

MISSION COUNCIL

*from 30 September
to 2 October 1997*

MINUTES

Minutes of the Mission Council held at High Leigh, Hoddesdon from 30 September – 2 October 1997.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH

The Meeting was constituted by the Moderator, the Reverend David Jenkins. Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Stephen Thornton, and included a time of Bible listening and reflection on the Psalms, introduced by the Moderator.

97/40 Welcome

The Moderator welcomed members to the meeting, particularly the following who were attending for the first time: the Revd Graham Long (Convener of Ministries Committee), the Revd Dr. Colin Thompson (Convener of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee), the Revd Bob Andrews (Convener of Ecumenical Committee), Provincial Representatives: Mrs. Sue Brown (Wessex), Revd Rachel Poolman (Thames North), Mr Ken Woods (Eastern), the Revd Tom Bayliss (West Midlands), Mrs. Jill Strong (East Midlands), and Revd Alan Smith (Eastern); and new member of Staff, the Revd Marjorie Lewis Cooper (Multi-racial, multi-cultural development worker).

97/41 Attendance

There were 64 members present with 17 members of staff in attendance and Mrs. Sally Brooks (Minute Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from the Revds Jessie Clare, John Sutcliffe and Sheila Maxey, Professor Malcolm Johnson, Dr. Jack Gow, Mr. Denis Earp, Miss Liz Burns and Mr. Desmond Curry. Mrs. Val Morrison was alternate for Professor Malcolm Johnson, Miss Marion Crack for Dr. Jack Gow, Mr. David Coaker for Miss Liz Burns and Mrs Delyth Rees for Mr. Denis Earp

97/42 Appointment of Minute Secretary for the current meeting.

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that Mrs. Sally Brooks should be appointed as Minute Secretary for the current meeting of Mission Council. This was agreed.

97/43 Minutes of Mission Council 14 – 16 March 1997

The Minutes of the Mission Council held on 14 -16 March, which had been circulated, were approved and signed with the following correction:

97/30 Reference to Revd Geoff Prentice should read Mr. Geoff Prentice.

97/44 Matters Arising

The Moderator thanked the members of the Human Sexuality Task Group, particularly the Revd Peter Brain and Dr. David Thompson who were present, for their care and commitment in preparing the papers for General Assembly. Mission Council expressed its thanks by applauding those present and the Moderator said that thanks would be conveyed to the other members of the group. The Group was then discharged.

97/45 Agenda

The Deputy General Secretary explained the suggested order of business and distributed additional papers. The Revd Keith Forecast reported that copies of the guidelines produced by the Ministerial Discipline Working Party were available to anyone who wanted to review them in preparation for the later discussion.

97/46 Appointment of Tellers

Mr. Graham Stacy and the Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee were appointed to serve until the end of General Assembly 1998.

97/47 Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG)

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the report. There was only one item that required a decision; MCAG proposed that Mrs. Sally Brooks be appointed as Minute Secretary for Mission Council and General Assembly for a period of 4 years, ending with the Assembly of July 2001. This was agreed. Mission Council expressed its thanks to Mrs. Christine Hardwick, retiring Minutes Secretary.

The Revd Elizabeth Welch asked whether the group advising on which colleges the URC should use in training ministers had been established. The Deputy General Secretary replied that it had and that the Revd Derek Wales was the Convener.

There was to be an election on Thursday, to a vacant place for a Committee Convener on the Mission Council Advisory Group. The Clerk asked that nominations should be received before supper on Wednesday evening, noting that Mrs. Wilma Frew, the Revd John Sutcliffe and Mr. Graham Stacy were not eligible for election, already being members of the Group.

97/48 Report of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL)

Mr. Simon Rowntree presented the report and informed Mission Council that the Group's Secretary, the Revd Roger Whitehead, had expressed the wish to retire. Members of Mission Council were asked to suggest to the Deputy General Secretary names of possible successors. It was hoped that an appointment could be made at the January Mission Council.

The Group proposed that **from the 1999 Budget, Assembly Grants shall be handled by the Ecumenical Committee** as that Committee had the responsibility of guiding

the URC in its ecumenical priorities. Following reassurance that the Grants involved were all of an ecumenical nature, this was agreed.

The Revd Malcolm Hanson raised the issue of the financing of rotating Ministries in Ecumenical Situations (MES), which were funded by MES Grants except when a URC Minister was in post in which case they were treated as Special Category Posts. Mr. Rowntree responded that this should be referred to the Ministries Committee.

It was noted that a leaflet detailing grants made would be produced.

Mission Council received the report.

97/49 Provincial Groups

Provincial Representatives had been given notice that they would be invited to comment on the agenda of Mission Council, suggesting any changes in priorities or emphasis or the inclusion of new matters. The Council divided into Provincial Groups and returned to present their ideas. The General Secretary welcomed them, responded briefly and assured Council that they would be considered by MCAG.

97/50 Human Sexuality Debate – Resolution 18 of the 1997 General Assembly

The Deputy General Secretary introduced a paper, which had been prepared by MCAG, detailing a proposal for the implementation of Resolution 18. He stressed that it was important for Mission Council to do what General Assembly had asked it to do, and to do it well. He explained that, due to the sensitive nature of the issues to be considered, careful attention would need to be given to the choice of members of the Core Group and the 4 Sub-Groups. It was noted that the sub-groups would be able to co-opt and consult others, as necessary, and that these could be from other denominations as well as from within the URC.

The Moderator asked Mission Council to split into groups to consider the report and the proposals.

When the Council reconvened, a number of questions were raised and comments made to which the Deputy General Secretary responded.

In particular it was noted that:

- In addition to considering the authority of the General Assembly and other councils of the Church, it was important that consideration should also be given to the rôle of personal conviction.
- The involvement of Assembly appointed staff in the process would need to be determined once levels of support required by the groups were known. This would be considered with due sensitivity to the workload of the staff.
- The work required by Resolution 18 should not be seen as an end but rather as a part of the process and consideration should be given to the implications of the findings of the four sub-groups. This was seen to be part of the rôle of the Core Group, in consultation with Mission Council.

The following resolution was carried:

Mission Council agrees to implement Assembly Resolution 18 in accordance with the proposal submitted by the Mission Council Advisory Group, except that the Core Group shall have 5 members rather than the proposed 3.

The remainder of the paper set out a proposed procedure for the nominations of members of the Core Group and four sub-groups. The Deputy General Secretary, in response to questions, clarified a number of issues.

The following resolution was carried:

Mission Council adopts the nominating process for Resolution 18 groups as proposed by the Mission Council Advisory Group.

The nominating group, having carried out its work, presented its report on Thursday, 2nd October. See Minute 97/74 on page 12.

97/51 Ministers' Pension Fund

Mr. Graham Stacy introduced the report and moved the following resolution, which was seconded by the Deputy General Secretary and carried:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the Assembly, agrees that, with effect from 1st January 1998, the employer's contribution to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund payable in the terms of Rule 15.2 of the rules of the Pension Fund shall be at the rate of 11.75% of the basic stipend paid to each member.

