers MCAG had accepted the offer of the General Secretary to collect together some background information in preparation for proper consideration in due course.
- Paragraph 6 Mission Council concurred with the view of MCAG that it would not be appropriate to appoint committee secretaries a year before they take up office.

00/55 Health & Healing Development Group (Methodist/URC) and Inter Faith Relations Committee (Paper D)

The Deputy General Secretary said that MCAG had considered the future of the Health and Healing Group and the Inter Faith Relations Committee, because both had been set up by the 1996 Assembly for a period of five years. On the advice of MCAG, Mission Council decided to defer consideration of the future of the Health and Healing Group until the outcome of wider ecumenical discussion was known. The hope was expressed that the proposal from Churches Together in England that an ecumenical group be established would be successful.

In the case of the Inter-Faith Relations Committee, Mission Council agreed to establish a review group with a suggested membership of Graham Rolfe, Brenda Willis and one other to be appointed by MCAG. The present convener of the committee would not be a member of the group but would be consulted.

00/56 Post of Deputy General Secretary (Paper E)

The synod clerks had written to the Deputy General Secretary concerning this post, and Mr Simon Rowntree introduced Paper E which contained the substance of their letter. It was agreed that a review group consisting of the Revd Graham Cook (convener), Mr John Ellis, the Revd Elizabeth Nash, Mr Simon Rowntree and the Revd Dr David Cornick should be formed. Permission was given for MCAG to approach alternatives for any of these who were unable to serve. The group would be expected to report back to Mission Council no later than March 2001. Later in the meeting it was confirmed that the work of this group would replace that normally undertaken by the Staffing Advisory Group (SAG).

00/57 Task group on local church premises (Paper B)

Mr Martin Ballard, convener of the task group, introduced the paper and then responded to initial comments and answered questions arising from it. Mission Council divided into groups to discuss the report. There followed a plenary session during which each group reported on the main issues resulting from the discussions. The report was welcomed, though concern was expressed that it might not be written in a way which would enable it to be used profitably in the church. Several suggestions were made as to how its format might be improved and as to the constituencies to which it should be addressed. It would be important to relate it to "Growing Up", which had originally provided the impetus for commissioning it. The Moderator thanked Mr Ballard for coming to the meeting to present the report and also thanked him and the group for the work they had done. The Deputy General Secretary was asked to reflect on all that had been said and suggest a way forward later in the meeting.

See Minute 00/64.

The Chaplain led worship and Mission Council adjourned.

SATURDAY, 30th SEPTEMBER 2000

Mission Council joined in worship led by the Chaplain.

00/58 Church Appointments and Termed Contracts (Paper A)

The General Secretary introduced this paper, noting the following corrections: paragraph 3.3, last line, a bracket to be inserted before the word "including" and paragraph 3.4, first line, deletion of "if termed contracts are continued." Mr Burnham pointed out that the change in legislation would affect synod appointed staff and Assembly appointed staff working in synods as well as Assembly appointed staff working centrally. A possible error in paragraph 2.2 was pointed out in that under the new legislation it was probably not permissible to include an unfair dismissal waiver clause in any contract. This would be checked, though it did not affect the conclusions reached or the recommendations. It was noted that part-time workers had the same rights as full-time workers. After discussion **Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, accepted the recommendations in the paper (references are to Paper A):**

- 1. that all lay staff appointed to Assembly posts should be given an open-ended contract, with a few exceptions (i.e. where the post lasts less than one year or where there is a clearly defined limited life to the task or to the funding - see 2.2);**
- 2. that any change from fixed term contract to an open-ended one should occur only when the existing contract expires, with the exception of those which have been**

issued since October 1999 where the employee takes the opportunity to change to the new form of contract (see 2.4);

3. that the position of ministers in Assembly posts should be reviewed in the light of the above decisions, after the Ministries Committee has completed its work on ministerial service, noting nevertheless that ministers are holders of an office.

The following resolution was also passed:

Mission Council advises the other councils of the church to review and if necessary revise their employment policies in the light of these decisions and to ensure that they comply with current legislation.

In order to help those considering this, a paper would be prepared for the use of the church at all levels.

00/59 Nominations Committee (Paper F)

In the absence of the convener, the Deputy General Secretary on behalf of the committee brought the recommendations and Mission Council acting on behalf of the General Assembly agreed that:

1. **The Revd Philip Woods be re-appointed to the post of Secretary for International Relations for a further five years from 1 September 2001.**
2. **Consideration be given to removing the staff responsibility for the Inter-Faith Relations Committee from the Job Description of the Secretary for International Relations.**

It was noted that the nominating group for the moderator of the Wessex Synod would be convened by Mrs. Christine Meekison.

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly Mission Council agreed that the Revd Graham Long's service as Convener of Ministries be extended until 2002.

It was further agreed that the following be appointed as conveners elect (following Resolution 12 of 2000): the Revd John Young, Doctrine Prayer and Worship; the Revd John Rees, Ecumenical; the Revd Ken Chippindale, Accreditation Sub-committee of Ministries; Mrs Darryl Sinclair, National Assessment Board.

The Revd Kenneth M Forbes, Mrs Olive Bell and Mr Neil Platt were appointed to be representatives to the Council for World Mission (CWM) Council meeting in Taiwan in June 2001.

It was noted that the Revd Hazel Martell had indicated her willingness to be nominated as secretary of the committee from Assembly 2001.

The General Secretary announced that the Review Group for the Moderator of the Mersey Synod had met and would be recommending unanimously to the General Assembly that the Revd Graham Cook be reappointed for a further term from 1 September 2001 until 31 January 2004.

00/60 The resignation of ministers and secession of local churches (Paper G¹)

The Deputy General Secretary introduced this paper. After discussion, Mission Council received the paper which affirmed the policy adopted by the Assembly in 1987 and noted two paragraphs (4 and 5) which brought it up to date, but decided that it would be neither necessary nor appropriate to present it to the Assembly in 2001.

00/61 Petition from the Edmonton church to secede (Paper G²)

Thames North Synod had passed the following resolution on 11 March 2000:

“Thames North synod, having failed to effect a reconciliation of differences with Edmonton United Reformed Church, refers the petition to secede to General Assembly through Mission Council”.

The Deputy General Secretary presented this paper. Acting in accordance with paragraph 2.6 of the Assembly policy, Mission Council agreed that a commission should be set up which would report back to Mission Council in March in order to make a recommendation to General Assembly. The following would be asked to serve on the commission: the Revd John Reardon (convener), Mrs Val Morrison, the Revd John Proctor, Mrs Delyth Rees and the Revd John Rees. Permission was granted for MCAG to nominate replacements for any of these who were unable to serve. The Deputy General Secretary would act as secretary to the commission, but the Clerk would not be present.

00/62 “Dominus Iesus”

The Revd Sheila Maxey spoke briefly about this recent statement from the Roman Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and commended a helpful note which had been prepared by the Revd Dr David Thompson.

00/63 The Women’s Union of the Scottish Synod and Resolution 8.2 of the Unifying Assembly (Paper H)

The Deputy General Secretary presented the paper and after discussion Mission Council accepted the advice of MCAG that the matter be referred to the Life and Witness Committee for further consideration and report back.

00/64 Task group on local church premises (Paper B) *Continued from Minute 00/57*

The Deputy General Secretary said that the earlier discussions had made two things clear: that Paper B contained good and timely comments and that for it to be helpful to local churches it would need to be amended in the light of the Mission Council discussions and to have substantial editorial and presentational work done, probably by the Communications and Editorial Committee. It was necessary to decide whether it would be better simply to issue the revised paper for the use of the church or to instigate a major strategic programme integrated with Growing Up. There was considerable discussion during which it became clear that the way forward would be influenced by decisions taken on matters to be considered later in the meeting. This item was therefore further deferred. *See Minute 00/72*

00/65 Resource Planning Advisory Group (RPAG) (Paper J)

The paper was introduced by the General Secretary and there was much discussion following which the following decisions concerning the remit and membership of RPAG were taken:

Remit

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

1. long-term strategic planning;

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

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

Membership

The Group will be appointed by Mission Council. Regard should be paid to a balance between ordained and lay, male and female. It will consist of:

- a convener and secretary who if not members of Mission Council will attend;
- a synod moderator, nominated by the Moderators' Meeting;
- three members, not necessarily serving on Mission Council, who normally will include those with experience of synods and district council work;
- the convener of the Staffing Advisory Group;
- the General Secretary and Treasurer.

In attendance will be the secretaries for Ministries, Finance and Life and Witness. The Resource Sharing Task Group will also be represented.

Periods of Appointment

The term of service will normally be four years, except that the convener will serve a preliminary year. MCAG might also wish to ensure that there is some overlap with the present officers.

It was noted that the Staffing Advisory Group's remit would need to be amended to reflect its changed status as a sub-group of RPAG. It was also agreed that the Revd Duncan Wilson be re-appointed as convener of RPAG until the end of Assembly 2001.

The matter of the other members of the group would be discussed later. *See Minute 00/67*

00/66 Resolution from Yorkshire Synod (Paper I)

The paper was introduced by the Revd Arnold Harrison who presented the following resolution originating from the Sheffield South Group of churches which had been passed by the Yorkshire Synod at its meeting on March 4th 2000:

The Yorkshire Synod, concerned about the length of current vacancies, requests Mission Council to set up a process to review the procedures for filling ministerial vacancies within the United Reformed Church.

- i) How districts, synods and the United Reformed Church support churches in vacancy, and the viability of common procedures for all districts related to the production and acceptance of church profiles and the declaration of vacancies.
- ii) The possibility of timed appointments for all ministers.

- iii) The viability of encouraging ministers to seek calls, in particular through churches, districts and synods advertising.
- iv) Ways of encouraging all districts and synods to move towards the nationally agreed deployment quotas.

The Yorkshire Synod requests that recommendations for alterations to current procedures resulting from the review process are forwarded to General Assembly for consideration by the whole church.

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss questions arising out of the report. There followed a plenary session during which each group reported on the main issues resulting from its discussions. Mission Council accepted the advice of MCAG and referred the resolution to Ministries Committee with a request for an interim report in January 2001, though in the light of the considerable amount of work to be done it was recognised that this would be brief. Ministries Committee would take into account the views expressed during the discussion and would consult widely. *(In order to assist them in this, group reporters were asked to send to Ministries Committee written notes of their discussions.)*

Mission Council also accepted the further advice of MCAG that:

- a welcome be given to the offer of the Moderators' Meeting to review the movement of ministers over the coming months and include the results of that review in their next Assembly report;
- the offer of the Moderators' Meeting to review vacancy procedures and offer statistics with analysis and recommendations to the March Mission Council be accepted;
- the annual synods' deployment consultation be asked particularly to look at iv).

00/67 Resource Planning Advisory Group (Paper J) *Continued from Minute 00/65*

The membership of the Revd Dr David Thompson until 2002 was confirmed. It was agreed that the secretary and a further two members would be appointed at the January meeting. MCAG would be asked to nominate the secretary, and the two members would be elected by the Mission Council. The Moderators would be asked to nominate one of their number and MCAG would consider a nomination for convener elect.

00/68 Resource Planning Advisory Group: Racial Justice Post

The General Secretary referred to the decision of the March Mission Council (00/44) and reported that the General Assembly in July 2000 had "urged Mission Council as a matter of high priority to secure funding and urgently to make an appropriate appointment to continue the work begun by the Revd Marjorie Lewis Cooper." He then summarised the discussion with the Baptists, Church of England, Methodists and Roman Catholic Churches and also with CTBI and CTE. The outcome was that whilst there was a need for greater co-operation, particularly in matters of racial justice, our specific needs for racial awareness development work and the support of workers and ministers from ethnic minorities could not be provided ecumenically.

With regard to financing such a post, if the response to the Ministry and Mission Fund was insufficient, then something else might have to be cut. Finally he recommended that the Mission Council should resolve to give effect to its own and to the Assembly's resolution as soon as possible.

It was therefore agreed that the Nominations Committee be asked to proceed immediately to take steps towards a full-time appointment. The matter of which committee would support the work would be considered at the January meeting of Mission Council.

00/69 Stipend level for 2001 (Paper K)

This paper was presented by Mr Graham Stacy and contained the following resolution:

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2001 at £16,944

This was agreed. In answer to a question the Treasurer said that a figure which represented the actual cost of ministry could be obtained by adding to the stipend £2,101 for pension, £1,529 for N.I. and £1,883 for other ministry costs, giving a total of £22,457. This information would be sent to all church treasurers and synod M&M representatives.

00/70 Luther King House Educational Trust (Paper P)

The paper was presented by Mr Graham Stacy. The following resolution was carried:

Mission Council

- (a) **confirms the appointment of Revd John M Piper as a director of Luther King House Educational Trust, and**
- (b) **authorises any one of the following to represent the United Reformed Church (URC) and vote on its behalf at General Meetings of Luther King House Educational Trust:- the director of the trust for the time being appointed by the URC, the General Secretary of the URC or the Treasurer of the URC.**

00/71 Changes to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund Rules (Paper M)

Mr Graham Stacy presented this paper and proposed the following resolution:

Mission Council, acting for Assembly, amends the Rules of The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund by the deletion of the words shown in square brackets and by the addition of the words in italics:

- 14.1.2 **[If a minister serving a local church is inducted to part-time service whilst under the age of fifty five years or being a contributing member of the Fund reduces] *If a contributing member serving full-time reduces* his/her commitment to that of part-time service whilst under normal pension age, the Pension Trustee may raise the Pensionable Service to the level applicable to a full-time minister having regard to the length of any previous full-time service, to the age and health of the minister, to the fraction of basic stipend being paid and to the purpose and pensionability of any other employment and shall in such cases allow full membership of the Pension Fund, contributions then being payable on the full basic stipend.**
- 15.3 **Where part-time membership only has been granted [under Rule 14.1.2] the contributions referred to in paragraphs 15.1 and 15.2 of this Rule shall apply only in relation to the proportion of the basic stipend being paid.**

18. **Normal Retirement Pensions**

Subject to Rules 18.3 and 18.4 all pensions are based on stipend at date of retirement or normal pension age whichever is the earlier.

A member retiring in respect of whom all due contributions have been made shall be entitled to a pension based on years and months of pensionable service. [The pension will be proportionately reduced in respect of any year of part-time membership granted under Rule 14.1.2.] The amount of pension at retirement shall be:-

- 20.3 If a member at the time of ill-health retirement is a part-time member [under Rule 14.1.2] any uncompleted years under paragraph 20.2 above shall be reduced to the proportion that the number of pensionable years under Rule 18 bears to the number of years membership of the Fund, unless a concession granted under Rule 14.1.2 is in operation and full contributions were paid up to the date of incapacity.

The Clerk confirmed that the Moderator, General Secretary and Clerk had together agreed that the matter could be considered under Standing Order 3e(iv), and the resolution was carried.

00/72 Task group on local church premises (Paper B) Continued from Minute 00/64

The Deputy General Secretary brought the following proposal:

Mission Council agrees to:

- a) **Ask the Communications and Editorial Committee to liaise with the Use of Local Church Premises Task Group and others to produce a document for local churches based on the task group report (“document” to be interpreted broadly). This to be ready for General Assembly 2001.**
- b) **Ask MCAG to produce a paper for the January meeting of Mission Council, suggesting how the General Assembly, and through it local churches and district councils, can be encouraged to develop their strategy and practice of mission, in particular through considering the resources represented by church buildings.**
- c) **Discuss at the January meeting of Mission Council the issues raised by the suggestion in the task group report regarding the use of the Heritage Lottery Fund.**

This was accepted.

00/73 Moderator of Assembly 1999/2000

The Moderator greeted the Revd Peter McIntosh, who addressed Mission Council. Members warmly received Mr McIntosh, thanked him for his work as Moderator and wished him well for the future.

The Chaplain led worship and Mission Council adjourned.

