



The United Reformed Church

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General Secretary The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

22 September 1994

To Members of Mission Council

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council - 30 September - 2 October 1994
Damascus House, The Ridgeway, Mill Hill, London NW7

Here is the final mailing for our meeting beginning Friday, 30 September. Reception will be from 12.15 and lunch is at 1.15 pm. The meeting will finish on Sunday, 2 October after lunch.

Please bring: a Bible
 Assembly Record and Report
 Bath towel! (a small hand towel is provided)

Our theological reflector will be Sr Lavinia Byrne, Associate Secretary, Community of Women and Men in the Church, of CCBI.

Group leaders and reporters. thank you for volunteering.

Leaders

1. Sheila Fairbairn
2. Nelson Bainbridge
3. Wilma Frew
4. Angus Duncan
5. Lesley Husselbee
6. Peter Poulter
7. Raymond Signh
8. Eileen Sanderson

Reporters

Ivan Andrews
Mary Stacy
William McVey
Pat Nimmo
Malcolm Hanson
Angela Hughes
David Butler
Philip Morgan

Details of groups and a timetable will be handed out on your arrival.

Rail Strike. Notice has been given of a 48 hour strike from midnight on Wednesday next to midnight on the Friday. A further complication is that a strike is also expected on the underground. Therefore please make arrangements to travel by car.

Yoursa sincerely,

Anthony G Burnham



MISSION COUNCIL

30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994

Agenda

At some stage the following eight papers will be discussed, not necessarily in this order. Where discussion in groups is specified, it will not preclude further discussion in plenary session.

1. Number of ministers
2. Consultants' report on Westminster College (Saturday morning)
It is not expected that decisions on the report will be taken at this meeting, other than on what consultation is necessary before MC decides on the recommendations to the Assembly.
3. Resource Sharing Task Group

In groups:

4. Authority in the URC
5. IT Task Group
6. The National Lottery
7. On human sexuality
8. Reflections on the MC

Other subjects for groups - no papers enclosed.

9. 1997 - 25th year of the URC
10. Review of GA '94
11. Theme for GA '95.

- Presentations:
1. Sandra Ackroyd will report during Friday evening on her work with the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (a CCBI Commission) and also with the WCC working party on 'Racism, Indigenous peoples and Ethnicity'.
 2. There will be a short presentation on Saturday evening by Ministries on 'The Future of Church Related Community Work'.

Elections to MC Advisory Committees.

MCAG will consist of the moderator, the immediate past moderator, the moderator-elect, the General Secretary, the Treasurer, six members of MC at least two of whom shall be Conveners of standing committees of the Assembly. At present the elected members are David Butler (1995), Elizabeth Caswell (1996) and Janet Turner (1997). With the end of the time of service of Sandra Lloydlangston and the need to appoint at least two conveners, there will be an election to fill three places. The conveners appointed by the Assembly are David Thompson, Malcolm Johnson, Stephen Thornton, Murdoch MacKenzie, Keith Forecast, John Sutcliffe, Alistair Black, Chris Wright and Wilma Frew.

Staffing Advisory Committee William McVey has completed his period of service. The continuing members are Elizabeth Scopes*, Angus Duncan and John Maitland*. (* Not members of MC.) Therefore there is one vacancy.

Resource Planning Committee

This group will 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 will be responsible for preparing budgets. It will hold one or two consultations with the financial representatives of the Synods each year. It will also consult with those responsible for human resources. Mission Council will make all recommendations to the Assembly about the use of resources.

MCAG suggests that:

1. the General Secretary and the Treasurer ought to be ex-officio members of this committee. The secretaries for finance and ministries will be in attendance;
2. the convener, who should be a member of MC, serves for four years. It is hoped to offer a name to MC;
3. the secretary, who need not be a member of MC, should also serve for four years. It is recommended that David Butler be invited to undertake this task;
4. the remaining four places are filled by the MC. Where a name is proposed from outside the membership it is expected that his/her willingness to serve will have been established. The person with the largest number of votes will serve for four years and the others for three, two and one year(s).

Misc Business

1. Assembly Record 1994 - corrections.
2. Assembly Reports 1994 - Toller Appeal correction
3. Minutes of MC March 1994
4. Matters Arising
5. Notice of members' business
- Andrew Jackson : URC Logo.
6. Notice of Elections
7. MC Advisory Group report
8. Nominations Committee report.
9. Assembly Arrangements Committee report.
10. Patterns of Ministry (The report will be tabled but it is suggested that the content is not discussed)
11. Letter from the Scottish Episcopal Church inviting the URC, with all who have participated in the Multilateral Church conversation "to take new practical steps towards visible unity which has always been the goal of the Multilateral Conversation". MC will need to decide on the principle as a response is required before the next Assembly.
12. Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee - Ministerial Counselling Scheme.

13. Next Meetings

1995 Saturday, 21 January
Fri 17 - Sun 19 March
Fri 29 Sept - Sun 1 Oct

Yardley Hastings
St Joseph's Upholland
Damascus House

For decision:

1996 Saturday, 20 January
Fri 15 - Sun 17 March *
Tues 1 - Thurs 3 October *

Milton Keynes

(*At the last meeting it was agreed that the March meeting be over a weekend. MC was divided over the October meeting and therefore MCAG propose that it be mid-week.)



NUMBERS OF MINISTERS

A report to Mission Council from Ministries as a result of decisions of the Mission Council in March '94 and the General Assembly in July '94.

1. A group comprising Keith Forecast (Convenor, Ministries), Clem Frank (Finance), Malcolm Hanson (Patterns of Ministry), Lesley Husselbee (Ministries), John Waller (Provincial Moderators) and Michael Diffey (Ministries) met on 14th April and 29th July. In addition to which there have been a number of consultations between the General Secretary, Clem Frank and Michael Diffey.
2. **Assembly '94 Resolutions.**
The Assembly instructs Ministries in consultation with Synod Moderators, the Patterns of Ministry working party and Finance (and with power to consult more widely) to submit to the General Assembly, or by Mission Council, regulations for stipendiary ministry, including any necessary revision of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, which shall:
 - a) *ensure a more accurate estimate of future numbers of ministers available for call,*
 - b) *ensure that (with some possible tolerance for small and temporary variation and with the retention of a scheme for issuing certificates of eligibility to ministers of other churches) there cannot at any time be an excess of ministers and CRCWs to be paid from the Maintenance of the Ministry account over the full time equivalent number used in calculating the current year's budget; and*
 - c) *to consider any other relevant issues not covered by the Patterns of Ministry working party.*

The Assembly, noting the action taken at the March 1994 Mission Council in halting the transfer of ministers from other denominations into a stipendiary pastorate or CRCW post in the United Reformed Church, and in the light of work being undertaken by Ministries, agrees to extend the period in which transfers are halted from 7th. July 1994 to such date as the mission Council shall decide.

It should be noted that:-

- i) The moratorium agreed by the Mission Council in March prevents anyone who is not already on the Roll of Ministers or CRCWs being introduced or inducted to a stipendiary pastorate or CRCW post except (a) students completing a course of training for URC ministry in a college or course, (b) ministers of other churches who by 21st. March '94 had already been introduced to a URC pastorate.
- ii) In agreeing these resolutions there was a clear feeling in Assembly that the moratorium should be a temporary measure only. The General Secretary in moving the resolutions assured Assembly that it was a short-term 'blunt instrument'.

3. Work identified

At the first meeting of this group (14th April '94) two pieces of work were identified:

i) Short term - to gather as accurate information as possible on the number of ministers paid, or who are likely to require payment, in '94 and '95 and compare these figures with the number used to calculate the budget.

ii) Long term -

a) ensure that information regarding ministerial movement which is likely to affect the payroll is collected as early as possible;

b) because there is no way, at present, of controlling the number of ministers coming on to the payroll, to discuss what action to recommend to Mission Council to ensure that the number of ministers on the payroll does not exceed the equivalent number used in calculating the budget.

c) consider re-establishing a deployment policy;

4. The Short term work.

The task of producing accurate figures has been far from straight forward for a number of reasons : the number of ministers on the payroll is constantly changing; many of the factors giving rise to these changes are unpredictable because of the changing circumstances of ministers and the inevitable uncertainties about prospective moves, retirement dates and other intentions, often until two or three months before they occur or even later; inaccessibility of information held in a number of different places, such as the Maintenance of the Ministry Office, with moderators or in provincial offices and Ministries, with no co-ordination.

Up to the present time it has not been considered necessary to gather, hold in one place and update this information regularly. The current crisis has revealed the necessity for this to enable more accurate forecasting and strategic planning although this alone will not avoid crises of the kind the Church is now facing. It will, however, enable trends to be recognised and reveal the actual reasons for the changes that are occurring. It may also help alert the Church to potential crises and enable action to be taken at an earlier stage. Ministries has established a procedure to gather information on a bimonthly basis from the moderators about changes that will affect the payroll, to share it with the MoM and compare the information with that held by the MoM.

The computer systems now installed in the office are a great help in this connection but urgent consideration should be given to maximising these resources and generally improving the efficiency of keeping records and sharing information between provincial offices, colleges and the office at Tavistock Place. At present a number of members of staff have been, or are at present, engaged in collecting and collating data. This might be done more effectively and efficiently by the appointment of one person with the appropriate skills particularly if savings could be made elsewhere. **Resolution 1**

Since the March '94 Mission Council efforts have been made to gather this information regularly so that it is possible to have as accurate and complete a picture as possible of ordinations, movements from part-time to full-time pastorates, re-entries to the payroll of URC ministers who are employed by other bodies, transfers, resignations, retirements and other moves which have implications for the payroll. A particular focus has been given to '94 and '95 and efforts are now being made to gather information for '96 and beyond. Obviously accuracy is reduced the farther ahead we look.

Up to March '94 it was suggested that the reasons for the number of ministers the MoM was required to pay being greater than the number used to calculate the budget was due mainly to three factors: part time ministers moving to full time pastorates, URC ministers paid by other bodies returning to the pastoral ministry and ministers of other denominations transferring to the URC. The moratorium agreed by the Mission Council in March '94 and confirmed by Assembly in July which has halted ministers of other denominations transferring to the URC is only now beginning to have an impact. Consequently any benefit of this action is unlikely during the current year as a total of 13 ministers had either transferred, or had already been introduced, to pastorates when the moratorium was imposed by Mission Council in March. The hope at the time was that this action alone, although regrettable, would be sufficient to bring the number of ministers on the payroll to within the number used to calculate the budget. The information gathered from the moderators indicates that this is unlikely due to a new factor that has emerged. Whereas it was estimated that ordinations and transfers from NSM to SM would mean approximately 29 ministers coming on to the payroll in '95, it now appears that the figure will be around 40. Consequently any advantage gained by the moratorium is being wiped out by the unexpectedly high number of new stipendiary ministers trained and available for service.

1994 started with 790 ministers on the payroll. It is estimated that at the end of the year there will be 800, an increase of 10 ministers or 7 more than were used to calculate the budget. This represents an excess over budget of £70,000.

1995 is expected to begin with 800 ministers on the payroll. It is currently estimated that at the end of the year there will be 809, an increase of 9. This represents an excess over budget of 23 ministers at an estimated additional cost of £225,000 in the year. However, changes in numbers due to changes in circumstances may well reduce this number by say 6 which may reduce the overspend by some £50,000.

5. Part time Ministers

The number of part time ministers has remained fairly static at an average 87 of in '94, equivalent to 44 full time posts therefore no variation on this figure has been included in the calculations. However it is noted that this represents the third largest cost head in the MoM budget, approximately £700,000 It is also noted that the average number for '95 is estimated to reduce to approximately 82. This needs to be watched to determine whether or not a downward trend is developing.

Table 3

Part time Ministers '94 & '95

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
'94	86	86	86	87	89	89	89	88	88	86	85	85
'95	84	84	84	83	83	83	81	81	81	79	78	77

6. Stipendiary Ministers on the Roll not paid at present by the MoM

It is not known for certain how many URC ministers there are not at present paid by the MoM but eligible to be introduced to a pastorate. The figure of 150 has been calculated from information in the '94 Year Book. Information obtained indicates that 11 could seek to return in '95. Caution needs to be exercised with this figure, as one of many unforeseen circumstances could cause a surge of fresh applications, however, it is considered unlikely that a number in excess of 6 ministers are likely to seek re-entry in '95.

7. Moratorium

The work so far undertaken indicates that the number of ministers the MoM will be required to pay is likely to increase even with the moratorium preventing ministers from other churches transferring to the URC. With the unexpected increase in the number of new entrants to the stipendiary ministry, it seems more than likely that even with the moratorium the numbers will continue to rise in '95. No picture for '96 is available yet but it has become urgent to forecast and watch carefully to see if the trend continues. In any case it would be prudent to give urgent consideration to other methods of controlling the numbers of ministers. In the meantime Ministries has no option but to recommend to Mission Council that the Moratorium is continued at least until the January meeting.

Resolution 2.

8. Long term work

The question that needs to be addressed in the long term is:

How can the URC ensure that (with some possible tolerance for small and temporary variation and with the retention of a scheme for issuing certificates of eligibility to ministers of other churches) there cannot at any time be an excess of ministers and CRCWs to be paid from the Maintenance of the Ministry account over the full time equivalent number used in calculating the current year's budget?

In addressing this question a number of suggestions have been made and will need further consideration:

- (i) Whether or not it is possible, given the polity of the URC, for any control to be exercised by a committee or council of the Church other than the District Council, without changing the Basis of Union.
Ministries has consulted the Clerk to Assembly about this who is of the opinion that no change of the Basis of Union would be necessary as controls on the number of ministers paid would only restrict the deployment of stipendiary ministers. The requirement is to provide ordained ministry to every church but this does not necessarily mean a minister paid by the MoM. Consequently this requirement can, and indeed often is, satisfied in other ways. However, it would be necessary to amend the Plan for Partnership in order to control the numbers.
- (ii) The decision of Mission Council in March '94 to ensure that there cannot be at anytime an excess of ministers and CRCWs to be paid by the MoM account over the full time equivalent number used in calculating the current year's budget masks a number of major difficulties:
 - (a) How can control be exercised in a just way?
What criteria will be acceptable to decide who may and who may not be called?
Who will have the responsibility to decide who may be introduced to a pastorate?

(b) Is it possible to ensure that there is an adequate variety of experience and gifts in the ministers available for a call to match the needs and aspirations of local pastorates and is there any guarantee that those 'authorised' will be acceptable and receive a call?

It can be argued that this is no different from the existing system of assessment of those applying for training. In fact the main difference is that the assessment process is not required to choose between applicants, at least not at present, whereas a system of control required to limit numbers most certainly may/would be.

(c) Is the Mission Council endeavouring to impose a system of control which is incompatible with the practice of calling by local church/pastorate and concurrence by the District Council? At present Ministries is able to exercise limited control on the numbers recruited but has no control on those appointed or called.

- (iii) The possibility of designating the proportion of stipend each stipendiary minister receives but cannot exceed without the agreement of a designated body such as Mission Council.
- (iv) Lowering the upper age limit for entry into training for the stipendiary ministry and so excluding those over a certain age, say 50. The number of students in training at present who will be over 50 when ordained is 17 = approximately 20%.
- (v) Agreeing strict limitations on the numbers of ministers from other categories permitted entry to the stipendiary ministry, e.g. NSMs, part time ministers, ministers in secular employment.
- (vi) A new deployment policy as signalled by the Patterns of Ministry Working Party and about which the Convener of the Working Party is willing to speak.

9. Consultation with the Mission Council

Before proceeding, especially as the additional factor of the number of new entrants to the stipendiary ministry has only come to light since the meeting of those with whom Ministries was asked to consult there is a need for further consultation. The Mission Council is asked to express its views on the 6 points above and offer some indication of the preferred course of action.

10. Proposals

- (i) Mission Council instructs its advisory group (MCAG) to appoint a person with the appropriate skills to advise how the collecting, collating and sharing of data in connection with the Year Book, the Roll of Ministers and the MoM payroll can be co-ordinated possibly by making savings elsewhere to enable the employment of one person to manage a data base and liaise with those whose work requires access to the information held.
- (ii) Mission Council, in view of the continuing increase in the numbers of ministers, agrees that the moratorium imposed in March '94 shall remain in place at least until a further report is received from Ministries in January '95.

MCD
September 1994

Table 1 showing changes in 1994

	Total	Actual								Estimate			
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Full-time SMs		712	708	710	709	708	708	705	721	727	730	729	723
Part-time SMs		44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
CRCWs		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Assembly Apts		28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
Total at Start		790	786	788	787	786	786	783	799	805	808	807	801
IN													
New Entrants	26	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	5	5	1	0	0
Re-Entry	10	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	2	0	0
From Other Churches	13	1	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	0	0
CHANGES													
PT-FT/FT-PT	1	0	0	0	-1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
OUT													
To Other Church Wk	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0
Retirements	-29	-5	-1	-2	-1	-2	-2	0	-1	-2	-6	-6	-1
Deaths	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0
Resignations	-9	0	0	0	-2	0	-3	0	0	-3	-1	0	0
Difference	10	-4	2	-1	-1	0	-3	16	6	3	-1	-6	-1
No at Start	-	790	786	788	787	786	786	783	799	805	808	807	801
No Paid	-	786	788	787	786	786	783	799	805	808	807	801	800
No Budgetted	-	786	785	783	780	776	784	798	803	800	798	796	793
Variance	-	0	3	4	6	10	-1	1	2	8	9	5	7

Table 2 showing changes in 1995

		Estimate											
	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Full-time SMs		722	722	719	718	715	713	707	737	735	738	735	731
Part-time SMs		44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
CRCWs		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	7
Assembly Apts		28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
Total at Start		800	800	797	796	793	791	785	816	814	817	814	810
<u>IN</u>													
New Entrants	40	0	0	0	1	0	0	36	0	3	0	0	0
Re-Entry	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
From Other Churches	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>CHANGES</u>													
PT-FT/FT-PT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<u>OUT</u>													
To Other Church Wk													
Retirements	-34	0	-3	-1	-4	-3	-6	-7	-2	-1	-3	-4	0
Deaths	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resignations	-1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Difference	3	0	-3	-1	-3	-2	-6	30	-2	3	-3	-4	0
<u>Summary</u>													
No at Start	-	800	800	797	796	793	791	785	816	814	817	814	810
No Paid	-	800	797	796	793	791	785	815	814	817	814	810	810
No Budgetted	-	793	790	790	788	785	787	791	792	792	789	787	786
Variance	-	7	7	6	5	6	1	24	22	19	25	23	24

Westminster College and Its Future

**A Report to the United Reformed Church
by
CAFcert Consultancy Services**

prepared by

**Hugh Barr
and
Nicholas Lowe**

September 1994

CONFIDENTIAL

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1 Summary

1.01 Westminster College has a valued and long-standing place in the training of ministers for the United Reformed Church (URC), and formerly the Presbyterian Church of England. Questions have, however, been raised repeatedly over nearly 30 years regarding its viability.

1.02 In 1993, the General Assembly of the URC authorised its Mission Council to make recommendations regarding the future use of the College. The Mission Council decided to seek help from independent consultants in reviewing the situation, in canvassing views about the College's future, in formulating options and advising upon their feasibility. CAFcert Consultancy Services was retained.

1.03 After an historical resume, this report reviews the activities and well-being of the College. Concerns about viability are then examined in the light of the evidence. Four options are floated for the future - closure, no change, slimming down and diversification. The first three are eliminated. The fourth is commended, but with qualifications. It takes into account propositions put to us during interviews and in correspondence, and in the Interim Report of the Working Party on Patterns of Ministry. The case for making the College a National Resource Centre for the URC is explored, but rejected in favour of a National Resource Network comprising a consortium of all the URC training centres.

1.04 Recommendations follow to redefine the relationship between the College and the URC, and to strengthen College governance, management and staffing to measure up to more diverse and more complex functions.

1.05 Sensitive issues regarding location are left until last, in the belief that purpose must first be clear and relationships with significant others defined. Several possibilities are floated, three of which CAFcert commends for further consideration.

1.06 Westminster College is part of two interlocking training systems. On the one hand, it is a member of the ecumenical Cambridge Theological Federation. On the other hand, it is one of a network of URC training centres (some of which belong, in turn, to other ecumenical training schemes - see Diagram in Appendix D). A consortium is envisaged between the latter to develop a National Resource Network for the URC, without detriment to continuing relations with the former.

1.07 Major changes at Westminster College have implications throughout these interlocking systems. It is envisaged that consultation would take place with the other training centres before final recommendations are put to the General Assembly regarding the future of Westminster College.

2 Terms of Reference

2.01 CAFcert Consultancy Services was retained by the Mission Council to assist the URC in reviewing the future of Westminster College, Cambridge, with particular reference to:

- a) the College's historic contribution to the Church's heritage
- b) its present contribution to the ministry of the Church
- c) its resources, including its staff, funds and premises, the uses to which they are put and might be put
- d) its students, their needs and expectations of the College
- e) its types of course
- f) its administration and management
- g) its financial viability

2.02 Account was to be taken of

- a) contributions made by other centres of training
- b) policies, plans and projections for
 - training new entrants for the ministry
 - post ordination and in-service training
 - lay training
 - training students from overseas
- c) current deliberations on patterns of ministry
- d) the interests of the Cheshunt Foundation, its work and its relationship to the College
- e) the relationship to the Cambridge Theological Federation.

2.03 Comments and suggestions were to be invited regarding the future of the College, options prepared, and recommendations made.