97/52 Stipend Level for 1998

Mr. Stacy then introduced the report on the stipend level for 1998. The following resolution was carried unanimously:

Mission Council sets the basic ministerial stipend for 1998 at £14,820.

97/53 Totnes United Church

The Legal Adviser explained that it was necessary to pass a resolution in order to enable certain permanent endowments to be dealt with under a pre-1972 Charity Commission Scheme. He then proposed the following resolution, which was seconded by the Revd Arnold Harrison and carried:

It was resolved that:

- 1. the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church is the successor authority to the Congregational Union of England and Wales referred to in Clause 23(3) of the 1956 Scheme as one of the "Joint Authorities" for the determination of questions arising under the said Clause 23 and that Mission Council is the proper body to discharge the duties of the General Assembly in relation thereto acting under its delegated powers.**

2. the Reverend W.R.P. Adams be authorised on behalf of Mission Council to act as its representative at the Meeting of the joint Authorities to be constituted and held pursuant to Clause 23 of the 1956 Scheme and be authorised to agree the following resolutions which it is intended shall be put to that meeting:-
- (i) that the joint Authorities are satisfied from the evidence produced to them by the Church Meeting that the number of infant baptisms in the buildings used by Totnes United Church for religious worship during the last preceding period of five years has been less than 5 and that in consequence it is desirable that the provisions of Clause 23(2) of the 1956 Scheme take effect.
 - (ii) that for the purposes of Clause 23(2)(c) of the 1956 Scheme all (if any) endowments held in trust for the United Church and any general purpose funds held by the United Church (as opposed to endowments referred to in Clause 23(2)(a) and (b) for which special provision is made in the 1956 Scheme itself) shall revert to and be held in trust for the ongoing Totnes Baptist Church.
 - (iii) that the proper expenses incurred by the Joint Authorities in making their determination under Clause 23 of the 1956 Scheme (including all legal costs Value Added Tax and disbursements) shall be met by the ongoing Totnes Baptist Church.

97/54 Composition of the Ecumenical Committee

The Revd Bob Andrews explained that to date the Nominations Committee had ensured that two out of the eight "core" members (i.e. those appointed by Assembly and not by other committees). The Nominations Committee made it a practice to propose at least one person from Scotland and one from Wales. The Committee proposed that, in future, the Synod of Wales should appoint someone to represent ecumenical concerns in Wales and that the Mid-Scotland District or its successor should do the same for Scotland. In each case this would take effect at the end of the term of the current representative. These two appointments would be in addition to the eight "core" members. Noting that this would involve an increase of two in the size of the Ecumenical Committee, Mission Council agreed.

97/55 Task Group on Authority

The Deputy General Secretary introduced this issue by explaining the long and rather complex process that had been involved in the production of the report on Authority. On behalf of the Mission Council Advisory Group, the Deputy General Secretary recommended to Mission Council:

That the report of the task group on Authority, without further discussion or amendment, be offered as a resource to those appointed by Mission Council to process Assembly resolutions 18(a) and 18(b) on human sexuality.

Following confirmation that the Report would also be made available to any other Group within the Church and that, as the report had not been agreed by Mission Council, it should be regarded as a discussion paper. Mission Council accepted the recommendation of the Mission Council Advisory Group.

97/56 Responding to Legal Matters

The General Secretary proposed, and Mission Council agreed:

that where the Church is involved in serious legal matters, other than those involving the Trust or property matters, the General Secretary shall consult the Legal Advisor and any decisions should be taken by the Assembly Officers, in the light of advice received. The Officers shall decide whether, and if so when, to report to Mission Council.

97/57 Correspondence

The General Secretary reported that he had received a number of letters in response to those that had been sent on behalf of General Assembly to Her Majesty the Queen, the Mayor and Mayoress of Portsmouth, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Kenyan High Commission. The members of Mission Council would continue to remember the people of Kenya in prayer.

97/58 Assembly Arrangements Committee

Mrs. Wilma Frew reported that the 1999 General Assembly would be held in the Mersey Province from 5-9th July 1999, but that to date it was still not possible to confirm the venue. Mrs Frew noted that the Assembly Arrangements Committee continued to organise the General Assemblies as residential/non-residential on an alternating basis and would do so until they were advised otherwise by Assembly. The Moderator thanked Mrs Frew for her work as Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee and Mission Council expressed its thanks by applauding.

97/59 Staffing Advisory Group

Mr. Geoff Lunt introduced the report and brought two Resolutions to Mission Council, both of which were carried.

Mission Council authorises the continuation of the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations for a period of 5 years from 1 September 1998 or until it becomes vacant, whichever is the shorter period. It recognises that the post shall be open to be filled by a suitably qualified and experienced lay person or by an ordained minister of the Reformed tradition.

Mission Council urges the Ecumenical Committee to re-draft the Job Description for the post to make more specific the requirement for the post-holder to be in a close working relationship with the General Secretary. It also invites the Ecumenical Committee to consider allocating priorities for the post-holder to encourage more creative and pro-active engagement with ecumenical issues at all levels.

The Moderator's Chaplain led Mission Council in a period of reflection and closed with prayer.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1ST

Mission Council began the day with Holy Communion. The Moderator reflected on the images of God portrayed in the Book of Isaiah and the Gospel of John.

97/60 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 19 of the 1997 General Assembly

The General Secretary opened the discussion by reporting fully and at length on the correspondence that he and the Moderator had received following the passing of Resolution 19 at the 1997 General Assembly. He reported that every letter had received a personal reply.

Mission Council heard from all the Provinces reports on reaction throughout the country. It was evident from these responses and from the letters referred to by the General Secretary that those who were distressed by the passing of Resolution 19 were not distributed evenly through the country as a whole, or within Provinces. It was further noted that many who were in support of Resolution 19 were also experiencing pain and that many had expressed no reaction.

A long discussion followed during which Mission Council sought fully to understand the situation and to formulate an appropriate response. The Clerk confirmed that Resolution 19 was not a constitutional amendment, and also advised that Mission Council did not have the power to suspend or rescind a decision of General Assembly. The Legal Adviser strongly endorsed the Clerk's advice.

Consideration of this matter was continued later and is recorded in Minute 97/62 on page 7.

97/61 CWM Gift of Grace

Mission Council received reports from the Province of Wales, Mersey Province and the East Midlands Province on their plans to spend the money made available to them from the CWM Gift of Grace. Mission Council commended the three Provinces on their plans and shared the excitement expressed by the Provinces.

97/62 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 19 of the 1997 General Assembly (continued from 97/60)

Considerable time was spent exploring a number of ways forward as Mission Council sought to respond to the reactions following the passing of Resolution 19 at General Assembly, always mindful of the content of Resolution 17 and also re-affirming the importance of the work to be done as a result of Assembly Resolution 18.

The discussion was suspended and continued later. See Minute 97/68 on page 9.

97/63 Resources Planning Advisory Group (RPAG).