SUNDAY 1ST OCTOBER, 2000

Mission Council, led by the Moderator and the Chaplain, met for worship and shared in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Subsequently the Moderator convened the meeting with prayer.

00/74 Lay training proposals (Paper N)

The Revd John Proctor introduced this report from the Training Committee concerning a course to succeed the current Training for Learning and Serving Programme (TLS) from September 2001, giving a clear explanation of the position and the advantages and disadvantages of the options available. Following the discussion at the General Assembly the Training Committee had examined further the four options, and had concluded that the best way forward would be either to use a course to be supplied and developed by the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester (PTEM) or for the URC to develop and write a tailor-made programme. After careful consideration the Committee brought to Mission Council a clear, though not strong, preference for the former.

The Moderator thanked Mr Proctor for his presentation. Detailed questions were put and answered and there was much discussion. Members indicated that they were aware of considerable unease, particularly on the part of current TLS students, about the proposal to use PTM.

Mission Council agreed to accept Option 4 on Paper N – developing and writing a tailor-made programme. It was confirmed that this implied an estimated annual expenditure of £80,000, which would include the cost of a full-time salaried post of Co-ordinator. It was also agreed that the General Secretary should ascertain whether it was possible to purchase the copyright of the TLS material which could then be adapted to URC needs by our own team of writers. A report on progress would be made to the January meeting of Mission Council.

00/75 Petition from the Ruiton Church to secede

The General Secretary asked Mission Council to give authority to MCAG to appoint a commission to bring a recommendation to Mission Council concerning the petition of the Ruiton church (West Midlands Synod). This was agreed.

00/76 Theological Reflections

Following an introduction by Mrs Daphne Beale based on the Reflection on the March 2000 meeting there was discussion which focussed on decision taking by means of majority voting or consensus. It was agreed that it would be good to pursue this further at another time. It was also agreed that the Theological Reflection on the previous meeting would be raised in 'Matters Arising' at the beginning of future meetings. The Revd Dr Christina Le Moignan, the Theological Reflector for the current meeting, thanked Mission Council for its hospitality and the stimulating discussions. The Moderator thanked her and wished her well as she prepared for her term of office as the President of the Methodist Conference.

00/77 Closing Remarks

At the close of the meeting it was agreed that the Moderator would write to the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to offer the sympathy of the URC on the death of the Revd Duncan McClements, noting that he had been a good friend of the URC and a fine ecumenist.

Closing Worship was led by the Chaplain.

The Moderator announced that the next meeting of Mission Council would be at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh on Saturday 20 January 2001.

Confidential Minute of meeting of Mission Council 29th September – 1st October 2000

URC Insurance Company Limited (Paper L)

The paper was presented by Mr Graham Stacy who answered questions from members. After brief discussion the following resolution was carried:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves that:

- (i) the sale to Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc of the whole of the issued share capital of URC Insurance Company Limited on the terms outlined in Paper L be approved in principle;**
- (ii) the Honorary Treasurer, the Deputy General Secretary and the Financial Secretary be authorised to conclude detailed negotiations and agree the form of contract to be entered into with Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc; and**
- (iii) United Reformed Church Trust be authorised to execute the necessary documents relating to the contract and the transfer of shares to Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc.**

It was noted that the URC Trust has entered into a confidentiality agreement with EIO under which it has been agreed that, until the transaction has been completed, information regarding the transaction may only be disclosed to directors of URC Trust, members of Mission Council and members of the URC Finance Committee.



MISSION COUNCIL

29 September - 1 October 2000

PAPERS

A	lilac	Policy on termed appointments
B	pink	Report of task group on local church premises
C	salmon	MCAG
D	canary yellow	MCAG (Health & Healing : Inter Faith Relations)
E	cream	MCAG (Deputy General Secretary)
F	gold	Nominations
G	blue	G1 Resignation and secession G2 Petition from Edmonton church
H	bright green	Resolution for Unifying Assembly on Women's work
I	lilac	Yorkshire synod resolution
J	pink	Resource Planning Advisory Group
K	salmon	Level of basic stipend
L	canary yellow	URC Insurance Company
M	cream	Changes to pension fund rules
N	gold	Lay training
O	blue	Province or synod : a change of usage
P	bright green	Luther King House Educational Trust
Q		
R		
S		
T		
U		



MISSION COUNCIL

29 September - 1 October 2000

A

1 Church Appointments and Termed Contracts

- 1.1 **Present Policy** The present policy was adopted by the Executive Committee on 3 July 1986. With regard to termed contracts it argued

There is a distinction between staff members who are appointed principally for a technical or professional expertise and those whose appointment has major elements of Christian leadership, requiring insight and vision, a broad understanding of church life and policy and frequent exercise of initiative. Those in the former category can well be appointed without any terminating date, on a normal contract of employment. But the second category carries with it the awareness that life-long service in the post is improbable. The church therefore has made such appointments for fixed terms, for this gives the possibility of change.

- 1.2 Posts appointed principally for a technical or professional expertise are the secretaries for Communications and Editorial, for Finance and the Office and Personnel Manager. All other Assembly appointments are for fixed terms.

- 1.3 The present rules and practice regarding fixed terms are as follows:

General Secretary	7 years + up to 7 years
Synod Moderators	up to 7 years + up to 5+

Others posts up to 5 years + up to 5+ *but see para 1.6 below

Posts falling into the latter category are:

Deputy General Secretary and secretaries for Church and Society, Continuing Ministerial Education, Ecumenical Relations, International Relations, Life and Witness, Ministries, Training and Youth Work. Also Children's Advocate, CRCW Development Worker, Editor of Reform and Media Officer, Pilots Development Officer, The Director of Training at Windermere and the Centre Minister at the National Youth Resource Centre. In addition, the Principal and teaching staff at Westminster and Youth and Children's Work Training Officers also have termed contracts.

Mission Council in March 1996 agreed that the following restrictions be placed on Assembly appointments. Only the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary

and Synod Moderators have to be ministers of the URC. The Secretaries for Ministries and Ecumenical Relations have to be members of the URC. The four posts of Secretary for International Relations, the Principal of Westminster, the Director at Windermere and the Chaplain to the National Youth Resource Centre, are open only to members of the URC and members of those churches which are within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches or the Council for World Mission. In fact all these eight posts are presently filled by UR ministers. All other posts are open to persons of any church affiliation.

- 1.4 Ministers called to serve in any of these posts do so as part of a total life of ministry. They can expect, at the end of their period of service, to return to local ministry unless they are due for retirement. Therefore in 1986 it was agreed that

ministers serve without contracts of employment but as ministers with an office which has been designated by the Assembly.

- 1.5 Lay people have contracts of employment. Assembly appointed staff, as distinct from most of the lay support staff and the exceptions noted above in para 1.2, have termed contracts. The legislation which covered this, Section 142(1) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 amended by Section 8 (2) of the Employment Act 1980 provides as follows:

Section 54 does not apply to dismissal from employment under a contract for a fixed term of one year or more, where the dismissal consists only of the expiry of that term without its being renewed, if before the term so expires the employee has agreed in writing to exclude any claim in respect of rights under that section in relation to that contract.

This agreement in writing is referred to as a **waiver** and this has been included in contracts for fixed terms of service.

- 1.6 In the review of 1986 it was also recommended that

the policy be adopted that appointments will not normally be extended beyond a second term, but the Nominations Committee will have freedom to recommend a further extension in exceptional circumstances.

This has been the practice with regard to all posts with two variations. First, this was not applied to synod moderators until after a decision in one case in 1993. Since then an appointment to a third term has been made only on one occasion, on the grounds that a third term of only two years, would bring the person to the age of retirement. Even so, care was taken by that Review Group to ensure that the retirement factor was not the sole reason for re-appointment. Second, this has not been applied to YCWTO's as a whole.

- 1.7 CRCWs also are issued with contracts. Although the church treats them as part of our ministry, unlike ministers, they are covered by under employment legislation. Therefore the practice has been to issue termed contracts for five years. After this first period, there has been no set pattern common to all CRCWs.

2 **Contracts since October 1999**

- 2.1 The Employment Relations Act of 1999 does not end the possibility of termed contracts. However there are certain limitations which affect our present practice of termed contracts with waiver clauses regarding redundancy payments and claims for unfair dismissal.
- 2.2 Termed contracts are possible for posts lasting less than one year. Termed contracts with waiver clauses are possible where there is a clearly defined limited life to the task or to the funding. However, in many of our posts, at the end of a second term, we expect to appoint another person to fill the same office. In future, the church will not be protected by the waiver clause against a claim for unfair dismissal.
- 2.3 Any termed contract which was agreed prior to 25 October 1999 and including the waiver clause is not affected by the new Act. In practice, this means that, with regard to most of our existing contracts, we are free not to renew them, if we so wish. If we do reappoint anyone then the new contract is subject to the 1999 legislation.
- 2.4 Some termed contracts have been issued since October 1999. Where those have been for a five year period, with the expectation that the post will continue, the persons concerned have been told that if the church changes its policy, they will be offered an opportunity to change to the new contract. Whether or not they change will be their decision.

3 **Future Policy**

- 3.1 The legal advice received is that fixed term contracts are not worth retaining, other than for *specific purpose* appointments or for funding reasons. (see 2.2)
- 3.2 Ministers are not employees and are exempt from the legislation. Therefore they do not receive contracts. It could be argued that, as a matter of equity, ministers in Assembly posts ought to be appointed on the same basis as the lay staff. If, in the latter case, the church moves to open-ended contracts then ought that not to be for ministers also? This might be in contrast to emerging thinking with regard to ministers in pastorates. However, if ministers continue to be appointed for fixed terms then is there not a risk that nominating groups will favour the appointment of ministers rather than lay-people?
- 3.3 The argument for termed contracts is to avoid a person becoming stale or the programme and interests of one person dominating far too long. These arguments are valid for larger organisations but in those bodies there are opportunities for creating teams with a balanced appraisal and also advancement in a career for the individual. In the absence of such possibilities and coming from a history that expected most of such posts be occupied by ministers, the termed contract of a reasonable length has not seemed to be as restrictive as in the secular world. If the use of termed contracts is ended then a new culture with new management practices will be required. The church is temperamentally disinclined to take hard decisions affecting the livelihood of individuals. There is

also a question as to whether the church is strong enough to provide the management for the numbers of posts including YCWTO's and CRCW's) involved.

- 3.4 There is one further option open to the church if termed contracts are continued. First, to work on trust that an individual will go after, say, two periods of service. This would run the risk of a person choosing to sue us for unfair dismissal. This would mean that when a person was appointed, it would be agreed that the expectation was that they would move on after, say, ten years. This would not preclude serious reviews during the period.
- 3.5 If termed contracts are ended, then different forms of supervision, appraisal and assessment of a person's value will need to be developed.

4 **Recommendations** after discussion at the Salaries Committee:

- 4.1 that all lay staff appointed to Assembly posts should be given an open-ended contract, with a few exceptions (see 2.2);
- 4.2 that any change from fixed term contract to an open-ended one should occur only when the existing contract expires, with the exception of those mentioned in 2.4;
- 4.3 that the position of ministers in Assembly posts should be reviewed in the light of the above decisions, after the Ministries Committee has completed its work on ministerial service, noting nevertheless that ministers are holders of an office.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

B



Church Premises - Millstone or Keystone?

“A paper (to assist) local churches and district councils in considering the best possible use of local church premises as a resource for mission” - Mission Council Brief

September 2000

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TASK GROUP

Generally

As part of its ongoing mission programme for the URC it was felt by Mission Council that part of the discussion should relate to local church premises and their use for mission.

A Task Group was appointed and it was hoped that their report would include some guidelines to encourage local churches to think creatively about the use of premises and that this should be, not only about major redevelopment schemes, but also include ideas and information about schemes that were 'small but significant'.

Membership of Task Group

The following people were appointed to the Task Group:

Mr Martin Ballard (Convenor)
Rev Beryl Chatfield
Miss Rachel Greening
Rev Dr Alan Wise



Meetings

The group has met on 7 occasions and these have included days of visits to churches where it was thought some significant contribution to the subject might be available through observation and discussions with those closely involved with the ongoing work in the local situation. Details of these visits are given later in the report in Appendix A.

Assistance

The group is grateful to all those who have given of their time to share experiences of the subject matter from a wide range of experiences. These include ministers, church members and administrators of individual churches, and officers in each of the Synods, who were approached to provide information about material and procedures that operate within their area.

We are aware that at the time of writing members of PLATO are compiling a national property handbook. This will give advice on matters such as health and safety regulations and other legislation that affects our churches and their users and we have therefore not attempted to cover these areas in any detail.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TASK

Generally

Many local churches have inherited buildings that have been used for worship and other activities over a period of many years. Inevitably there have grown emotional ties to buildings for aesthetic, personal and family reasons. These emotional and historical ties may at times inhibit the wider aspect of church life or deter newcomers from becoming part of a church which to them may seem rooted in the past. The expectation today is for public and community buildings to be warm, comfortable and 'attractive'.

Inherited buildings may in many cases be situated in good town centre locations even though the buildings themselves may now be unsuitable. The opportunity to assess the potential of buildings and site for more effective use is one that churches and their professional advisors must grasp. Suitable adaptations to make the best use of the premises and site can on occasions be beneficial both in financial and utilisation terms. In other situations difficult and unpopular decisions may be necessary and these could include the need to relocate, amalgamate or even close, all in the best interests of the mission of the church.

Apart from their regular use for worship, usually on a Sunday, there is no set pattern of use by churches of their premises. These will vary from church to church and will be dictated by circumstances which may or may not be linked to the locality.

During the preparation of this report it was clear from the majority of our visits that there is a belief that investment in buildings is an important aspect of church life and that in many instances this is linked with outreach work being carried out either by the church itself or in association with other agencies.

Aims & Objectives

In considering the relationship between buildings and mission the group has been aware of the concern of local congregations in seeking to maintain buildings which may be unsuitable and to alter, adapt and provide more suitable premises for some aspects of mission of the church. We recommend that every church examines its buildings and site, on a regular basis, to ensure that they are appropriate, in terms of suitability and condition, to assist the mission of the church. The contrast between a millstone and a keystone is apt and hence the title given to the report.

The group felt that it was important to hear the stories of churches that had undergone redevelopment. We visited at random and, whilst those churches would be happy to share their experiences, there are many others, certainly in each Synod and probably in each District, with stories to tell. We strongly recommend the sharing of these stories, as is already taking place in some Synods. It is also important to remember that other denominations have stories to tell too.

The group is concerned about the tendency of some congregations to seek to keep existing buildings open for reasons that are not essentially mission-based. Some common misconceptions appear to be: -

- Keeping this building open is the only way to survive
- It is better to be seen to have an old fashioned, worn out presence than no presence at all
- Good stewardship means preservation of buildings regardless of the cost in terms of human resources, even where there is no energy or time left for mission
- Mission is about providing accommodation for outside agencies who serve the community, allied to the assumption that users of buildings will see their relationship with the church as more than simply a hiring agreement
- This building is our spiritual home and the important thing is that it will 'see us out' – we wouldn't like it if it was changed and it probably wouldn't make any difference to those outside

We would like to encourage churches, as a result of this report, to look again at their own buildings and the relationship between buildings and mission.

"Experience shows that renewal of the [church] building, and enlargement thereby of its capacity for hospitality and service, has lead to the renewal of the worshipping community in that place, and to growth in numbers as well as in maturity of faith."

Richard Giles in 'Repitching the Tent' (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 1997)

MISSION

"Growing Up"

At the General Assembly at Southport in 1999 the mission strategy for the URC was set out in a document entitled "Growing Up". This started from the premise of numerical decline among British churches over the whole of the 20th century, the reasons for the decline, and how the URC might plan for growth.

The second part of the document dealt with the challenge "Towards a Mission Strategy". This incorporated the Five Marks of Mission first drafted by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and later revised. The 1997 Forum of Churches Together in England endorsed the revised statement. It therefore seems entirely appropriate that this should be the starting point for this report.