3 Acknowledgements

3.01 Seldom can consultants have enjoyed such generous and unqualified support and assistance from all with whom they had the pleasure of working. Particular thanks go to the Principal, staff and students at Westminster College for the warmth of their welcome into its life, fellowship and worship, and for briefing us so thoroughly, to the heads of the other colleges training ordinands for the URC stipendiary ministry who found time to meet us in London and helped us to put our task in context, to the outgoing and incoming Directors of the Windermere Centre with particular reference to lay training and, not least, to our correspondents for filling in much of the background and for pointing up so many possibilities for the future.

3.02 Former students reflected upon their days at Westminster with benefit of hindsight.

3.03 The Chief Accountant/Financial Secretary responded most positively to a long schedule of questions on finance and building costs.

3.04 Two people prepared material specifically to assist the review. The Revd. Dr. Lesley Hesselbee provided a most helpful visual presentation of training in the URC and collated statistical data, while the Revd. John Proctor exercised his feats of memory to collate more detailed data about past and present students.

3.05 We much appreciated the willingness of the Working Party on Patterns of Ministry for allowing us to see its Interim Report ahead of publication.

4 The Report in Context

4.01 "Patterns of Ministry" provides the context within which many of the arguments in this Report will need to be considered. It envisages:

- that lay leadership be strengthened including the appointment of locally authorised Ministers
- that training be fashioned nationally for lay leaders, but delivered locally
- that the distinction between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers be removed
- that parity of training between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers be established
- that the need for further training be assessed when moving from the non-stipendiary to the stipendiary ministry
- that training for lay preachers be adequately resourced
- that in-service training be developed further

4.02 It finds great demand for Ministers and calls for better projections of future requirements. Attention is drawn to a possible need for an increase in the number of stipendiary ministers at some time in the future. Training for younger men and women is stressed.

4.03 In essence, these recommendations point towards a single, integrated, flexible and responsive system of training for all engaged in URC Ministry. If and when adopted, they will carry major implications for the reform of training throughout the URC. At risk of anticipating a wider review, we have tried to take those implications into account, with reference not only to the future role of Westminster College, but also to its place within the network of URC training provision and related ecumenical provision.

4.04 Like the Working Party, we have pieced together the best available picture of present take-up and future demands for training for the Ministry. Overall figures for students training for the stipendiary ministry fluctuate year by year. From 72 in 1979, they rose to a peak of 122 in 1989, falling back to 85 in 1994. If there had been a downward trend in earlier years (for which figures were not available), this had not continued, although the more recent downturn could be the beginning of a trend.

4.05 No projections are prepared for future places likely to be needed, either at Westminster or nation-wide, demand being dependent upon 'call' and numbers put forward by Provinces.

While fully appreciating the significance of this, we see a need for working assumptions to enable intelligent plans to be made. Factors to be taken into account include: the introduction of 65 as the retirement age for stipendiary ministers, the large number approaching that age, and the predominance of mature entrants with a relatively limited number of years to offer. Taken together, these considerations suggest that intakes will remain at least at their present level. We learned, however, of recommendations to increase grants to ordinands which could have the effect of limiting the number which the URC can afford to support. It was also put to us that the URC is well endowed with stipendiary ministers relative to other denominations. Together, these two considerations might suggest a fall in new entrants. But we were also told that URC stipendiary ministers were overstretched - suggesting that the need for new entrants may remain high.

CAFcert recommends that the URC prepare working assumptions of the number of entrants likely to offer and be required for the stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry for the next decade based upon extrapolations of past trends, modified to take account of the workforce profile, anticipated needs and financial constraints.

5 Recommendations

5.01 CAFcert recommends that the URC:

prepare working assumptions of the number of entrants likely to offer and be required for the stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry for the next decade based upon extrapolations of past trends, modified to take account of the workforce profile, anticipated needs and financial constraints; (4.05)

if the College remains on its present site:

- review further the use made of buildings in the light of impending decisions about its role; (8.23)

- instruct the architect to bring forward more radical proposals for future usage, with particular reference to the Principal's Lodge; (8.23)

appoint an additional half-time book keeper/assistant bursar; (8.48)

draw up a strategy for Westminster College; (12.23)

establish a Board of Governors for the College. (16.03)

replace the existing Board of Studies by an Education and Training Committee accountable to the Board of Governors; (16.03)

review the staffing of the College, taking into account both continuing and additional functions; (16.06)

define the post of Principal as a general manager for every aspect of the College's work including implementation of the proposed strategy; (16.06)

create a separate post of Director of Studies to be in charge of education and training; (16.06)

appoint a Development Officer for a limited period to work closely with the future Principal in implementing the strategy; (16.06)

introduce financial costing systems to monitor the true costs of running the College's activities; (16.06)

make the College a cost centre managing a devolved budget; (16.06)

encourage present and potential funders to 'pump prime' projects within the strategy; (16.06)

consider how remaining capital or income from the Healey Legacy can best be used to implement the strategy; (16.06)

call upon the Board of Governors to prepare annual business plans demonstrating year on year how the strategy is to be implemented; (16.06)

set a target date after which the College must be financially viable; (16.06)

signal the intention to withdraw the deficit subsidy from the URC from that date; (16.06)

establish a Task Group for up to one year to manage the period of transition; (16.06)

weigh the choice between continuing to locate Westminster College in its present premises or moving it to Central London or to a city in the Midlands; (17.14)

give priority, in considering alternative locations in the Midlands, to exploring the feasibility and desirability of association with Queen's College and St Andrew's Hall in Birmingham; (17.14)

consult with interested parties on its plans for the future of Westminster College allowing time for comment on wider implications before finalising them. (17.14)

6 Work Undertaken

6.01 The consultancy was carried out between April and September 1994. During that time, we visited the College for a total of eight working days, meeting the Principal, staff and students, and their families, and being shown round the premises. In the course of those visits, we also met Governors and staff of the Cheshunt Foundation and officers of the Cambridge Theological Federation.

6.02 In London, we met senior staff at Church House for briefings and to obtain access to relevant documentary sources. Heads of the three other colleges training ordinands for the URC ministry, Mansfield College, Oxford, Northern College, Manchester and Queen's College Birmingham, were interviewed and a visit made to the Windermere Centre. Former students were also interviewed.

6.03 An open invitation was extended via 'Reform' for anyone with comments to contribute to write to the consultants

6.04 Three meetings were held with the Steering Group: one at the outset; the second to test formative ideas; and the third to consider this report in draft.

6.05 Appendix A gives the names of the Steering Group members, lists the people with whom we met or corresponded, and documentation studied.

7 An Historical Resume

7.01 Westminster College continues the work of the College for the Presbyterian Church of England, founded in London in 1844. It moved to Cambridge in 1899. Since 1967, it has incorporated the former Cheshunt College, whose work continues through the Cheshunt Foundation housed in, and closely associated with, Westminster College. The history of Westminster College has been fully documented (Cornick, Knox), enriched for us by the 'living history' which some of our correspondents contributed as past students and teachers (and even their descendants).

7.02 In spite of the high regard in which the College has clearly been held over the years, our reading also revealed recurrent concern about its viability and over-provision of places generally for training for the URC stipendiary ministry. Numbers at Westminster have fluctuated over the years. From 17 in 1969 it fell as low as 11 to 12 for each of the next four years, but then rose sharply, peaking at 41 in 1990 and 1991, before falling back to 36 in 1992, 27 in 1993 and 30 in 1994 (recovering slightly to 32 for September 1994). Recent slippage may have prompted renewed concern. Nevertheless, Westminster has the largest number of such students of the four colleges (36% of the total in 1994). (see Appendix D)

7.03 Reporting just two years after the amalgamation with Cheshunt College, the Visitors (1969) commented upon the small number of students relative to the size of the premises and the cost of their up-keep. One way to redress this imbalance, they said, would be a smaller staff in college and greater use of university classes, but they did not favour that course of action, fearing that it might detract from preparation for ministry.

7.04 In 1975 the Commission on the Ministry took the view that the URC could not continue indefinitely its commitment to all the theological colleges then training its ministers. The existing arrangement should continue, but subject to review after five years. Westminster and Cheshunt Colleges should continue, but actively develop links with Anglican and Methodist colleges in Cambridge. The Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges (now the Cambridge Theological Federation) had been founded in 1972. Westminster College joined in 1976. Two years later the report from the Visitors (1978) noted that the Federation was developing slowly. Participation in the Federation was, however, seen as a counterbalance to involvement with Cambridge University.

7.05 The 1982 Report of the Review Group on Ministerial Training noted that the vast majority of URC students for the ministry were, by then, going to the colleges in Cambridge (Westminster), Manchester (Northern) and Oxford (Mansfield). However, the Church had to consider whether it still needed all three of these colleges. Two options were floated: to send all students to Westminster College and sever links with the other two; or to close Westminster College and send students to one or both of the other two. In spite of its concerns, the report argued that the Church should continue its present policy in respect of these three colleges for three reasons. First, variety of styles in the ministry matched the

"pluriformity" of contemporary society. Second, to withdraw support from any one of them would be to withdraw the Reformed contribution from the ecumenical centres of theological learning of which it was a part. Third, it was a time for maximising experiment, in the spirit of fresh thinking from the World Council of Churches, even though it might not always prove fruitful. The report also recommended that the URC continue to recognise Queen's College, Birmingham, together with colleges in Bangor and Aberystwyth, while not expecting that many students would be sent to these last two in the near future. The Report saw the growth of non-residential training as a possible way to ease financial pressures in all three of the main colleges. It also argued that they become teaching centres for the whole Church, and for helping the ministry of the whole people of God.

7.06 Over the years, advice about reducing the number of training centres has been heeded. Aberystwyth, Bala, New College (London) and Swansea had all been phased out by 1981.

7.07 In 1991 the Visitors to Westminster College formed part of an ecumenical inspection of the Federation. Reference to the future of the College was conspicuous by its absence. The issue was, however, clearly still alive. Meeting in Portsmouth in July 1993, the General Assembly of the URC resolved that "the Mission Council be authorised to take such steps as are necessary to recommend to the General Assembly a future policy regarding the use made of Westminster College due regard being given to the relationship of other centres of training to the Assembly; and to report to the Assembly not later than 1995"

8 Westminster College Today

Tasks

8.01 The core task of Westminster College has always been and remains the training of future stipendiary ministers for the URC. In recent years, its role has extended to include a contribution to the training of ordinands for other denominations through the Federation, which has, in turn, extended into training for the non-stipendiary ministry through the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course. Lay training courses have also been introduced into the College.

8.02 From home and abroad, ministers on sabbatical enjoy opportunities for reflection and study, supported by College staff and taking advantage of both College and University libraries.

Students

8.03 A total of 125 ordinands entered the College between 1986 and 1993, annual intakes varying from 13 to 22. Of the 125, 34 were women and 91 men. Twenty four were graduates, including two holding doctorates. Twenty five were from overseas, nine of them being from the United States, three each from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, two each from Australia, Denmark and Holland, and one each from Canada, China, Germany and New Guinea. All but one of the remainder were from England, the other being from Wales. Within England, most came from the South, the Midlands and East Anglia, only ten from the North - two from Lancashire, four from Tyne and Wear and four from Yorkshire. These last figures suggest that Westminster College attracts students from the east of the Pennines, less so from the west where Northern College is located.

8.04 Duration of study ranged from one term to five years. Five stayed for a term, 11 for two terms, 25 for a year, 14 for two years, 29 for three years, and 37 for four or more years, four others studying part-time for varying periods.

8.05 Of the 94 for whom ages at intake were available, 12 were under 30, 23 between 30 and 39, 41 between 40 and 49 and 18 were 50 or over.

8.06 Of the 32 current students, half live in College and half outside. Many of those living in commute weekly from their homes and families.

8.07 Some twelve students opted to meet the consultants. All spoke most positively of their experience at Westminster College, especially the close and supportive relations enjoyed with staff. Relations between students and staff had, they said, become less formal in recent years and College life less austere. Both trends were welcomed. Comments were notably lacking regarding changes which they would like to see, either in the life of the College or its training programmes.

Staff

8.08 The teaching staff comprises the Principal and four others. Teaching responsibilities are divided between: Systematic Theology and Apologetics; Church History; Old Testament Language, Literature and Theology; New Testament Language, Literature and Theology; and Pastoral Studies.

8.09 All staff carry substantial responsibilities in addition to those at Westminster College. As well as teaching within the Federation, they advise ministers, preach at local churches, teach at summer schools and hold office within the URC. The Revd. Martin Cressey is Clerk to the General Assembly. Dr David Cornick is Convener of the Ministries' Support Committee, Secretary to the Patterns of Ministry Working Party and is helping to improve distance learning materials, as well as being Director of the Cheshunt Foundation (which funds his post). The Revd. John Proctor is a member of the Ministries' Training Committee and has taken part in inspections of other colleges. The Revd. Bill Mahood is Convener of the Mission and Other Faiths Committee.

8.10 The post of paid Bursar (part-time) was created in 1991. There is a small support team of secretarial, kitchen, domestic and maintenance staff. An honorary organiser for lay training is also based in the premises.

8.11 The Principal is due to retire in 1996 and contracts for other teaching staff all terminate within the next four years. While this creates opportunities to make fresh appointments to spearhead new initiatives, it also means that ways forward need to be clearly charted before job descriptions and person specifications can be drawn up, and applications invited. Furthermore, existing staff need to be consulted soon if they are to assist during a handover period.

Premises

8.12 Completed in 1899, the College comprises an imposing group of period buildings designed within a single style and standing in their own grounds on a prominent site close to the heart of Cambridge. Some whom we consulted held the premises in affection. Others had found them unfriendly, Spartan and ill-suited to contemporary needs (in most cases before recent improvements).

8.13 For some 20 or 30 years, there was a patchwork attitude towards the upkeep of the fabric. Generally, the care of the buildings had been neglected with a very low budget allocation. Some staff and student family accommodation, in particular, was of poor standard. Adaptations, notably to the Principal's Lodge, have been piecemeal and not strategically planned. A more responsible attitude adopted some ten years ago resulted in a detailed inspection and report prepared by Peter Hall, Architect, in 1985. "Extensive but not serious" structural problems were reported, including poor subsoil conditions, uneven loading to the structure and inadequate drainage. These and other defects led to a phased programme of repair, renovation and internal alteration completed in May 1994, at a total cost in excess of half a million pounds.

8.14 As well as essential roof and structural repairs, the opportunity was taken to convert three separate buildings in the grounds for staff and student family use, and vastly to improve the lecture room facilities by creation of the joint Healey Room/Elias Library.

8.15 Our consultation with the architects confirmed that the main building is now in a very good state of repair and a programme of gradual, low cost, internal redecoration is in hand. A routine annual maintenance programme rolling forward for five years is now all that they advise.

8.16 Except for the Principal's Lodge and No. 3 The Bounds, the whole site has been rewired. The gas fired boiler should be good for 30 plus years and the plumbing is generally satisfactory (again with the exception of some lead piping in the Principal's Lodge, No. 3 the Bounds and the Annexes - this will be replaced under the maintenance programme). There is still some galvanised piping in parts of the heating system, which simply requires a small chemical installation to keep it functioning freely.

8.17 The kitchen equipment is in a good state and has spare capacity. This part of the premises is inspected frequently under the Health and Safety Regulations and reports are favourable.

8.18 The residential wing is fully up-to-date on fire regulation requirements. For the building as a whole, future EU legislation (fire doors etc.) has been anticipated.

8.19 Disability access is poor, but within legislative requirements. Wheelchair access to the main building is via the students' entrance at the east side. There could be access to a small number of ground floor rooms, but not to the library, Senatus Room or Bursar's office. A lift could be installed in the residential wing, but this would be very expensive. The main entrance could be ramped but, however that were done, it "would be a disaster, architecturally speaking".

8.20 Parking generally is adequate (very good by Cambridge standards) and more space could be allocated if necessary.

8.21 A detailed schedule of the present use of all rooms in the main building and of other buildings on the site will be found in Appendix B.

Future Use

8.22 In order to give consideration to all possible options for the future use of the College site, whether or not the URC remained in ownership (or in partnership with a developer), a totally confidential visit was made to the Cambridge Planning Department. In response to a wide range of hypothetical questions, the following observations were made:

a) Westminster College is a Grade II listed building. Listing building consent would therefore be required for any proposed structural alterations. Reference would be made to the Department of the Environment, English Heritage and the Victorian Society.

b) There would be no question of permission being granted to demolish the buildings in order to facilitate redevelopment or change of use.

c) As far as **conversion** of the present buildings is concerned, "commercial" redevelopment, i.e. offices, would not be permitted. (The relocation of the URC national offices is therefore precluded.)

d) Change of use to that of an hotel would be considered on its merits (but see paragraph 8.31 below). However, there would be a heavy parking facility requirement.

e) If the College moved or ceased to exist, a change of use to private dwellings, or to total student accommodation, would be encouraged. Again, there would be a high standard of car parking requirements for the former, but a much reduced standard for the latter in line with the University's policies regarding vehicle ownership and local usage. An observation was made that "most of the Cambridge colleges are in continual search of additional student and post-graduate accommodation". However, the standards for such accommodation, especially when newly-built or converted, are rising.

f) As far as the College's own continuing use of the site was concerned, it was considered "most unlikely indeed" that planning permission would be granted for additional buildings in the grounds or for any major extensions. The separate buildings on the site are controlled by the same restrictions as those relating to the main College building. Applications for "appropriate" alterations, for example to the Principal's Lodge, to provide more staff and/or student accommodation would be viewed sympathetically.

8.23 Given the size and location of the Lodge, there is a strong case for a major conversion following the retirement of the present Principal. A successor and his/her family could be housed in part of it, elsewhere on the site, or off-site by acquiring property nearby.

If the College remains on its present site, CAFcert recommends:

that the use made of buildings be subject to a further review in the light of impending decisions about the College's role;

that the architect be instructed to bring forward more radical proposals for internal adaptation in line with proposed future usage, and with particular reference to the Principal's Lodge;

Valuation

8.24 Through the College architect, an introduction was made to a partner in a Cambridge firm of surveyors to discuss the question of a valuation of the properties and site.

8.25 The surveyor agreed that, in principle, a sale to another college was feasible.

8.26 He advised that there were two basic rates for calculating the fee charged to carry out a professional valuation of such a property. If it is an integral step in the sale process then the fee is 2% of the sale proceeds; if a simpler general valuation is required then the fee is one

quarter of one percent. However, he was prepared to suggest a "round" figure over the telephone without having inspected the site, but based upon local knowledge and without commitment on either side. On the basis of £35K per existing student room and the assumption that the same level of accommodation could be replicated elsewhere in the building and still leave appropriate communal space, a figure of £3.5 million to £4.5 million was suggested. Using this as an extremely rough baseline, a professional valuation would attract a fee of around £10K. We considered it wholly inappropriate to commit the URC to this level of expense at such an early stage in the debate. The extremely helpful contact with the valuer can be picked up at any future time.

Power to Sell

8.27 The site for the College was gifted to the Presbyterian Church in 1895. The original conveyance stated that the site " ----- hereby conveyed shall **forever hereafter** be used as and for a Presbyterian Theological College ----- and lodgings for habitation of persons belonging to or connected with such College **and for no other purpose whatsoever** -----"

8.28 There then follows a condition that if all or part of the site should cease to be so used for the purpose during the lifetime of the "longest liver" of the present (i.e. 1895) fellows of St John's College, Cambridge, that college would have first option to re-purchase. That possibility has obviously been excluded by the passage of time.

8.29 The document continues by stating that the site shall be held by the Trustees (13 named individuals) and their successors "upon such trusts and subject to such powers and provisions as consistently with the provisions herein before contained ---- may be directed or approved from time to time by the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of England."

8.30 In 1972 on the formation of the URC, there was no specific reference to any of the theological colleges, either in the Basis of Union or the URC Act of Parliament. Under Resolution 11 of the Constituting Assembly of that year, the powers in the original constitution and conveyance of Westminster College were given to the URC. It is clear therefore that ownership of the College lies with the General Assembly and that the URC Trust is the holding trustee. It would appear to follow that, even if the Charity Commissioners gave their approval, sale would require the agreement of the General Assembly.

8.31 The solicitor to the URC, Mr Hartley Oldham, is of the opinion that the original restrictive covenant with regard to use "in perpetuity" as a theological college still obtains. Before any action were taken to change use or sell, a formal request would need to be made to the original vendor, St John's College, seeking a waiver of that restrictive covenant. Mr Oldham is looking into these matters further.

Costs of Training Ordinands

8.32 Maintenance and support payments to all ordinands at whichever college are on a common scale. There are wide ranging differences in the amount each student receives, dependent upon age, family and housing commitments, but these are not related to the college attended. A small number of bursaries are available to students at each of the three main colleges, but these sums are deducted from the URC central grants. The same principle

applies to the small percentage of Local Education Authority support grants. Fees charged by colleges vary:

College	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94
	£	£	£
Northern	3212	4000	4300
Mansfield	3323	3363	3297
Westminster	3528	3735	3855
Queen's	3591	3753	3864

8.33 As independent institutions, Northern, Mansfield and Queens set their own fees based upon their own criteria, presumably with the intention of breaking even. If there is an element of what the purchaser (the URC) can afford, this has not yet been made paramount. There is no evidence that choice of placements for any student has been decided upon fee costs.

8.34 At Westminster the fee is not related to the overall costs of running the College, more to what seems a reasonable figure which may prove to be acceptable to the small number of local authorities which make contributions.

8.35 No other payments are made by the URC to Northern, Mansfield and Queen's other than an annual grant of £5K from the Ministerial Training Fund to the Ivona Powell Scholar at Northern College.