The Revd Duncan Wilson introduced the report of the Resources Planning Advisory Group by affirming the message of their report to General Assembly: that before

making progress with an updated five year plan with its budget implications, the Church needed to establish the purpose of its mission.

In response to this, at the next Mission Council RPAG would lead a discussion about mission in terms of leadership, planning, training and resources, so that clear objectives could be set for both the immediate, medium and long term.

The Moderator thanked RPAG and looked forward to receiving the report at the next Mission Council.

97/64 Provincial Management of YCWT/YLTOs

In introducing the report, the Deputy General Secretary paid tribute to Helen Brown for the care with which she had carried out her task. Mission Council received the Report with appreciation. The Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee (Training Committee) acknowledged the Recommendation made by the Report that the ultimate responsibility for the programme should rest with the Training Committee rather than the Youth and Children's Work Committee. She asked that this decision should be deferred to the next meeting of Mission Council to enable the Training Committee to establish and understand the full implications. The Deputy General Secretary advised Mission Council to accept this request, noting that doing so would not result in the process extending beyond the originally planned timescale. Mission Council agreed.

97/65 URC Holiday Forum

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the report on the URC Holiday Forum and the Resolution:

"Mission Council appoints Julian Macro, Graham Stacy and John Waller to represent it in discussions with the steering group of the URC Holiday Forum regarding the legal standing of the Forum and its relationship to the United Reformed Church."

The Revd Peter Poulter proposed that the resolution be amended by adding the words:

"... and empowers them to reach an agreement on behalf of Mission Council"

This was seconded by Mrs. Irene Wren and agreed by Mission Council. The full Resolution was then put to the Council:

"Mission Council appoints Julian Macro, Graham Stacy and John Waller to represent it in discussions with the steering group of the URC Holiday Forum regarding the legal standing of the Forum and its relationship to the United Reformed Church and empowers them to reach an agreement on behalf of Mission Council."

The Resolution was carried.

97/66 Memorandum from Church and Society Committee on ADVISERS and work around AIDS.

The report was presented by Mrs. Val Morrison. Mission Council noted and received the report with appreciation.

97/67 Theology of Ministry

The Revd Dr. Colin Thompson introduced the statement which had been prepared by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Deputy General Secretary reminded Mission Council that the statement had been produced as a result of the Patterns of Ministry debate. A number of issues were raised, questions asked and suggestions made about how the statement should be used in the future.

It was agreed that the statement should be circulated, as an affirmed draft, among our partner Churches and sent to Provincial Synods for discussion and that responses, comments and suggestions for further work should be sent to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. The Moderator, aware of the degree of urgency, suggested that there should be a two year consultative period. This was agreed. At the same time, it was agreed that Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, in consultation with Ministries and Training, should undertake the further work noted in paragraph 2.11 of the statement.

**97/68 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 19 of the 1997 General Assembly
(continued from 97/62)**

The Revd Malcolm Hanson proposed the following Resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Ken Woods.

“Mission Council:

- a) **has received and heard calls from a number of District Councils, churches, ministers and members to suspend or rescind Resolution 19. After careful reflection, Mission Council is of a mind that it is neither appropriate nor within its power to take such action;**
- b) **expresses its continuing concern for the unity, peace and well-being of the United Reformed Church, and reaffirms the vital significance of Resolutions 17 and 18 which emphasise the need for a spirit of unity and for further work to be done;**
- c) **understands General Assembly not finally to have defined the United Reformed Church’s attitude to homosexual relationships and sees Resolution 19 as holding options open until the Resolution 18 process is complete;**
- d) **urges all the councils and members of the Church to speak and act with that sympathy and compassion to which Christ calls us.”**

The Resolution was carried unanimously. It was agreed that a copy of this Resolution should be sent to the Provincial Synods together with a letter which would give background information on the Resolution and the way in which it had been reached.

The covering letter was presented later. See Minute 97/75 on page 13.

97/69 Nominations Committee

In introducing the paper from the Nominations Committee, the General Secretary noted that the Secretary of the committee, Mr. Desmond Curry, was unwell and in hospital. Mission Council expressed its concern and sent its good wishes to Mr. Curry.

The following nominations were then proposed by Mr Burnham and agreed by Mission Council:

Review Group – Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Convener: Mrs. Rosalind Goodfellow
Members: Revd Fleur Houston, Revd Brian Bailey
Revd Gethin Rhys, Mr. Desmond Curry

Thames North Moderator Appointment Group

Revd Bernie Collins is unable to serve. Revd Alasdair Pratt nominated in his place.

Committee Vacancies

Communications and Editorial	Revd Peter Moth, Revd Roger Hall
Equal Opportunities	Revd Nanette Head, Revd Wilf Bahadur
National Assessment Board	Dr. Christopher Whitehead
Youth & Children's Work	Mr. Lewis McKenzie
URC Trust – Directors	Mr. Martyn Daldorph, Dr. Brian Woodhall, Mrs. Christine Meekison
Assembly Arrangements	Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt

Representation on Other Bodies

Milton Mount Foundation	Revd Peter Grimshaw (appointment for a further term) Mr. David Butler
Lord Wharton Trust	Mr. Norman Fabb
Mansfield College Training and Education Committee	Dr. David Peel, Revd Janet Sowerbutts

It was noted that the Revd Jean Forster had resigned from the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee.

Youth Secretary

The General Secretary reported that the Appointment Group had met, drawn up a job description and person specification and that the post had been advertised. 12 applications had been received and 5 candidates had been short-listed and interviewed. However, as the Appointment Group had not felt able to make an appointment, the post would be re-advertised.

Mission Council, noting the importance of the development of Youth Work, agreed to authorise the Officers of the General Assembly to make an appointment on behalf

of the Council should an appropriate candidate be found before the next meeting of the Mission Council.

Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

The General Secretary reported that, although the post had been advertised twice, no suitable candidate had been identified.

97/70 Report from the Moderator of General Assembly 1996/7

Mission Council received a report prepared by Dr. David Thompson following his year as Moderator of General Assembly.

The Moderator's Chaplain led a period of reflection and closed with prayer.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2ND

Opening worship was led by the Chaplain, and included a time of Bible listening and reflection on Psalms, introduced by the Moderator.

97/71 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 41 of the 1997 General Assembly

The Deputy General Secretary introduced the report of the Pastoral Group which had been established in response to Resolution 41 of General Assembly, and noted that to date the group had been little used. He suggested that the Group should continue to exist for the time being and that Mission Council should review the situation at its meeting in January. This was agreed.

97/72 Pilots Development Officer

The Revd Stephen Thornton introduced the report and explained that since the report had been prepared the situation had changed. The Revd Erica Beglin had decided that she could not continue in post due to illness.

Mission Council recognised the importance of Pilots and the focus on Children and Young People requested by General Assembly, and also noted the involvement of the Congregational Federation. The General Secretary suggested that the whole matter be looked at again by the Youth and Children's Work Committee in consultation with the Staffing Advisory Group and the Ecumenical Committee. The review should include consideration, by the Mission Council Advisory Group, of the possibility of funding the post nationally.