Marks of Mission

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation to sustain and renew the life of the earth

How To View Our Church Premises?

Against the 'marks of mission', how are we to view our church premises? We see two main purposes: -

- i) as a place for worship, prayer and spiritual renewal
- ii) as a tool for service and mission

These are closely connected. Without worship and prayer, service and mission will be in vain. Without service and mission, worship and prayer are hollow. We see church premises, therefore, as intended to help both spiritual growth and social action.

Existing premises vary greatly in an ability to serve these requirements. Many provide a traditional space for worship which has been a 'holy place' for many in the past, today has that attribute for some, but has little appeal for many people in this modern age. For a variety of reasons many such buildings have become redundant in recent decades; more are falling into that category. Traditional premises, moreover, are not usually ideal for service to the community.



Our Priorities

In the light of our discussion and experience we see flexibility as the key priority for a missionary church. Flexibility was, in effect, a keyword for the first Christian communities; they were content to borrow and to adapt and use a variety of houses and small buildings for their assemblies and as bases for mission. From the third century onwards, however, the church often chose to build according to the pattern of the imposing civic building, to provide a major and recognisable centre for Christian assembly in a multitude of towns and cities. With many variations on this theme, church building has often continued over the centuries to provide large and imposing edifices for a powerful church. Flexibility, a keyword for early missionary enterprise, was replaced by stability and power within an established tradition. The word 'church' has thereby tended to become synonymous with 'building'; the idea of church as assembly and the people of God has been diminished. For a modern age, and with mission strongly in mind, a more flexible approach is vital, not least in the provision of church premises. Our twin requirements of worship and prayer, service and mission make this essential.

Approach to Renewal: The Options

We have been impressed with attempts that we have seen to change and develop some church premises to meet these requirements in fresh and imaginative ways. A few developments have also broken new ground. All of these have stemmed from a willingness to be open to the local scene and to the needs of the community at large, whilst aiming to provide for worship and prayer with imagination and sensitivity. In these we feel we have seen a missionary church at work.

We recognise that there is an increasing pressure to share ministry through the establishment of groups or clusters served by a ministry team. This approach, at different stages of development within the Synods, is likely to be the pattern for the United Reformed Church's mission and ministry for the foreseeable future. This may influence the requirement for resources, particularly buildings, and must be a consideration in any plan or process for renewal.

A strategic geographical assessment of buildings that are available could lead to an awareness of the possibility of creating a new building stock from which the mission of the church as a whole might best be served in the locality. This is not merely a denominational consideration but if carried out in conjunction with Churches Together in the area might have even more far reaching effects, and benefits, than tackling the issue piecemeal.

For the future, the United Reformed Church should pursue a strategy to be widely agreed for dealing with the use, repair and refurbishment of Church property. This should aim to assist the basic requirements of mission, and promote good stewardship and appropriate use of resources.

A key demand is to make church premises as welcoming as possible for the community at large as well as for members and friends. With this in mind there are various options. The first two, immediately below, are not viable in the long term:

- i) Keep a building as it is, repairing it only as required, but leaving it in the state that served the 19th century church, but disconnected from 21st century society.

- ii) Make minor modifications to a building alongside the repairs programme so that it is more convenient to use, but maintains the 'church' feel to the place.

The proposed strategy involves first a study of community and membership needs, as, for example set out in the Appendix. This should precede consideration of the following options:

- i) Remodel the buildings to reflect the needs of the postmodern world. For example:-
 - alter the entrance to give unrestricted views of the inside
 - remove ancient looking furniture and redecorate to give a light and welcoming atmosphere
 - provide facilities for social action as well as spiritual growth

We recognise that the 'Listing' of a building may limit the freedom to remodel.



- ii) Close the buildings. Join forces with another congregation in the area to promote a stronger united presence in the community.
- iii) Close the buildings. Move out of the church building in to a local meeting hall or school, leaving behind all the costs of owning a building. Meet the community in the community and reach people on their own ground.
- iv) Build a modern building on the same site or as a church plant in an unreached part of the community in a style that is welcoming and functional, with low maintenance and running costs. With a small development, building requirements may be supplemented by the use of other local premises.

Process Towards Renewal

1. Each church should put together a proposal for assessment at a District Pastoral Visit. This should outline the relationship between the numerical strength of the church, the local mission activities, the financial health of the congregation and the structural integrity of the buildings. The assessment should take into consideration the area that the church serves and would help the congregation to decide on which of the four options above that they would pursue.

2. Funding would only be approved for churches, which were working in line with the resulting policy agreed at the pastoral visit. The church's resources would not then be used unstrategically, and the people in the church would know their mission priorities and work to these.

Sharing Buildings with Other Agencies

Many churches currently share premises with voluntary, statutory and secular organisations. Historically churches have been building owners and the use, usually of church halls, has been an integral part of the local community scene. The awareness of churches to both the pastoral concerns for all God's people and the availability of suitable premises has meant an increased use for community purpose. Many churches already share buildings on a regular basis with Caring Agencies and this conforms with the mission mark 'to respond to human need by loving service' as well as having considerable financial benefits by means of the greater use of extensive and expensive buildings.

Some churches may view this role as also containing the marks of mission of 'proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and the teaching and baptising and nurture of new believers' through contact made by those regular visitors to the premises. It should be borne in mind however that in many secular organisations who seek funding from outside sources there is a restriction, indeed prohibition, of organisations being sectarian or religious. Sharing buildings does not necessarily constitute mission in itself.

The trust and legal implications of sharing buildings on a regular basis are referred on page 14 of this report. It is also important to be aware of the practical implications of shared use – there is a need for co-ordination to ensure that buildings are not run for the convenience of external users to the exclusion of 'church' use, and increased use also means increased 'wear and tear'. Churches also more and more need to address ethical issues and agree policies relating to uses that are acceptable on church premises and those that are not.



CHURCHES WITHOUT WALLS

The Church is people, not buildings. But just as the symbol of the empty Cross is a reminder of the Living Christ, so a building recognisable as a church, is a reminder of active Christians, especially when activities benefiting the community are seen to take place in it all the week.



The last few decades have seen the rise of many 'house churches' which, when they outgrew a house, met in schools or halls. They rejoiced in freedom from building maintenance problems and costs, in minimal administration and in independence from denominational dictates. They were free, like the early church, to concentrate on fellowship and spiritual growth. Undoubtedly they attracted people who felt that the traditional church had lost its way, and they provided an intimate atmosphere of fellowship and mutual support. Many are still meeting a need. 'Church planting', and 'relocation', have also produced churches which do not own premises, and a few Local Ecumenical Partnerships meet in Community Centres and School halls, though these often move on to acquire a building after a few years.

A church using a secular building may have an important role to play, particularly in a Community Centre, as a House-church, or as a temporary arrangement, but it is a different role from that of a church with a building of its own. It is limited in the public witness it can give, since it tends to be 'visible' only on Sundays.

On the other hand, secular premises may encourage visitors who would hesitate to enter a church building, and where there is contact with other users of the premises, a good relationship with the local community may develop. This can facilitate active co-operation and the church can come to be seen as a valuable part of society and be listened to with greater respect. Buildings not owned by the church can still be a mission resource.

God never uses a stereotyped pattern. He loves variety. Where a church owns no premises, it is clear that people are the primary mission resource. Let us not think that owning a building is essential to mission, nor that it is always an advantage. Every situation is different, and each needs discernment of what is the right way forward for the people of God in that place.

Some details are included in Appendix D of a United Reformed Church who decided to abandon their old and unsuitable premises to become a 'church without walls'. After a period of years the decision was made to build again and in 1998 a completely new complex of premises for church and community use was opened.

COPING WITH CHANGE

Every church has to struggle to find the right balance between meeting the spiritual needs of its members and reaching out to try to meet the needs of those outside the church, in the name of Christ. It is only as members become mature in the faith that they are able to engage in effective mission to those outside, and it must be recognised that while premises can be a useful resource for mission, mature Christians are the essential driving force it needs. Those whose faith is based on a living relationship with Christ will know that He continually calls them to move on into new things, and to take risks. They are able to do so only in the security of their experience of His presence and enabling power.

A local church, however, is made up of Christians who are at many different stages of growth towards maturity, and when there is a call for quite radical changes to the surroundings in which they worship, some feel that the foundations of their faith are being threatened and raise strong objections. These people need to experience the love and understanding of their fellow-members, and to be helped to see that the fellowship of the church and the love of God provide greater security and strength than familiar surroundings. It is by gentle discussion of the variety of ways in which worship becomes meaningful and perhaps by widening their experience of worship in differing surroundings and denominations that people can grow more secure and willing to accept change. Visits to or from those who have made changes may be helpful. It is also important that members recognise that following Christ means our primary commitment is to His will, not ours.

Major change, such as the redevelopment of a much-loved and very familiar sanctuary, or the opening up of premises for the use of the local community, should therefore be approached with openness and without haste, clear and early intimation being given of what is proposed and the reasoning behind it. (This is a salutary exercise for those advocating change!) It is then good to have an opportunity for full discussion, followed maybe by a further period of several weeks of reflection and prayer before any vote or decision is taken. Thus the proposals can lead to deeper thinking about worship and discipleship as well as about the task of communicating our faith in ways meaningful to 'outsiders'. In this way Christians as well as buildings are prepared for mission, and in many instances this has led to a new sense of excitement and expectancy as members of a church 'set out together, with God'.

CWM has produced a workbook entitled "What does the Lord require of us?". This helps congregations to assess the needs of the community in which they are set, to clarify their mission aim, and to make practical plans in relation to their own situation, taking into account resources available. When this has been done, the need for adaptation of premises may well become apparent, and when everyone can see the need for the proposed changes, they become more acceptable. Since the involvement of church members in any new activities made possible by change is crucial to achieving the Church's mission aim, it is vitally important to communicate the overall 'vision' of the way forward and gain the support of the whole congregation as far as possible.

CONSERVATION AND EVANGELISM

As a denomination we have in many places inherited buildings constructed by our forefathers with a generosity and philanthropy that enabled large voluminous accommodation to be provided. Changes in the pattern of worship and other church activities have meant that many of these formal and inflexible facilities have become a hindrance to the work of the church rather than a help.

Many of our church buildings have been "listed" as of historical and architectural interest. The restrictions imposed by such classification result in a lengthy process of consultation and approval before any alterations can take place and the assumption is of conservation and preservation. Conflict between current usage and preservation of historic architecture is a frequently occurring dilemma but there are many examples of "listed" premises that have been altered to suit present day requirements whilst still retaining the integrity of the original design.

United Reformed Church buildings, in common with Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist, are exempt from secular listed building controls relating to alterations, instead being covered by Ecclesiastical Exemption procedures. The legal constraints are no less onerous than the secular procedure, but the procedures enable worship and mission needs to be taken into account alongside conservation. In the United Reformed Church each Synod has a Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC) to examine applications, consult and make recommendations to the Property Committee regarding approval. Secular planning permission is required through the normal channels for change of use and demolition, but local churches would be well advised to seek advice from their LBAC in the first instance.

It would be wrong to think that all old buildings are necessarily unsuitable for present day use and it is readily acknowledged that many can be "inspirational" and worthy of retention as part of the church's heritage. However, the church is not a society for the preservation of historic buildings, worthy though some may be, and the image given by unchanged buildings from the turn of the last century is often in conflict with the stated mission and image that the church of today would wish to convey.

There is naturally a reluctance to use funds intended for Christian mission and service for the preservation of Listed Buildings – which is a community rather than a church requirement. For this reason we commend to churches the Heritage Lottery Fund dating from 1999 which is a source of grant aid for Grade II Listed Churches in 100 or so local authorities in 'deprived' areas of the country. Such use does not in our view conflict with the views of the United Reformed Church General Assembly in 1997 on the lottery that "where it (an application) seeks funding for projects to benefit the whole community and nor merely or primarily the church or its organisations, this does not breach the spirit of what Assembly determined (about the lottery in 1995)".

The foregoing paragraphs indicate the concerns that may be shared by a local church but take no account of the "image" of the church to those outside its own circle and, unless steps are taken to modernise the premises in an acceptable manner, the assumption that the church is an institution tied to the past will be an inevitable consequence.

NEW BUILD

The decision to construct a new church building may well be taken for a variety of reasons including: -

1. Replacement of an existing unsuitable set of premises
2. A desire to relocate or "church plant" in a newly developed area
3. A local ecumenical initiative

The group is aware of new church buildings of various denominations in many parts of the country further illustrating the extent of the importance placed on appropriateness of premises for the current mission of the churches, either together or separately.

Nowadays it is unusual for any new building to be constructed other than for use for activities on a seven day a week basis. Provision of facilities for groups, for activities that are church related, church supported or even purely commercial, are very much a feature of the times and the image that is portrayed to those outside church circles is of an organisation in tune with and aware of the many facets of modern day life.

It is frequently difficult for local churches to accept that their present, often much loved, old building may have come to the end of its useful life, and it takes a bold decision to determine to dispose of or demolish a building in which so much emotion has been invested. However, experience has shown us that churches that have undertaken change have usually felt the benefit of that decision. In some instances membership and church attendance has increased, as local people become aware that the congregation is involved in creating new accommodation and promoting activities.

There is no discernible pattern as to whether new buildings projects are restricted to large, small, suburban, city centre or rural churches.

From an architectural aspect it is a comparatively rare opportunity to design purpose built accommodation of the size and accommodation most suited to the church's needs, although it is acknowledged that at the end of the day all new buildings are a compromise between site limitations, planning considerations and the finance available.



One significant financial implication that exists at present is the imposition of VAT which in general terms is zero rated on new church buildings (or self contained extensions) whereas works of alterations and improvements to other than listed buildings (unless for facilities for the disabled) is chargeable at the full current rate. This factor is not inconsiderable when considering major expenditure and there are a number of churches that have been chosen to go along the new build route as a result of the minimal financial differences between that and persevering with major adaptation of an existing building that may not be as suitable.

The Group is conscious that there are enormous advances being made in the field of communications and information technology and that these are likely to have an increasing effect and influence in all areas of society including the church. The internet now has far reaching possibilities and many churches are on the net with their own web site.



Although this does not directly relate to buildings it does have a bearing on the type of facilities that may need to be provided within new or even existing premises. The dichotomy between 19th century buildings and 21st century technology affects the life of a church through communications/publication/teaching for adults and children, many of which will have an effect on mission.

PRACTICALITIES

Generally

Each of the twelve Synods within the URC operates a different procedure for churches seeking to undertake building projects. Every Synod has a Property Committee or equivalent, however, and local churches should consult them for advice on procedural matters.



- Q. HOW MANY ANGLICANS/URC/METHODISTS ETC DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE A LIGHT BULB?**
- A. TEN. ONE TO ACTUALLY CHANGE THE BULB AND NINE TO SAY HOW MUCH THEY LIKED THE OLD ONE.**

Self Assessment

Some Synods are able to make grants and loans to local churches but the rules governing the eligibility for such financial assistance vary. There are some useful guides to the evaluation of requirements of projects and the Eastern Province has prepared a questionnaire providing the basis of self assessment in relation to buildings work and a copy of this is included as Appendix D.

Another useful exercise when considering the suitability of buildings is for a church to undertake a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and this can usefully be undertaken prior to the preparation of a Mission Statement. We recommend the CWM Workbook "What does the Lord require of us?" that has been sent out to all are churches (see bibliography).

This guides congregations through a mission audit process that involves SWOT analysis. It helps to emphasise the importance of putting 'function before form' – in other words, looking at what we want to achieve first and then what we need to achieve it. Buildings should be looked at after Mission, not before it when they will only be viewed as a constraint.

Current Statutory Regulations

- Issues of Health & Safety play an increasingly important part of any church's consideration of its property. Regular inspections of gas and electrical installations and appliances are only the 'tip of the iceberg'.
- With the legislation that came into force in October 1999 and the additional regulations due in 2004, all churches need to tackle the issue of access and facilities for the disabled. Whilst it is hoped that there may be some leniency for ecclesiastical buildings this is yet to be clarified and perhaps more importantly it is clearly our responsibility to carefully consider how we cater for this sector of the community. The age profile of our own congregations also emphasises the danger of not treating this as a priority.