Costs of running Westminster College

8.36 From the way in which the College accounts are organised, it is not possible at the moment to attribute direct costs accurately nor to distribute overheads to the many different activities:

- primary ministerial training
- conferences
- sabbaticals and visitors
- lodgers
- lay training
- Federation activities
- URC committees, working parties etc

8.37 The College is "subsidised" from three main sources:

- i) its own restricted funds
- ii) the Cheshunt Foundation
- iii) Central URC funds

8.38 Its restricted funds provided the following:

	£
1987	20 K
1988	21 K
1989	26 K
1990	27 K
1991	30 K
1992	28 K
1993	24 K

These are minimum figures. Additional sums totalling anything up to £10 K per annum may offset individual fees or maintenance grants. Additionally, in 1993 approximately £50 K was granted towards the major refurbishment programme from these restricted funds.

8.39 On average, for the last two years, the Cheshunt Foundation has provided the following.

	£
Student Grants -----	26.0 K
College Administration Grant --	4.5 K
Library -----	1.0 K
Staff Salaries -----	23.5 K
Staff Housing Costs -----	2.5 K
Total -----	57.5 K

The Foundation also funds six sabbatical terms at Westminster for serving ministers, increasing to nine terms in 1994/95. (It also owns the house which it provides for the use of its own Director, who is a senior member of Westminster College's Senatus.)

8.40 In past years allocations have been made towards staff stipends from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund (MMF). The net balance, when in surplus, has been transferred to the Ministerial Training Fund (MTF). In the last two years, the net deficit has been met from that Fund.

	Allocation from MMF £	Transfer (to)/ from MTF £	
1987	28 K	(2 K)	26 K
1988	29 K	(17 K)	12 K
1989	33 K	(16 K)	17 K
1990	38 K	(23 K)	15 K
1991	41 K	(6 K)	35 K
1992	50 K	4 K	54 K
1993	Nil	55 K	55 K

8.41 Whilst calls upon the restricted funds and the Cheshunt Foundation are acceptable continuing sources of support, the increasing deficit causes concern in the College and, more particularly, in the URC which has to balance the books.

8.42 It is for this reason, especially, that the fee charges must come to relate to actual costs and why the College must look to other ways of increasing its income. A small investment in staffing would enable appropriate costing systems to be installed and managed, and would also permit an expansion of the conference programme. Other recommendations in this report hold the potential to generate additional income. Estimated figures for income from each activity would be included in future business plans. In our view, an aim of considerably reducing the deficit in the short term is not unreasonable, linked with fixing a date by which the College, guided by the new Board of Governors, could be expected to reach financial viability.

8.43 We consider later arguments for moving the College from its present site (see paragraphs 17.01 to 17.02). Suffice to say here, that any move from Cambridge would, we were advised, lose the financial support of the Cheshunt Foundation, making the task of establishing viability much harder. Moreover, it would be a costly operation, which could only be borne if the capital value of the buildings and site were realised and alternative accommodation were significantly cheaper.

Management

8.44 As "a wholly owned subsidiary" of the URC, Westminster College has no Governing Body of its own, responsibility for training resting with a Board of Studies and everyday running with a local Management Committee. Staff are employees of the URC and (with the exception of Dr Cornick who is employed by the Cheshunt Foundation) on its payroll.

8.45 It is clear from comments that have been made by the Principal and other staff both at the College and Church House, and by students and ex-students that great strides forward have been made in the day-to-day management of the site and buildings in the last three years.

8.46 The present professionally qualified bursar took the place of an honorary bursar and a book keeper (the latter paid for 13 hours per week). She is paid by the College for only 15 hours per week and by the Cheshunt Foundation for 5 hours. Two job sharing secretaries have replaced the previous arrangements in the College office. The Principal has been relieved of much routine administrative work. With a committed housekeeper, and well supervised teams of kitchen and domestic staff, the main professional and domestic systems appear to run smoothly and efficiently.

8.47 There are, however, stresses and overloads. In particular, because the bursar has to perform all basic book keeping (for which there is no local cover), she has not had the opportunity to develop more appropriate costing systems nor to research or recommend better I.T. packages. A logical separation of financial duties and responsibilities between the College and Church House is lacking. The Chief Accountant/Financial Secretary has expressed his willingness to delegate and rationalise responsibilities as and when there is capacity to accept them within the Bursar's office.

8.48 The second major pressure point is caused by the logistics of the present conference programme. Although still quite limited (see Appendix C), the bulk of this programme takes place in the relatively short Easter vacation. Household, administrative, accounting and supervisory staff are severely overstretched at this time. There is clear recognition of value to the College, and its users, of a fuller, properly costed, appropriately timed conference/courses programme. To enable control and costing systems to be put in place, to give full and proper support, even to the present Conference programme and to facilitate the production of a business plan for the College at its current level of activities

CAFcet recommends an additional half-time appointment with, book keeping skills and to understudy the Bursar.

9 External Relations

With the Cambridge Theological Federation

9.01 Westminster College is one of five training centres which now comprise the Cambridge Theological Federation, the others being Ridley Hall (Anglican), Wesley House (Methodist), Westcott House (Anglican), and the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course (ecumenical), with plans to include also the Lady Margaret Beaufort Institute (Roman Catholic). While scope for closer ties between "houses" is acknowledged, there are no plans at present for a united college.

9.02 The Federation's purpose is "to set ministerial training in all our houses within an agreed framework of disciplined obedience to that call of God which bids us to realise the visible unity of Christians in Christ." Its total teaching staff numbers 23 and its courses lead to the Certificate in Theology for the Ministry. Quite apart from ecumenical arguments, the Federation enables Westminster College to provide more extensive, more cost effective and better quality training than it could do on its own.

9.03 Participation in the Cambridge Theological Federation has provided overall numbers sufficient to sustain broadly-based training programmes with the requisite range of specialist expertise amongst teachers, which would be impossible for Westminster College alone. Suggestions were, however, put to us that the contribution made by staff of Westminster College was over generous and disproportionate to the number of URC ordinands. This appears to have been so in early years, less so following the restructuring of staffing in other houses of the Federation although there is a continuing desire to retain a specific Reformed contribution to teaching for the whole. Staff/student ratios are calculated for the Federation, not just for the URC, and the skills and specialisms of replacement staff are looked at in relation to the needs of the Federation as a whole.

With Universities in Cambridge

9.04 Westminster College is not affiliated to the University of Cambridge, although its staff enjoy close ties with colleagues in the Faculty of Divinity. Most Westminster students fall short of the University's entry requirements, but links have been forged with Fitzwilliam College (and occasionally other Colleges) to enable some students to enter the Tripos.

9.05 In general, however, Westminster's current students seem to take little advantage of the opportunities which a major university city affords, time and energy largely being absorbed within their own College and the Federation. Four reasons were suggested. First, the age gap between the College's students (average 39 years on admission) and University undergraduates is wide, while many of the former have families either with them in Cambridge or to whom they return at weekends. Recreational and social contact with the University's students is therefore unlikely. Second, the College caters for students with educational backgrounds which (in formal terms) are weak compared with those of Cambridge

undergraduates. Third, the University is amongst the most traditional in its reluctance to extend access by non-conventional and vocational routes and to adopt flexible patterns of study. Finally, emphases within theological studies in the University have not favoured participation in the training of ordinands either at Westminster College or at other houses in the Federation.

9.06 A recent "breakthrough", however, was the decision of the Faculty to recognise the Federation's Certificate in Theology for the Ministry and hopes were expressed that the College's own Certificate of Qualification for the Ministry might gain similar recognition.

9.07 Discussions are also in hand with the Cambridge-based Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) with a view to Federation staff being recognised as supervisors for a taught MA in Religious Studies and Theology. This could constitute one year of their ministerial training for some ordinands, as well as being open to other students as part of a wider APU programme.

9.08 Multiple relationships are therefore being cultivated, each widening opportunities for Westminster students according to their abilities and aspirations.

Within the Network of URC Training Centres

9.09 Westminster College is one of four training centres for the URC stipendiary ministry, the others being Mansfield College, Oxford, Northern College, Manchester, and Queen's College, Birmingham. Numbers in training for the URC stipendiary ministry at each of these colleges between 1972 and 1994 are given in Appendix D.

9.10 Of these four, Westminster is the only one owned by the URC and under the direct control of the General Assembly, although Northern and Mansfield both enjoy close working relationships with the URC.

9.11 Observations on the other three colleges lie outside our brief. Some understanding of their roles in training URC ordinands is, however, essential if decisions about Westminster are to be taken in context. Meetings with their respective Heads, and documentation which they kindly provided, reveal marked differences. Both Northern and Mansfield have integrated and diversified their activities, but in quite different ways.

9.12 Northern shares accommodation with training centres for other denominations. It is party to the development of closely integrated courses, not only between denominations but also between training for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers and for lay people. Emphasis is put upon training for ministry in the secular world, including deprived inner city areas nearby. We were impressed by the way in which much that is good in current educational innovation is being incorporated into modular programmes. Moreover, these could pave the way for developments in training necessary to implement recommendations in the Interim Report on Patterns of Ministry.

9.13 Mansfield is about to become a full college of the University of Oxford, within which URC ordinands comprise a minority of the students. The Director saw this as strengthening training for ministry. Some of our correspondents were more doubtful, questioning how well older ordinands mix with young undergraduates and whether the overall ambience was conducive to ministerial studies. Some implied that Mansfield had become less committed to training for

the URC ministry, others that such commitment would inevitably weaken when the present Director retires. Whatever the position for the future, Mansfield presently trains substantial numbers of URC ordinands within a viable and buoyant institution.

9.14 Of the four colleges, Queen's trains fewest URC ordinands and presently has no URC staff member. The Principal is, however, committed to making a URC appointment at the first available opportunity, provided that URC ordinands continue to be assigned. Save for the presence of some URC ordinands, Queen's would become an Anglican/Methodist college. This is a prospect which the Principal would much regret, rendering the College less than ecumenical.

9.15 Ordinands for the URC non-stipendiary ministry train through a network of regionally-based ecumenical courses. The extent of direct teaching and mentoring for URC students by URC tutors seems to vary, as do ties with URC colleges training stipendiary ministers.

9.16 Other URC training centres are: the Windermere Centre, Cumbria, providing short courses for lay people and ministers, and the Yardley Hastings Youth Resource Centre, Northamptonshire, providing training for young people and their leaders. The URC also has a stake in St Andrew's Hall, Birmingham, together with the Baptist Missionary Society and the Council for World Mission. St Andrew's trains people from home and abroad for mission and church leadership, mainly overseas.

10 Viability

10.01 In summary, anxiety surrounding the viability of the College springs from assumptions about:

- falling numbers of URC ordinands, in general, and at Westminster College, in particular;
- under-occupancy of College premises;
- maintenance of the fabric;
- lack of information about true costs

We have checked each of these assumptions against the evidence presented to us.

- Student Numbers

10.02 Earlier concerns about falling numbers are no longer justified, although the most recent figures could prove to be the beginning of a renewed fall. In the absence of firm projections (and bearing in mind observations made by the Patterns of Ministry Working Party), it seems to us prudent to have a limited reserve of additional places for training future stipendiary ministers, provided that such spare capacity is put to alternative use and does not constitute a drain on resources.

- Occupancy Levels

10.03 On present evidence, anxiety about numbers at Westminster may be overplayed, but only 18 of 46 study/bedrooms are used for URC ordinands. Three others are used by students, but in the day time only. Five bedrooms are used by sabbatical and other visitors, one is temporarily used as staff accommodation and one as an office. Every effort is made by the Bursar to ensure that spare capacity is occupied by students from other colleges (22 in 1993/94) and income is thus obtained. A more detailed cost accounting system would ensure that rent charges are optimised. Elsewhere in the main building three flats provide accommodation for two student families. There are also two single flats.

10.04 In the grounds, from October 1994 following conversion work now in progress, there will be two large staff flats/houses, two student family flats, one student family detached house and two single studio flats. Off site there is ownership of a staff house and student family house. For a detailed description of the total accommodation available (residential and other) together with its present use, see Appendix B.

- the Fabric

10.05 In view of extensive repairs made and the rolling programme of maintenance, there are less grounds for concern than in the past. Nevertheless, repairs and up-keep will always tend to be more than for modern, purpose built accommodation.

- Costs

10.06 Internal management, including financial management, of the College has been strengthened, following the appointment of the Bursar. While claims on URC central funds have risen in recent years, we believe that they can be substantially reduced, and in due course eliminated, by continuing improvements in College management and diversification of its activities.

11 Options

11.01 The future of the College is not being debated in the midst of crisis. On the contrary, numbers of URC ordinands are good compared with some years ago, accommodation is more fully used than in the past, fabric has been extensively repaired and internal management and financial systems improved. This makes it easier to focus upon wider considerations which bear upon the future of the College as part of overall URC training provision.

11.02 In broad terms, there are four options:

- (i) closure
- (ii) no change
- (iii) slimming down
- (iv) diversification

11.03 The first of these options attracted no support from those with whom we talked or corresponded. While arguments were put for reducing the number of centres for training URC ordinands, no one doubted that Westminster College has a continuing place. Some stressed the importance of the URC keeping alive the Presbyterian tradition which Westminster represented, while retaining the one college over which it had control. Others argued that the "special relationship" was in danger of being overstated.

11.04 The second option gained some support, not least amongst students and former students who wanted to conserve and protect a College from which they had gained much. While some seemed wedded to maintaining the status quo, others saw the need for change. The College staff all acknowledged that change was necessary and timely. They volunteered helpful suggestions, but a sense of collective ownership was lacking as indeed was a strategic overview. That may reflect uncertainty surrounding the future of the College for so long and the short time which present staff contracts have to run. More radical arguments for change came from outside the College.

11.05 The third option can be read several ways. It can be taken to mean reducing the number of ordinands. This had few if any friends. It would only exacerbate existing problems of viability, making it difficult to justify distinctive URC teaching. This option can, however, also be taken to mean producing a leaner organisation while maintaining the present scale of operation. This attracted some arguments being put for accommodating URC ordinands in one of the other houses in the Federation or for a non-residential college.

11.06 Most of those with whom we talked or corresponded volunteered at least one proposal for future development at the College. Taken together, those proposals add up to an ambitious, perhaps over-ambitious, plan for diversification.

- **to strengthen mission**

12.15 The College already welcomes many students and ministers on sabbatical from overseas and the Federation is intent upon strengthening studies in Missiology, including the work of the Henry Martin Institute. *Suggestions were made that Westminster should put greater emphasis upon training for, and students from, overseas.* Persuasive as this line of argument is, we doubt whether Westminster should be encouraged to embark upon an initiative which might compete with the URC stake at St Andrew's, Birmingham.

12.16 Again, the case for two centres rests upon expansion to sustain both. In an ideal world that would, no doubt, be so. In the real world, we were advised, it would depend upon the URC being willing and able to invest substantial sums for the benefit of the Church overseas. Possibilities for income generation were strictly limited to a few rich nations, one of which, the United States, already enjoys close ties with Mansfield (although sending some students and ministers on sabbatical to Westminster).

12.17 *One formulation, however, saw Westminster, within the Federation and in association with the Henry Martin Institute, as establishing a centre for the Study of Christianity in the non-western World and attracting scholars world-wide.* Such a centre could arguably complement the work at St Andrew's Hall, but emphasises Westminster's future in academic terms

- **to augment the library**

12.18 *Widely praised as a priceless resource, the case was put for expanding the library with new stock and a periodicals room, while incorporating the URC History Library from Church House. An alternative case was put for making the Westminster library the main one of the Federation - a proposition with quite different implications for augmenting stock, requiring more space and probably a full-time librarian.*

- **to become a centre for the production of URC publications**

2.19 *Yet another proposition was for the College to become a centre for producing URC publications.* Of all the propositions floated, this was the least developed. It would not be difficult to see a 'publishing arm' at the College benefiting from the expertise of teachers and visiting scholars. Such publications would, however, need to contribute to an overall URC strategy. In that context, a persuasive case might be made for the College to contribute to the production of open learning materials for use by both ordinands and lay students, perhaps drawing upon, and co-operating with, its Methodist namesake, Westminster College, Oxford.

- **to establish a centre for Reformation Studies**

2.20 *Given the tradition which the College represents, the scholarship which teachers bring to it, their relations within the Federation, their association with academic theology in Cambridge University and archives held in the College library, it was said to be ideally suited to establish a "Centre for Reformation and Reformed Studies". The idea was subsequently developed into one for a "Centre for Reformation and Ecumenical Studies"- to be called the Dikoumene Centre". Strong support for this latter proposition came from the Head of the*

Divinity Faculty and from within the Federation.

12.21 The original title refers, as we understand it, to the reinterpretation of the lessons of the Reformation within the URC Church today. It can be read (although this was clearly not the intention) as exclusive to the URC. The revised title obviates that problem, but risks losing sight of the distinctive role of the URC and its influence within the wider Church. "Oikumene Centre" (attractive though it sounds) goes further, losing any reference not only to the Reformed tradition but also to the Reformation, itself. Whatever its merits in rallying support across the denominations, there is no obvious reason why such a centre should be established by the URC.

12.22 This is more than semantics. It touches upon fundamental issues about the future role of the College and, indeed, of the URC. It points up the tension between the role of the College as a resource within the URC (and through it to the wider Church) and its own ecumenical relations, notably within the Federation.

Our Observations

12.23 Attractive though many of these propositions may be, they need to be approached with caution for at least four reasons. First, there is a danger that they become no more than a shopping list, from which to pick and choose without sufficient regard to their compatibility and their potential interdependence. Some incline towards the academic, others towards the practical. Some would reinforce existing functions; others would break new ground. Some would deliver education and training; others would support such delivery by means of research, scholarship and service. Second, there is a danger of being drawn into a catalogue of developments which would overstretch resources and dissipate effort. Third, there is a danger that developments at Westminster might undermine the 'market' for existing activities at other URC training centres. Not least, there is a danger of becoming so absorbed in the parts that insufficient attention is paid to the purpose of the whole. That purpose plainly needs to be restated so that propositions can be tested against it.

CAFcert recommends that a strategy be drawn up for Westminster College, in consultation with interested parties.

13 A National Resource Centre

13.01 Subject to further work, we are persuaded that proposals for a Centre could form the hub of the new Westminster College around which other propositions might revolve. We see the Centre as a source of inspiration and reinvigoration within the URC and, through it, to the wider Church. This need not conflict with a direct input into the life and teaching of the Cambridge Federation, although that would be secondary and minor relative to the potential role of the Centre within and through the URC.

13.02 While emphasising the potential of this proposition, we are alive to the hazard that the Centre might become no more than a place where scholars talk to scholars. To guard against this, proposals (once firm) need to be thrown open to consultation and debate throughout the URC and beyond. The Centre would need to be both scholarly and practical, denominational and inter-denominational, of the University and of the Church. Much remains to be done to realise this.

13.03 We see a continuing role in training ordinands (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) as a core activity to inform and support continuing ministerial developments and lay training.

14 A National Resource Network

14.01 Attractive as the notion of a National Resource Centre may be, it devalues, perhaps inadvertently, the other URC Training Centres, each of which has acknowledged strengths. To accord Westminster College the status of national resource (or *primus inter pares*) would, in our view, exacerbate rivalry, competition and tension, while duplicating effort and wasting scarce resources. We cannot resist the observation that URC training centres often seem closer (not just geographically) to their ecumenical partners than to each other.

14.02 Fashionable as internal markets may be (not least in education), it is hard to believe that one would serve the best interests of the URC. Each of its training centres is well placed to provide the national lead in fields where it is strongest, supporting the work of the others as and when appropriate. Recent moves to establish co-ordinating machinery are therefore welcome, but need to go further. There is a strong case for establishing a Consortium of URC Training Centres, each deciding what it is willing to put into the common pool, and institutionalising creative tension between the traditions and emphases which each represents. Use of resource would be optimised. Programmes, curricula and learning materials would be developed jointly. Students would move between centres within modular courses. All this goes beyond our remit. We therefore stop short of making a recommendation.

15 An Integrated Education and Training System

15.01 Just as the centres may need to come together, so may training systems for the stipendiary ministry, for the non-stipendiary ministry and for lay leadership. Indeed, this will become pressing if and when recommendations of the Patterns of Ministry Working Party are adopted.

15.02 The same courses and learning materials can be designed for students at various stages in their development, provided that tutors are equipped to help students to use them differentially. Such integration is already happening in Manchester. We were impressed by the Report of the Integrated Working Party developed with Northern College. This provides a single system of modular courses for ordinands (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) and lay people with pathways leading to certificate, diploma and degree level awards. It may well be a model meriting national adoption and, incidentally, a good example of how the lead might be taken in one centre for the benefit of others. Again, we are in danger of exceeding our brief and stop short of making a recommendation.

15.03 We envisage not a patchwork of developments, but a tightly woven fabric to which the denominational warp is as vital as the ecumenical weft, and within which the different training strands are intertwined.

16 Implications for Governance, Management and Staffing

16.01 In our view, Westminster College will only measure up to the challenging opportunities ahead with root and branch restructuring. This needs to begin by redefining and formalising the relationship with the URC and by appointing a Board of Governors to be directly accountable to the General Assembly for overseeing all aspects of the work of the College. The Board would all upon the best available talent throughout the URC and beyond, including people qualified in accountancy, architecture/planning, fund-raising, vocational education, continuing professional development, the health and social care professions as well as ministers from the URC and other denominations. Links would be built in with the Eastern Province and others with whom the College was working especially closely. At the same time, the Board would be kept small (say not more than ten members) by appointing people able to make multiple contributions.

16.02 Amongst its first tasks would be to scrutinise propositions made above or subsequently, establishing feasibility studies as necessary, and prioritising developments within an overall strategy.

16.03 The function of the Board of Governors would be wider than that of the present Board of Studies (reflecting the extended scope of the work). The latter would be renamed the Education and Training Committee. Its future members would be appointed by the Board of Governors, to whom it would be accountable for the promotion, development, conduct and standards of all education and training within the College.