In view of the urgency, it was agreed that the officers of the Youth and Children's Work and Ecumenical Committees should meet with the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary. Mission Council further agreed to empower these officers to take appropriate action.

For the immediate future, Provincial Pilot Officers would be asked to provide support to companies in their areas.

97/73 Election to Mission Council Advisory Group

The election papers having been distributed earlier were collected and the votes counted. The Moderator announced that the Revd Graham Long had been elected to serve as a member of the Mission Council Advisory Group until 2001.

97/74 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 18 of the 1997 General Assembly (continued from 97/50)

Dr. David Thompson reported on behalf of the special Nominations Group that had been established to make recommendations to Mission Council for membership of the Core Group and the four sub-groups which were to be set up in response to the passing of Resolution 18 at the 1997 General Assembly.

Dr. Thompson asked permission to increase the size of two of the four sub-groups from the 6 members recommended by the Mission Council Advisory Group to 8. He explained that the Nomination Group felt that this increased membership would ensure well-balanced groups with a wider range of experience and therefore was particularly appropriate for the sub-groups which would be considering Ordination and Human Sexuality and reflecting on the Wider Issues of Human Sexuality.

Mission Council agreed to the proposed number of members of the four sub-groups.

Dr. Thompson then presented the following nominations for membership of the Core Group:

Core Group

Revd Elizabeth Welch (Convener)
Revd Tony Burnham (Secretary)
Revd Malcolm Hanson
Dr. David Thompson
Revd Graham Maskery
Mrs. Val Morrison

These were approved unanimously.

Dr. Thompson then presented a list of nominees and alternatives for the four sub-groups which would undertake work on:

1. Biblical Authority
2. Authority of General Assembly and other councils
3. Ordination and Human Sexuality
4. Reflection on wider issues of Sexuality.

Mission Council then unanimously agreed to the appointments and to the principle that Dr. Thompson, together with the Revd Elizabeth Caswell and the General Secretary, should be able to make further appointments from a reserve list should that prove necessary.

The Moderator stressed that the list of Nominations should be treated as a confidential working paper and was not for circulation.

**97/75 Human Sexuality Debate: Resolution 19 of the 1997 General Assembly
(continued from 97/68)**

The Deputy General Secretary read the letter (copy attached to these Minutes) that it was proposed should be sent to the Provinces with a copy of the Mission Council resolution detailed in para. 97/68

A number of amendments to the letter were suggested and agreed

It was proposed and agreed that the letter should be signed by the Deputy General Secretary as the secretary of Mission Council. It was also agreed that the letter and resolution should be made available immediately to enable circulation prior to the Provincial Synods.

The Moderator expressed thanks to the Deputy General Secretary for his care in drafting the letter.

97/76 Assembly Resolution on the discipline of all members

The Moderator asked Mission Council to split into groups to consider the paper prepared by the Deputy General Secretary in response to the passing of the Assembly Resolution on the discipline of all members (Resolution 54 of General Assembly 1996)

The groups reported on their discussions and Mission Council agreed that, before the proposed work on discipline and guidelines for Elders' Meetings could begin, the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee should be asked to look at the meaning and understanding of Church Membership.

It was also agreed that, in the light of work already done, the Thames North Province should be asked to draft guidelines on how to deal with situations when accusations are made concerning the behaviour of local Church Officers and to present these to Mission Council.

Mission Council then considered two proposed responses to the General Assembly contained in the report from the Deputy General Secretary:

1. **Dealing with pastoral difficulties and breakdown is primarily the responsibility of Elders' and Church Meetings, together with the District Council whenever a minister is particularly involved. District Councils in particular need to be sure that their procedures are reviewed and publicised at regular intervals, and that available resources of support are also made known.**

The following amendment was suggested and agreed:

To delete "whenever a minister is particularly involved" in line 2 and add "and Provincial Moderator in certain circumstances"

The amended proposal was then put to the Council and agreed:

Dealing with pastoral difficulties and breakdown is primarily the responsibility of Elders' and Church Meetings, together with the District Council and Provincial Moderator in certain circumstances. District Councils in particular need to be sure that their procedures are reviewed and publicised at regular intervals, and that available resources of support are also made known.

2. Mission Council also agreed:

Provinces are urged to give support and training to those who may be involved in seeking to resolve difficulties. In particular, attention is drawn to the experiment of appointing pastoral consultants in Thames North Province, and the organisation of courses in conflict management and intervention in East Midlands, Thames North and Southern Provinces.

97/77 Ministerial Discipline Working Party

The Revd Keith Forecast presented the final report from the Ministerial Discipline Working Party, noting that the procedures and guidelines produced by the group and agreed by General Assembly would become Section O of The Manual. The report was received.

The Moderator, stressing the importance of this work, thanked the Group and discharged them.

97/78 Closing Remarks

The Moderator thanked Mission Council for their good humour and understanding and for working together throughout the meeting.

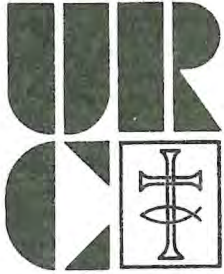
He thanked the Deputy General Secretary for his work in preparing the papers for Mission Council and for his steady guiding hand in the discussions. He also thanked the Chaplain for his sensitive leading of worship, in music and in words.

Thanks were also expressed to the Tellers and the support staff.

The Moderator expressed concern, on behalf of Mission Council, for the General Secretary at this time of increased workload and pressure.

The Chaplain led Mission Council in a meditation with music, a hymn and prayers.

30/9 - 2/10/97



The United Reformed Church

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To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

16 September 1997

Dear Colleague

*Mission Council: 30 September - 2 October 1997
High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire
Telephone Number: 01992 463016*

This letter accompanies the second mailing for the Council meeting.

You will find a list of groups on the back of this page. If you volunteered to be a leader or reporter, please make a point of checking whether or not you are being called on this time. Come prepared if you are.

The consequences of the Assembly debate on human sexuality will require a fair bit of our time and attention. The papers relating to this are pinned together: do make a point of reading them. In particular, please put your mind and the minds of others to the matter of nominations.

You were given advance notice in my letter of 6 May that Provincial groups would be asked to say whether they wanted any changes in priorities or emphasis, or to suggest new matters, for the agenda of Mission Council. This is intended as a way of letting the voice of the local church be heard. You will have a fairly short time in your Provincial groups before tea on Tuesday, with a report back immediately afterwards. We are not looking for a long and detailed shopping list: perhaps one or two items that you believe deserve more attention, or less. It is possible that some will have no suggestions at the present time.

While in your Provincial groups, please will you decide who will be your Provincial representative on the resolution 18 nominating group (Paper A2).

It has been pointed out to me that the Stewardship task group no longer exists and so Julian Macro is no longer a member of Mission Council as its convener. The title of the Discipleship and Witness Committee should have been changed to Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee.

Please bring with you a Bible and a copy of 'Rejoice and Sing'.