- Multiple use of buildings brings with it additional regulations and costs. One example is the effect of commercial occupation on rates; another is the need for professional building management/caretaking. Much applies to all churches, but those in multiple use need to be particularly vigilant about new legislation and its effects.

Complying with all the changing regulations can be particularly difficult in ageing buildings.

Starting afresh can sometimes be more economical and, particularly in the case of health and safety issues, may increasingly become a legal necessity.

Trust & Legal Implications

The trust and legal implications of sharing buildings are complex. The principle that “where there is a will there is a way” might prove a useful starting point but it is essential to involve Synods, Legal Advisors and Trust Officers at an early stage to ease the way in which projects can be implemented. Problems can be solved but answers are often not as simple as it appears at first. The right advice can be particularly helpful in identifying cost implications at an early stage while there is more flexibility to adapt schemes if necessary.

In particular, trustees are constrained regarding what they can give consent to under both the URC and the Charities Acts. They must ensure that the charity’s assets are protected and leases that provide appropriate protection under the Landlord and Tenant Acts can be costly. There is also now a statutory requirement for special valuations prior to sales and some lettings so costs are further increased.

Different projects can throw up individual anomalies. One of our churches in the North Western Province (subsequently closed) encountered a problem in registering its premises for marriage ceremonies. It discovered that its sanctuary was too multi-use for religious registration but too religious for civil registration! Discussions are already taking place to resolve the confusion and conflict arising from the existing legislation for civil and religious ceremonies but in the meantime such buildings cannot be registered for marriages.

These are but examples of matters that may require consideration. The need to consult with advisers and trustees is an ever-important aspect of changing circumstances.



FINANCE



Generally

It is only rarely that churches contemplating adaptation or new build projects to their premises will find that the scheme is self-financing. The usual pattern is for at least part of the cost to need to be found by the local church. A general rule is that any scheme must be within achievable financial limits.

Joint venture projects with other organisations can have a large impact in financial terms but the requirements of the local church will normally be the priority in considering any proposals.

Churches will therefore need to look at ways in which money can be obtained to fund such projects and there are loans and grants available from some Synods and also from the URC Church Buildings Fund.

URC Church Buildings Fund

The grants and loans currently available can be summarised as follows: -

- Loans for building works/purchases in excess of £30,000
 - Up to 50% of project cost (excluding professional fees), max £75,000
 - Up to 100% of professional fees, max £25,000, interest free for 2 years
- Grants
 - Feasibility Study – 50% of total cost, max £2,000
 - Disabled Facilities – 50% of total cost, max £10,000
 - Construction of new church buildings in new locations (limited resources)

Applications have been received that did not fit the standard criteria and these were judged on their individual merits. This is a restricted fund and the current situation results from past experience of trying to allocate limited resources as prudently and widely as possible. Whilst outside the remit of this group, will it be time to look at the criteria again in the light of its findings?

Synods

The variation in procedures and resources available within the twelve Synods means that there is no consistent policy with regard to the availability of grants to assist churches undertaking building projects. Some Synods operate a % basis grant together with loan facilities whilst other Synods operate on a more ad-hoc basis with assessment of each case on its own merits. As before, each Synod Property Committee or equivalent can advise local churches.

Grants & Loans from Other Sources

There are several national trust bodies making grants to organisations fulfilling their criteria and churches have taken advantage of these in a number of instances. Local trusts also make grants and the eligibility for such funding needs to be researched locally through the register of grant making bodies.

Joint Venture & Partnership Schemes

Where a church enters into an arrangement with another organisation for a joint venture project then the legal as well as the financial implications require careful consideration. Applying jointly for funding from trusts frequently widens the scope under which an application can be assessed but the restrictions on use of premises and other factors need to be considered at an early stage.

Lottery

Whatever view is taken of the lottery there is no doubt that it has become an increasingly common source of providing funding for a variety of organisations. A church undertaking partnership or joint venture development projects with other organisations may well find that the lottery is the source from which their partner may be seeking finance.

The Heritage Lottery Fund established in 1999 is a source of grant aid for Grade II Listed Churches in deprived areas of the country, as discussed in the section on Conservation and Evangelism.

Sale or Development of Sites

One of the major assets that churches have inherited is the value of their buildings and sites. It is possible to utilise these for the provision of new or modernised premises either individually or in conjunction with other users or even developers. There are vast capital assets within the churches and it will be realised that these are sometimes retained for the exclusive benefit of a very small number of members. There are some circumstances where income generation enables a church to maintain its fellowship even though numerically the effectiveness would otherwise not be viable. Disposal of sites that are not realising their full potential can also release some capital for the benefit of the wider church.

Effective Use of Resources

If it is the desire of the church to allocate financial resources to projects where mission is the principle objective then some changes may need to take place both within the Church Buildings Fund and within Synods to ensure that this policy is effective in the local situation. Eligibility for grants would be limited to schemes where the mission aspect could be clearly demonstrated.

The level of grant could also be related to the level of need in financial terms for a scheme in any locality. There are vast differences in capital values of buildings and sites in different parts of the country and some account of this could be made as part of a grant making policy.



CONCLUSIONS

The group is conscious of the difficulty in listing the criteria for measuring "success" in terms of mission. "Growing Up" arose from consideration of the decline in church membership during the 20th century and it is probable that membership is the only realistic numerical basis for measuring response to the Gospel. Our research and the information available to us give no clear indication that it is the buildings themselves that increase membership. The members of churches and ministers are likely to be a more influential aspect, although the availability for mission purposes of warm, comfortable and attractive premises undoubtedly plays a part and is a prerequisite for modern day accommodation. Our conclusions and recommendations may be summarised as follows: -

1. We see church premises for the 21st century as having a twofold purpose: -
 - i) as a place for worship, prayer and spiritual renewal,
 - ii) as a tool for service and mission
2. There is no one solution to the improvement or development of church premises for a modern age. Each case depends on local needs and mission opportunities in the area.
3. It is vital to make premises welcoming, worshipful in the sanctuary, and flexible and practical as a whole.
4. We invite the URC to adopt a general strategy based on the options set out on page 6, linked to the District pastoral consultation process supported by professional advice within the Synod.
5. The implementation of the strategy depends heavily on local churches. Without exception, each local church (with the help of District pastoral consultation and professional advice within the Synod) should be asked to examine these options in their situation during the first 5 years of the new century, with a view to adopting one of them after concurrence by District Council.
6. The provision of URC funds for changes to premises should depend on the completion of the exercise set out at conclusion 5 and priority be given to projects clearly demonstrating the potential for mission.
7. We commend the Heritage Lottery Fund as a source of grant aid for Listed Churches in certain deprived areas of the country.

APPENDIX A

List of churches visited by Task Group during preparation of report: -

Chester: Caldley Valley Neighbourhood Church (UM)

Warrington: Elmwood Avenue (URC)

Warrington: Birchwood, Thomas Risley (LEP)

Bromley-by-Bow (URC)

Hackney: Rectory Road (URC)

Hackney: Upper Clapton (URC)

Tottenham: Highcross (URC)

Coventry: Warwick Road (URC)

Coventry: Holyhead Road (URC)

Visits Made By Task Group

During the preparation of the report a number of visits were made to local churches to enable the group to see in action different patterns of church life and to learn something of the mission of these churches. The visits were to large and small churches in rural and urban situations and it is perhaps difficult to determine a clear pattern or measure "success" from these visits. The visits to Caldley Valley Chester and Bromley-by-Bow were each to Church Centres where community activities very much dominated the weekday life of the local church. In each instance the premises were occupied extensively every day and the variety of activities involved members from the local community of a very wide-ranging age. The actual membership of the church at Bow is small and it must have taken a bold step for the congregation to enter into a commitment which enables the Centre to have grown to the present level of involvement and the planned further extension to the work.

The modern building at Thomas Risley in Warrington is already proving to be inadequate for the demands made upon it by the local community and plans are in hand for altering and adapting the building to make it more suitable. Here clearly is a church involved in the heart of the community where a growing congregation is also part of the picture.

The visit to Rectory Road in Hackney enabled us to see a modern building for which the scope and extent of mission work is not yet apparent. The new minister therefore has an opportunity of working with the church in creating a pattern of life within the Centre without the constraints of those that have historically taken place and may be continuing for no other purpose.

At Elmwood Avenue in Warrington, a joint development with a local Housing Association has enabled a modest but adequate building to be provided for church use together with a number of housing units, replacing a very large unsuitable building.

The situation at Upper Clapton was one that presented an entirely different aspect of mission within a local church. Clearly a congregation gathered from a very wide area is growing at a rapid rate such that plans to enlarge the existing building have been referred back by the District Council to enable the church to consider something more ambitious. The ultimate aim is for a large amphitheatre type building capable of seating 1000 people (or even 6000).

The visit to Highcross, Tottenham illustrated an existing church building that had been "rationalised" with adaptations being made to the premises to provide a Worship Area and with many other activities happening within the existing extensive but "ordinary" ancillary accommodation.

At Coventry we were shown proposals for a major City Centre redevelopment scheme utilising land owned by Warwick Road United Reformed Church. The present "listed" worship area will be modified and other ancillary accommodation for church and community work will be provided alongside a commercial fitness centre and restaurant. The Holyhead Road church is a modern building provided twelve years ago as a result of a joint development scheme with a local housing association.

APPENDIX B

Bibliography

“Growing Up – A mission strategy for the United Reformed Church” – (adopted at General Assembly in 1999) available from the URC Bookshop, price £2.50 incl p&p

“Repitching The Tent” - Richard Giles, published by The Canterbury Press Norwich

“What does the Lord require of us?” – CWM workbook, available free from CWM in London

“The New Alclémist” article re Andrew Mawson & Bromley by Bow URC

“A Pastoral Approach to Church Redevelopment” – Revd Andrew Lonsdale, sabbatical thesis

Synod Documents

There are many good documents specifically relating to the topic of church buildings that have been prepared by Synods and some of these are: -

Mersey Synod - Churches and their buildings strategy
Synod Day - Repitching The Tent

Eastern Province - Standards for Church Buildings - Self Appraisal Questionnaire
(Appendix D)

Synods are also circulating books of stories, such as: -

“A book full of stories” – published by North Western Provincial Office

“Are we Better Together?” – Southern Synod, April 2000

Feature

Christ Well Manselton URC

APPENDIX C

Self Appraisal Questionnaire – to assist churches

(Produced by the Eastern Synod)

STANDARDS FOR CHURCH BUILDINGS

Self-Appraisal Questionnaire

(To assist a church in assessing whether its buildings meet the current mission needs of the congregation)

GENERAL PURPOSE

Each church is recommended to complete this exercise at least once in every five years, in the hope that it will be helped to develop long term plans to ensure that its properties provide the facilities which are necessary for an effective witness and work. Before conducting the self-appraisal it will be helpful for the church to review its hopes for the future as these may have an impact upon the buildings; possibly for work with children, young or old people, perhaps for counselling, book-selling or large-scale catering.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE

Where the appraisal indicates possible obstacles that may become greater as time passes, the exercise should encourage churches to evaluate their physical location sooner rather than later. By so doing, it should be possible to secure a future for the congregation whilst at the same time avoiding further investment in buildings which may need to be abandoned.

TACTICAL PURPOSE

Where a relocation is not indicated, the appraisal should highlight any major changes which will become necessary in the foreseeable future and should encourage churches to keep their facilities maintained to a high standard.

STANDARDS

It may be that standards set by new public buildings such as schools or health centres or even indeed supermarkets are not appropriate for every church and that in some circumstances those of a modern comfortable home are more appropriate. It is doubtful whether self-evident DIY endeavours, the use of cast-off furniture and the smell of decay constitute an adequate standard.

PROCEDURES

It is anticipated that, whenever the church is reviewing its facilities, it will update the appraisal form and also offer a completed form to its District Council in preparation for each quinquennial visitation. It is likely that applications to the Synod either for permission to alter buildings or to seek financial assistance will need to be accompanied by a completed appraisal form.

ASSISTANCE

If churches require assistance in the undertaking of their buildings self-appraisal then informal professional advice can be sought through their District Council. There may be grants to assist churches to engage suitable professionals should major changes be contemplated. Introductions can be made to churches which have successfully faced similar problems, and upgraded buildings etc. can be viewed. The Synod makes available financial assistance through both Project Facelift and under the terms of its Finance Policy.

Self-Appraisal Questionnaire

KEY LIMITING FACTORS

This section invites your church to look ahead in order to foresee whether there are likely to be any future limitations which may restrict your church's work and generate a need to move, merge or close. These will depend upon a number of questions:-

1. The nature of your fellowship. Would you consider your church to be:-
 - a) A community church (i.e. is the outreach of your church mostly directed at people living within ready reach of your church?) Y/N
 - b) A gathered church (i.e. is the outreach of your church mostly directed at like-minded people – regardless of where they live?) Y/N
 - c) Other (please give details)

2. Is the number of people living within ready reach of your church likely to grow during the next five years? Y/N

3. Is your church still sited in a central position within the community. Y/N

4. Are there location considerations such as major commercial property redevelopments, the creeping pedestrianisation of town centres or other traffic considerations which could, within the next five years, seriously impede the ability of your congregation to gather in the church building? Y/N
If yes – please give details.

5. If you need to expand your facilities is there sufficient spare usable space within the confines of your site? Y/N

6. Is there any evidence that the structure and fabric of your church building, its foundations or sub-soil are becoming sufficiently defective as to cast doubt upon its long term future? Y/N

7. If you were to plan such a substantial redevelopment that the local Planning Authority could insist upon the provision of additional on-site car parking, could this be provided? Y/N
8. If you need to install or improve essential services within your building will the suppliers be able to provide these economically?
- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| Gas | Y/N |
| Electricity | Y/N |
| Telephone | Y/N |
| Water | Y/N |
| Foul Drainage | Y/N |
9. Is vandalism or other criminal/unsociable behaviour likely to grow within the next five years to the level at which insurance premiums and/or security measures demanded by the insurance company become too expensive? Y/N
10. Does your church offer rooms and facilities for hire to local secular organisations without any significant contact with the users? Y/N
11. Do you anticipate that elderly people will still be prepared to walk after dark to your church building during the next five years? Y/N
- 12a Is your church building listed or in a Conservation Area? Y/N
- Listed I II* II. Within a conservation area (please underline)
- If listed – please answer the following question.
- 12b Is it possible that the listed status of your church will render it impractical to adapt it to meet your requirements within the next five years? Y/N
- (The maintenance of a listed building which can no longer provide adequate facilities for a church is neither a URC nor indeed a Christian obligation).
13. Are the estimated costs of the Action Plan at the end of this assessment such that the church will be able to meet them? Y/N
14. Would the life of your church be assisted if you were able to use hired or other accommodation rather than continue in your present premises? Y/N

FIT FOR MISSION ? If, as a result of your replies to the previous questions, your church does not envisage moving from its present site within the foreseeable future, could you please now evaluate the adequacy of your premises for the purposes which have been identified in the previous section? It will help to obtain more accurate answers to some of the questions if the opinions of non-church members are sought e.g. passers by, children, hirers of rooms etc.