CAFcet recommends that the URC:

establish a Board of Governors to be responsible to the General Assembly for the College;

replace the existing Board of Studies by an Education and Training Committee accountable to the Board of Governors;

16.04 College staff would be accountable, through the Principal, to the Board of Governors.

16.05 While happy with the designation 'Principal', we see the future incumbent as a general manager in charge of a complex and diverse organisation. Responsibility for managing education and training programmes would be delegated to a Director of Studies (other teachers ceasing to have 'director' in their designations).

16.06 Even then, we doubt whether the Principal could carry the full load of work in both managing the College and implementing the strategy. We therefore envisage the appointment of a Development Officer for five to seven years to promote new projects, attract pump priming funds and generate income to ensure viability in the longer term.

CAFcet recommends that the URC:

review the staffing of the College, taking into account both continuing and additional functions;

define the post of Principal as a general manager for every aspect of the College's work including implementation of the proposed strategy;

create a separate post of Director of Studies to be in charge of education and training;

appoint a Development Officer for a limited period to work closely with the future Principal in implementing the strategy;

introduce costing systems to monitor the true costs of each aspect of the College's activities;

make the College a cost centre managing a devolved budget;

encourage present and potential funders to 'pump prime' projects within the strategy;

consider how remaining capital or income from the Healey Legacy can best be used to implement the strategy;

call upon the Board of Governors to prepare annual business plans demonstrating, year on year, how the strategy is to be implemented;

set a target date after which the College must be financially viable;

signal the intention to withdraw the deficit subsidy from the URC from that date.

CAFcet also recommends that a Task Group be established for up to one year to manage the period of transition, pending the appointment of the Board of Governors.

17 Location

17.01 We have deliberately left the question of location until last, believing that the choice can only be made once the future role of the College, and its relationships with other URC centres, becomes clear. In essence the choice lies between:

- staying put
- relocating within Cambridge
- relocating outside Cambridge

- staying put

17.02 The overwhelming weight of arguments from those associated with the College was to stay put in Cambridge, although not necessarily in the present premises. Furthermore, the Governors of the Cheshunt Foundation (having seen their own College in Cambridge close) were firmly of the view that it remain in the city. As noted above, continuation of their generous support for Westminster College would be at risk if it were to be relocated outside Cambridge.

17.03 Our own view, is that the most compelling case for remaining in Cambridge lies in the strength of the working relationships so patiently built up within the Federation. Compared with these, links with Cambridge University and its colleges seem tenuous, although the creation of the Centre for Reformation/Reformed/Ecumenical Studies would, we were assured, benefit by association with it and lead to stronger ties.

17.04 While location in this ancient university city plainly offers some advantages, it may also be a handicap compared with location in a city with a newer university, accustomed to having older students, innovative and enterprising in reaching out to do business with other colleges. Arguably, relations developing with the Anglia Polytechnic University offer just that within Cambridge, although there can be little doubt that comparable, if not better, working relations could be cultivated elsewhere with a university which includes a divinity faculty.

- relocating within Cambridge

17.05 Only one suggestion was put for relocation in Cambridge and then in general terms. This envisaged accommodating URC students and staff in another house within the Cambridge Federation, while releasing the Westminster College buildings for a library and teaching centre for the Federation as a tangible demonstration of ecumenical commitment. This proposition had not been discussed with other Federation members and the advantages and disadvantages to each party were not spelt out. Our assumption is that fewer URC students could be included than at present. This idea would therefore only make sense if slimming down were to emerge as the preferred option.

17.06 Alternative suggestions for rehousing the College within Cambridge were lacking. Indeed, the likelihood of finding suitable premises within walking or cycling distance of other Federation houses seems remote, while finding vacant land and gaining planning permission to develop in central Cambridge seems even more remote.

17.07 It seems to us that the only circumstances in which relocation within Cambridge should be considered would be, first, if present premises were unsuited to future purposes, second, maintaining the present premises was wholly excessive and/or, third, their sale seemed likely to generate sufficient sums to cover not only the costs of better accommodation for future purposes but also a substantial residue for investment from which the income could be used for development.

- relocating outside Cambridge

17.08 Cogent arguments were advanced by people not closely associated with Westminster College for its relocation to a major industrial city. Cambridge was said to be both ill-suited for training ministers for modern urban society and off-centre geographically. While the URC might justify having one theological college in an ancient university town, two was one too many! Mansfield College having secured its viability, should, so the argument ran, be the one. Conversely, Mansfield, having diversified beyond training for the ministry, was held no longer to provide the URC with a secure theological base in Oxbridge for the future - leaving that honour to Westminster.

17.09 Opinions differed about where to relocate. One correspondent envisaged two colleges serving the URC ministry, one (Westminster College relocated) in the south and the other (Northern College, Manchester) in the north. Viewed thus, Mansfield College would cease to be a major centre in view of the degree to which it had diversified, while Queen's College, Birmingham, was discounted. Where to locate Westminster College in the south was not made clear.

17.10 At first sight, Central London seemed a non-starter. The cost of relocation as a residential college would be prohibitive (Indeed, Westminster College moved from London in 1899 in the midst of controversy). If, however, the College were to become primarily non-residential, the arguments would look quite different. A non-residential College had been discounted when considering locations outside London, on the grounds that most students would be some distance from home and accommodation would need to be found for them. However, the concentration of potential students resident within London or within easy commuting distance, suggests that a non-residential college might well be feasible.

17.11 Existing URC accommodation might be found in London, accessible to mainline stations and suitable for conversion at reasonable cost. Limited residential provision might need to be found for a minority of students from outside London and the South East, accommodation which could also be used out of term time for some participants at conferences and short courses. In our view, this option merits detailed scrutiny. One possible objection is that it loses the advantages of ordinands living in community, but that has already broken down substantially with more mature and married students - in marked contrast to the celibacy traditionally associated with the seminary. Furthermore, fewer and fewer higher education institutions provide residential accommodation in a cost-conscious age.

17.11 The case was also put for an Outer London location, accessible by road from the M25 and close to a rail connection. We, ourselves, could not envisage such a location which would be close to a university with a divinity faculty and to other theological colleges with whom

ecumenical collaboration could be cultivated. Canterbury might meet these criteria, but is no nearer than Cambridge (or indeed Oxford) to London and far less accessible from most of the country.

17.12 Another view saw Mansfield, Northern and Westminster as the three colleges for the future. Between them, Mansfield and Northern were well sited to serve the North, the West and much of the South. Situated between Oxford and Manchester, Queen's College would cease to be used by the URC while Westminster College would move to the East Midlands to optimise geographical spread (although Nottingham, for example, could not offer ecumenical relations comparable to Cambridge). Arguments that Westminster should move, rather than Mansfield or Northern, rested on the assumption that its premises were a liability, its costs excessive and its location less than ideal - arguments which evidence in this report suggests have tended to be exaggerated.

17.13 A variation on this theme envisaged that Westminster College would move to Birmingham. Association would be sought with Queen's College which is keen to maintain and strengthen its links with the URC. This would enable Westminster to establish ecumenical ties comparable to those which it presently enjoys within the Cambridge Federation. There would be the possibility of cultivating mutually beneficial relations with the Selly Oak Colleges, including St Andrew's Hall. Arguments that Birmingham is too close to Oxford and Manchester had to be set against the ease with which these new relationships might be forged. Furthermore, in the absence of a URC college in London, a compelling case could be made for reinforcing its presence in England's second major conurbation where the URC was reportedly strong and practical studies could be developed in a multi-cultural environment.

17.14 Pending initial reactions from the Mission Council, it seemed premature to check out the feasibility of a move to Birmingham. Meanwhile, major questions remain unanswered, not least whether and where residential accommodation could be found for URC ordinands.

CAFcet recommends that the URC:

weigh the choice between continuing to locate Westminster College in its present premises or moving it out of Cambridge to Central London or to a city in the Midlands;

give priority, in considering alternative locations in the Midlands, to exploring the feasibility and desirability of association with Queen's College and St Andrew's Hall in Birmingham;

it inform interested parties of its plans for the future of Westminster College allowing time for comment on wider implications before finalising them.

Appendix A

Individuals, Organisations and Documentation Consulted

Members of the Steering Committee:

Mrs Ruth Clarke
The Revd. John Sutcliffe
The Revd. Tony Burnham

Individuals Consulted:

At Church House:

The Revd. Dr Lesley Huselbee
The Revd. Michael Diffey
Mr Clem Frank

At Westminster College:

Mr Andrew J. Armour
The Revd. Martin Cressey, Principal
The Revd. Dr Janet Tollington
The Revd. Bill Mahood
The Revd. John Proctor
Mrs Valerie A Sinclair, Bursar
Mr Brian Harley, Senior Student, and fellow students.

From other URC Training Centres:

The Revd. Charles Brock, Director of Training, Mansfield College, Oxford
The Revd. Graham Cook, Director, The Windermere Centre
The Revd. Peter Fisher, Principal, Queen's College, Birmingham
The Revd. Peter McIntosh, Director Designate, The Windermere Centre
The Revd. Dr. David Peel, Principal, Northern College, Manchester

From the Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Desmond Davies, Chairman
Ann Phillips, Governor
The Revd. Alan Tovey, Governor
Mr Philip Wade, Governor
The Revd. Dr. David Cornick, Director

From the Cambridge Theological Federation:

The Revd. Kenneth Cracknell, President of the Federation Council, and Senior Tutor, Wesley House

The Revd. Graham Gray, Principal, Ridley Hall

Canon Graham Kings, Federation Lecturer in Missiology

Mr Chris Wright, Executive Officer

Others

Mr Peter Hall

Architect

Mr Alan Miles

Architect

Mr Hartley Oldham

Solicitor

Eileen Paterson

Cambridge City Council

The Revd. David Littlejohn

Former Student

The Revd. Victor Ridgewell

Former Student

The Revd. Sue Roderick

Former Student

Correspondence received from:

Organisations are shown where applicable although most letters were written in a personal capacity.

Mr Andrew J. Armour

Westminster College

Mrs J. M. Armour

Cambridge

The Revd. R. J. M. Collins

Broadway

The Revd. Hazel Day

Gloucester

The Revd. Malcolm Deacon

Northampton

Professor David Ford

Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge

The Revd. W. K. Gathercole

Moderator, URC Eastern Province

The Revd. Norman Healey

Friends of Westminster and Cheshunt Colleges

The Revd. Canon Graham Kings

Ridley Hall

The Revd. A. L. Macarthur

Former General Secretary

The Revd. Dr. David Hill

Sheffield University

The Revd. J. Parker,

The Congregational Federation

The Revd. Michael Powell

URC Chaplain, Anglia Polytechnic University

The Revd Norman Setchell

British Sailors Society

Dr A. G. Towers

Bedlington

Mrs Sheila Tull

Former Administrative Secretary to the URC

The Revd. M. D. Whitehorn

Cambridge, Retired

The Revd. Rodney J. Wood

Ashford

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Appendix B

Present Capacity and Usage

Accommodation Wing

2nd Floor - 18 study bedrooms, with 4 bathrooms/toilet suites and 4 kitchens

- = 13 Westminster College students
- 1 Sabbatical Visitor
- 1 ex student/researcher
- 1 lodging student
- 1 guest room
- 1 College Chaplain's Room
(can be used as an extra bedroom)

1st Floor - 14 study rooms with 4 bathroom/toilet suites and 4 kitchens

- = 14 lodging students
- 1 Westminster College student
- 1 Westminster College commuter study room (1993/4 only)
- 1 Sabbatical Visitor
- 1 Office (Andrew Armour - Exploring the Faith)

Plus Bursar's Office
Cheshunt Director's Office
Office for Director of Pastoral Studies

Ground Floor - 14 study rooms with 4 bathrooms/toilet suites and 4 kitchens

- = 4 Westminster College students
- 7 lodging students
- 1 Westminster College Commuter (1993/4 only)
- 1 Senior Student's room
- 1 Dr Tollington (temporary)

Other Living Accommodation

Above Principal's Lodge

Flat No. 1 - (1 Bed, 1 Living Room, 1 Study)

Student and family

Flat No. 2)

Flat No. 3) (2 Beds, 1 Living Room, 1 Study)

Student and family

Flat No. 4 (1 Bed, 1 Living room)

Single student

Kitchen Flat - (1 Bed, 1 Living room)

Single Student

Large Detached House in Grounds

No. 1 The Bounds - 4 Beds 1 Living room 1 study

No. 1a The Bounds - 3 Beds 1 Living room, 1 study

(Dr Tollington)

(both under conversion - available 1994)

No. 2 The Bounds - 3/4 Beds, 1 Living room, 1 study

(Staff house - Revd. J Proctor)

No. 2a The Bounds 2/3 Beds, 1 Living room, 1 study

(Family)

Separate Detached House

No. 3 The Bounds - 3 Beds, 1 Living room, 1 study

(Student and family)

Annexes (on North Boundary wall)

No. 1 - 1 Bed, 1 Living room - student

No. 2 - 1 Bed, 1 Living room - Sabbatical visitors (2)

Off Campus

11 Storey's Way - student and family
(to be sold to fund cost of conversion of Nos 1 and 1a The Bounds)
Value c. £115 K

38 Victoria Park - staff house
(to be sold in 1997)
Value c. £125 K

It is envisaged that all staff could be housed in The Bounds eventually.

The Principal's Lodge

On the retirement of the present Principle, the 4 flats may be redesigned and the accommodation currently used by the Principal and his family converted into flats/apartment. One large living room adjacent to the Principal's study has direct access to the College and could be used for non-residential College purposes.

Ground Floor - Main Buildings

The Principal's Study - this large room is well used for meetings, discussion groups, entertaining visitors etc.

The Cheshunt Room - is used for lectures during the mornings and Pastoral Study Groups, music practice and by individual students at other times.

The new combined Healey Room/Elias Library is used for lectures and study groups in the mornings. As separate rooms they are used by the Federation Council, Students' Committee and visiting groups, working parties etc. Generally, however, they are underused in the afternoons.

The Common Room is well used by students and staff in manner its name would suggest. There is a television and comfortable furnishings.

The College office contains the expected hardware, as well as housing the College secretaries and control of security entrance facilities. In the small post room next to the main entrance there are separate photocopying facilities for students' use.

College Chapel has a capacity (we were assured) of 150. It is in daily use in term time on weekdays.

The very large dining room is used mainly at lunch time and for smaller numbers for dinner/supper. There is a snooker table (half size?) at one end. The Hall is an underused facility which is excellent when employed for large gatherings, formal lectures, music and social events etc., but for which much handling of heavy furniture is required. Any permanent reconstruction to make greater use would be both expensive and spoiling. Some ingenuity needs to be applied to permit more flexible exploitation of the available space.

On the first floor the splendid library is in the process of recovering its eastern section, which has been employed of late for study groups.

The Senatus Room (Council Room) is used for formal meetings and for small groups, but its "built-in" round table is not very flexible. The table seats 12/15 and the room capacity 30/40.

The Tower Block contains shelving for library overflow on three floors as well the Carrie Room with secure and moisture controlled storage for manuscripts and other archives.

As is common with buildings of this age and design, there are areas of "wasted space". The large area at the bottom of the stairs in the accommodation wing houses a table tennis table, student notice board etc. The corresponding area at the bottom of the tower and outside the Principal's study and dining hall is less adaptable, but contains a number of large bookcases as does the first floor landing between the Senatus Room and the Library. If space was at a premium, there could be some rationalisation here - especially if other libraries (e.g. Reformation studies, URC Historical Society) were acquired.

Detracting from the imposing main entrance is the need to maintain tight security against intruders. Visitors are therefore met by closed doors and a dark entrance hall. Carefully designed additional lighting might enhance this and other areas.

Appendix C

Conferences

Gross Conference Income in 1993 **£31,682**

This was made up as follows:

1 Assessment conference (URC, National)	1,737	Annual - 1 weekend
2 Ministers Spring School (Eastern and Thames Provinces)	6,610	Annual - 5 days
3 The Westminster Conference (URC ministers, national refresher)	9,035	Annual
4 Wesley Historical Society	4,954	One off
5 Tri-National Conference	8,946	Triennial
6 One day seminars etc.	400	

1994 to date

1 Ministers Spring Conference	4,461	5 days
2 Lay Conference	1,974	Weekend
3 Reformation Society	787	1 night
4 Capriol Dance Society	1,113	Weekend
5 Lay Preachers' Weekend Conference	445	
6 The Westminster Conference	7,300	
7 Swedish Musicians	370	
8 One day seminars, room hire etc.	640	

£ 17,100

The 1994 income is reduced because:

(a) the Tri-National Conference will not be hosted more frequently than once in three years

and

(b) with major building work in progress, 15 delegates from each of two conferences had to be boarded out.

For the remainder of 1994, there will be two weekend conferences in September (one of which is already fully booked), two single day conferences in October and an Assessment Conference weekend in December.

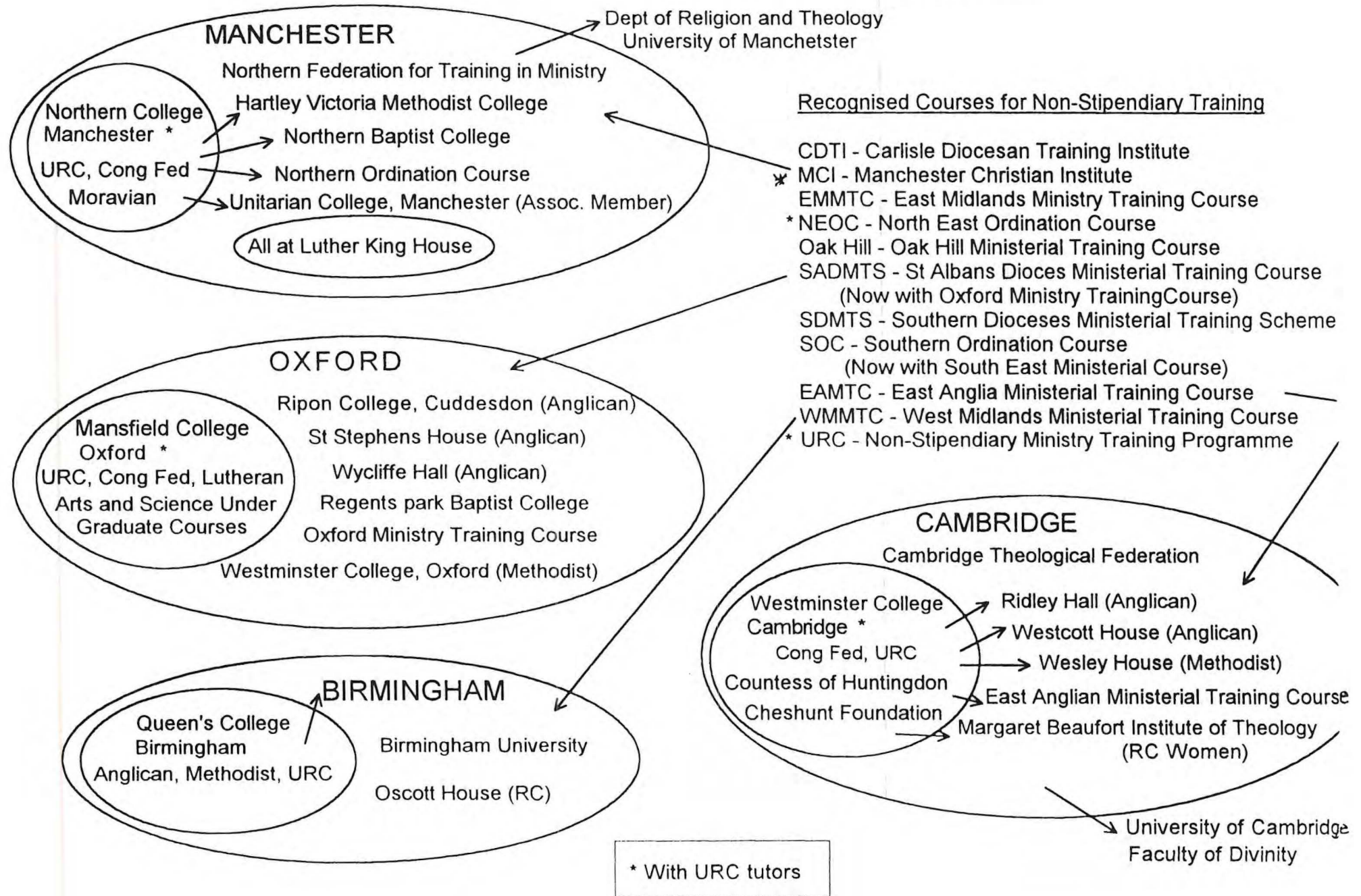
Appendix D

Tables and Diagrams

1 Training Centres for Ministry in the United Reformed Church and related Ecumenical Institutions

2 Students in Training for the URC Ministry - 1972 to 1994

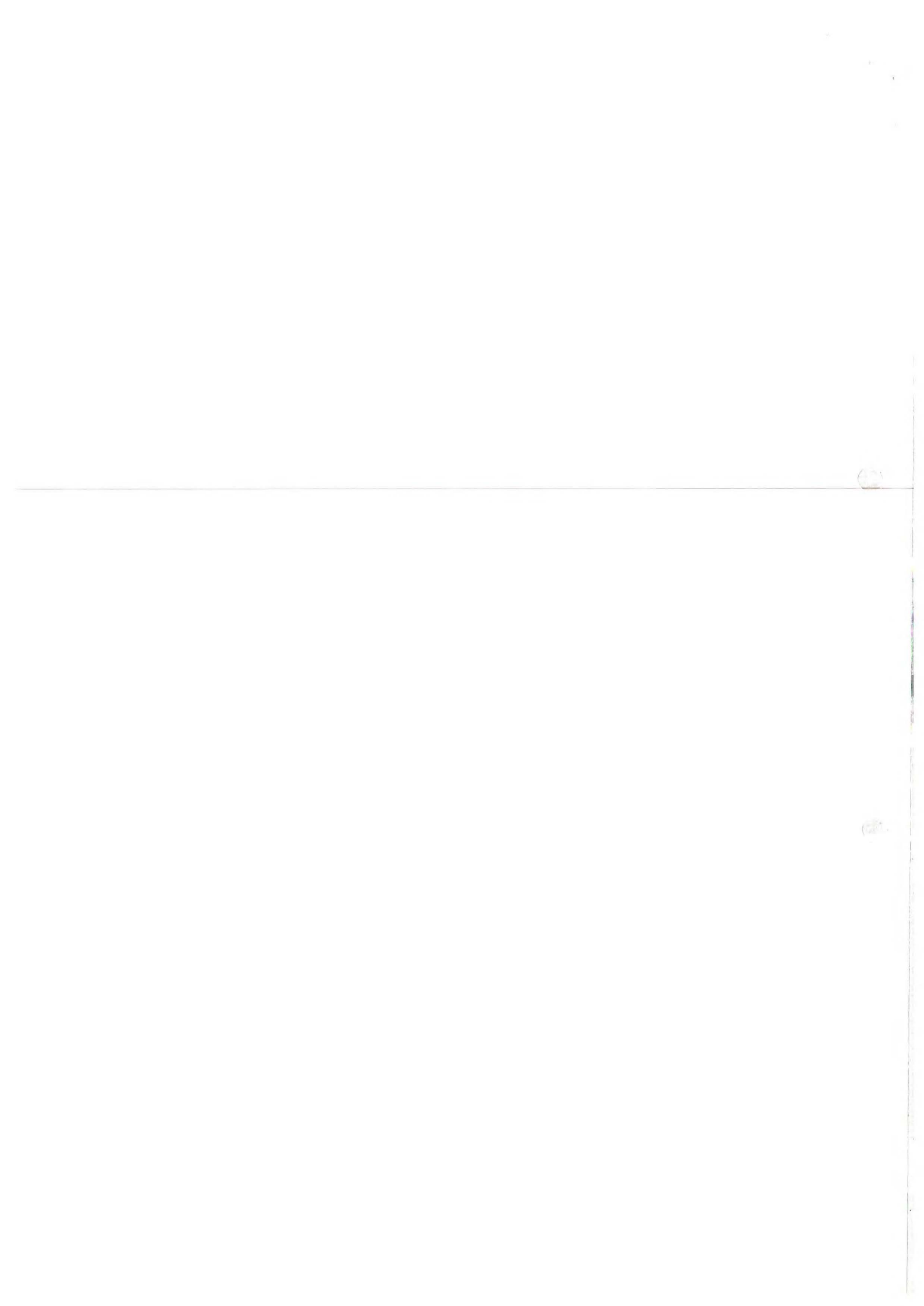
TRAINING FOR MINISTRY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