Yours sincerely

Revd John Waller
Deputy General Secretary

GROUPS

The first person named is the leader, the second the reporter.

- | | | | |
|----------|--|----------|--|
| A | Wilma Frew
Derek Wales
Sally Brooks
Peter Clarke
Keith Forecast
Paul Franklin
John Humphreys
Lesley Husselbee
Margaret McKay
Peter Roche | B | Chris Wright
Val Morrison
Ray Adams
Hilary Gunn
David Helyar
Graham Long
Gordon Ollerenshaw
Alasdair Pratt
Jill Strong
Jean Sylvan Evans |
| C | Graham Cook
Graham Maskery
Peter Brain
Margaret Carrick Smith
John Jenkinson
Peter McIntosh
Christine Meekison
John Rees
Stephen Masaton
John ... | D | Carol Rogers
Julian Macro
Lesley Charlton
Desmond Curry
John Edwards
Malcolm Hanson
Ann Jackson
Margaret Lewis-Coppet
Harley Digham
...
Wendy Woodside |
| E | Bob Day
Mary Eden
Bob Andrews
Sue Brown
Dave Coaker
David Jenkins
David Lawrence
Delyth Rees
Graham Stacy
Elizabeth Whitten | F | Graham Campling
Barbara Martin
Marian Crack
Christine Craven
Arnold Harrison
Geoff Lunt
Colin Thompson
David Thompson
Bill Wright
Erica Young |
| G | Elizabeth Caswell
Bill Mahood
Tom Bayliss
Tony Burnham
Clem Frank
Rosemary Johnston
Rachel Poolman
Peter Poulter
Duncan Wilson
Steve Wood
Irene Wren | H | Philip Woods
Brian Evans
Michael Cruchley
Peter Devaney
Jenny Hale
Susan Rand
Janet Sowerbutts
Ann Sutcliffe
John Waller
Ken Woods |



The United Reformed Church

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General Secretary

The Revd Anthony G Burnham BA

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Deputy General Secretary

The Revd. John Waller MA

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To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

27 August 1997

Dear Colleague,

*Mission Council 30 September - 2 October 1997
High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire*

I write to give you early warning of the next meeting.

The Council meets for lunch at 1.00pm on the Tuesday and ends with lunch at 1.00pm on Thursday. Arrivals are from 12 noon.

With this first mailing I enclose:

- a list of members (to enable you to travel together)
- an expense slip (to be completed and handed in at the meeting)
- directions for getting to High Leigh
- a form giving your accommodation and meal requests, and certain other information

Please return the completed form, if possible, by return of post. We need the information if liaison with the conference centre and our general administration is to be effective.

ACCURACY AND CHANGES

At the end of the last Council meeting ten or a dozen people who had ordered lunch did not stay to eat it. The result was a significant waste of food and money. Please try to give us accurate information and to let us know in good time of any necessary changes to your plans.

SAVING PAPER

Two major reports which have already been before Mission Council will need further attention from us this time. One is on Authority and the other on Oversight Ministries. Some of you will still have these reports or will have received them from your predecessor. In the interests of paper conservation, please indicate on the form if you need to receive a copy of one or both these reports.

cont...../

cont...../2Mission Council

GROUPS

At Council meetings we do some of our work in groups. These are fairly informal but they need a leader and also a reporter who is willing to record discussions or report them to a plenary session. Again please indicate on the form if you are willing to be a leader and/or reporter during the year 1997/8.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Inevitably human sexuality will be on our agenda, and in particular the implementation of Assembly resolution 18. You will find it helpful to have with you a copy of the 1997 Book of Reports.

That is perhaps enough for you handle at this stage! There will be a second mailing with fuller information later in September.

I will end on a domestic note. All bedrooms at High Leigh have a wash basin but only bed linen is provided. You should bring your own soap, towel, etc. with you. Please contact Naomi Davies in my office if you need to have one of the ground floor bedrooms or if you need to know anything further about the venue.

Yours sincerely



Revd John Waller
Deputy General Secretary

What are we about in Mission Council?

This paper is written particularly with those new to Mission Council in mind. It may also help some older hands!

The original vision

This was set out in the Reports to the Assembly of 1992: "The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and the policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body. As the Assembly is representative of the whole Church, so the Mission Council will listen to and will serve the local churches, to help them in their missionary vocation. It is a Mission Council and so the aim it will have in mind is to ensure that all we undertake centrally and all we are as a denomination is directed towards the mission of God in the world, towards that Kingdom of justice, peace, forgiveness and hope which is true life and which Christ brings in his person. The Council will ask, Is this programme, this appointment, this budget, this grant, this statement designed to further the overall mission, or simply to maintain our human structures of institutional life? It is by such criteria that priorities will have to be assessed, not only when new work is proposed but as the existing work of the church is reviewed".

The members

Each of the 12 Provinces is represented by 4 people, including its Moderator. These 48 people form the main body of the membership. The other significant group of members is the 13 Conveners of Assembly standing committees. FURY Council has 2 representatives, and conveners of long-term task groups are also members. Finally, the Assembly officers and certain other officer of the Church are members. This currently adds up to a total of 72 but the actual membership is slightly less as a few people are members in more than one category.

In attendance

The number present at any Council meeting is usually just over 80. This is because a number of members of staff and other consultants are present to advise the conveners and the Council itself. Whilst they do not have a vote and can only speak with permission, those in this category participate in group work and in many ways play a very important part in the life of the Council.

Paper

There are normally 2 mailings before each Council. The first contains practical information about the Council and may include other reports if they are ready. The second contains the agenda and timetable, and (as far as possible) all other papers to be considered by the Council. You need to build reading time into your diary in the week before every meeting!

Meetings

The Council meets 3 times a year, in October and March residentially for 48 hours and in January for a full Saturday. The meetings relate very much to the General Assembly: in October we take up any matters referred by Assembly, in January we begin to look ahead to the next one, and in March we very much focus on the Assembly in the following July. Our input also comes from committees of Assembly, which may want advice or decision, and from the Provinces. At the moment we could do with more of the latter.

Style of meeting

Worship and Bible Study are central to our meeting. They are the responsibility of the Moderator and her/his Chaplain. Much of the time we meet in plenary session, with the Moderator in the chair and the Clerk helping us in order. Normal rules for the conduct of business apply, although hopefully we can sometimes be more informal than an Assembly. It helps if speakers identify themselves. We use small groups (of about 10 people) in a variety of ways. Last year we kept the same groups for all 3 meetings: our normal practice is to change them for each meeting. The style of our working together is most affected by the informal conversations we have at coffee breaks and meal times - and late at night!

Advice

Advice is welcome from all quarters but Mission Council has 4 standing Advisory Groups. *Mission Council Advisory Group* (MCAG) plans the agenda and necessary follow up, and provides support for the Moderator and General Secretary. *The Resources Planning Advisory Group* (RPAG) prepares a rolling 5 Year Plan, annual budgets, and makes recommendations on the use of human and financial resources. *The Staffing Advisory Group* (SAG) considers staff posts due to become vacant and proposals for new posts, and brings appropriate recommendations to Mission Council. *The Advisory Group on Grants and Loans* (AGOGAL) considers and co-ordinates central grants. It makes an annual report to Mission Council. Elections to these groups normally take place at the March meeting, although casual vacancies have to be filled from time to time.