Action required

Are the buildings

Easy to find?	Y/N
Readily recognisable as a church?	Y/N
All under one roof?	Y/N
Evidently well cared for and loved?	Y/N
Clearly hospitable (Is the entrance welcoming and the threshold easily crossed?)	Y/N
Weatherproof?	Y/N
Clean, well maintained, clearly illuminated, with safe walkways, ideally on one level?	Y/N

Does the greeting and meeting area (the vestibule, porch, foyer) provide:-

Sufficient space?	Y/N
Direct access to all other church facilities?	Y/N
A clear view of the Sanctuary/Worship area?	Y/N
A warm, welcoming, clean, well maintained, clearly illuminated facility with a safe floor surface, ideally on one level?	Y/N
Up to date notice boards?	Y/N

Does the Worship area provide:-

The correct seating capacity (between 25% and 50% above the average congregation)?	Y/N
A layout suitable for the way you would like to worship?	Y/N
Ready participation in relative comfort for the old, very young, physically disabled and hard of hearing?	Y/N
An unobtrusively effective sound system?	Y/N
A warm, welcoming, clean, well maintained clearly illuminated facility with a safe floor surface, ideally on one level?	Y/N

Does other accommodation provide:-

Sufficient separate rooms/spaces of the right sizes?	Y/N
Adequate facilities for the purposes for which they are <u>now</u> used?	Y/N
A warm, welcoming, clean, well-maintained, clearly illuminated environment with safe floor surfaces, ideally on one level?	Y/N

Are the kitchens and catering facilities:-

Adequate for the size of the building?	Y/N
Well located within the building?	Y/N
Equipped with adequate appliances functioning correctly?	Y/N
Such that refreshments can be served hygienically?	Y/N
Up to the requirements of relevant legislation?	Y/N
Welcoming, clean, well maintained clearly illuminated and ventilated with a safe floor surface, ideally on one level?	Y/N

Are the toilet facilities:-

Adequate in number for the size of the building?	Y/N
Well located <u>within</u> the building?	Y/N
Hygienic and properly equipped, with facilities for hand washing?	Y/N
Accessible to disabled people and any other special user groups?	Y/N
Warm welcoming, clean, well maintained, clearly illuminated with a safe floor surface, ideally on one level?	Y/N

Are doorways, corridors, staircases and other areas:-

Wide enough?	Y/N
Clear of obstructions?	Y/N
Adequate for access to upper and lower floors?	Y/N
Fire proof – if designated as a fire escape route?	Y/N
Warm, clean, well maintained, clearly illuminated with safe floor surfaces?	Y/N

Generally:-

Are the buildings safe for the use of the public? (See Synod Health & Safety Guidelines)	Y/N
Does the church have all the necessary licences? (See Home Office booklet Licensing your Community Building)	Y/N

ACTION PLAN

Please summarise here the actions which your Church hopes to take during the next five years to improve and/or maintain its facilities. Please list them in yearly order.

<u>Year number</u>	<u>Improvements</u>	<u>Maintenance</u>
--------------------	---------------------	--------------------

(1-5)

The substance of this report was shared with a church meeting on

Signed.....Church Secretary

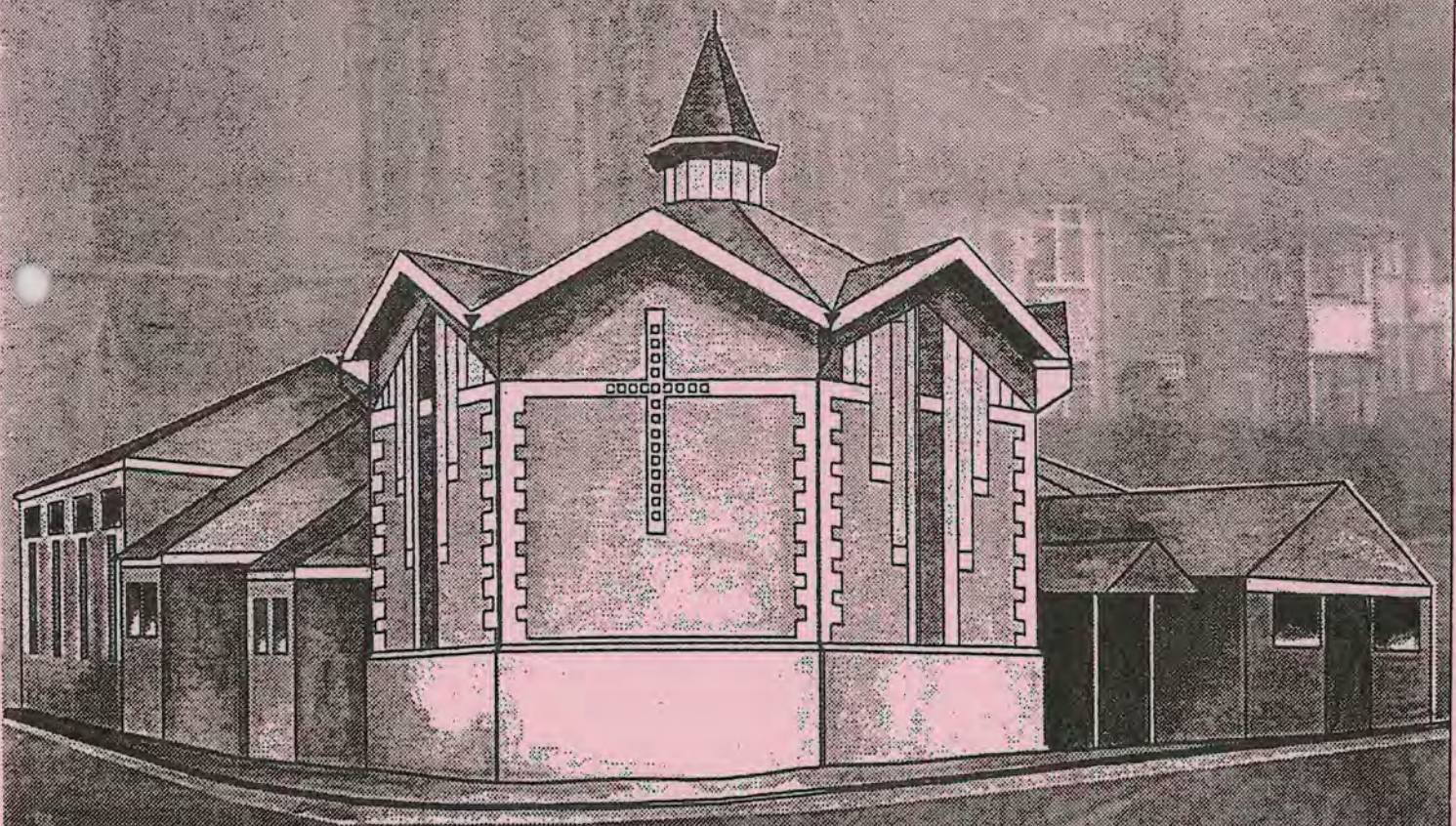
APPENDIX D

Manselton United Reformed Church – just one example of a church that transformed old buildings into a new resource.



Christ Well

Manselton United Reformed Church



October 1998

History of Manselton United Reformed Church

“Manselton Cong”

In the early 1900's, Christian men and women from the surrounding area were committed to establishing an English Congregational Church in Manselton, which at that time was a new residential area. In 1906, their work and prayer came to fruition when the church was founded. The people were soon attracted to the church, which met in the local school, and by 1908 the church was able to move into its own building. The church was soon able to recognise the wealth of talent within the community, which was expressed through its history in such things as oratorios, pantomimes and musicals, as well as providing its own church and community leaders. The church has always tried to care for its community, through tried and tested church organisations such as Guides and Brownies, youth clubs, choir, Sunday Schools, meetings for men and women, and mother and toddler groups. It has also run luncheon clubs, holiday play schemes and has a long tradition of 'world development projects', supporting poorer communities throughout the world. The church has close links with centres for the disabled and the Multiple Sclerosis Society, which has a centre in Manselton. Fully integrated worship has always been important to the church, recognising the importance and value of each individual and the whole contribution by people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to the life of the church. There is a strong ecumenical dimension to the church, which belongs to a denomination that arose out of the coming together of Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches, and continues to foster links between existing churches. This is also expressed in its use of many traditions, ancient and modern, in worship. Even after becoming Manselton United Reformed Church in 1973, it continued to be known affectionately as 'Manselton Cong'.

Church Without Walls

Throughout the history of the church, it has faced many problems with dignity and practical common sense. During the late 1980's, the church had to face up to an increasingly common problem: what should be done about old buildings where age, weather and wear had taken its toll? The church recognised that its buildings and institutions can easily be a barrier, keeping out many "types" of people. The old church building had become a constant drain on finances and was increasingly inappropriate to the spiritual and social needs of a vibrant, changing community. In 1989, the church made a brave decision to demolish all its existing buildings. With fear, anticipation and expectancy, the church began to discover what it means to be a "church without walls". The buildings were demolished in the summer of 1990. With ease and with pain, the church adapted to its new situation. Stability was offered by the temporary availability of other local buildings loaned to us for regular meetings. The life of the church continued, although built on what had been, it could never be the same again.

Leaving the old buildings was a liberation. We rediscovered what we held to be most valuable: people. During this time, the church became involved with a 'soup-run' to the homeless people of Swansea, and packing aid for crisis areas at home and abroad. The concern and interest in 'poorer' areas of the world was heightened, and new work among the children of Manselton was able to begin. We were able to take a look at ourselves and the community, and re-assess our own needs and how that related to the needs of the community. With renewed awareness of strengths and weaknesses, problems and solutions, the church learnt how a building can serve both the needs of the community and the needs of the church.

(Rev) Richard Pope, Former Elder

The Christ Well Project

The Christ Well Project is the day to day activity taking place in the new building. It will include all our present weekly activities, but we hope to promote a much wider programme, which will encourage the involvement of the people of Manselton – for the Christ Well Project is very much of and for the local community.

Presently we have over 100 children, aged between 5 and 13, participating in midweek clubs. We hope to extend opportunities for pre-school children by offering 'Carer and Toddlers' and 'Playgroup' mid-week, morning sessions, organised by qualified staff. These will not only present children with the chance for play and the development of social skills, but will also provide openings for carers to meet, exchange ideas and make new friends.

The building has a large area to be used a coffee shop. During the day people will be able to call in for a snack in a friendly place, where they can enjoy company or perhaps be able to seek help or advice. We are already co-ordinating with other groups, such as Age Concern and the East Side Initiative to become a centre which can provide useful information. In the evenings this coffee shop can be turned into a 'dry pub'. It will become a safe place where our teenagers can join with their friends, not for organised activities, but to merely have the freedom to meet and enjoy each others company, in a warm, friendly environment.

There are many rooms in the building which will be used by various groups. It is likely that a cancer self-help group will develop. We look towards working with the East Side initiative, and possibly helping to provide facilities for free educational courses. There will be opportunities to work alongside the handicapped members of the Manselton area. Hopefully, many ideas will come from the community itself, for the Project feels very much like a market place, where people of all ages, backgrounds and persuasions will feel welcomed and encouraged to participate.

However, the Christ Well Project is not a community centre, nor has it the primary objective of filling seats in the worship area on a Sunday. You may have noticed the word 'friendly' is at the heart of the Project. It was through friendly actions, mixing with, talking to and serving, that Christ ministered to the needs of his community nearly 2000 years ago. It is through the activities of the Christ Well Project, through friendship, by providing a safe, friendly environment, and by involving local people, that we seek to bring Jesus into their lives, making the gospel relevant to their daily needs. We believe this vision has been given by God and we wish to fulfil it to His glory.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October

C

MISSION COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP

1. The group has met on 4 May and 7 September. Some of the major items considered appear as separate papers for this meeting's agenda.
2. A number of elections to advisory and task groups took place at the last meeting of Mission Council. Some of those elected felt unable to serve and it was necessary to approach others who had been suggested. The full list is now as follows:

IT task group:(2000-2003) Steve Wood (convener), Russell Davies, Barney Lawrence, plus 4 Church House nominees.

Grants and Loans Group: (2000 - 2004) Angus Duncan (convener).

Personal and conciliar oversight task group: Rachel Poolman (convener), Elizabeth Caswell, Graham Campling, Fleur Houston, John Humphreys, Elizabeth Nash, John Rhys.
(This group is due to report in March 2002)
3. Mission Council at its March meeting sent the report of the task group on the grouping of churches to district and area councils, inviting them to send in comments by 31 December 2000. It also agreed that people should be appointed to consider the comments and advise Mission Council on the next steps. MCAG suggests that Arnold Harrison, the Clerk, and the Deputy General Secretary should be asked to undertake this task.
4. MCAG considered the Assembly resolution concerning the setting up of an occupational health scheme for ministers. It agreed to accept the General Secretary's offer to collect together some background information so that proper consideration can be given to this matter.
5. MCAG considered the Assembly resolution on the post of a Secretary for Racial Justice. This matter will be considered under the report of the Resource Planning Advisory Committee.
6. MCAG considered the suggestion made at Assembly that committee secretaries, as well as committee conveners, should be appointed a year before they take up office. It noted that most committee secretaries are Church House staff and therefore well aware of the issues before their committees. For the few who are not, MCAG believes that the case for early appointment is not strong enough to justify either the time commitment or the cost involved.

7. The resolution 41 pastoral group was set up by Assembly in 1997 to be available to individuals who felt particularly hurt by the human sexuality debate. It has not been used by many people but in those few instances it has been a valuable support. The group's life has been extended several times, the last extension being to October 2000. MCAG proposes that the group should be continued in being for a further year.
8. MCAG considered the method by which Mission Council nominates people for its advisory groups and task groups. A request at the beginning of a meeting for people to make nominations rarely gets a response, and the Clerk has often had to spend mealtimes encouraging people to think of names. At the last meeting the groups were asked to spend a few minutes discussing possible nominations and this produced a considerable number of names. MCAG suggests that in future nominations should be accepted either from groups or from individuals. In the latter case there would need to be a seconder.
9. MCAG considered the future of the Health and Healing Development Group (Methodist/URC) and the Inter Faith Relations Committee. Recommendations are contained in paper D.
10. MCAG considered a letter addressed to John Waller from the synod clerks regarding the post of Deputy General Secretary. This has been printed as paper E. MCAG recommends that a review be established immediately to look at the issues raised in the letter concerning the nature of the post and the method of appointment, with a report and recommendations no later than March 2001. It believes that David Cornick should be a member of the review group and has other names to propose if the recommendation is accepted.

Additional note

The Revd Ken Forbes acted as minutes secretary at General Assembly without formal appointment. In order to regularise the situation Mission Council is invited to appoint him to take the Assembly minutes for the next four annual meetings. Ken is willing to undertake this.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October

D

Health and healing Development group (Methodist/URC)
Inter Faith Relations Committee

A proposal from the Mission Council Advisory Group

These were both set up by the 1996 Assembly for a period of five years, at which time their future was to be decided.

It is clear the Mission Council should be ready to advise next year's Assembly as to the way ahead.

There is a proposal from Churches Together in England that consideration be given to setting up a wider ecumenical group on health and healing. It has been suggested that the existing joint group with the Methodists could form the base of such a development. The group itself is in favour of that way ahead.

Mission Council is advised to defer any consideration of the future of the Methodist/URC group until the outcome of the wider ecumenical discussion is known.

In the case of the Inter-Faith Relations Committee **MCAG recommends the establishment of a review group** of three people who will be asked to report to the meeting of Mission Council in March 2001. The group might consist of a convener, someone involved in the situation in 1996, and the present committee convener. If that is acceptable, possible nominees could be Graham Rolfe, Brenda Willis and Daphne Beale (none have been asked).



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

E

POST OF DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

I write on behalf of the Synod Clerks about a matter arising from their annual Consultation which they wish to be brought to Mission Council in October this year.

You attended that Consultation, and I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you for all the support and help you give us as Deputy General Secretary.

The matter we wish to raise derives from our contact with you, and concerns the potential difficulties we see from the retirements of the General Secretary and yourself being only a year apart.

We are anxious that the Church considers the nature of the post to be vacated by you in 2002 and decide on its content and how it should be filled as soon as possible.

While we understand that the duties of the current post are meant to be largely *interchangeable* with those of the General Secretary, we recognise that there could be other models. These could include

- one where there is a *complementarity* to the duties of the General Secretary;
- another where greater co-ordination of staff is exercised; or
- another with more specific management functions.