STUDENTS IN TRAINING FOR URC MINISTRY - FROM REPORTS TO ASSEMBLY

Stipendiary Colleges	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Anticipated Entry into URC Service				
																									1994	1995	1996	1997
Mansfield	3	4		4	3	9		10	13	17	20	18	16	17	16	14	15	23	25	22	24	24	21	4	8	5	4	
Northern	21	20	27	27	30	37		31	35	38	32	34	34	32	36	41	44	44	42	30	27	28	25	10	9	3	3	
Queens						1					1		1	2	2	3	5	5	5	8	7	6	6	1	2	2	2	
Westminster/ Cheshunt	17	11	12	12	11	25		29	34	33	30	28	22	27	23	24	36	40	41	41	36	27	30	14	7	3	6	
Aberystwyth									1	1																		
Bala, Bangor																												
New	16	14	0		5																							
Swansea	0	0		2	2	1		1																				
ROM	18	11																										
Totals	75					73		72	83		83	80	73	78	77	82	100	122	113	101	94	85	83	29	26	13	15	
Non-stipendiary/ Auxiliary Courses													81	63	69	72	70	67	71	78	80	71	57	24	14	14	5	
Church Related Community Workers																												
Selly Oak															3	4	5	5	5	3	3	1	1	1				
Salford																				1	2	4	3	1	2			
Total													154	141	149	158	175	184	189	183	179	161	144	55	4	27	20	

New Candidates	1971	1972	1972	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Westminster/ Cheshunt		8	1	5	5	6	14		11	14	12	9
New		3	1	0	0	3						
Manchester		4	5	8		12	17		7	9	21	4
Mansfield		0	3			1	3		4	7	6	4
Swansea		0	0		2	0	0		1			
Bala, Bangor		3					0					
Aberystwyth												
ROM (Roll of Ministers)		7	5									
Queens												
		25					34				39	17





MISSION COUNCIL

30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994

INTERIM REPORT OF THE RESOURCE SHARING TASK GROUP

1 BACKGROUND

At its meeting in October 1993 (Minute 93/82), Mission Council resolved to establish this Group and agreed its terms of reference. The January 1994 meeting of Mission Council completed the appointments (Minute 94/5) and the Group commenced its work in February. The Group has met on two subsequent occasions and has made some progress in tackling the task set out in its terms of reference. Two things have become very clear: The first is that the task covers a very wide spectrum of involvement; the second is that the control of by far the largest part of the URC's resources is focussed in the Province.

2 PROVINCIAL RESOURCE SHARING

It is the second of these understandings that we now wish to consider in a wider forum while we continue to work on the other aspects of our task in the small Group. We have used the same categorisation of resources as was used in the Urban Rural Mission Group's work and in the group which reported to Mission Council in October 1992, viz. Buildings, People and Money. When we conclude that these resources are chiefly controlled within the Province (as distinct from being available at 'national level') we have in mind:

- decisions about the use of buildings
- the application of money, e.g. proceeds of sale of redundant buildings
- the deployment of stipendiary ministers of word and sacrament
- the employment of ministers and lay people in training, evangelism and administration
- the creation of opportunities to share vision and experience
- sharing of human skills and experience
- advocacy for giving to M and M
- setting M and M 'targets'

We believe that the role of the 'national church' in the sharing of resources is much more limited than is generally perceived. Only a small fraction of the assets of the URC is held by or may be disposed of by the 'national church' and much of the money provided through centrally made grants, arises from local churches through M and M.

3 CONSULTATION

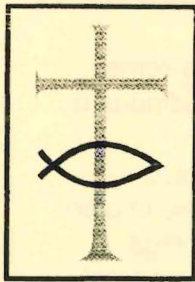
We are equally clear that the sharing of resources within and between Provinces cannot, and should not, be imposed by other councils of the church. We believe there are two essential ingredients in the process of greater sharing: First, it is necessary to identify 'models of good practice'. We are sure that these exist across the URC and we have become aware of some of them; secondly, consultation between the Provinces must be facilitated so that these models can be shared, others discovered and opportunities given for exploring other ways of sharing.

Having considered other options, the Group recommends that these objectives can best be achieved by a 'one-off' consultation with each Province, using small teams drawn from a group of people representative of each of the Provinces.

The choice of team members would be critical as there is a need for vision and openness to radical thinking as well as for expertise in matters relating to the sharing of buildings, people and money. The best blend of gifts and wisdom is rarely to be found in the same person. Having in mind the resources listed in Section 2 above, it is suggested that each team should consist of three people who together cover all of the following:

- a) conveners or experienced members of district pastoral committees
- b) district or province ecumenical officers or members of LEP review teams
- c) those with a knowledge of the care and repair of church buildings but whose gifts and experience are wider than this.
- d) those with an incisive financial awareness but whose gifts and experience are wider than this.

It is hoped that the visits might be completed and a report prepared in time for the 1995 General Assembly. It is therefore proposed that six teams be formed. The teams would meet for briefing and planning of their task before the programme of visits commences. They would meet after the visits to discuss their findings and to prepare a single report, the purpose of which would be to share models of good practice throughout the URC and thereby stimulate wider adoption of such models and the search for new ones.



Authority in the United Reformed Church

A discussion paper for Mission Council

• Introduction

Who we are and why we met.

Mission Council set up the Working Party which submits this report to consider 'Authority in the URC' following the submission of mainly practical questions regarding the exercise of authority. These questions were submitted by a minister, who was also a District Secretary, in the Mersey Province with the support of the Province.

We resisted the temptation to discuss 'authority' as such, or to prepare a study of authority in the Bible and in Church History. Nevertheless, we found it necessary to explore other questions than those narrowly related to the practical exercise of authority. Whilst we concentrated on authority in the URC, we found it helpful to reflect on aspects of authority and its exercise in other churches and in the secular sphere.

The Working Party consisted of Angus Duncan, Fiona Gow and David Lawrence (appointed by the Mersey Province) together with Tony Cheer, Phillip Morgan and Bert Worrall (selected by the Doctrine and Worship Committee). We have met seven times, and submit the following as a first draft, inviting comment from both the Doctrine and Worship Committee and the Mersey Province.

• Some stories of the church

What happens when authority is not exercised?

The following stories are a mixture of the real and unreal. They are unreal to the extent that they are not drawn directly from life: W, X, Y and Z are not (intentionally at least) to be found on the Roll of Ministers. The situations described, however, are real to the extent that none of them are far from the experience of many who have observed the life of the Church, who have seen them played out with slight changes of plot time and time again down the years. The stories are not offered with the intention of setting a detailed agenda for this paper but rather to articulate a sense of unease at the current situation faced by the Church, out of which much of our discussion arose.

The Revd. W. had been in his present church for 18 years. He had come to a middle-class market town in a state of transformation by the building of a huge overspill housing estate. For some years he held together the congregation while the character of the area changed. As years passed, however, the church began to decline and W built up a life outside the church. He became a part-time time teacher of religious studies in a local college, ploughing his earnings into the church and maintaining an artificial picture of health in its finances. Congregational numbers continued to decline and it became clear that W found the new demographic situation in which the church found itself both puzzling and unsympathetic. More sensitive members of the congregation and visitors from elsewhere came to realise that no change would ever take place under W's leadership. After more years passed, the congregation abandoned its increasingly decrepit church building and moved into the scarcely less ruinous scout hut on the site.

The church were aware that a series of Quinquennial Visitation reports had urged the congregation to look outward but all had been met by W's insistence that District failed to understand the problems faced by the church. Such outside pressure seemed to serve only to increase W's sense of isolation and a defensiveness which covered his own sense of failure. It became more and more important to him to maintain not merely that the church was failing but that there was no alternative to its failure. While maintaining a real pastoral concern for remaining members and associates, W effectively damped all moves to reach out to a local community with which he felt out of touch and out of sympathy.

Five years ago W suffered a sudden and debilitating illness. His doctor advised privately that it might be better for him to retire but was not willing to force the issue. After a few months W returned to a reduced role, his personality changed for the worse by the after-effects of his illness. The church, now struggling even to maintain its remaining premises, was increasingly aware of the need for a fresh start but such was the sense of mixed pity and affection for W that no one was prepared to force the issue in his weakened state.

District Officers and others outside the church were well aware over many years of the church's problems. On several occasions private conversations were held with Elders but District was faced with W's abrasive insistence, both in private and in public, that their concern was uninformed and unhelpful. To this was added, in more recent years, W's implication that any more pressure on him could well result in a possibly fatal relapse.

In the end it seemed easier to wait the two years remaining until W's retirement before attempting to find someone who could grasp the challenge of a relatively unchurched and potentially promising area. One year before W's retirement the roof at the rear of the scout hut blew off and the congregation, such as it was, moved into an Anglican church hall for Sunday worship -- the few remaining other activities ceased. By the time of W's retirement, District had little choice but to decide that it was not practical to provide further ministry and commended the remaining handful of members to a local Methodist church a mile away. In due course the church site will be sold and the money raised no doubt used promote new initiatives in mission elsewhere in the Province.

Anystreet URC is a small but relatively lively church located in the inner city. Over several years some of its members had engaged in a campaign to persuade the District and Province that the church merited specialist full-time ministry and that such an investment would pay immense dividends in the long term. After more than two years of detailed discussion with a small group of Elders delegated to handle the task, the District agreed to allow the church to call a minister to a ministry directed to the community around the church. In addition, the Province made a substantial investment in the church's premises, providing office space and equipment and renovating the church halls to make them suitable for outside organisations.

Problems arose shortly after the arrival of an enthusiastic minister, X, with a proven record in more than one other inner-city pastorate. Though X's work was widely welcomed in the local community, complaints were raised within the church itself that too much of the minister's time was being spent outside of church activities. Others noted that outside organisations making use of the church's premises seemed to express little interest in the life of the existing congregation. These voices were vigorously resisted by the younger professional elders who had been instrumental in setting up the specialist ministry and, as a result, the church existed for several months in a state of considerable tension.

At the subsequent eldership elections, two of the younger elders were not returned to office and, shortly afterwards, an acrimonious Elders' Meeting agreed to recommend to the Church Meeting that, while recognising the need for outreach, X be requested to spend more time with the existing, committed members of the congregation and to make church activities a priority in the allocation of time and facilities. A larger than usual church meeting, which substantial numbers of inactive members had been encouraged to attend, passed the motion by a comfortable majority and several elders resigned.

At this stage both the Moderator and officers of the District visited the church. They were assured that the church continued to support the concept of community ministry but that X seemed not to understand the real needs of the existing church. After painful mediation, both sides agreed to listen more closely to each other and to work together for the sake of the kingdom. Within six months the Elders had passed a motion of no confidence in X who, shortly afterwards, was placed under the care of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and has experienced some difficulty in finding a church in the light of suspicions raised by the breakdown in pastoral relations.

At a subsequent meeting of the District Council, following a sustained campaign among other local fellowships, an impassioned appeal from the Anystreet resulted in a vacancy being declared on the understanding that the church was to be the centre for a community ministry -- though this time with greater sensitivity to the needs of existing members who, as their representatives put it "pay the bills after all". In the interim, the lettings to community organisations were suspended and the church's premises used only by the Ladies Circle, a weekly Bible Study and a small Pilot's group.

Somewhere Hill URC was the Revd. Y's first ministry. After a moderately successful career as sales manager of a small company Y felt the call to ministry in middle years. Somewhere Hill were pleased to be introduced to him

after a relatively long vacancy. The church is middle of the road and had experienced some growth under its previous minister. Y seemed a safe choice.

Within a few months of his arrival, rumours began to circulate outside the church of problems. The quality of Y's sermons was said to be very poor, nothing like those he had used during the process of introduction. His administration was chaotic and important deadlines and meetings were often missed. Having spent all of his life in a very different area of the country, Y found that he did not understand the people of the locality. In addition, after a lifetime of knowing exactly what he wanted out of most of his meetings with others, he found himself more and more reluctant to engage in what he saw as mere routine visiting.

Y's pastoral supervisor kept in close touch with him, a fact which Y seemed to find a source of resentment rather than of support. The Provincial In-Service Training Officer offered Y a list of potential training courses which might benefit Y in this early stage of his ministry. Y responded that he had already spent too much time theorising about ministry at college, that he had all the skills necessary and anyway his time was under too much pressure to be wasted on more so-called "training".

As the dissatisfaction of both the church and their new minister increased, more and more attempts were made to help Y see the potential of his charge and to help him develop his skills -- all were rebuffed. After three years, with membership in serious decline -- a fact that he blamed on the lack of commitment of the current members -- Y indicated that he would prefer to move closer to his previous home territory. When he received a call, District Council commended him with a quiet sense of relief to the receiving District and set about combining his former church into a joint pastorate -- now seemingly the only practical way forward.

Z had only recently left college, having entered the ministry after a successful career as a local government administrator. She was enthusiastically recommended by the Moderator to City URC as someone with both the personal and ministerial gifts to continue City's valued role as a city centre church with links to the worlds of commerce and local government. Initial contacts between the church and Z confirmed the impression of a candidate who possessed both personal charm and a real authority. A Sunday was arranged for Z to 'preach with a view' and the two services were generally agreed to have gone off very well.

It was only when the Elders met to discuss the outcome of the Sunday that the majority became aware of a sense of disquiet on the part of at least three of their membership. This small group were, according to their own estimation, representative of an undercurrent of opposition within the congregation, especially among more elderly members whom they had visited. Questions, it was said, had been raised as to the candidate's commitment to the church should her spouse wish to take work elsewhere. There was also the question of whether a woman minister would be taken as seriously among city centre churches and institutions. The meeting was inconclusive and it was agreed to reconvene in a few days time.

The following day the Church Secretary contacted the District Secretary to discuss the procedure which was being followed. He was advised that the issue

ought to be confronted head on and that perhaps the best way might be to convene a church meeting where doubts could be frankly aired. At the subsequent Elders meeting the majority of the eldership were still enthusiastic for Z and agreed that any underlying unease ought to be aired at the forthcoming church meeting, part of which would be intended to allow members to both hear and question Z.

At the church meeting it was widely agreed that Z gave a very good account of herself, fielding with a robust humour questions about the "disadvantages" she might experience as woman minister -- questions which she knew very well would have been ruled out of any secular interview procedure. At the end of a very friendly time together she left and the meeting continued for a second session without her. At this point, those Elders who had already expressed reservations on behalf of unnamed others repeated their views, though acknowledging that Z had answered the points well for those present. They nevertheless felt that there would be those who would still have reservations. They also introduced at this point the feeling of some members that, though they might have no personal objections to Z, they were not entirely happy with the concept of women's ministry and wondered whether this might cause problems in the future. Having convinced the meeting that the call was, to a greater or lesser extent 'controversial', they proposed the simple expedient of balloting all members on the subject. Since the hour was now late, this compromise was gratefully accepted by the rest of the meeting.

The ballot duly took place among City's widely spread membership, many of whom were only able to attend worship very infrequently but valued their links with such a 'flagship' church. As the votes came in it was clear that there was a substantial minority -- many of whom had unfortunately been unable to attend either the Sunday when Z preached or the church meeting at which she had spoken -- who did indeed have doubts about the wisdom of calling her. The Elders met again and reluctantly agreed that, given the controversy surrounding her, they could not recommend to the church meeting that a call be issued to Z. This view was confirmed by a small majority at the subsequent church meeting, and a number of active members have subsequently left the church.

Midshire District Council covers most of a rural county, without a major urban centre. The majority of its 30 widely spread churches have less than 50 members and the District would be the first to admit that it often finds it difficult to offer its churches adequate ministry. A particular difficulty is presidency at communion services, where the relative shortage of ordained ministers has led to the widespread practice of elders presiding. In past years, the practice was almost entirely unregulated, a fact which caused little or no comment in this formerly congregational area. More recently the District has made an attempt to put into practice the principles laid down at General Assembly. A list of elders currently authorised to preside at communion during a particular vacancy is kept centrally and it is expected that one-off services will only take place after authorisation by the appropriate committee, acting with executive authority for the District Council. This policy has been explained by the Provincial Moderator to other church leaders in ecumenical bodies and is accepted as the considered position of the URC.

The real situation is, however, quite different. Though the majority of churches do seek authorisation, there is a substantial minority who regard it as an unnecessary bureaucratic imposition and ignore the requirement completely.

There is a substantial group of elders in smaller churches, including a number of Lay Preachers, who have regularly conducted communion over the past years. In many cases, popular lay preachers are invited to conduct communion at several local churches. Members and officers of the District are aware that the situation exists but have studiously avoided examining either its extent or particular cases for the simple reason that no one is convinced that an instruction from the District would be heeded by any of the churches involved, who often complain that they receive little enough from the URC in return for their assessment.

The problem has now been thrown into sharp relief by a recent ecumenical project based around a small market town within the District. Under an enthusiastic URC minister the project, which includes two smaller URC churches, got off to a good start. Now in vacancy, however, the two URC churches have failed to seek authorisation for any of their elders and have begun to revert to their former practice of drawing on established local preachers to preside at communion services, to the confusion of their ecumenical partners. The result is that the mutuality of the whole scheme is being undermined, with suggestions that some ecumenical partners will no longer take account of advertised communions at the URC churches during the vacancy. In addition, the assurances given by the Moderator with regard to the policy of the URC are increasingly being called into question in ecumenical circles, to the detriment of the URC's standing in other projects within the Province.

Mrs. V is in her mid-forties and had been an elder of the church for some five years when she resigned. For the past 10 years Mrs. V have been one of the twin pillars of the semi-detached youth club which met in the hall of Christchurch-in-the-Mire URC and had been made an elder largely on the basis of the members' admiration for her part in what was the church's only effective outreach. Some six months ago, however, Mrs. V had left her husband (who was not a member of the church) and set up house with her co-leader in the youth club, who was an occasional attender at the church. It soon became generally known that the relationship had been going on, with varying degrees of intensity, for at least six years. It is believed that the two intend to marry at some time in the future but divorce proceedings have not so far been instituted.

The original situation was largely defused by Mrs. V's prompt resignation from the eldership. She and her co-habitee offered to continued to run the youth club and, in the absence of any other other candidates either qualified or willing, the church acquiesced. The general view among the members of the church was that though the break-up was unfortunate, it was not for them to pass judgement, while the fact that Mr. V was not a member of the church meant that there were no negative pastoral consequences of any substance. Mrs. V continued to attend the church and to take communion, occasionally accompanied by her partner.

These events have recently been brought sharply back into focus by the fact that Mrs. V has been nominated for the eldership in the forthcoming elections and has agreed to stand. Her nomination, on the grounds that she is one of the few committed younger members of the church and that her work with young people is outstanding, appears to have every chance of success. The prospect of her resuming her place on the eldership is extremely disturbing to her minister, who recently raised the issue with the Elders. The general feeling was

that while the situation was somewhat embarrassing there was nothing that could or indeed should be done in a church which did not, in general, attempt to impose moral standards on its members.