Administration

The administration of Mission Council is the responsibility of the Deputy General Secretary, to whom all reasonable comments and questions may be addressed!

John Waller
August 1997

MISSION COUNCIL 30 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 1997

The Moderator: Revd David Jenkins
General Secretary: Revd Tony Burnham
Clerk: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
Moderator Elect: Mrs Wilma Frew
Past Moderator: Dr David Thompson
Treasurer: Mr Graham Stacy
Deputy General Sec: Revd John Waller
Legal Adviser: Mr Hartley Oldham

Assembly Standing Committees

Doctrine Prayer & Worship: Revd Dr Colin Thompson
Discipleship & Witness: Revd Elizabeth Caswell
Church & Society: Mrs Val Morrison - or- Professor Malcolm Johnson
Youth & Children's Work: Revd Stephen Thornton
Ecumenical: Revd Bob Andrews
Ministries: Revd Graham Long
Training: Revd John Sutcliffe
Finance: Mr Graham Stacy
Communications & Editorial: Mr Chris Wright
Nominations: Revd Jessie Clare
Assembly Arrangements: Mrs Wilma Frew
Equal Opportunities: Mrs Susan Rand
Inter-Faith Relations: Revd Bill Mahood

Task Groups

Advocacy & Stewardship
- Revd Julian Macro

Fury Council

Ms Jenny Hale
Miss Liz Burns

12 Provincial Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each Province

1 Revd David Jenkins	Revd Peter Poulter, Mr Peter Clarke, Revd Ann Jackson
2 Revd Keith Forecast	Revd Bob Day, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw
3 Revd Graham Cook	Mrs Barbara Martin, Mr Wesley Woodside, Revd Peter Roche
4 Revd Arnold Harrison	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr Steve Wood, Mr Brian Evans
5 Revd Malcolm Hanson	Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Graham Maskery, Mrs Irene Wren
6 Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Tom Bayliss
7 Revd Elizabeth Caswell	Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Margaret McKay
8 Revd Ray Adams	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Mr Geoff Lunt
9 Revd Derek Wales	Revd Julian Macro, Revd Alasdair Pratt, Mrs Sue Brown
10 Revd Janet Sowerbutts	Dr Jack Gow, Rachel Poolman, Revd John Edwards
11 Revd David Helyar	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Graham Camppling
12 Revd John Humphreys	Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, Mr Denis Earp, Mr Peter Devaney

In attendance:-

Minute Secretary	Mrs Sally Brooks	Editor, Reform	Revd David Lawrence
Moderator's Chaplain	Revd Stephen Thornton	Training	Revd Dr Lesley Huselbee
Church & Society	Revd Peter Brain	Ecumenical Relations	Revd Sheila Maxey
Intl. Church Relations	Revd Philip Woods	Director, Windermere Centre	Revd Peter McIntosh
Ministries	Revd Christine Craven	Communications	Mrs Carol Rogers
Chief Accountant	Mr Clem Frank	Advocacy	Revd Bill Wright
Youth Work	Mr Paul Franklin	Nominations	Mr Desmond Curry
Discipleship & Witness		Childrens Advocate	Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Office & Personnel Mngr	Mr Hilary Gunn	Theological Reflector	
Rural Consultant	Revd Michael Cruchley	Multi-racial, multi-cultural	
Convener RPAG	Revd Duncan Wilson	development worker	Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper



MISSION COUNCIL

from 30 September
to 2 October 1997

AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question, what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?

TUESDAY

12.00

Onwards

Check in

1.00

LUNCH

2.00

WORSHIP AND BIBLE LISTENING

Welcome and apologies

Appointment of minute secretary for this meeting

Minutes of last meeting

Matters arising

Our agenda and additional business

Report of Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper P)

Notice of election procedures

Appointment of tellers for the year

Province groups on agenda priorities

(see letter dated 16.9.97)

4.00

TEA

4.30

Report back

Human sexuality: responding to resolution 18

(Paper A2) (*including group work*)

7.00

SUPPER

8.00

Short but vital: AGOGAL report (Paper B)

Ministers' pension fund (Paper C)

Totnes (Paper D)

Ecumenical committee (Paper E)

Task group on authority (Paper N)

Responding to legal matters

8.45

PRAYERS

WEDNESDAY

8.30

BREAKFAST

9.15

COMMUNION

10.00	Human sexuality: the reaction to resolution 19 (Paper A1)
10.45	COFFEE
11.15	Human sexuality: the reaction to resolution 19 : review of resolution 41 (Paper A3)
1.00	LUNCH
	Free time
3.30	TEA
4.00	Church life and mission: Provincial projects (Paper F) Resource Planning Advisory Group YCWT management (Paper G) Holiday Forum (Paper H) Church and Society (Paper Q at meeting)
7.00	SUPPER
8.00	People: Nominations, including Secretaries for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness, and Youth Work Staffing Advisory Group (Paper J) Pilot Development Officer (Paper K) Assembly Arrangements Report of Moderator 1996/97 (Paper O at meeting)
8.45	PRAYERS

THURSDAY

8.30	BREAKFAST
9.15	WORSHIP AND BIBLE LISTENING
10.00	Election to vacant place on MCAG Election to resolution 18 groups Ministerial discipline guidelines (Paper I)
10.45	COFFEE
11.15	Discipline of members and pastoral breakdown (Paper M) (<i>including group work</i>) Theology of Ministry (Paper L)
12.30	CLOSING PRAYERS
1.00	LUNCH

After the Assembly debate on human sexuality

There are significant matters which Mission Council needs to discuss, either because Assembly has asked it to, or out of concern for the life of the whole Church. We shall consider them under three headings although clearly they belong together. Despite the title, our discussion and decision at this meeting is about the care, confidence, and direction of the Church as a whole.

1. Resolution 18

This is dealt with in attached paper A2. We are dealing with this first because it is an Assembly instruction and because the decision we take (particularly about timetable) will be a factor when we come to a more general discussion. It is also important that we have the maximum time to think about and discuss nominations to any groups.

2. The reaction to resolution 19

We will come to this fresh on Wednesday morning. The discussion will be opened by Tony Burnham, who has borne the brunt of the reaction since the Assembly. He will set the scene and then in plenary session you will be asked to fill the picture out. Provincial representatives are asked to come with some idea of the variety of reactions within their Provinces.

Our discussion will eventually have a focus in a resolution which has been sent to us by the Derbyshire District Council. It reads as follows:

"Derbyshire District Council, recognising the divisive nature of resolution 19, instructs Mission Council to suspend resolution 19".

This was proposed, at a meeting on 8 September, by the Revd Philip Waller, seconded by Mr Jim Gill, and passed by the Council with two people voting against.