Our sister churches may suggest other models. The adoption of a particular model may have implications for whether or not the post holder should be an ordained minister. We also recognise that the incoming General Secretary has an essential role to play in such a review.

We further suggest that the method of appointment for your successor needs consideration: should this be by a 'normal' group appointed by the Nominations Committee, or by a wider group comparable - but smaller in size - to that used for the General Secretary? We would favour the latter, and that such a group receives nominations, rather than invites application.

We therefore ask Mission Council to agree urgently that

- (i) a review of the Deputy General Secretary post be conducted, involving Dr Cornick;
- (ii) the appropriate method of undertaking this be agreed; and
- (iii) the review group also considers the method of appointment.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

F

Nominations Committee report to Mission Council 30 Sept 2000

1. Staff Review Groups

1.1 The review Group for the Secretary for International Relations was convened by Revd Michael Davies and made the following recommendations

- 1. The Review Group unanimously recommends that Revd Philip Woods be re-appointed to the post of Secretary for International Relations for a further five years from 1 September 2001.**
- 2. It is recommended that the staff responsibility for the Inter-Faith Relations committee be removed from the Job Description of the Secretary for International Relations.**

1.2 The Review Group for the Moderator of Mersey Synod was convened by Mr Brian Evans.

1.3 A Nominating Group for the Moderator of Wessex Synod will be convened by Mrs Christine Meekison

2. Appointment of Conveners Elect.

Following the passing of Resolution 12 at General Assembly, appointments are required now as Convener Elect for those committees where the Convener is due to retire in 2001.

2.1 We had representations that, in view of possible staff changes, some Conveners should serve for a further year. Resolution 51, appointed Revd Alasdair Pratt as Convener: Assembly Arrangements to serve until 2002. We now propose that Revd Graham Long's service as Convener: Ministries should also be extended until 2002.

2.2 We propose the following as Conveners Elect with immediate effect:

Doctrine Prayer and Worship: Revd John Young

Ecumenical: Revd John Rees

Ministries; Accreditation Sub-committee: Revd Ken Chippindale

National Assessment Board: Mrs Darryl Sinclair.

Windermere Advisory Group: *to be advised in January*

3. Representatives to CWM Council [meeting in Taiwan June 2001].

We propose the following, in addition to the Secretary for International Relations.

Revd Kenneth M Forbes

Mrs Olive Bell

Mr Neil Platt

4. Revd Hazel Martell has indicated her willingness to be nominated as Secretary w.e.f. General Assembly 2001.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

G¹

THE RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS AND SECESSION OF LOCAL CHURCHES

In both March 1999 and March 2000 Mission Council has considered a paper on this subject. The last discussion called for a re-drafting of the paper in the light of the comments that had been made in group discussion and of the discussion on Assembly resolutions 14 and 15.

Consideration of the latter point has led MCAG to recommend the deletion from the paper of the paragraphs relating to the resignation of ministers and the possibility of a major split in the church. Consideration of the former point has led to the paper beginning with the present policy on secession agreed by the Assembly in 1987 and adding two new paragraphs setting out certain new factors and considerations.

MCAG advises that a paper in this form be presented to Assembly in 2001. If Assembly accepted the paper, then the changes in paragraph 4 could be incorporated in the main text in the Assembly minutes.

The Secession of local churches from the URC

In 1987 the General Assembly agreed a statement about secession which is reprinted below. During the discussion of human sexuality Mission Council looked at the statement and came to the conclusion that there was no reason to depart from it. However in a few aspects it needs updating. The original statement is therefore reprinted below, followed by the suggested updating. Assembly is invited to adopt the whole paper as a position statement for the years ahead.

The 1987 Statement

1. The history

1.1 1972 Events *In the preparation of the Basis of Union the joint Committee deliberately made no provision for secession by local churches and no procedures for it were described. The Parliamentary Bill was necessary to deal with the trusts and properties of the uniting bodies. A number of individuals lodged objections to the Bill and it was therefore considered by a committee of the House of Commons. Those opposing the Bill were seeking to amend it with clauses providing a right to secession by local churches. Those promoting the Bill resisted such*

amendment and pointed out that within the functions and powers of the General Assembly it would be able to permit secession and will be the council of the church with final authority in such matters. The Committee agreed to the next stages of the Bill unamended, and accepted the statement of the promoters that the URC 'will give very careful consideration to requests made in due form of individual churches to secede taking with them their property'.

1.2 1972 to 1980 *Subsequently, the General Assembly did receive such requests and in some cases agreed to secession. The numbers were: 1975: 1, 1978: 5, 1979: 1. The grounds cited in these cases were mainly that the uniting procedures of 1972 had been misunderstood, or were in error, or that the character of the new URC was radically different from what they had been led to believe. The main problem that arose was that the Charity Commission asserted that, in the absence of express statutory authority, they had no power to alter the trusts of property and a seceding church.*

1.3 1981 *Therefore, the opportunity of the 1981 Act was used to include a clause which sets out how Trust responsibility would be dealt with. This clause is set out at the end of this paper.*

1.4 1981 to 1986 *In the following years the General Assembly received requests and agreed to secession in some cases. The numbers were: 1982: 4, 1983: 3, 1984: 2, 1985: 1. In some cases the grounds cited were confusion regarding the uniting process, but also included were cases where the local church claimed that it had not received from the URC the basic ministry of Word and Sacraments that is assured in the Basis of Union. In these latter cases the evidence of District Council and Synod was received that indeed the URC had failed to provide such pastoral care, because of the isolation of a very small fellowship. These arguments were dealt with in the Applications Committee which reported to Assembly. In 1983 the Committee reported that it regarded the time as now passed when the events of 1972 could any longer be cited as adequate ground for secession.*

2. Present Understandings

2.1 The meaning of Secession *Churches are voluntary bodies. Individuals may join or leave according to personal decision. A group may decide to leave at any time, and no conciliar process of the church is required to give approval or disapproval. Church history is full of such schismatic movement. But secession has meant a congregation acting as one whole body, and moving into a different denominational allegiance, and remaining in the same church property and transferring that property to the new allegiance.*

2.2 Theological understanding of the URC *From its inauguration the URC has not understood itself to be a federation of independent*

congregations, but to be one corporate whole within which the various councils are given specific authority to act in the sphere which is their concern. The URC has seen itself as embracing people of several cultures and traditions. It confesses itself to be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Its congregations are part of Christ's body, its fellowship open to all people, regardless of sex, race, class or culture.

There are various consequences for the question of secession. Some would argue that secession is impossible because the corporate body can never give up hope of reconciling those who wish to part. Others would consider that there may be extreme cases where the wholeness of the total body of Christians may justify a separation. Severance is a very serious matter, demanding a careful process of consideration, not to be rushed.

It may happen that a congregation moves from the understanding of the faith accepted by the URC to quite different perception, and seeks secession to join another denomination. This is not a ground for secession that can be accepted. Either the congregation should seek to win the URC to its new confession of faith, or it should leave its property to enter another centre of worship, so that the URC witness may continue.

- 2.3 Property** *As noted in paragraph 2.1, local church property is a major factor. Within the URC the local church manages local church property but is not the sole authority. The property is seen as a trust for the whole body of the denomination and the 1972 and 1981 Acts spell out the methods by which District Councils and Provincial Synods share with Church Meetings the final or major decisions about property. The Church Meeting is, in a sense, the steward caring for what has been received from previous generations and passing the property on to the future. This perception is necessarily a brake on any removal of church property outside the URC. But since human relationships rather than property is the centre of church life, the movement of property has been made possible in the 1981 Act so that if the Assembly is satisfied about the issues concerned with people then the property may follow.*
- 2.4 Ministry** *At the induction of a URC minister to a pastoral charge a promise is made to exercise ministry in conformity with the statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC. This does not mean that a minister then has to approve of every action or statement of the whole body. Any minister may seek to reform the body. But it does mean that a minister cannot, in good conscience, serve in a pastoral charge and at the same time lead the congregation to a position of faith or order which has the direct result of a plea for secession. The URC has room for a wide diversity of style and understanding. We have confidence in the councils of the church to discern the limits of diversity and to uphold the peace and unity of the church (Basis 10).*

- 2.5 Ecumenism** *The URC is committed to the greater unity of the whole church for the sake of faithfulness to Christ and effective mission in the world. The URC has an identity and a tradition which is its contribution to the wholeness of the church. Therefore, in questions of secession, the URC will wish to ensure that the wholeness of the church is not being further damaged by the action, and that no new sectarianism is arising. The URC will wish to discuss with other sister churches in the area the movement of a local congregation with its property into or out of the URC.*
- 2.6 Process** *If a local church reaches a decision to seek secession, it discusses the issue with the District Council and Provincial Moderator. Every effort will be made to discern the roots of the problem and to seek a resolution of differences. If the Council is unable to achieve this, it passes the matter to the Synod which again seeks a resolution. If it fails, it passes the matter to the General Assembly through its Executive Committee. The Executive will investigate the matter and, through representatives, will hear the parties involved before making a recommendation to the Assembly. Representatives of the local church are enabled to share in the Assembly debate under the Standing Order for Access to Assembly by named parties. The decision of the Assembly is final. (Structure, Section 12).*
- 2.7 Considerations on which a decision can be based**
- (a) Reasons expressed for secession* *The Assembly will need to be satisfied that there are reasons strong enough to justify a final break in fellowship.*
 - (b) Has the local decision been a proper one?* *The Assembly will need to be satisfied that it is not a matter of emotionalism, nor a sudden attempt to avoid obligations, nor a financial matter, nor the effect of one individual's leadership, but a settled and thoughtful direction of faith and life in the whole fellowship.*
 - (c) What follows?* *The Assembly will need to be satisfied about the consequences of the action. For example, would secession mean that the local fellowship would have no oversight or association? Would secession help or harm the missionary witness in the locality? Would it strengthen or weaken the ecumenical life of the churches? Would it lead to serious damage to other parts of the URC?*
- 3.** *All the councils of the URC will take great care not to act in a hasty way nor out of pride to oppose a church's desire to secede. The search will always be to seek ways in which we may live and worship and serve God together. If the case is pressed to the Assembly and the decision there is not to permit secession, then there is an additional burden on the whole church to express care for the congregation and to meet any particular complaints that have been shown to have a basis. Should a congregation, as a last resort, vacate its building in order to begin life*

outside the URC, then the District Council and Synod will need to decide on the future use or disposal of the building.

The only real antidote to secession and the bitterness that is likely to accompany such a process, is awareness of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which we are never living out our discipleship alone but always as part of a wider community which supports, teaches and holds us to Christ.

4. Changes since 1987

- 4.1 Since 1987 one local church has sought to secede and been allowed to do so. That was in 1988. The reasons were similar to those in the earlier cases. The small scale of secession viewed over a 30 year period underlines the importance of the theological understanding set out in paragraph 2.2 of the 1987 statement.
- 4.2 Since 1987 more local churches have entered into local ecumenical partnerships of various kinds. The point made in paragraph 2.5 of the 1987 statement therefore assumes added significance in that many local churches could not secede from the URC without affecting wider relationships between the URC and sister churches.
- 4.3 Changes in the Structure of the URC since 1987 mean that references to Provincial Moderators and Provincial Synods should be changed to synod moderators and synods, and references to the Executive Committee should be changed to Mission Council.

5. Further legal clarification

However the passing of the years has made another factor of increasing significance. The United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 were framed on the assumption that any church wishing to secede with its property would do so in order to return to what it was before the decision to unite in those years. Therefore they provide that property would be held on the same trusts as it was before union. One certain consequence of this is that no church formed since union can secede with its property. A further possible consequence is that any local church formed since union by the union of two or more local churches which existed before union, is also unlikely to be able to secede with its property. To discover whether secession would be possible in any given situation where there had been such a union, the "mechanics of the amalgamation" (to use the language of the Charity Commissioners) would have to be scrutinised and in this the assistance of the Church's legal advisers would be required. It can easily be seen that the legal framework surrounding the United Reformed Church reflects its essential unity or "oneness", as expressed paragraph 2.2 of this paper.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

G²

Petition from the Edmonton church to secede

Thames North Synod passed the following resolution on 11 March 2000:

"Thames North synod, having failed to effect a reconciliation of differences with Edmonton United Reformed Church, refers the petition to secede to General Assembly through Mission Council"

The process for considering secession petitions was agreed by the General Assembly in 1987. The relevant paragraph reads as follows:

Process *If a local church reaches a decision to seek secession, it discusses the issue with the District Council and Provincial Moderator. Every effort will be made to discern the roots of the problem and to seek a resolution of differences. If the Council is unable to achieve this, it passes the matter to the Synod which again seeks a resolution. If it fails, it passes the matter to the General Assembly through its Executive Committee. The Executive will investigate the matter and, through representatives, will hear the parties involved before making a recommendation to the Assembly. Representatives of the local church are enabled to share in the Assembly debate under the Standing Order for Access to Assembly by named parties. The decision of the Assembly is final. (Structure, Section 12).*

As there is no longer an Executive Committee, this role is to be taken by Mission Council. The rules for access to Assembly by named parties are now contained in the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church (1998 edition of the Manual, page C2). The reference to the Structure can be found on page B17 of the Manual.

Since both the synod and Lea Valley District Council have been unable to resolve the problem, Mission Council must now assume its responsibility in the matter. It is proposed that at the October meeting a commission of five people is appointed to read the papers and to hear the parties involved (which will include the local Church and Elders' Meetings, representatives of the district council and synod, and any other individuals who may be appropriate) and to bring a report and recommendation to the March meeting. The Deputy General Secretary should be asked to act as secretary to the commission but not be a member of it. The clerk should be present in an advisory capacity.

At the March meeting Mission Council would decide what recommendation to make to the General Assembly and would communicate that recommendation to the church at Edmonton, the Lea Valley District Council, and Thames North synod. The local church should be advised of its right of access to the Assembly.

The commission and Mission Council would need to bear in mind the Assembly's policy regarding the considerations on which a decision can be based. These were agreed by Assembly as follows:

Considerations on which a decision can be based

- (a) Reasons expressed for secession** The Assembly will need to be satisfied that there are reasons strong enough to justify a final break in fellowship.
- (b) Has the local decision been a proper one?** The Assembly will need to be satisfied that it is not a matter of emotionalism, nor a sudden attempt to avoid obligations, nor a financial matter, nor the effect of an individual's leadership, but a settled and thoughtful direction of faith and life in the whole fellowship.
- (c) What follows?** The Assembly will need to be satisfied about the consequences of the action. For example, would secession mean that the local fellowship would have no oversight or association? Would secession help or harm the missionary witness in the locality? Would it strengthen or weaken the ecumenical life of the churches? Would it lead to serious damage to other parts of the URC?

All the councils of the URC will take great care not to act in a hasty way nor out of pride to oppose a church's desire to secede. The search will always be to seek ways in which we may live and worship and serve God together. If the case is pressed to the Assembly and the decision there is not to permit secession, then there is an additional burden on the whole church to express care for the congregation and to meet any particular complaints that have been shown to have a basis. Should a congregation, as a last resort, vacate its building in order to begin life outside the URC, then the District Council and Synod will need to decide on the future use or disposal of the building.

The only real antidote to secession and the bitterness that is likely to accompany such a process, is awareness of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which we are never living out our discipleship alone but always as part of a wider community which supports, teaches and holds us to Christ.

If this way of proceeding is acceptable to Mission Council, MCAG will advise on the possible membership of the commission.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

H

**The Women's Union of the Scottish Synod and resolution 8.2 of
the Unifying Assembly.**

The General Assembly, acknowledging the great service to the church of the Women's Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland, instructs the Mission Council to consider whether there are implications for the central organisation of the church in the context of current ecumenical thinking.

To help Mission Council consider this instruction MCAG has collected the following information:

- ◆ Details of the Women's Union's activities and constitution
- ◆ An informal summary of Women's work in the other synods

These are appended.