The minister subsequently spoke to Mrs. V, who expressed the feeling that if she were not welcome at Christchurch she and her partner would withdraw from membership and leadership of the youth club. The minister, aware that support from Elders had not been forthcoming, assured her that he was not attempting to exclude her, merely airing his personal perplexity -- the conversation went no further. The following day the minister arrived home to discover that a reporter from a national Sunday newspaper had been enquiring into rumours of "goings-on among children's workers" at the church.

• The nature of the problem - Authority and Discipleship

1. The Church (on earth) consists of those who have heard and by the grace of God responded to the call of God, made known to us in Jesus Christ, to be his people. This call is the Gospel, the good news of God's redeeming love, to which those who hear respond in loving and willing obedience. Individuals who hear and respond become disciples of Jesus, men and women under discipline, called to serve Christ and represent him to the world in service and evangelism. They become part of the Christian fellowship, the Church. In this understanding the Church is a community of love, called to live the life of God's kingdom, seeking to live in obedience to the Gospel to the glory of God and for the sake of the world.
2. The source of any authority in the Church is God who calls us to be a people when hitherto we were no people. The paradoxical expression of authority is the Gospel of grace which makes men and women new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17); demands of them a totally new life style which befits those who have died and risen again in baptism and thus become God's chosen people (Col 3:1-17); and, by the Holy Spirit, provides the resources for this new life style (Gal 5:16-26).
3. In our worship we all acknowledge the authority of God. In confession we acknowledge our disobedience, and in our Sunday worship week by week we commit ourselves anew to a disciplined and obedient life. In this we acknowledge the basic constitution of the Church, the call of Christ, "follow me", and by our commitment to follow both congregation and individuals make an act of obedience to the authority of God in Christ.
4. In the ways just outlined, we all acknowledge the acceptance of authority and commitment to a life of obedience are inherent in Christian experience and Church membership. We profess that such obedience enables us effectively to express the Gospel in life. Our problems arise in the areas of practical exercise of authority by officers and councils of the Church, and the recognition by individuals and congregations of the authority of such officers and councils.
5. Sometimes, the concepts of authority and obedience appear to be critically and negatively affected by the dominant individualism of our time and an interpretation of them in restrictive secular terms. We appear to have adopted a secular model of individualism in conflict with that of a conciliar Church or any concept of the Church as the Body of Christ. There is little sense of unity, common obedience and service of the Church beyond the local congregation. Ministers can comment that they, "are not willing to submit to the dictates of an ecclesiastical civil service", and some congregations resist or ignore wider councils of the Church. The sense of mutual sharing in obedience to Christ can seem singularly absent.
6. We think that recovery of a sense of common obedience to Christ and the Gospel could be a fruitful starting point from which to consider the understanding and exercise of authority required in a conciliar Church, such as the United Reformed Church claims to be. We wish to assert that the authority of Christ may be joyfully accepted; that properly understood it is the grace of God which is experienced in the exercise of authority, working for the good of

the Church and its mission. **THE PURPOSE OF AUTHORITY MAY THEN BE SEEN AS THE DISCOVERY AND EXPRESSION OF THE MIND OF CHRIST IN ORDER TO BUILD UP HIS BODY FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP.** Thus, we wish to remove the idea of authority as restrictive and largely external. Instead we wish to show that authority freely accepted, even when it conflicts with the immediate inclinations of individuals or congregations, can be a source of strength and a means of expressing and applying the Gospel in our common life.

7. As we proceed, we accept that the URC by its openness to change, necessary provisionality and assertion of the rights of personal conviction, makes provision for a broad spectrum of faith and practice. We gladly affirm that breadth. We are also aware that in a divided Church any statement about authority or any exercise of authority by the URC has to take into account the views and reactions of members of other churches, some of which are in communion with the URC and others of which share in ecumenical councils with the URC. Nevertheless, we are convinced that, in order for any corporate body to have an identity, an area of common understanding and acceptance in the area of authority needs to be established. Once established, it is the responsibility of those entrusted with leadership or oversight to ensure that the body of its members remain faithful to that identity.

• The Basis of Union and Authority

A. *Statements about Authority*

The doctrine and practice of the URC are set out in The Manual. The primary texts with reference to 'authority' are:

From The Basis of Union

9. The United Reformed Church testifies to its faith, and orders its life, according to this Basis of Union, believing it to embody the essential notes of the Church catholic and reformed. The United Reformed Church nevertheless reserves its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede this Basis so that its life may accord more nearly with the mind of Christ.

(asserts the standing of the Basis of Union and the URC's right to change it to accord more fully with 'the mind of Christ').

10. The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body, shall uphold the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace

(asserts 'personal conviction' but not to the injury of the unity and peace of the Church)

12. The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the church catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people. It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

13. The United Reformed Church believes that, in the ministry of the Word, through preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world.

(asserts the primacy of the 'Word of God')

18. The United Reformed Church, under the authority of Holy Scripture and in corporate responsibility to Jesus Christ its ever-living head, acknowledges its duty to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit and therefore affirms its right to make such new declaration of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit.

At the same time the United Reformed Church accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. It recognises as its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by

Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ as stating the Gospel and seeking to make its implications clear.

(acknowledges indebtedness to past declarations of the catholic faith while being open to change should the Spirit so require)

19. The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness; by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility; and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.
20. For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church. The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and ministers. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills; the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them to their particular ministry and give them authority to exercise it within the church, setting them apart with prayer that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfillment, which solemn setting part shall in the case of ministers and elders be termed ordination.

(The ministry of Jesus Christ is continued through the whole people of God with a gift of particular ministry of elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament, which includes that of oversight, for which the church gives authority)

Elders and ministers make a specific declaration of the source of authority at ordination or induction:

from Schedule B (Elders)

- Q. Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?
- A. I do.
- Q. Do you accept the office of elder of the United Reformed Church in this congregation and do you promise to perform its duties faithfully?
- A. I do.

from Schedule C (Ministers)

- Q. Do you promise to fulfill the duties of your charge with all fidelity, to lead your people in worship, to preach the Word and administer the

sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?

A. I do.

One of two versions of a 'statement of the nature, faith and order of the URC', or a similar statement, is required to be read at each ordination or induction of elders or ministers. The two versions contain similar assertions to the Basis of Union on the matters of:

*the source of authority;
the role of tradition;
the role of the Basis of Union;
openness to the Spirit and the possibility of revision;
the place of personal conviction.*

The statement also asserts that the government of the Church is appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ

8. The United Reformed Church declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has herein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto, and that civil authorities, being always subject to the rule of God, ought to respect the rights of conscience and of religious belief and to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind.

and from The Structure of the URC

- 1 (3) The oversight of the United Reformed Church shall be the concern both of the local church and wider representative councils
~~The councils of the United Reformed Church shall be~~
- (a) the church meeting and the elders' meeting of each local church;
 - (b) the council of each district to be known as a district council and of each area of ecumenical cooperation to be known as an area meeting;
 - (c) the synod of each province to be known as a provincial synod;
and
 - (d) The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned.

(asserts the responsibility for 'oversight' given to the councils of the Church).

B. Some Comments on the Statements about Authority

1. The URC in recognising itself to be but one part of the divided Church, claims the historic Church as its heritage and lives as fully the life of the Church as present disunity allows. It asserts its right (or the necessity) both to make its own statements of faith and to modify them to accord 'more nearly with the mind of Christ'. All such statements, therefore, are necessarily provisional, in the sense that they represent present convictions to which we are committed until we are convinced of the necessity for change.
2. The URC, possibly uniquely, asserts the right of personal conviction. This appears to mean that a person who is a member in good standing of the URC may hold an understanding, expression or interpretation of Christian Faith which differs from the faith of the URC as formulated in the Basis, by being either less precise or more detailed in definition than that in the Basis. At the same time it asserts the authority of the URC to determine and safeguard 'the substance of the faith' and maintain 'the unity and peace' of the URC.

At the date of its formation the URC confessed its faith in the following words:

We believe in the one living and true God, creator, preserver and ruler of all things in heaven and earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whom alone we worship and trust.

We believe that God, in his infinite love for the world, gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who became human, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead and lives for evermore, sovereign, judge and saviour.

We believe that, by the Holy Spirit, the glorious Gospel is made effective so that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins, newness of life as children of God and strength of in this present world to do God's will.

We believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, in heaven and on earth, wherein by the same Spirit, the whole company of believers is made one Body of Christ, to worship God and serve God and all humankind in God's kingdom of righteousness and love.

We rejoice in the gift of eternal life, and believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

3. In common with other churches of the Reformation, the URC believes that no belief is required for salvation which is not contained in scripture. In a sentence repeated in Schedules B and C (ordination and induction of elders and ministers), and in one of the versions of a statement on the nature, faith and order of the URC, affirmed by congregations at all ordinations and inductions, it acknowledges the source of 'supreme authority' to be 'the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit'. The phrase 'the authority of scripture' is used without further definition in para 18, which also acknowledges 'corporate responsibility' to Jesus Christ.

Since discernment 'under the guidance of the Holy Spirit' is continuous, our understanding of the Word of God at any one time will be provisional. Individual study, prayer, preaching and group Bible study in the local

congregation and in the councils of the Church will contribute to such discernment and assist the URC to act in 'corporate responsibility' to Jesus Christ. Individual inspiration and discernment needs to be tested by the Church, and any assertion of individual conviction needs to be assessed by the appropriate councils of the Church as to its effect upon the unity and peace of the Church.

4. The URC accepts the witness born to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and recognises the value of historic formulations of the faith of the Church. They constitute an heritage for which the URC is thankful, assisting it in its continuing discernment of the Word of God.
5. The primary ministry is that of Jesus Christ, exercised through the whole people of God, who serve, amongst other things, in the 'proclamation of the Gospel and Christian witness'. Whilst Jesus Christ himself equips his people for these tasks, those called by him and recognised by the Church as elders and ministers have a special responsibility to equip the people of God and, through the exercise of 'oversight' assist them in the growth of faith and love. The Church gives authority for the exercise of this ministry.

Elders and ministers are required specifically to acknowledge the 'supreme' source of authority within the Church, as formulated above (Basis of Union para 12) and in their promise to fulfill their duties faithfully they undertake to act in accordance with that authority.

6. In the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church, which is read at ordination and induction services, the Church declares that "... the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has therein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto ...". The form of the ministry is a development from that established at the Reformation when it was believed to be that found in the New Testament (see J Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 4, Chapter 3). The essential point is that properly constituted Christian ministry is a response to the revelation of God's purpose and is not simply utilitarian or expedient.

C. *The Application of Authority*

1. The United Reformed Church is a conciliar Church with councils defined in I(3) of the Structure (see Section Three A above). From a juridical point of view, supreme authority within the Church is exercised by the General Assembly limited only by common or statute law. In fact, each council has authority within its own sphere unless that authority is challenged by appeal to a wider council of the Church.
2. The responsibilities of each council are defined in the Structure. The General Assembly has power to change those responsibilities by appropriate procedures. It also has power to legislate on matters not within the Structure.
3. In matters of faith and teaching the United Reformed Church, by its statements on the 'Word of God', makes clear that, like other churches of the Reformed tradition, it understands the decision-making power of its councils to be a case of recognising truths revealed in Scripture, or consonant with Scripture. It does not claim the right to lay down new things to be believed by members of the

Church. There is, however, always the opportunity to consider matters further and to re-examine beliefs in the light of new insights.

4. In matters of practice the United Reformed Church acts directly by resolution of General Assembly, or another of its councils, and indirectly through the committees of General Assembly or other councils. Questions of the admittance of congregations to the United Reformed Church, or the suspension of congregations from the United Reformed Church are decided by the General Assembly on the recommendation of subordinate councils and committees. In this way too, decisions are made about the selection, training, calling, ordaining, inducting and, when necessary, the disciplining and suspending of ministers.
5. All councils have the responsibility of promoting the work and welfare of the United Reformed Church in harmony with its faith and practice as set out in The Manual. A central feature of this responsibility is the exercise of oversight:

The Church Meeting is responsible for maintaining standards of membership;

The District Council is responsible for the oversight of ministers and churches within the District;

The Provincial Synod is responsible for the oversight of District Councils within the Province;

The General Assembly is responsible for the oversight of the total work of the Church.

Councils which are more local councils are expected to receive and to apply reports and decisions from more central councils.

6. The exercise of authority in the Church will be modeled as closely as possible on that demonstrated by our Lord Jesus Christ, that is generally a non-coercive authority of love and persuasion. In matters of dispute, decisions will normally be made by reference to the statements and standards of the Church, and such matters will normally be settled in the immediate context in which they arise. It is the responsibility of the appropriate officers and/or councils, through prayer, reference to Scripture, and discussion, to seek to establish the mind of Christ and thus to arrive at a resolution of disputes which is honouring to Christ, and which will be helpful to individuals and congregations in their spiritual growth, witness and ministry. Methods of achieving this end may range from individual conversations and pastoral visits through specially convened meetings of District and Province, to a commission of General Assembly appointed to consider a specific situation.
7. A further consideration with regard to the exercise of authority will be the effect of particular situations on the witness, integrity and ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church as a whole.
8. Attempts should always be made to settle matters without appealing to 'higher authority' and such settlements should normally be respected by others without interference. Nevertheless, an appeal procedure exists whereby any matter in dispute which cannot be resolved by a more local council can be brought to General Assembly, whose decision is final and binding.

• What Hinders the United Reformed Church in the Exercise of Authority?

1. The situations and events illustrated by the stories in Section One above suggest that the life of obedience and acceptance of authority which we recognise in our worship is not always evident in our corporate life. We have drawn attention to an individualistic temper and to an understanding of authority as external and repressive.
2. We wondered how far District Councils and Provincial Synods recognised that part of their role was the exercise of authority as a matter of pastoral care and leadership. In particular, we wondered whether we had lost an understanding of the nature of relationships within the Church, a relationship of exchange in love, each giving to and receiving from others to enable growth, within which relationship the exercise of authority could be seen as important for the building and protection of the body. This may lie at the root of our problem. The problem may be seen in various ways:
 3. Sometimes local councils do not promote acceptance of decisions of more central councils. This may be because the atmosphere in which those decisions were taken, and the arguments which led to them, are remote from more local councils. Nevertheless, when particular councils are:
 - unwilling to accept the authority of higher councils;
 - unwilling to promote acceptance of decisions of higher councils;
 - in disagreement with those decisions,
 - or lax in the application of this part of their responsibility,the common life of the United Reformed Church is impaired and the attempt to discern corporately the mind of Christ is thwarted.
 4. Sometimes councils appear reluctant to exercise authority or take responsibility for oversight, in particular when relationships between congregations and the rest of the Church, or between individuals and congregations, either have broken down or appear to be near to breaking down. Often councils do not act unless forced to do so. There may be various reasons for this reluctance to exercise authority or take responsibility:
 - it may be too difficult; too unpleasant; potentially destructive of other relationships, e.g. friendships, which are valued more highly;
 - councils may be unclear of their authority and responsibility (in spite of the fact that they are set out in the Structure), or councils may be doubtful of the loyalty of other congregations and/or church members if difficult pastoral guidance or discipline were to be attempted;
 - there appear to be no sanctions which councils could apply, authority would be ignored and so brought into disrepute.
 5. Difficult situations often come to the attention of District Council or Provincial Synod when it is probably already too late for effective pastoral action, thus the exercise of authority is connected with crisis situations.

For instance, we recognise situations in which individuals and groups had created such difficulties that a congregation had been thwarted in its life and work and some who had made sacrificial efforts in the life of the Church had become disillusioned and had turned away before the District Council had become involved.

On many occasions we discussed the call, assessment and training of ministers. We were aware of instances of failure to exercise authority early enough to be helpful, e.g. by preventing an unsuitable ordinand from receiving a leaving certificate, or by questioning acceptance for ordination, or by questioning the possibility of an established minister accepting a further call when it was known that there were substantial doubts about the person's suitability for ministry.

6. A particular problem concerns the authority given to individuals and exercised by them. In particular, Provincial Moderators are "...appointed ... by the General Assembly and responsible to it". They are to "...exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the province, ...". Thus, our structure gives functions and responsibilities to an individual with authority to fulfill them. District officers also have responsibilities, but their authority is that of the council they represent.

While recognising the real leadership often given by Moderators, and other officers, we questioned how far they received any training, or even advice, to enable them to cope with pastoral situations in which the authority of the Church needed to be exercised.

7. Another potential problem is the minister who is an enthusiast in a particular area. We recognise the need to value, and find a place for, those who have a passion to pursue a particular line and who sometimes appear to have special gifts in a certain direction, and we questioned whether the Church is slightly afraid of enthusiasts. But we also questioned whether some enthusiasts are too impatient of others, and may use their 'oddness' to cover some anxiety over their own status or value. The Church finds it difficult both to acknowledge the enthusiast and at the same time to insist on the accountability of all ministers.
8. While the United Reformed Church accepts in theory the accountability of ministers and congregations, it often appears that 'visitations' of congregations are very gentle and unfocused and conditions of ministerial appointments are not always clear and not always insisted upon. It remains unclear what disciplines councils could exercise.

• Section Five: Suggestions for Mission Council

Preamble

Part of our problem is perhaps that we think of two kinds of authority which are not brought together, at least for most people most of the time.

In the first place, we have an *official* or *theoretical* authority. Here we speak of the 'Word of God', and to a lesser extent Catholic orthodoxy and tradition represented by creeds and official statements. This authority is stressed on official occasions, such as ordinations and inductions. Such authority is debated by those of a theological/philosophical turn of mind. The majority of members are aware of this authority, would be unlikely to deny it or be too critical of it, but are not much concerned about it. They do not see it as impinging on their normal lives. We suspect this is the attitude of many ministers.

Secondly, we have a *practical* authority. Here we speak of ministers, elders and church meeting (normally in that order), then of 'higher' authority represented by District, Province or General Assembly. The 'higher' authority normally only affects us in terms of providing, and paying for, ministry. Decisions concerning the day to day, or week by week, life of the local church are made by minister, elders and church meeting, but without obvious reference to our official or theoretical authority. There is an air of surprise or unreality when it is suggested that the two should somehow overlap or merge.

Suggestions

1. We need to recover the idea (experience?) of authority as positive, healthy and pastorally useful, rather than as officious, intrusive and repressive. We need to ask what can be done to help church members take on board ideas of authority in such a way that the problems illustrated by the stories of Section One above, and the hindrances identified in Section Four above, are at least minimised. In particular, we need to recover the idea that Christian discipleship involves discipline as a positive aid to spiritual growth for the individual as well as a means of making the Church as a body more effective. Such positive discipline will normally take place within the fellowship of the Church.

Two issues flow from the above:

- (a) Given that the 'Word of God' has such a central place in our theory, we need to consider ways in which we can apply it in practice. This will mean avoiding the error of applying it too easily (i.e. simply quoting proof texts with no consideration of background or change of circumstances), and also the error of supposing it is too difficult to apply it at all (i.e. saying it is alright for theologians but not for anyone else, or that the circumstances are so changed that it cannot apply to us). Without putting all the burden, or blame, on colleges, we need to ask whether ministers are trained, and can train others, in the use of Scripture. We should also consider the position given to Bible reading and reflection upon it at meetings of all our councils.

- (b) Our structure gives clear areas of responsibility to various councils, and by implication to officers of those councils. Of church and elders meetings, District Councils or areas of ecumenical co-operation, Provincial Synods, and General Assembly, we say "These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned". The role of the Provincial Moderator is especially singled out (*see above Section Four, para 6*). However, we do not seem to provide much training in the exercise of authority in a pastorally sensitive manner. Indeed it could be said that we have diluted the concept of 'pastoral care' by omitting the elements of leadership and authority. We should think of providing such training. At the same time, members and congregations need to be helped to recognise the authority of councils and officers; or at the very least the existence of such authority should be made plainer than it is, perhaps by inclusion in church membership training.
2. A number of issues which we have discussed clearly concern the selection, training and accountability of the ordained ministry. We need to examine our understanding of the 'call of God' in the recruitment of ministers and ask in particular how it is tested. There is then the question of who defines the ministry to which an individual is called; perhaps the balance should be moved towards stressing the authority of the Church and away from personal preference. If that were done, we would also need to examine our understanding of the accountability, assessment and oversight of ministers, asking where District visitations fit in and what is the role of the Provincial Moderator. To facilitate such assessment and oversight a more focused process of in-service training should become normal practice and accepted discipline.
 3. We have drawn attention (*see Section Four, para 7*) to the question of enthusiasts and the problem of acknowledging and valuing such people, while maintaining standards of ministerial accountability. Positive pastoral concern for such people will call for discernment on the part of Provincial Moderators.
 4. We need to ask how far representatives at Assembly, or at other councils, should see themselves as advocates for the lower councils which sent them, and subsequently as advocates of the decisions made at the higher councils. If they should see themselves in that way, do they need training for the task? In any case, we need to find ways in which decisions of any councils are given wide, and fair, circulation.
 5. The Working Party were impressed by what we found about the use of authority in secular institutions. Five guidelines stood out:
 - to see the exercise of authority as a protection both for individuals and for the whole.
 - to provide both an adequate job-description and proper training for it.
 - to have built-in early warning systems of potential difficulties.

- to act promptly on the basis of warnings given.
 - to recognise that any need for 'crisis management' reveals a failure in previous relationships and methods which need to be corrected for the future.
6. To help in the exercise of authority at all levels, do we need a detailed manual, such as the Book of Order of the former Presbyterian Church of England, which would lay down procedures and offer guidance to individuals and councils on the fulfillment of their responsibilities?



MISSION COUNCIL

30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994

The National Lottery

Memorandum for Mission Council at the prompting of MEWH committee

Concerns about the proposals were expressed at Green and White Paper stages in representations made to Government and other interested parties by Church and Society; these were summarised in a REFORM article in February 1993.