It is not "normal" for Mission Council to be asked to suspend an Assembly resolution within 3 months of its being passed, and we will need to consider the implications of doing so. However, Mission Council is empowered to act on behalf of Assembly between its meetings. It will be necessary, in this case, to decide whether or not our consideration of this matter is allowed under standing order 3e(iv). A matter which has been resolved by Assembly cannot be considered again for two years unless it is deemed that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter.

Our prayer must be that God will give us clear minds and compassionate hearts. Although we may not specifically discuss resolution 17, we need to remember it.

3. Resolution 41 review

The actions that have been taken as a result of this resolution are described in Paper A3 attached. The Council is asked to review the situation.

John Waller
September 1997

Responding to Resolution 18

This was passed by the Assembly in the following amended form.

18. *Assembly,*
noting the requests made in a number of responses from local churches, District Councils and provincial Synods for further time and space to reflect on these matters, asks Mission Council to arrange for further work to be done, ecumenically and in consultation with our partner churches through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) where appropriate and possible, on
- a) the nature of Biblical authority for the life of the church;*
 - b) the relationship between the authority of General Assembly and the other Councils of the Church;*
 - c) the matter of ordination and human sexuality, including the implications of ordaining ministers in committed homosexual relationships; and also to consider ways in which the Church may be assisted in reflection on the wider issues of human sexuality. To enable this process Assembly asks Mission Council to establish a timetable for these reflective processes and ensure appropriate representation on necessary consultative groups and working parties.*

MCAG proposes the following way of responding to the resolution. Mission Council will need to discuss it and then decide whether to accept or to amend it.

The proposal

1. Mission Council should remit responsibility for the implementation of resolution 18 to a core group of 3 of its senior members, plus the General Secretary, who will act as secretary. "Senior" is intended to describe gifts and experience rather than age.

The core group would work through the conveners of the sub-groups described in paragraph 2. It would be responsible for arranging the ecumenical consultation required by the resolution. It would consider and respond to requests for the appointment of co-opted members to any of the sub-groups. It would negotiate the allocation of Assembly-appointed staff to any sub-group that was not able to administer its own work.
2. The core group would oversee the work of the following four sub-groups and in due course would report to Mission Council.
The sub-groups would be:
 - 2.1 Biblical authority (6 people)
 - 2.2 Authority of General Assembly and other councils (6 people)
 - 2.3 Ordination and human sexuality (6 people)
 - 2.4 Reflection on wider issues of sexuality (6 people)
3. The core group should be asked to report to the March 1999 Mission Council, with a view to a report being submitted to Assembly.

4. The core group should be asked to consider the possibility of publishing discussion papers on any or all of the areas of its remit, in order to allow wider discussion of the issues involved so that people can be prepared for Assembly discussion.
5. The treasurer would be asked to authorise an overspend on the 1997 and 1998 budgets to allow this work to begin. A separate budget figure would be negotiated within the Mission Council budget for 1999.

Mission Council agrees to implement Assembly resolution 18 in accordance with the proposal submitted by the Mission Council Advisory Group.

This proposal as it stands, or in an amended form, will require people to be appointed to do the work. MCAG proposes that they should be appointed by Mission Council at this meeting. In view of the importance of the work, and of the need for those who do it to carry the confidence of the whole Church, some unusual nominating procedures are suggested.

Nominations

6. A nominating group would be established consisting of David Thompson, immediate, past Moderator, (Convener), Tony Burnham (Secretary) and one representative of each Province appointed by and from the Provincial representatives to Mission Council.
7. The General Secretary would receive nominations from members of Mission Council up to lunch time on Wednesday, 1 October. The nominations should be accompanied by two or three sentences describing the nominee and her/his particular gifts. They should also indicate whether the person is nominated for the core group or one or more of the sub groups.
8. The nominating group would be asked to produce a slate of names for the core group and sub-groups (if possible with a few alternates) for consideration by the Council on Thursday morning. The Council would consider the slate as a whole, although individual names might need to be discussed or even changed.
9. In making and considering nominations the following points (among others) may be important:
 - 9.1 Each of the sub-groups needs people with expertise but they also need within them an understanding of the nature and current thinking of the whole United Reformed Church.
 - 9.2 The usual considerations of balance must apply, with attention given to the theological balance. This does not necessarily mean that identified groups must have their person(s) on each of the sub-groups.
 - 9.3 In view of the tight timetable, and in view of the fact that other work must continue, it may be right to see if the membership of the sub-groups can be drawn largely from those who are not currently members of Assembly committees.

Mission Council adopts the nominating process for resolution 18 groups as proposed by the Mission Council Advisory Group.

John Waller
September 97



MISSION COUNCIL

from 30 September
to 2 October 1997

A3

Resolution 41 Pastoral Group

Report to Mission Council : September/October 1997

1. At its meeting in July the Assembly passed the following resolution:

"General Assembly instructs the Officers of Assembly as a matter of urgency to form a Working Group to enable sensitive care of Districts, Churches and individuals who feel pain and distress as a result of the passing of Resolution 19 and asks Mission Council to review the work of the group at its next meeting."
2. The Assembly officers subsequently appointed Elizabeth Caswell, Malcolm Hanson, Jim Hollyman, Glyn Jenkins Lis Mullen and John Waller as members of the group. It was agreed that reference to the group should be made through the General Secretary. Most of this information was published in the September issue of "Reform". An update will appear in October.
3. The group had a first meeting on 4 September and further meetings are planned.
4. Certain general principles were agreed:
 - ◆ There would be a direct personal response to every enquiry.
 - ◆ In many cases a reference would be made to existing local sources of pastoral care.
 - ◆ Alternative sources would be negotiated when this seemed to be required.
 - ◆ In some cases the group or one of its members would give direct pastoral support.
 - ◆ If experience showed this to be helpful, the group could in future offer some general guidance.
5. The group wondered whether or not it would be appropriate to offer to act in a mediating role in the case of ministers considering resignation from the roll or churches considering secession.
6. The group considered applications for help from four ministers and decided on an initial response in each case.
7. Whilst this report is presented in a bureaucratic form, the group is clear that its method of working must be pastoral. By the grace of God it will respond to the pain of those who come to it always in a pastoral spirit.

John Waller
10 September 97



MISSION COUNCIL

*from 30 September
to 2 October 1997*

B

ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS (AGOGAL)

REPORT FOR PERIOD JANUARY 1996 - JULY 1997

Background

AGOGAL is an Advisory Group to Mission Council, and was established in 1992 "to advise Mission Council and specialised Committees of Assembly on grants and loans from central funds in support of the local ministry of projects which are designed to develop the outreach of the church and which are applied for by a Provincial Synod or by a local church or District Council with Synod approval". It was reviewed by Mission Council in January 1996, and its continuation supported.