The advice of MCAG is that Mission Council should have a preliminary discussion of the issues raised by the resolution and that then the matter be referred to the Life and Witness Committee for further consideration and report back.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH - SYNOD OF SCOTLAND



WOMEN'S UNION

Hon. Secretary/Treasurer: Mrs. Moyra Young
18 Thorkel Road, Thurso,
Caithness, KW14 7LW
Tel: 01847 893932
18 MAY 2000

Dear Ken,

Thank you for your letter of 15th May regarding the Women's Union. I have endeavoured to answer all your queries at this time but there may be other points I would like to add at a later date.

I attach a copy of our Constitution, due to be revised at Synod, which sets out our Aim and our Motto. The other information contained therein you may find useful.

Any women's branch of our churches in the Synod of Scotland, or beyond, may become a member of the Women's Union by payment of an annual Affiliation. Any person may become an Associate Member and receive copies of all minutes, reports, etc., again for a small annual fee. At present there are 37 branches affiliated and 34 Associate members, a total membership of approximately 700.

In recent years we have experienced a loss of some branches due to the movement of several churches to the Federation and branches closing because of too few members to be viable. On the other hand, we had a branch close although it had healthy numbers it lacked leadership. The minister of that church was made aware of the situation but the problem still remains. I am unsure of the ethics or availability of someone outwith that church becoming involved.

For forty years we have held a residential Bible Study at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane at the beginning of April while the original United Reformed Church ladies held their Scottish Women's Christian Convention, also residential, in St. Andrews at the end of March. A number of ladies would like to attend both of these events but their close proximity timewise precludes this. To facilitate those wishing to attend both Bible Studies, we have arranged to move the Dunblane Bible Study to October commencing 2001.

Our women are involved in many outreach fields as part of our Service to both church and community. We support a different charity each year as our annual Project. These have ranged from support of various hospices, Dogs for the Blind and also the Deaf, an AIDs support group and many various children's charities (the most popular and best supported). Our current Project is the Marie Curie Cancer Care. The National Committee agreed to recommend at Synod in August our next project to be the Anaphylaxis Association, this in memory of Rona Goodall whose oldest grandchild is an acute sufferer. The ladies work hard throughout the year raising funds in many different ways for these projects and donations of between two and three thousand pounds are handed over after our Annual Business Meeting at Synod.

Many of our ladies are involved with and actively serve on such committees as Christian Aid, the Ecumenical Women's Consultative Committee, NEWS (Network of Ecumenical Women in Scotland), ACTS, the World Day of Prayer etc., some being appointments from the national committee. We also attend other denominations women's Annual Public Meetings representing our own church and are sometimes required to take part in their proceedings.

Since 1988 we have had ladies from the United Reformed Church as observers on our national committee and normally we sponsor two ladies to attend each others Bible Studies. We are looking forward to welcoming the new representative on Committee from East Scotland Area who is Miss I. Kidd from Salem Chapel, Dundee. We understand that some original United Reformed Churches have mixed groups and would therefore not wish to become affiliated to the Women's Union. We would be very happy to meet with any group or individual who wishes to become involved in the Women's Union and to discuss any new ideas or proposal put forward. Also we would welcome new blood into our organisation.

I hope this has been sufficiently explicit and covers all the points you wish to know. As you will see the women do a tremendous work embracing a wide spectrum of causes. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me should you require any further information

Yours sincerely,

Mayra

WOMEN'S UNION CONSTITUTION

1. NAME

The name of the organisation is "THE WOMEN'S UNION OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN SCOTLAND".

2. AIM

The aim is to unite the women of the Church in fellowship, prayer and service.

3. MOTTO

Our motto is FELLOWSHIP, PRAYER AND SERVICE.

4. MEMBERSHIP

All women in membership of or adherents of Women's Union Branches of Churches of the Scottish Synod of the United Reformed Church are eligible for membership of the Women's Union, but only members of the Scottish Synod of the United Reformed Church are eligible for appointment to Area office and National Committees the term being three years.

5. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

(a) Women's Union Branches shall pay the Annual Branch Membership Fee agreed by the Annual Business Meeting.

(b) Individual women of said Churches may become Associate Members to receive regular information and reports by paying an Annual Fee agreed by the Annual Business Meeting.

6. STRUCTURES

(a) BRANCHES

Each Women's Branch shall appoint a "Women's Union Committee" to run its affairs in accordance with local tradition but including as officers a President, Secretary and Treasurer.

(b) AREAS

Women's Union Branches shall be organised into "Women's Union Areas" defined by the Annual Business Meeting of the Women's Union. The affairs shall be organised by "Women's Union Area Committee" comprising three members from each Branch within that Area and have as officers a President, Secretary and Treasurer appointed from within their own number in accordance with the Women's Union Constitution. The Women's Union Area Committee shall be responsible for nomination of Representatives to Area Councils of the Scottish Synod within its bounds.

(c) NATIONAL COMMITTEE

At national level the "Women's Union National Committee" comprises one representative appointed by each Women's Union Area; together with a President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Women's Union nominated by Women's Union Areas through the National Committee and appointed by the Scottish Synod. The Women's Union National Committee shall act in its own right to deal with all matters pertaining to the Women's Union. It shall be responsible for the appointment of Representatives of the Women's Union to the Standing Committees of the Scottish Synod.

7. WOMEN'S UNION OFFICERS

- (a) The PRESIDENT is nominated by the Women's Union National Committee choosing a sole nominee who has experience of the work of the National Committee and is a member of a Congregation of the Scottish Synod. The nomination shall be made biennially to enable the candidate to serve for one year as PRESIDENT-ELECT prior to assumption of office and appointment by the Scottish Synod. The duties of the President may include presiding over meetings of the Women's Union in National Committees, and on other occasions; representing the Women's Union at rallies and other gatherings.
- (b) The SECRETARY and TREASURER of the Women's Union are appointed annually and are eligible for re-appointment each year. It is expected that they will intimate if their intention is not to stand for appointment giving a year's grace to appoint a successor. Their duties are defined by the Women's Union Committee.

8. WOMEN'S UNION BUSINESS

- (a) All decisions of the Women's Union shall be subject to the approval of the Annual Business Meeting, which shall be held at the same place and time as the Meeting of the Scottish Synod.
- (b) The Annual Business Meeting shall be conducted by the Women's Union Committee and shall comprise that Committee together with two voting members appointed by each Branch and the Women's Union Representatives to Area Councils.
- (c) The Meeting shall also be open to any other non-voting member of the Women's Union and any member present may participate in the business under discussion at the discretion of the President.
- (d) Emergency business shall be dealt with as and when it arises by the Executive Committee comprising the officers of the Women's Union.

9. ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

- (a) This Constitution may only be altered by a two-thirds majority in the Annual Business Meeting of the Women's Union.
- (b) Notice of any proposed alteration must be submitted at least six weeks in advance of the Annual Business Meeting to the Secretary of the Women's Union who shall advise all Branches accordingly within four weeks of the submission of the business.

An informal summary of women's work in synods and districts other than the synod of Scotland

<i>Northern</i>	No synod or district committees. Annual rallies in two districts. A person at synod level looks after women's issues
North Western	Some annual rallies in districts.
Mersey	No women's organisation at synod level. Cheshire district has an annual rally.
Yorkshire	Synod women's committee: Annual Assembly. Care of ministers' widows. Relates to Palatinate link.
East Midlands	No women's organisation at a synod level. Two or three districts have an annual women's rally.
West Midlands	Women's committees in three districts.
Eastern	Women's committees in two districts.
South Western	Synod women's committee. Annual conference.
Wessex	Three district councils have women's committees. Annual rallies are held.
Thames North	Nothing at synod or district level.
Southern	Annual meeting organised by moderator's wife (it has brought resolutions to synod) Districts have meetings.
Wales	Annual Conference at Trefeca for all of Wales. Three district organisations: Cardiff Area Ladies' Fellowship, Pembrokeshire District Women's Forum, North Wales District Women's Fellowship. Two rallies are held each year in the East Wales district.

NB Involvement in the Women's World Day of Prayer is not included in this



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

I

Resolution from Yorkshire synod

The resolution for Mission Council was agreed at the Yorkshire Synod meeting on 4 March 2000 and is:

The Yorkshire Synod, concerned about the length of current vacancies, requests Mission Council to set up a process to review the procedures for filing ministerial vacancies within the United Reformed Church.

- i) How Districts, Synods and the United Reformed Church support churches in vacancy, and the viability of common procedures for all Districts related to the production and acceptance of church profiles and the declaration of vacancies.*
- ii) The possibility of timed appointments for all ministers.*
- iii) The viability of encouraging ministers to seek calls, in particular through churches, Districts and Synods advertising.*
- iv) Ways of encouraging all Districts and Synods to move towards the nationally agreed deployment quotas.*

The Yorkshire Synod requests that recommendations for alterations to current procedures resulting from the review process are forwarded to General Assembly for consideration by the whole church.

This resolution originated from the Sheffield South Group of churches that had been without a minister for three and a half years. Whilst initially concerned about local procedures, they were pleased to advocate the whole resolution that had developed en route through District Council and Synod Executive Committees to Synod itself.

This resolution has been considered by MCAG on two occasions and the Moderators' Meeting has been asked for comment on paragraphs i) and iii). The General Secretary has written an initial paper on ii).

MCAG advises that, after an initial Mission Council discussion, the resolution is referred to the Ministries Committee with a request for an interim report in January 2001. In addition Mission Council is asked to consider recommending

- that a welcome be given to the offer of the Moderators' Meeting to review the movement of ministers over the coming months and include the results of that review in their next Assembly report.
- that the offer of the Moderators' Meeting to review vacancy procedures and offer statistics with analysis and recommendations to the March Mission Council be accepted.
- that the annual synods' deployment consultation be asked particularly to look at iv).

MCAG believes strongly that any suggestions for change emerging from this consideration ought to be offered for wide consultation before they become actual proposals. With this in mind, it believes the Ministries Committee should also consider the process that might be involved.



MISSION COUNCIL

29 September - 1 October 2000

J

Resource Planning Advisory Group

1 Introduction

1.1 **The Resource Planning Group (RPAG).** When Mission Council (MC) was set up in 1992, a number of Advisory Groups were also created. However RPAG owes its origin to the major changes in the committee structure agreed by the Assembly in 1994.

1.2 **The membership** of RPAG presently consists of a convener and secretary, neither of whom are members of MC, though the convener attends, four members appointed by MC (there is one vacancy at present), the General Secretary, the Treasurer, the Secretary for Finance and the Secretary for Ministries. The Advocacy Secretary was a member and, in recent times, the Convener of the Ministries Committee has attended.

1.3 **The remit** given to RPAG was

to prepare 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 is responsible for budgets. It holds one or two consultations with the financial representatives of the synods each year. It also consults with those responsible for human resources.

In practice RPAG has worked to a wider remit as described below, particularly in 1.6.

1.4 **The Budget** preparation on behalf of MC has been a consistent feature of RPAG's work. The information on which the Group has depended has been produced by the finance office though, increasingly, the Convener of RPAG has been involved in the process of consultation with budget-holders.

1.5 **Deployment of ministers** has also been a major part of the Group's work. RPAG has enabled the church to discuss the implications and practice of the policy and has organised consultations with synod representatives and moderators. The detailed work has been done by the Ministries Office and the Ministries Committee will continue to undertake responsibility for this matter.

1.6 **Other work** began by focusing on A Five Year Plan which was presented to the Assembly in 1996. However it soon became apparent that there were important issues requiring attention not covered by the remit. In particular, Mission was a fundamental concern and there was serious discussion of many of the issues which ultimately fed into the report *Growing Up*.

2. Related Groups

2.1 **The Staffing Advisory Group** was set up at the time of MC. Its remit was defined in the Executive's Report to the 1992 Assembly:

When an Assembly appointee is retiring, resigning or coming to the end of a fixed term, the first discussion should be about the post Should the post continue, if so, should there be any variation in the job description? When MC has come to a mind about that, the question of the person should be considered. This procedure should be followed with all new appointments.

It was proposed that the consideration of the post be undertaken by three persons not currently officers of standing committees, appointed by MC, reporting to MC, serviced by the General Secretary. A review of the Staffing Advisory Group was undertaken in 1996 and MC in March resolved that the Group should continue. Apart from personnel, the only change since 1992 has been to increase the number of members from three to four, although the convener is the only one who has to be a member of MC.

2.2 Resource Sharing Task Group

This was set up as a result of a discussion at MC in October 1992 on the sharing of resources arising out of a report from a WCC consultation. After further consideration by MCAG the task was agreed at the October 1993 MC of preparing

a preliminary report suggesting a practical, radical and staged approach to Resource Sharing at national, provincial, district and local level, which has the prospects of acceptance in all councils of the church (MC 93/82)

The following were appointed by MC to the Group: Mr Alastair Black, Mr David Butler, the Revd Roger Whitehead and Mrs Fiona Smith. The last three continue to serve.

2.2.1 **The Report** was made to the MC March 1995. The Group had engaged in a consultative process involving visits to synods. Mr Black proposed that some matters e.g. *Ecumenical Sharing* be referred to standing committees. He suggested that any progress depended on *voluntary co-operation in the provinces and therefore it was not proposed to make recommendations to the Assembly.* (MC 95/35). A further report was discussed at MC October 1995 and the Group were asked to continue their work. Following the death of Alastair Black, a new convener was needed. At the meeting in January 1996 Tony Burnham was appointed.

2.2.2 In January 1997 it was reported that synods had agreed to contribute a sum equivalent to a *minimum of 2% of their investment income which would then be redistributed in inverse proportion to their investment income,* (MC 97/9) now the proportion shared has reached 10%. In addition, useful experience has been shared over the last three years to reduce the differences in the treatment of ministers because of unequal resources, e.g. car loans, manse ownership and standards, training grants etc.

2.2.3 The Group, with unchanged personnel, meets once a year and there is an annual consultation of representatives of the synods where the attempt is made to reach agreement on the next stage of sharing. The

work involved in organising the consultation and working out the sharing is done by the secretary, David Butler.

3. **The Remit and Membership of RPAG**

3.1 In the light of developments in the working of the Group, it is clear that the remit needs to be revised. For example, it has been suggested that the budget preparation and deployment could be dealt with within the Committees for Finance and Ministries. However it was recognised that, the Finance Office could not be expected to take decisions that significantly affected the church's mission. Nor could this be left to the final stage when the draft budget was considered by the MC. Moreover while deployment could now be dealt with by the Ministries Committee in consultation with the synods, this did not deal with every use made of people. In particular Assembly appointed staff had not been the responsibility of RPAG.

3.2 **The Task of RPAG** should be the detailed consideration of the resources of the church, its mission priorities and the link between them. If the church is taking mission seriously, then demand should always outstrip the ability to respond. Choices have to be made and this is the responsibility of MC. RPAG must reflect and report on the implications of certain courses of action so that an informed decision can be made by MC. The challenge is to balance necessary maintenance with new initiatives in mission.

3.3 **Collaboration.** The councils of the church have to be good stewards of the human, material and spiritual resources which are God's gift. If their use is not co-ordinated, then there is likely to be waste, God's generosity will not be honoured and God's purposes not served. Therefore RPAG must work closely with the Ministries, Finance and Life and Witness Committees and the Resources Sharing Task Group. To facilitate a more integrated collaboration, the Staffing Advisory Group, continuing with its present role, becomes a sub-group of RPAG. This will avoid the possibility of MC having to resolve any clash between different groups and, more positively, will allow RPAG to take an overview of the number and nature of Assembly appointed posts. In addition, there must be closer communication with the Resources Sharing Task Group.