In brief we raised four questions:

- 1: *whether there would really be any new money in it for charities, given the risk of support being diverted from existing giving* (on this, of course, there can only be opinion as yet but a research team from the University of Manchester will monitor this)
- 2: *what would be the tax level* (it might have been 15%; 12% is high enough)
- 3: *that the temptation to frequent purchase by young people or addictive gamblers was too lightly dismissed by Government* (this concern has been raised with Peter Davis, the regulator; it will need to be pressed as it will easily be submerged in the general euphoria - see below)
- 4: *what was the risk of Government mainline grants being reduced to bodies that were benefiting from the lottery* (this must still a real danger despite the Prime Minister's reassurances, since the restriction on grants for capital projects has been changed to allow some revenue funding)

Eventually, after some, mostly technical amendments including those proposed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), the National Lottery Act became law in 1993 and established the principle of a lottery run by the private sector, with 'good causes' to receive approx. 27% of the total, split equally between arts, sports, heritage, charities and the Millennium Fund. The sum available for this is the net remaining after taking around 49% in prizes, 12% in taxation and a similar sum in administration/profit. Incidentally the Act also made it much easier to run smaller local lotteries, a separate issue.

It was announced in May that Camelot had won the franchise and were estimating that even in the first year the lottery could generate £2bn+ (£135m for charities) and in later years as much as £4bn (£240m for charities). Tickets will go on sale in November in over 10,000 outlets with a massive advertising promotion.

The Arts Council, Sports Council, National Heritage Memorial Fund and Millennium Commission have already started work on preparing systems for processing applications for grants from their share of the proceeds. However the National Lottery Charities Board had only a chair in July 1994, David Sieff; the other members have since been appointed. But these delays seem to mean that no grants will be payable until late 1995 or even 1996, almost a year later than grants from the other sectors. NCVO have expressed great disappointment at this delay and blame the Home Office, to whom they had offered their help back in 1993. This delay is especially disappointing since, almost certainly, Camelot will feature some charities - potential beneficiaries - in their promotion of the lottery itself.

Charitable bodies may also benefit from the other four categories, most probably the Millennium Fund. Half of this (perhaps £800m over the 5 years up to 2000AD) will be spent on 12 large national projects. The other half will be used more regionally and first indications are that the Millennium Commission intend to fund a large number of local community projects; millennium bursaries will also be awarded.

PTO

There is thus no rush for voluntary bodies to queue for grants. Guidance as to how to apply will be available later in the year and I will have copies.

But Mission Council might wish to consider whether to advise the church not to apply for such grants on the grounds that they are derived from deliberate gambling. Other denominations are considering this and, not surprisingly, there is no consensus for or against.

There are some specific factors worth bearing in mind. For example, the URC has instructed its investment managers not to hold stock in "companies whose main activities are in ... the provision of gambling facilities". Again, some local churches (fewer than in the past) refuse to include gambling-type activities in their fairs or bazaars. But hardly any church body would refuse a grant from, say, the Littlewoods trusts. And because it is so very difficult to draw a clear line between necessary risk-taking (in business or personal life) and unnecessary or 'irresponsible' risk-taking (which might be described as gambling) the moral line becomes a moral maze.

We should not be boxed into the familiar Christian corner of appearing to deplore something because it is fun! Gambling is surely wrong when it does damage disproportionate to the benefit that might accrue if *chance* went otherwise. One reason (perhaps the main one) why it has been traditionally listed as wrong is because it can become addictive; the fantasy of 'winning next time' drives some people to reckless and ruinous gambling and in this it is rightly often bundled together with other addictions such as drinking and smoking. Another is that it appears to bolster the notion that material possessions are a guarantee of happiness. Another is that promotion of gambling often appeals to - and distorts - otherwise good things like courage, excitement or powers of judgement. Another is that it confers on chance or, more properly, uncertainty (which is a basic element in the way the world works) a pseudo-divine status with consequent superstition and quasi-religious practices, often derived from true religion (such as crossing one's fingers - the logo used by Camelot).

The national lottery is deliberate gambling. Should we have therefore nothing to do with it?

Peter Brain
August 19

1 There is a clear need for some open debate during the 1995 General Assembly on issues of human sexuality.

1.1 A number of ministerial candidates have been affected by the perceived failure of the church to declare whether it would accept gay men as ordinands. The colleges are uncertain how to proceed. The possibility of Provincial Synods or committees seeking to rule on these cases this autumn only complicates the process of reaching a mind as a church.

1.2 Debate in the late 1980s prompted the (then) Church and Society Department to set up a working party which published 'Homosexuality: a Christian view'. Subsequently a working party set up by GEAR published 'Homosexuality and the Gospel'. A third volume with personal stories from homosexual people and a possible fourth, gathering up subsequent comments, are being considered for publication under the auspices of Church and Society. This publication policy is intended to resource and inform the debate, not produce draft policy statements, as was made clear to Assembly in 1992.

1.3 Other churches have debated the issues and passed assorted resolutions, with published reports etc. The Bishops of the Church of England published a report, the Methodist Conference held a debate, the Church of Scotland are in the midst of a similar process. Several other bodies have published books or papers on aspects of human sexuality.

1.4 Homosexuality is not an isolated issue but is part of the wider current debate on human sexuality, though arguably the most contentious part. The Church of Scotland report, for example, also touched on sexual relations between disabled persons and on sexuality and older people; others have raised issues of age differences in relationships, incest, inter-racial relationships, etc. There is great concern over cohabitation and the future of marriage as a church-sponsored, not to say God-given, institution.

2 The issue of homosexuality itself raises for us several distinct issues, including the following:

2.1 Should the moral standards expected of the ordained be distinct from what is expected of the lay Christian? A corollary: should ministerial candidates be asked at some stage about their sexual orientation or practice?

2.2 How are we to honour the authority of the Bible in this discussion as we are all bound to do?

2.3 Is the distinction between homosexual orientation and practice critical to a Christian assessment?

2.4 How permanent or 'genetic' is homosexual orientation in a person?

2.5 Are other churches or denominations considering these issues?

2.6 How does sexual orientation fit into an Equal Opportunities policy framework and the implementation of that policy?

3 This meeting of Mission Council cannot be expected to debate these at any depth or length but might choose to establish a task-group so that Assembly next summer can have the benefit of a considered report with some appropriate resolutions drafted. Such a group would need to include representatives of all relevant committees and interest-groups within the church, plus two or three non-URC consultants.

from the General Secretary

Admission of Candidates

I have received a letter from the Principal, writing on behalf of the Westminster College Board of Studies raising the matter of the admission of declared homosexual candidates to the college.

The letter stated that "declared homosexuals had recently passed through the candidating procedure and one was being commended for admission to the College". At a meeting on 8 June 1994, after considerable discussion, the Board agreed unanimously that "since Westminster College is the Church's college, we will accept declared homosexual candidates for training only if the Assembly gives clear guidance that this is in accordance with Church policy."

I then consulted the other recognised colleges regarding the position. The Mansfield Ministerial Training Committee discussed the issue on 24 June 1994 in relation to "a ministerial candidate who had declared himself to be gay and living in partnership with another. This candidate had been unanimously recommended to his province by the national assessment conference, and subsequently his call had been recognised by the province After considerable discussion, the Committee agreed to confirm the offer of a place (with one abstention), subject to the provincial decision, recognising ~~that this does not contravene any existing national URC policy~~". The Principal of Northern College states that the issue is on the agenda of the Education Committee for 27 October 1994. No reply has been received from Queens.

The Mission Council at its meeting in October '93 (93/74 f) accepted a recommendation from MCAG and responded to a request from GEAR that the URC needs to establish a policy in relation to homosexual people in the life of the Church by agreeing that no action be taken on the grounds that we are in the middle of a process of the publication of papers to stimulate members' thinking that to press for policy at this time would be divisive.

I responded to Westminster College stating that I would refer this matter to the MC. It should be noted that the candidate referred to by both Westminster and Mansfield is the same person and is from the Southern Province. There is a second candidate, commended by the National Assessment Board, who is presently appealing to the Thames North Synod against a decision of the provincial committee which deals with candidates.

Tony Burnham

21 September 1994

P.T.O.

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TASK GROUP

1 BACKGROUND

Over the past three years, there has been a growing awareness of the potential benefits of the application of Information Technology (IT) in the URC and indeed in the churches generally, but little has been done to bring about a coherent policy which is needed to ensure optimum returns from the capital expended. The attached paper provides an introduction to IT, outlines some potential applications of IT within the URC and highlights some of the issues involved in the development of an IT strategy.

Mission Council resolved (Minute 94/26) at its meeting in March 1994 to place the subject of IT on the agenda of its next meeting. MCAG offers these proposals as the basis for discussion.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The task of the Group will be to:

1. comprehend and record current practice throughout the URC of the collection, storage, processing and retrieval of information to which the benefits of IT might be applied
2. review the current and expected future state of IT in the marketplace
3. identify and record the opportunities for the application of IT in the URC and assess, where possible, the possible improvements in efficiency and economy which might thereby accrue
4. develop and document a strategy for the implementation of IT throughout the URC
5. make recommendations for the short and medium term implementation of the strategy; including training needs
6. recommend how the strategy is to be developed and its implementation monitored beyond the current life of the Task Group

3 CONSULTATION

In all the work set out in 2 above, the Group will consult widely with a view to the widest application of the strategy. Specifically, consultation will include those responsible, or likely to be responsible, for the procurement, management and use of IT:

- at 86 Tavistock Place
- in central committees
- in the Province offices
- in Districts
- amongst local church officers
- amongst ministers
- amongst ecumenical partners

4 TIMETABLE

It is intended that the task as defined above will be completed and a report presented to General Assembly 1997. It is expected that interim reports will be presented to Mission Council.

5 BUDGET

Travelling and office costs will be consistent with the size of the Task Group and the consultation it is required to undertake. It may be that professional advice is required on technical matters which are beyond the competence of the Group's membership. Any associated costs must be approved by Mission Council before advisers are appointed.

6 TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

It is suggested that the Group will comprise about five people who together have knowledge and experience of the application of IT and who understand the needs and potential benefits of its application throughout the URC.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Information Technology and its Application within the URC

1 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information has always been essential to good decision making in an organisation. The first computers were able to store and process only numbers and for that they used a system of coding in which each number was represented by series of binary digits (bits), viz. zeros and '1's. Later, a coding system for text was developed so that the alphabet and other important symbols (such as £) could also be represented by binary digits. Initially, Information Technology (IT) embraced the converging technologies of voice and data communications and of the collection, storage, processing and retrieval of numerical and textual information by computers. More recently, the scope of IT has extended to other information types such as graphics, sound and moving pictures.

The majority of organisations of the size of the URC have implemented IT and many will have a strategy for the development of its application. The benefit:cost ratio of employing IT has increased dramatically over the past five years.

2 IT IN THE URC

The URC is using computers at Tavistock Place. There are specialist systems for payroll and accounting and for publications. The majority of the desk-top computers are used only for word-processing. The use of computers in the Provinces is quite limited and generally restricted to word-processing and databases holding names and addresses for mailings and handbooks. There are some exceptions where computers are used for Province and Trust accounting and for more sophisticated databases of property and investments. The use of computers in local churches can only be guessed at but it is suggested that most are used by ministers as word-processors for correspondence and preparation of orders of service. There are many computer programs which provide bible texts with searching and cross-reference facilities and some ministers are using these. Some ministers will be using databases for membership lists and this is one of the more common applications in use by church secretaries. There are some accounting and covenant record programs available which are doubtless in use by some church treasurers.

3 STANDARDS

One of the first ingredients of a coherent policy for the introduction and exploitation of IT within any organisation is the establishment of standards for computer hardware and software, viz. physical equipment and programs. In order to prepare for the re-equipping of computers at Tavistock Place and to give guidance to other computer users in the URC, a consultation took place in 1992 with a view to establishing some hardware and software standards and to give some thought to longer-term strategy for implementing IT in the URC. Limited agreement on hardware and software standards was reached but the details have not been confirmed or circulated widely. If the application of IT in the URC is now to evolve effectively, further work on standards needs to be done, particularly in the areas of database software and electronic mail services.

4 NETWORKS

The consultation referred to in Section 3 didn't address networking; by which is meant the interconnection, and where appropriate, interworking of computers, peripherals (e.g. printers) and public network services such as electronic mail and databases. The cost of the equipment needed to support effective networking has dropped sharply while the benefits of sharing resources, such as data or sophisticated printers, continue to rise.

There are two main types of networking; local area networking and wide area networking. The former applies to networks in buildings such as offices. The latter covers global telecommunications networks which interconnect local networks, individual computers and public network services. Two distinct strategies are appropriate for the two different types of network in the URC. The main reason for this is that it is only at Tavistock Place that local area networks are likely to be installed in the foreseeable future, whereas the benefits of wide area networking will only accrue when a significant number of computer systems are interconnected across the whole of the URC.

5 LOCAL AREA NETWORKING AT TAVISTOCK PLACE

The main reason for installing a local area network is that it facilitates the sharing of resources. These resources may be expensive peripheral equipment like scanners or colour printers, large databases which are held on computers in the local area or access to a wide area network. Perhaps the first resource at Tavistock Place which could helpfully be shared using a local area network is information. Databases either exist or are being developed to hold the information in the Year Book and more extensive information relating to ministers of the URC. The Year Book data could be extended for internal use to include a very comprehensive database of names, addresses and telephone numbers of people in the URC who have any involvement with the central church. If this were accessible to all users in Tavistock Place, only one database would need to be kept up to date and this would provide mailing lists and individual details to all those with a computer.

6 WIDE AREA NETWORKING

The universal problem of wide area networking is achieving 'critical mass'; viz. establishing a large enough community of interest to justify the cost of connection to and use of the network. Once the network is established, its growth is usually assured as with growth comes added value by virtue of the amount of information that can be shared on the network or the number of people who can be contacted. For example, Tavistock Place and all the Province Offices might agree to form a network for the exchange of information, for electronic mail and for access to centrally held data. Once the equipment had been purchased and connected and the system found to be effective and worthwhile, it would not be long before it made sense to add to the network other Province officers who work at home and perhaps District Secretaries. At this stage there would be 'interest groups' both provincially and nationally but there would also be the inherent capability of the network for interconnection between, say, a District Secretary and Tavistock Place or between two Province officers working at home but in different Provinces. Eventually, local churches and ministers would feel it worthwhile to join the network.

From this quite realistic example, it can be seen that

- 1 as the number of network terminations increases the number of interconnection possibilities increases at a much greater rate.
- 2 the larger the number of network users, the greater the incentive to join.

7 INFORMATION

Reference has already been made to information in Section 5 of this paper and it should be evident from the example given, and from knowledge of other possible applications of shared databases, that careful thought needs to be given to the development of databases and their networked access. Information is at the heart of the IT revolution because the value of information has been understood for many years. The sharing of information has value for the URC as much as for a commercial organisation. The lack of consistent, up to date information in the URC can easily lead to incompetence, time-wasting and financial mismanagement.

8 STRATEGY

This brief paper has attempted to set out, in fairly non-technical terms, some of the issues of IT to which the URC has been applying some thought but to which much greater thought now needs to be given. What is needed is a strategy for IT. This starts with an understanding of how the URC might use IT in the future and then sets out some realistic steps in the direction of those objectives. A strategy must address not only the procurement and systematic replacement of equipment and services but also management of equipment and networks and training in their use. The work needs to be guided by those with a knowledge of the technology and by those with a knowledge of the requirements for information both in Tavistock Place and elsewhere in the URC.



MISSION COUNCIL

**30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994**

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE
REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL
30th September to 2nd October 1994

-*-

Following General Assembly the Nominations Committee has met once to deal with routine matters and to address the major issue of membership of the new committees.

The following routine matters are set out for the attention of Mission Council, and where appropriate its approval.

1. Appointment Groups are now in place for
Wessex Provincial Moderator
Children's Advocate
Editor of Reform and Media Officer
And a Review Group is in place in respect of
National Youth Secretary.
2. National Assessment Board
The Revd. Barbara Plenderleith and Mr Brian Evans have agreed to serve.
However it is necessary to replace the Revd. Val Howson and the Committee
is approaching Mrs Shirley Moss.
M.C. approval is requested for these names.
3. FCFC Chaplaincy Board - M.C. approval is requested for the appointment of
Revd. Daphne Williams as our representative.
4. CTE Forum
Revd. Richard Mortimer & Miss Rachel Ingles have agreed to serve.
Revd. Gillian Bobbett and Mr Wallie Warmington have been invited and
replies are awaited.
CCBI Assembly
Miss Melanie Smith, Mrs Ruth Clarke and Revd. David Taylor have all
agreed to serve.
A reply is awaited from Revd. Susan Durber
CCBI Church Representatives
Mrs Ruth Clarke has agreed to serve.
ACTS - Revd. David Taylor has agreed to serve.
Meth/URC Liason Committee - Revd. Val Towler has resigned and the Revd.
Joe Clemson has agreed to serve.

M.C. is invited to approve these nominations.

4. Other Miscellaneous Appointments

Churches Main Committee - Mr Tegid Peregrine
Northern College Governors - Revd. Brian O'Neill re-appointed
- Revd. John Marsh (Leek) invited to serve.
New College Trust Governor - Mr J.C. Smether has agreed to serve.
Milton Mount - Mrs Ruth Clarke and Revd. Peter Grimshaw have agreed to
serve.
Taunton School Governors - Revd. Ray Adams to succeed Revd. Michael
Hubbard.

M.C. are invited to approve these nominations.

5. Equal Opportunities - Standing Committee

The following have been invited to serve

1. Mrs Susan Rand (Convener)
2. Revd. Elaine Dunn
3. Mr Alan Hart
4. Revd. Rudi Dixon
5. Revd. Justine Wyatt
6. Revd. Simon Walkling
7. Mr Doug Thacker
8. Mrs Daphne Beale
(R. Revd. John McCauley)

6. Representatives to other Bodies and Assemblies.

In consultation with the present Mew at Home (to be the Ecumenical) Committee it is proposed to Mission Council that the responsibilities for such appointments in the future be agreed as follows -

- a. appointments to major bodies like CTE Forum & Enabling Group, CCBI Assembly and Church Reps. Meeting, ACTS Council and Assembly, CYTUN Council and Cymanfa must go to General Assembly and therefore through Nominations Committee.
- b. appointments to sub groups e.g. Group for Local Unity and Church Rural Group and Liason Committees (e.g. Methodist/URC; Scottish Cong. Church/URC) be dealt with by MEWH (Ecumenical).

If this general principle is acceptable then it may be used as guidance for other Committees who are required to appoint people to ecumenical sub-groups.

-*-

NEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The proposed names for the new Committees along with their retirement dates and their Provinces [1] are in the process of preparation. Invitations are currently out to all first choices and replies are coming in. An up to date list of nominations and their replies will be available on arrival at Mission Council, this will allow the list to be as up-to-date as possible in respect of replies.

These names will then be published in Reports to Assembly and submitted to Assembly for approval. In future the retirement dates will also appear against the names of members.

Mission Council is invited to approve the names whether or not they have yet replied. There are some reserves indicated (R), so that in the event of someone declining, the Nominations Committee can continue without returning to Mission Council. If further names are required other than those given they will be brought to the next Council Meeting.

It is assumed that as soon as committees are complete they will begin to meet.



MISSION COUNCIL

**30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994**

Reflections from groups
on Mission Council
at the March Meeting

1. "What do you think are the most significant things that the Mission Council has done? Why are these things significant?"

i) The Budget.

The budget discussions in 1993 and 1994 were seen as significant because they showed Mission Council learning how to prioritise, how to take responsibility, and how to take risks! The significance of these discussions was also seen by some in a more negative light: as revealing an inefficient and "amateur" approach to the business of the church; a lack of strategic thinking; a refusal to live in the "real" world.

ii) Children's Advocate.

Mission Council's persistence over a long period to achieve Assembly's objective of budgeting for a Children's Advocate was seen as important because it showed MC enabling Assembly's wishes to be carried out. The unanimity of the vote on this was impressive.

iii) Structures.

This work was thought to be significant because it is driven by the search for God's purpose for the church now, rather than by the past. Hopefully the new committee structures will be a spark to ignite the church's "engine" and get things moving.

iv) Training Review.

This review, together with renewed talk of deployment of ministers and the eagerly awaited Patterns of Ministry document should help us to set priorities and plan resources.

v) Children and Young People

The continuing value placed on children and young people in the URC, as instanced in discussions on committee structure and the Children's Advocate was felt to be important.

2. What lessons have we learned about our method of work and our role?

i) The pattern of meetings is helpful, giving us time in a residential context to get to know each other. This is leading to a less confrontational style of debate, with a more co-operative intent.

ii) We need to be aware of "warm-up time" - there is a danger that items raised near the beginning, or which are more "accessible", are discussed for a longer time than is necessary.

iii) A helpful factor is continuity: Provinces should be encouraged to give members sufficient time on Mission Council for them to develop good relationships and so continue the development of the "affirming" atmosphere of Council meetings.

iv) We are learning to listen to each other.

v) We are learning a greater degree of trust in small groups, and in "professional" groups.