3.4 **Remit**

Within the context of the United Reformed Church's mission, the group will advise MC on

- 1 *long-term strategic planning;*
2. *on priorities in the use of human and material resources;*
3. *the use of ministry by*
 - 3.1 *liaising with the Ministries Committee and the synods in matters of the deployment of stipendiary ministry;*
 - 3.2 *liaising with the Ministries Committee to facilitate the development of new forms of ministry;*

3.3 *receiving reports from the Staffing Advisory Committee about Assembly appointed posts.*

4 *financial planning, by*

4.1 *overseeing the budget process, and by its presentation to the church;*

4.2 *seeking to educate the whole church and advocate the needs of mission, liaising with the Stewardship Subcommittee of the Life and Witness Committee;*

4.3 *liaising with the Resources Sharing Task Group over the management of the financial resources of the whole church;*

5. *and undertaking such other tasks as MC gives to it.*

3.5 **Membership.** The Group will be appointed by MC. Regard should be paid to a balance between ordained and lay, male and female. It will consist of

- ◆ *a convener and secretary who if not already members of MC will become so ex-officio;*
- ◆ *a synod moderator, nominated by the Moderators' Meeting;*
- ◆ *three members, not necessarily serving on MC who normally will include those with experience of synods and district council work;*
- ◆ *the convener of the Staffing Advisory Group;*
- ◆ *the General Secretary and Treasurer.*

In attendance will be the secretaries for Ministries, Finance and Life and Witness. The Resources Sharing Task Group will also be represented.

3.6 **Periods of appointment.** The term of service will normally be four years, except that the Convener will serve a preliminary year. MCAG might also wish to ensure that there is some overlap with the present officers.

3.7 **The Staffing Advisory Group's** remit will need to be amended to reflect its changed status as a sub-group of RPAG .



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

K

Stipend level for 2001

RESOLUTION

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2001 at £16,944

The current basic ministerial stipend is £16,308.

General Assembly in 1999 endorsed a recommendation that future increases in stipend should be calculated by reference to increases in the National Average Earnings Index.

The annual increase in the Average Earnings Index for Great Britain published in September 2000 was 3.9%. For the same period the increase in the Retail Prices Index was 3.0%.

The Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee recommends to Mission Council that the basic stipend for 2001 should be the present amount (£16,308) increased by 3.9% to £16,944.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

L

URC INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

The contents of this paper are confidential to members of Mission Council. Please see further explanation at the end of the paper.

Purpose of this paper

This paper outlines a proposal for the URC to withdraw from active involvement in the provision of insurance by disposing of its 100% shareholding in URC Insurance Company Limited and seeks approval from Mission Council to the steps required to put the proposal into effect.

Historical background

URC Insurance Company Limited ("URCIC") came into existence in 1967 with the name Presbyterian Insurance Company Limited. Its primary objective was to provide insurance for Presbyterian churches and this was done through an arrangement with Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc ("EIO") who provided all management services and reinsured 100% of all insurance risks. The company received commissions from EIO related to total premiums and underwriting results and its profits were distributed to the Presbyterian Church in England & Wales by deed of covenant.

Following the establishment of the URC in 1972 the name of the company was changed to URC Insurance Company Limited and the arrangements with EIO continued.

EIO is a subsidiary of Ecclesiastical Insurance Group plc which is owned by Allchurches Trust Limited, a registered charity established to promote the Christian religion and contribute to the funds of charitable organisations. This trust has close connections with the Church of England.

Current situation

URCIC provides insurance to less than 20% of URC churches; it also sells household and personal accident insurance primarily to URC ministers and members. In 1999 its premium income was £466,000. The whole of URCIC's share capital is beneficially owned by the URC and at 31 December 1999 its net assets amounted to £214,000. Payments to the URC under deed of covenant for the five years to 31 December 1999 averaged £61,000 per annum. For 1999 the payment was only £33,000 due partly to a change in accounting treatment and to the impact of a major fire claim on commission income. The fire claim will continue to have an adverse effect on commission income for 2000.

The board of directors consists of five URC members plus the managing director of EIO and a retired EIO executive. None of the directors receives any remuneration as a director of URCIC. The board meets about four times a year when it receives formal reports on activity levels and financial results. The day to day management of URCIC is carried out by EIO.

Consideration of the future of URCIC

The Finance Committee has been considering the URC's involvement with EIO in the provision of insurance to URC churches and members through URCIC.

Since the formation of URCIC in 1967 the technical regulations affecting insurance companies have become more complex and consequently the responsibilities assumed by anyone involved in the ownership and management of an insurance company are also greater. Apart from the issues of insurance regulation, the administration of URCIC, involving regular board meetings, an Annual General Meeting and the preparation of annual audited accounts, is becoming increasingly cumbersome in relation to the size of the company.

The Finance Committee has come to the conclusion that it is no longer appropriate for the URC to be involved in the commercial activity of promoting an insurance product in competition with other insurance companies.

Proposal

It has been agreed that the most convenient way of terminating the present arrangement between the URC and EIO is for the URC to sell its shares in URCIC to EIO. It does not follow from this that the URC could offer its shares in URCIC to any other purchaser. The arrangement with EIO for the URC to participate in the provision of insurance to URC churches and members happens to have been structured through a separate company, URCIC; but it could have been structured in different ways through commission arrangements not involving the ownership of shares in a separate company. Thus, although the legal form of the proposed transaction is the sale of shares, its substance is the termination of an arrangement that has been of mutual benefit to the URC (and, before 1972, the Presbyterian Church in England & Wales) and the EIO for over 30 years.

After lengthy discussions a formal offer has been received from EIO for the purchase of the whole of the share capital of URCIC as at 31 December 2000 on the following terms:

Price The net asset value of URCIC at 31 December 2000 plus a goodwill payment of £75,000.

Use of name EIO will be permitted to continue to operate URCIC using its existing name for a period of two years (until 31 December 2002).

Restriction on use of URC name by other insurance organisations The URC will not authorise any other insurance organisation to use a name inferring any connection with, or endorsement by, the URC for a period of five years (ending 31 December 2005).

Date Contracts to be exchanged on or before 31 December 2000 for completion on or before 31 March 2001.

On the basis of the position at 31 December 1999 the total price would amount to £289,000 (Net assets £214,000 plus £75,000).

The continued use of the name URCIC for a period of two years is intended to allow EIO to communicate to each existing policyholder the change of ownership and new name at successive annual renewal dates.

The restriction on the use of the URC name by any other insurance organisation is to enable EIO to enjoy the benefit of the goodwill associated with URCIC and justify the price it is offering to acquire the business. Since the decision to terminate the arrangement with EIO is based on a decision to cease any involvement in commercial insurance activities in the foreseeable future, this undertaking presents no difficulty.

The terms of the offer by EIO will be discussed at a separate meeting of the URC members of the URCIC board on 20 September 2000. Their views will be reported to Mission Council when it meets on 29/30 September.

The Finance Committee has considered the terms of the formal offer and recommends that the offer be accepted.

Resolution

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves that:

- (i) the sale to Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc of the whole of the issued share capital of URC Insurance Company Limited on the terms outlined above be approved in principle;**
- (ii) the Honorary Treasurer, the Deputy General Secretary and the Financial Secretary be authorised to conclude detailed negotiations and agree the form of contract to be entered into with Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc; and**
- (iii) United Reformed Church Trust be authorised to execute the necessary documents relating to the contract and the transfer of shares to Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc.**

Confidentiality

URC Trust has entered into a confidentiality agreement with EIO under which it has been agreed that, until the transaction has been completed, information regarding the transaction may only be disclosed to directors of URC Trust, members of Mission Council and members of the URC Finance Committee. Accordingly, the contents of this paper prepared specifically for Mission Council should not be disclosed to anyone who is not a member of Mission Council.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

M

Changes to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund Rules

Resolution.

Mission Council, acting for Assembly, amends the Rules of The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund by the deletion of the words shown in square brackets and by the addition of the words in italics:

- 14.1.2 [If a minister serving a local church is inducted to part-time service whilst under the age of fifty five years or being a contributing member of the Fund reduces] *If a contributing member serving full-time reduces* his/her commitment to that of part-time service whilst under normal pension age, the Pension Trustee may raise the Pensionable Service to the level applicable to a full-time minister having regard to the length of any previous full-time service, to the age and health of the minister, to the fraction of basic stipend being paid and to the purpose and pensionability of any other employment and shall in such cases allow full membership of the Pension Fund, contributions then being payable on the full basic stipend.
- 15.3 Where part-time membership only has been granted [under Rule 14.1.2] the contributions referred to in paragraphs 15.1 and 15.2 of this Rule shall apply only in relation to the proportion of the basic stipend being paid.
18. **Normal Retirement Pensions**
Subject to Rules 18.3 and 18.4 all pensions are based on stipend at date of retirement or normal pension age whichever is the earlier.
A member retiring in respect of whom all due contributions have been made shall be entitled to a pension based on years and months of pensionable service. [The pension will be proportionately reduced in respect of any year of part-time membership granted under Rule 14.1.2.] The amount of pension at retirement shall be:-
- 20.3 If a member at the time of ill-health retirement is a part-time member [under Rule 14.1.2] any uncompleted years under paragraph 20.2 above shall be reduced to the proportion that the number of pensionable years under Rule 18 bears to the number of years membership of the Fund, unless a concession granted under Rule 14.1.2 is in operation and full contributions were paid up to the date of incapacity.

The Resolution brought to this year's Assembly introduced a definition of 'part-time service' into the definitions section of the Rules. However, in making the required deletions to Rule 14.1.2 not all the relevant words were deleted, leading to the confusion to which Julian Macro drew attention at the Assembly.

In checking this problem several cross-references were found which are now meaningless, and which had been overlooked in the Assembly resolution. This resolution seeks to remedy this.



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

N

**Lay Training in the United Reformed Church
Recommendations for a Course to succeed the current Training for
Learning and Serving Programme from September, 2001**

Summary

The *Training for Learning and Serving* Programme (TLS) has been a successful method of equipping the laity since its introduction in England and Wales in 1995. In December 1999, the Scottish Churches Open College (SCOC) decided that, in view of its own development programme, it would not be able to support TLS south of the Border after July 2001. The Training Committee consulted widely and found that demand for a similar programme is likely to continue, and that a replacement programme should incorporate many of the features of TLS.

A Working Group has been in conversation with ten potential providers, visiting five of them for detailed exploration. Four main options have been identified and are presented with a firm Recommendation:

Option 1 Purchase existing Foundation and Worship Preaching study material from SCOC

Upsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content continuity • We know it works 	Downsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited life only • Inability to modify • <i>Foundation and Worship and Preaching only</i>
Estimated net cost to the URC:	Development: NIL	Ongoing:	£139k p.a. (see NOTE)

Option 2 Using the Methodist 'Faith and Worship' course for Lay Preachers

Upsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide access • Quasi-ecumenical • Material is ready and proven 	Downsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No weekends • Lay Preachers mainly • Thematic, not integrated • Cerebral • Examinations required • Methodist flavour
Estimated net cost to the URC:	Development: £5K?	Ongoing:	Co-ordination + add-on course costs only <i>(Students pay £65 fee p.a.)</i>

Option 3**Using modules from the 'Faith in Living' course to be supplied/developed by the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester (PTEM)**

Upsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecumenical approach • We know PTEM through Northern College • Aligns with PTEM strategy • Validated – strong university link. • Possible Pastoral care replacement • Most material in place as basis 	Downsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance learning conversion of 50% of modules outstanding • Possible bias towards educationally stronger students • Liaison and co-ordination would need to be worked on.
Estimated net cost to the URC:	Development:	Ongoing:	

Option 4**Developing and writing a tailor-made programme.**

Upsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets all criteria • Integrated and thematic • Wide access 	Downsides:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed rather than ecumenical • Initially resource-intensive
Estimated net cost to the URC:	Development: £35-40K	Ongoing:	£125K p.a.

The Training Committee recommends that Option 3 be adopted with longer-term work continuing to gain co-operation in developing a fully ecumenical programme.

The recommendation entails:

- (i) In the very short term, (1-2 years), the URC may purchase material from the Scottish Churches Open College for the *TLS Foundation* course and the *Worship and Preaching* course while new courses are being developed. *Pastoral Care* and other specialist courses would be purchased from other bodies such as the re-vamped Methodist Open Learning Centre.
- (ii) That Option 3 (using modules of the 'Faith in Living' course supplied/developed by the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester), be adopted with early effect, with a design life of up to ten years.
- (iii) That, in the long term, we continue to aim for increasing ecumenical convergence in lay training.

Training Committee
8th September, 2000



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000



For information

Province or Synod: a change of usage

This is actually a debate on inclusive language, about including the Welsh and the Scottish nations. It is as full of snares as the linguistics of gender inclusiveness.

However too much has been made of the change. *Province* and *Provincial* are not banned words. The point is that we cannot talk of Wales and Scotland being *Provinces*. Each has, or will have, *a national synod*. Therefore we cannot use the generic *provinces*. Hence the adoption in some places in the Structure and in the Disciplinary Process of *synod/s*. We have to take account of the fact that we now have two national synods and eleven provincial synods.

No change has been made in the title of moderators. This was because in 1972 the Structure referred to them as *Moderators of Synods*. The role of Moderator of Synod was defined in 1972, under that heading, and is not changed by refraining from referring to them as *Provincial Moderators*.

It has been suggested that the Mission Council and Assembly should have foreseen the potential confusion. However both Councils have far more important matters to be concerned with than administrative (as opposed to theological) linguistics.

For myself I find *synod* a more congenial word than *province*. At least the former has ecclesiastical overtones and is about *coming together*. It is about people but also about the churches. It is a council of churches. But it does not disappear between meetings, it is a source of authority in its own right. Historically it is part of one of our traditions. Presbyterians used it to describe the council (court) next above the presbytery and it consisted of members of presbyteries *within its bounds* (OED records this usage in 1593).

Compare that with *province*. This has imperial overtones, being an administrative division of a state or empire. It is an area, a territory. I am amazed that anyone from the north can stomach the use of *provincial*. Its common meaning relates to places outside self-important London and carries the pejorative sense of being narrow, lacking the culture and sophistication of a capital city.

The only other ecclesiastical usage of *province*, of which I am aware, is by some episcopal churches, to describe the area overseen by an Archbishop. That is not a good argument to use in favour of its retention by a reformed church.

Tony Burnham
February 2000



MISSION COUNCIL
29 September - 1 October 2000

P

Luther King House Educational Trust

After a tortuous process lasting over two years, The Luther King House Educational Trust (LKHET) was registered as a company limited by guarantee at the end of August 2000 and has since been registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. LKHET has four Founder Members:- Northern College, Northern Baptist College, Hartley Victoria College and the United Reformed Church.

At its meeting in January 1999, Mission Council approved the investment of £200,000 in Luther King House Trust (as it was then expected to be called). An advance payment of £50,000 has been made and the remaining £150,000 is expected to be paid in October 2000.

Mission Council also authorised the General Secretary and the Treasurer to nominate or appoint an appropriate person to serve on the board of the trust. In accordance with that authority Revd John M Piper was subsequently appointed as a director of LKHET. Mission Council is now requested to confirm this appointment.

It is proposed that the URC will be represented at General Meetings of LKHET by any one of the following: the director appointed by the URC, the General Secretary of the URC or the Treasurer of the URC. Mission Council is requested to authorise the persons occupying those positions to act in this capacity.

The Luther King House building and site are currently owned by Northern Baptist College (NBC). It has been decided that the building will be the subject of a permanent endowment from NBC to a separate trust in which LKHET will be the sole trustee. The purpose of this rather complicated structure is to assure the trustees of NBC that the building will be used primarily for the purpose of providing theological education and training. A Charity Commission Scheme is being drawn up to put this arrangement in place. This should not affect either the rights of the URC within LKHET or the practical operation of LKHET. The URC's legal adviser will be asked to check the Scheme documentation, once drafted, to ensure that this is the case.

Resolution

Mission Council

- (a) **confirms the appointment of Revd John M Piper as a director of Luther King House Educational Trust, and**
- (b) **authorises any one of the following to represent the URC and vote on its behalf at General Meetings of Luther King House Educational Trust:- the director of the trust for the time being appointed by the URC, the General Secretary of the URC or the Treasurer of the URC.**