- vi) Deliberate action is required to encourage participation in plenary sessions.
- vii) Times of worship and reflection are highly valued, and need protecting from erosion.
- viii) The sharing of Synod concerns and business must not be allowed to become secondary. When a Synod resolution is discussed in a group it is very helpful to have someone from that Synod in the group to give background information.
- ix) Group work is valued. Groups encourage people to listen and to speak, and enable Council to tackle more work than it could otherwise do. They should feature early in the programme as they tend to obtain a "head of steam". They need sufficient time in order that they do not lightly overturn carefully researched projects. The presence of people in the group who have specialist knowledge of the subject under discussion is to be commended.
Specialist groups (e.g. the Finance Group which worked out the Budget redraft) should be encouraged.
Self-selection (in advance) by members of items which they might wish to discuss, on the basis of previous experience, interest and skill, is a possibility. However, this could lead to the danger of a group of "enthusiasts" discussing a topic without the useful balance of having to explain/defend it to those to whom it is new.
- x) Listening to local and regional concerns is vital, and should lead to realistic discussions on mission and priorities.
- xi) The grouping of agenda items on related topics is helpful.

3. What should be our priorities for the next two years?

- i) The URC needs a period of consolidation after so many changes.
- ii) We need to pause and reflect on where we are, and on what is distinctive about the URC. Our strategy and style of working need to arise out of our theology.
- iii) We need to face the question: do we see ourselves as a permanent or a transitory denomination?
- iv) The church needs a cohesive sense of direction. Mission Council needs to listen/look in order to channel vision. We are not here to supply vision, but we may discern it, and communicate it.
- v) We need to improve lines of communication in the church.
- vi) We will need to implement decisions made in Assembly regarding structures, Patterns of Ministry and training.
- vii) We need to discuss the Forum document on Mission, and how it might be used.

Elizabeth Caswell

30.09.94

NOMINATIONS TO NEW COMMITTEE
Report to Mission Council

Where replies are known they are shown - an acceptance by a /, declined by an 'x', and a 'blank' indicates a reply awaited.

Staff members are indicated in the right hand corner along with others, whom we believe will be in attendance at the committee. Those names may NOT cover every person with a responsibility to that committee at some time or another.

We have assumed that, with two exceptions (Ass. Pastoral Ref. & Ass. Arrangements), Staff Members are not included in the agreed membership of the committee, but attend in addition to the nominated members.

Likewise, with six exceptions, we have assumed that staff members will not act as secretary to the committee. Their secretarial services through Church House may, of course, still be used by the committee.

Since this list of new committees has gone into limited circulation some have expressed the belief that not having a staff member as secretary will either increase the work load or cause difficulties and confusion over lines of communication.

In particular the Finance Committee and the Training Committee have reservations in this area.

It will be for Mission Council to express its mind on this matter and direct the Nominations Committee on the action it should take. If it is felt that invitations to serve as non-staff secretaries have been mistakenly extended, then the Nominations Committee will need to tactfully withdraw these with a clear explanation to the nominee.

-*-*-

DOCTRINE, PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Staff : Revd Terry Oakley

1 / [7]	Dr David Thompson	1997	Convener
2 [1]	Revd Dale Rominger	1999	Secretary
3 / [2]	Revd Alan Gaunt	1996	
4 x [8]	Revd The Lady Helena McKinnon	1999	
5 / [12]	Revd Alan Sell	1997	
6 / [11]	Prof Graham Stanton	1997	
7 / [6]	Revd Wendy Baskett	1998	
8 / [4]	Revd Fleur Houston	1999	
9 / [2]	Revd Stephen Brown	1999	
10/ [9]	Revd Donald Norwood	1999	
11/ [7]	Mr Tony Cheer	1998	
12/ [3]	Miss Fiona Gow	1998	
*	Rep.appointed in consultation with Youth & Childrens		
R [4]	Revd Elizabeth Brown	-	
R [9]	Revd Kate Compston	-	

DISCIPLESHIP & WITNESS

Staff: Mrs Muriel Garrow
Revd Terry Oakley
Rev Peter McIntosh

1 / [4]	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	1999	Convener
2 / [5]	Revd. Roger Whitehead	1998	Secretary
3 [3]	Revd. Jean Forster	1998	
4 / [6]	Revd. Tom Arthur	1996	
5 [4]	Mr Jim Wilkinson	1998	
6 [2]	Mr Tony Ewens	1999	
7 / [7]	Revd. David Tatem	1999	
8	Rep appointed in consultation with Youth & Childrens		
R [8]	Revd. Chris Baker		

CHURCH & SOCIETY

Staff: Revd Peter Brain

1 / [5]	Prof. Malcolm Johnson	1998	Convener
2 / [11]	Rev. Michael Powell	1999	
3 / [4]	Ms Janine Lawley	1998	
4 / [6]	Revd. Ermal Kirby	1997	
5 / [8]	Revd. Hazel Barkham	1999	
6 / [4]	Mrs Val Morrison	1998	
7 / [11]	Revd. Raymond Singh	1999	
8	Rep. appointed in consultation with Youth & Childens		
*	[11] Mr Aubrey Curry	1996	
R	[1] Revd. David Pickering	-	

YOUTH & CHILDRENS WORK

Staff: Mr Paul Franklin
Master Pilot,
Also attending
Mrs Eileen Sanderson
Childrens Advocate
Revd Martin Nicolls

1 / [1]	Revd Stephen Thornton	1998	Convener
2 / [11]	Mrs Rosemary Johnston	1997	Secretary
3	[F] Mr John Dryburgh	1996	
4	[F] Ms Catherine Rook	1997	
5	[F] Ms Shirley Dale	1997	
6 / [1]	Revd Ron Forster	1999	
7	[7] Mr Nick Raggett	1996	
8 / [4]	Revd. Duncan Wilson	1996	
9	[2] Revd Barbara Plenderleith	1999	
10 / [11]	Mrs Elizabeth Crocker	1998	
11 / [9]	Mrs Jean Antcliffe	1999	
12 / [7]	Revd. John Hensford	1997	
P	[4] Mr Phil McGeary		
R	[8] K. C. S. S. S. S.		
R	[9] Mrs. M. S. S. S.		

ECUMENICAL

Staff: Revd Sheila Maxey

1 / [6]	Revd Murdoch Mackenzie	1999	Convener
2 / [5]	Revd Elizabeth Welch	1996	
3 / [6]	Mrs Claudette Binns	1998	
4 / [1]	Revd. Peter Arthur	1999	
5 / [12]	Revd David Fox	1998	
6 / [11]	Revd Norman Healey	1999	
7 / [10]	Revd Philip Woods	1998	
8 / [11]	Mr Desmond Curry	1997	
R	[10] Revd Clabon Allen	-	
R	[2] Dr Margaret Jessop	-	
R	[8] Revd Geoff Armistead	-	
R	[8] Revd Bob Andrews	-	

ECUMENCIAL - Sub-Committee - OVERSEAS EXCHANGE

Staff : Revd Tony Coates

1 / [10]	Revd Barrie Scopes	1999	Convener
2 / [12]	Revd Ken Graham	1999	
3 / [9]	Revd Bernie Collins	1997	
4 / [11]	Revd David Helyer	1998	
5	[10] Revd Mia Kyte	1998	
6 / [8]	Mrs Muriel Sleigh	1998	
R	[4] Revd Margaret Dodds	-	
R	[4] Revd Richard Dodds	-	

MINISTRIES

Staff : Revd Michael Diffey
Also attending
Convener RMH sub-comm

1 / [2]	Revd Keith Forecast	1997	Convener
2	[8] Revd Chris Baker	1998	Secretary

3 [4] Mrs Doreen Courtney 1997
 4 / [11] Mr John Ellis 1999
 5 / [10] Revd Vaughan Jones 1998
 6 [7] Ms Geraldine Swaine 1999
 7 [7] Revd David Cornick 1996
 8 / [8] Revd Sandra Lloydlangston 1999
 * Convener of Nat.Assmt,Bd
 R [12] Revd Susan Roberts -

MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION sub-committee

Staff : Revd Michael Diffey

1 / [9] Mrs Margaret Carrick-Smith 1999 Convener
 2 [8] Revd. Hazel Martell 1998 Secretary
 3 [11] Mr Bert Worrall 1999
 4 / [11] Revd Dean Tapley 1997
 5 / [12] Revd John Humphreys 1999
 6 / [2] Mrs Ruth Clarke 1997
 R [3] Revd Jean Forster -
 R [4] Mrs Shirley Rawnsley -

MINISTRIES - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY sub-committee

Staff : Mr Clem Frank
Also attending Convener
Pension sub-comm.

1 / [2] Mr Michael Harrison 1999 Convener
 2 / [11] Mr Alan Taylor 1995 Secretary
 3 [3] Mrs Barbara Martin 1999
 4 / [4] Miss Margaret Atkinson 1999
 5 / [7] Revd Bill Gathercole 1997
 6 / [11] Mr Alastair Black Treasurer

MINISTRIES - RETIRED MINISTER HOUSING sub-committee

Staff : Mr Clem Frank

1 / [1] Revd David Hannen 1998 Covener
 2 / [9] Mr Clive Willis 1999 Secretary
 3 [7] Mr Martin Ballard 1998
 4 / [6] Mrs Barbara Williams 1997
 5 / [10] Revd Janet Sowerbutts 1998
 6 / [4] Mrs Pauline Mewis 1997
 * The Treasurer

TRAINING

Staff : Revd Lesley Husslebee

1 / [2] Revd John Sutcliffe 1999 Convener
 2 / [8] Revd Dr.Catherine Middleton 1998 Secretary
 3 / [5] Revd. Elizabeth Nash 1997
 4 / [7] Revd John Proctor 1997
 5 [6] Mrs Kate Breeze 1996
 6 [3] Revd John Oldershaw 1996
 7 [1] Mrs Carol Dixon 1999
 8 x [5] Dr Susan Parson 1997

Revd Terry Oakley
 Mrs Muriel Garrow
 Revd Peter McIntosh
 Revd Martin Nicolls
 Also attending
 Mrs Eileen Sanderson
 An S.M. Student

FINANCE

Staff : Mr Clem Frank

1 / [11] Mr Alastair Black 1998 Convener
 2 / [7] Mrs Elizabeth Reeve 1999 Secretary
 3 [9] Revd Richard Wiggins 1999
 4 / [10] Mrs Edwina Rockey 1999
 5 / [6] Revd Paul Bedford 1997
 6 [] Mr Ron Turner 1996
 7 x [8] Mr Tegid Peregrine 1998
 8 - Convener of URC Trust -

COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL

Staff : Mrs Carol Rogers

1 / [7]	Mr Chris Wright	1999 Convener
2 / [5]	Revd Malcolm Deacon	1999
3 / [2]	Revd Brian Baker	1996
4 / [4]	Mr John Rawnsley	1996
5 [6]	Revd Graham Spicer	1997
6 [10]	Mrs Sue Brooks	1997
7 / [11]	Mr Doug Fletcher	1997
8 / [9]	Mr Andrew Jackson	1998
R [9]	Revd Peter Flint	-

ASSEMBLY PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Staff : General Secretary

1 /	Revd Alasdair Walker	1999 Convener
2 /	Revd Tony Burnham	- Secretary
3 /	Revd Nelson Bainbridge	1995
4 /	Mrs Sheila Pratt	1996
5	Revd Daphne Hull	1996
6 /	Miss Ruth Archer	1997
7 /	Mr Ray Heritage	1995 (as Convener Welfare Sub-Comm.)
8 /	The Treasurer	-

WELFARE sub-committee

1 /	Mr Ray Heritage	1995 Convener
2 /	Mrs Judy Stockings	Secretary

ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

1 /	www.missioncouncil.org.uk	www.missioncouncil.org.uk
2 /	www.missioncouncil.org.uk	Secretary
3	Provincial Rep. for forthcoming Assembly	
4	Provincial Rep. for previous Assembly then replaced by Rep. for two Assemblies hence	
5	Moderator	
6	Moderator elect	
7	General Secretary	
8	Clerk to Assembly	

Mission Council should also note the following responses for the new
Equal Opportunities - Standing Committee

- / 1. Mrs Susan Rand (Convener)
- 2. Revd. Elaine Dunn
- 3. Mr Alan Hart
- x 4. Revd. Rudi Dixon
- / 5. Revd. Justine Wyatt
- / 6. Revd. Simon Walkling
- 7. Mr Doug Thacker
- 8. Mrs Daphne Beale
- (R. Revd. John McCauley)

NOTES FOR CONSIDERATION OF " WESTMINSTER COLLEGE AND ITS FUTURE-CAFcert CONSULTANCY REPORT" , - submitted by College staff to assist Mission Council, 1.10.94. Additional clarificatory material has been supplied to the Steering Group.

The College staff have appreciated the courtesy of the consultants (this appreciation was indeed mutual; see para.3.01) and look forward to the Mission Council's response to the report; these notes of some errata and points needing clarification are to help understanding of the report. We recognise that eight days contact left some points unclear and we have tried to avoid being defensive or argumentative.

4.01 and 4.03. The summary of "Patterns Of Ministry" is so brief that we feel it right to emphasise the risk, pointed out by the consultants, of anticipating important implications for ministerial training of wider reviews now in process.

7.04. The Federation involvement complements rather than counterbalances that with the University Divinity Faculty, which validates the Federation Certificate. See also the middle part of 7.05 and 17.03. It is the close relations of the federated bodies which enable them to work with the Universities from a position of strength, and also to provide a wide range of courses for students with varied abilities.

8.09. This point needs to be set alongside 8.40. The Westminster College staff until 1993 were paid basically from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund because of their major contribution to wider church life, not only in these particular tasks but at district, synod, national and international levels; the recent accounting change has ignored all this. The figures at 8.40 need to be read in the light of the acknowledgment at last Assembly that the treatment in the Westminster College accounts of ministerial staff stipends differs from that in the accounts of Windermere and Yardley Hastings. This affects the use of the word "deficit".

8.19. Disability access is under new consideration following the General Assembly policy decision; a main stair platform lift could give library access.

9.06. The reference to the College's own Certificate is a mistake; that Certificate is the one rendered to Synods to declare candidates' readiness for ministry. What should have been described here is the Federation negotiation with the University of Cambridge to raise the Certificate in Theology for Ministry to B.Th. degree status.

11.04. The impression that "a sense of collective ownership was lacking as indeed was a strategic overview" reflects, in the staff's own understanding, a respect for the authority of the General Assembly through the Ministerial Training Committee and for the Mission Council review; we have sought to provide material for reflection rather than pre-empting the review discussion. We were also told by the consultants that they felt no need to discuss our current primary role in ministerial formation, the role where we do feel collective ownership and have a strategic overview. This is the only point at which we find the consultants unfair rather than under-informed.

12.20,21,22. These paragraphs reflect a misunderstanding of papers from Dr.Cornick. Titles can readily be changed. The reference to "Oikoumene" was specifically explained as arising from Reformed convictions about justice,peace and integrity for "the inhabited earth". Documents with revised descriptions can readily be presented to explain recent dialogue with interested parties on the three areas,Reformation,Reformed studies,ecumenical implications of these.

16.04,05,06. The relation of the posts here described to teaching duties and posts requires clarification,e.g. who will teach systematic theology when the present Principal retires? In the immediately following recommendations it is not clear when "the period of transition" is expected to occur - whether after the present Principal retires or earlier.

17.08,10,17.We call attention to the fact that East Anglia is an area of rapid technological growth and also of continuing rural communities;the reports "Faith in the Countryside" and "Faith in the City" are both important.There have been negotiations with URC and Methodist leadership in London for an "out-station" there of the Federation. These were suspended to allow Westcott House to experiment with its own residential scheme in Ancoats,Manchester,but the possibilities remain open.Many Westminster College internships are already located in London.

GROUPS

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

A

Fairburn
Andrews
Cressey
Earp
Lawrence
Maitland
Maxey
Oakley
Shaffery

B

Bainbridge
Stacy
Coates
Gunn
Helyar
McKay
Oldham
Reardon
Wilson

C

Frew
McVey
Adams
Brain
Buxton
Hart
Hilton
Prentice
Wright

D

Duncan
Nimmo
Black
Collins
Frank
Franklin
Macro
Meekison
Trippier

E

Husselbee
Hanson
Curry
Hardwick
Harrison
Rees
Thomas
Waller
Wright

F

Poulter
Hughes
Brown
Burnham
Forecast
Humphreys
McIntosh
O'Neill
Sowerbutts
Taylor

G

Singh
Butler
Forster
Garrow
Gordon
Jackson
Lloydlangston
McKelvey
Tull
Webb

H

Sanderson
Morgan
Bending
Cook
Diffey
Gathercole
Head
Rogers
Turner

GROUPS

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

A

Fairburn
Andrews
~~Cressley~~
Earp
Lawrence
Maitland
Maxey
Oakley
Shaffery

B

Bainbridge
Stacy
Coates
Gurn
Helyar
McKay
Oldham
Reardon
Wilson

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Adams
Brain
Buxton
Hapt
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Prentice
Wright

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Duncan
Nimmo
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Collins
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Ausselbee
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Curry
Hardwick
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Rees
Thomas
Waller
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Hughes
Brown
Burnham
Forecast
Humphreys
McIntosh
O'Neill
Sowerbutts
Taylor

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Singh
Butler
Forster
Gordon
Jackson
Lloyd-Lugster
McKelvey
Tull
Webb

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Sanborn
Magar
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Gathcole
Head
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Turner



MISSION COUNCIL

**30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994**

	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>
<p align="center"><u>FRIDAY</u></p> <p>12.15 Check in</p>	<p>8.30 Breakfast</p> <p>9.15 Prayers & Bible Study</p> <p>10.30 Nominations Committee</p> <p>10.45 Coffee</p> <p>11.15 Westminster College - Consultants' Report</p> <p>? Group Reports - Session 1 incl: Sexuality</p> <p>1.00 Close</p>	<p>7.30 Communion</p> <p>8.30 Breakfast</p> <p>9.30 Elections</p> <p>9.35 Resource Sharing Task Group</p> <p>9.55 -----</p> <p>10.45 Coffee</p> <p>11.15 Synod Groups</p> <p>12.15 Reflections - Lavinia Byrne</p> <p>12.45 Prayers</p> <p>1.00 Close</p>
<p>1.15 Lunch</p>	<p>1.15 Lunch</p>	<p>1.15 Lunch</p>
<p>2.00 Welcome and apologies Opening worship and Bible Study</p> <p>3.00 Our Agenda</p> <p>3.10 Misc Business 1-4, 6</p>	<p>3.00 Group Reports - Session 1 cont'd.</p>	<p align="center">Depart</p>
<p>3.45 Tea</p>	<p>3.45 Tea</p>	
<p>4.15 Groups - Session 1</p> <p>5.15 Misc Business</p> <p>6.15 Close</p>	<p>4.15 Groups - Session 2</p> <p>5.15 Number of ministers</p> <p>6.15 Close</p>	
<p>6.30 Supper</p>	<p>6.30 Supper [Nominations to Clerk]</p>	
<p>7.30 Racism - Sandra Ackroyd</p> <p>8.30 Members' Business</p> <p>8.45 Prayers</p>	<p>7.30 The Future of CR Community Work</p> <p>7.45 Group Reports - Session 2</p> <p>8.40 Election Notices</p> <p>8.45 Prayers</p>	

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MISSION COUNCIL

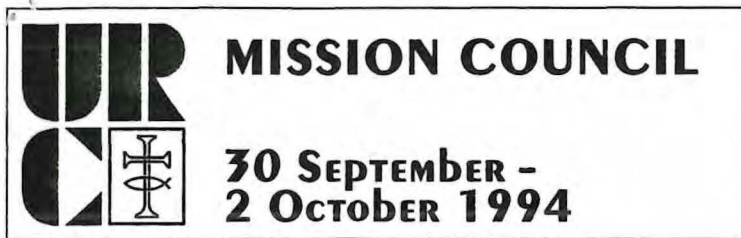
30 SEPTEMBER -
2 OCTOBER 1994

From the minutes of the Personnel Committee, 24 June 1994

Minutes of appreciation of returning missionaries

Miss Gillian Whiting was appointed on 17 October 1989 and spent two terms at St Andrew's Hall before leaving for Goldie College, Munda, Solomon Islands in July 1990 to work as a secondary school teacher. Despite the fact that her past experience and training had been as a primary school teacher, she settled well into her new role and coped well with the geographical isolation of Goldie College. She returned to the United Kingdom early in 1994 and is undertaking supply teaching while seeking permanent employment. The URC expresses its thanks to her for her contribution to the World Mission of the Church with the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

The Revd Paul and Mrs Mary Whittle were accepted for missionary service in June 1990. After two terms at Kingsmead College they were appointed to service in Panama with the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, and departed in July 1991. After Spanish language study at San Jose, Costa Rica, Paul began work as Minister in Panama at Paraiso and Rio Abajo, where they both exercised an effective ministry. Despite much appreciated and fruitful work in those two congregations and to the disappointment of the congregations, the Conference of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas after a long and difficult period of uncertainty finally decided in May 1994 not to renew the invitation to return after their initial period of three years' service. They are now back in the United Kingdom in the care of the Methodist Church Overseas Division. The URC expresses its thanks to Mr and Mrs Whittle for the service they have given to World Mission in Panama and wishes them well as Paul seeks a pastorate in the URC.



A Pastoral Measure concerning the suspension and resignation of ministers and their deletion from the Roll of Ministers - agreed by the General Assembly 1988.

In the Measure there is the following definition:

Suspension. This means a temporary bar on the activity of a minister who is in pastoral charge.

The Measure also states

"such suspension carries no implication for future ministry nor for any subsequent discussion of conduct."

A District Council has asked the General Secretary for an interpretation of the definition of suspension in the case of a minister who is retired.

The General Secretary, after consultation with the Clerk, suggests the following interpretation and invites the Mission Council to act on behalf of the Assembly to confirm it.

A minister under suspension, who is not in pastoral charge, shall not present him/herself as a minister and therefore ought not to preside at Communion. The minister ought to refrain from all activity in the United Reformed Church, or any other Church, which might lead others to believe she/he was acting as a minister, for example, preaching. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the rights of membership of any council of the Church save those accorded by the process of determining the disciplinary matter which has led to the suspension.