It was originally intended that AGOGAL consider requests for financial support from the following funds:

- Church Building Fund
- Industrial Evangelism Fund
- Ministry in Ecumenical Situations (MES)
- Mission Expenses in the UK (MEUK)
- New Enterprises in Mission (NEM)

In practice, the Church Buildings Fund has operated separately from AGOGAL, the MES, MEUK and NEM funds have been combined in to the Combined Grants Fund, and a Social Action sub-division has been added. (AGOGAL has also been responsible for reviewing Assembly Grants - previously known as Central Church Grants - to specific bodies supported by the URC, but wishes to propose a change to this arrangement - see below.

Membership

Apart from its Convenor and Secretary, AGOGAL's membership is made up of staff members. The current membership is (changes since the last report are indicated):

- Convenor (since March 1996): Simon Rowntree (member of Mission Council)
- Secretary: Rev Roger Whitehead
- Church and Society: Rev Peter Brain
- Discipleship and Witness: to be appointed (previously Muriel Garrow)
- Ecumenical: Rev Sheila Maxey
- Finance: Clem Frank
- International Church Relations: Rev Philip Woods (previously Rev Tony Coates)
- Ministries (CRCWs): Graham Ghaleb
- Ministries: Rev Christine Craven (previously Rev Michael Diffey)
- Youth and Children's Work: Paul Franklin and Rosemary Johnston (alternates)
- Deputy General Secretary: Rev John Waller

The Group has now settled into a pattern of meeting three times a year in April, July and December. Those applying for grants do so through the Secretary.

Assembly Grants

Following a request from the staff members, AGOGAL wishes Mission Council's approval for a change in the way Assembly grants are handled. **It is proposed that from the 1999 Budget these be handled by the Ecumenical Committee** as that Committee has the responsibility of guiding the URC in its ecumenical priorities, and includes appropriate representation from other areas.

Summary report January 1996 - July 1997

Mission Council may wish to note that AGOGAL has instituted a process whereby more detailed reports from projects receiving grants are submitted through Provinces. The Convenor is in the process of summarising these in the hope that they might be produced as a leaflet for the general information to demonstrate some of the exciting things that are happening locally throughout the Church with the help of relatively small pump-priming grants. It is hoped that this will be ready in draft form for the December meeting of AGOGAL.

At the request of the Secretary for International Church Relations, AGOGAL has recently taken on the responsibility of prioritising URC applications for CWM funding.

What follows is a brief summary of grants given by AGOGAL in this period

(March)

Ministry in Ecumenical Situations (MIES)

(This is further subdivided into funds to support County Ecumenical Officers (C), Chaplains at Further and Higher Education Colleges (E), Industrial Chaplains (I), and new Ecumenical Partnerships (P).

£325 pa towards the costs of the Northants Ecumenical Officer (C)

£575 for one year for the Coventry and Warwickshire Ecumenical Officer (C)

£2,700 pa for five years towards the Free Church Chaplaincy at Warwick University (E)

£2,000 pa for five years towards the Free Church Chaplaincy at Coventry University (E)

£800 pa towards the Free Church Chaplaincy at East Anglia University (E)

£2,100 pa three years towards the Free Church Chaplaincy at Oxford Brookes University (E)

£2,500 pa for three years towards the cost of the Severnside Industrial Chaplaincy (I)

£5,500 pa for three years towards the cost of ecumenical ministry in the Locking Castle housing development, Weston-super-Mare (P)

£5,000 pa for three years towards the cost of ecumenical ministry in Pratts Bottom, Orpington (P)

£5,500 pa for three years towards a Methodist diaconal worker in North Swindon (P)

Mission Expenses in the UK (MEUK)

£7,000 over three years towards the expenses of a CRCW in Clapton Park, Hackney

£3,000 pa for one further year towards the expenses of the Justice and Peace Worker, Milton Keynes

£2,500 pa for five years (reducing in the last two years) towards the expenses of the North Warwickshire Special Category Ministry.

£6,000 for a one year block grant to the Birmingham Inner City Mission Council (£2,000 of this comes from the NEM Fund)

£4,500 in the first year towards the expenses of a URC minister in the upper Dean LEP, Bedfordshire

£3,000 pa for five years towards the cost of appointing a Mission Enabler for the South Wales District

New Enterprises in Mission (NEM)

£3,000 pa for three years towards the costs of volunteer workers to implement the mission strategy at the Vine Church, Rochester

£2,000 for three years towards the expenses of a volunteer to undertake a mission audit at Sheerness URC

£3,000 pa for three years towards the cost of a Project Co-ordinator for the Nelson Inter-Faith Project

£3,000 pa for two years towards the cost of the Gillingham Mission Seed Team

£3,000 pa for three years towards the cost of a children's worker in the Montfort Mission Project, Romsey

£4,500 over three years towards the cost of appointing a London City Missionary at Charlton URC

£300 to the National Religious Education Festival

Social Action (SA)

£2,500 for one year towards the cost of a development worker at Old Trafford working with two Anglican parishes and the URC

£3,000 for one year towards the cost of a volunteer at Boulevard URC,
Nottingham, in the Hyson Green and Forest Fields Community Work Project

£3,000 pa for three years towards the cost of an ecumenically funded youth
worker in Groby URC, Leicester

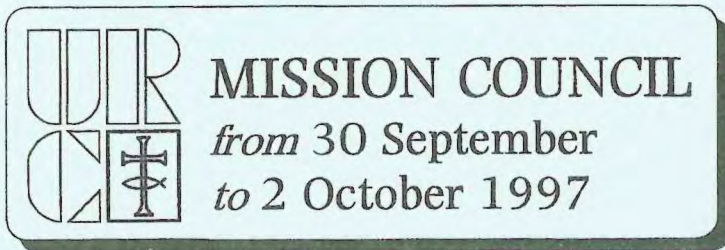
£2,000 pa for three years towards the cost of a community worker on the
Boarded Barns Estate, Chelmsford Group of Churches

£3,000 pa for a further two years to Friary URC Drop-in Centre, West Bridgford

£1,200 for a further nine months towards the cost of employing a part-time
youth worker at the Rotherham Culture Shock Youth Project

£3,000 for one further year towards the cost of an administrator for the Llynfi
valley Youth Project

Simon Rowntree
Convener
3 September 1997



C

Ministers' Pension Fund

Rule 15.2 of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund is as follows:-

"The participating bodies shall also contribute, and where the member is engaged directly in the service of the URC, a further contribution shall be made from the funds administered by the Committee, the amounts of these contributions being determined by the Assembly from time to time on the advice of the actuary".

This paragraph covers the employer's contribution to the Ministers' Pension Fund, which was run at the level of 10.65% of basic stipend for many years. Following the recent actuarial review, the actuary has advised that this percentage shall be increased to 11.75%. This advice was given in the expectation, which has come to fruition, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would remove the right of pension funds to recover tax borne on dividends.

The following resolution will be moved by the Treasurer:

"Mission Council, acting on behalf of the Assembly agrees, that, with effect from the 1st January 1998, the employer's contribution to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund payable in the terms of Rule 15.2 of the rules of the Pension Fund shall be at the rate of 11.75% of the basic stipend paid to each member".



D

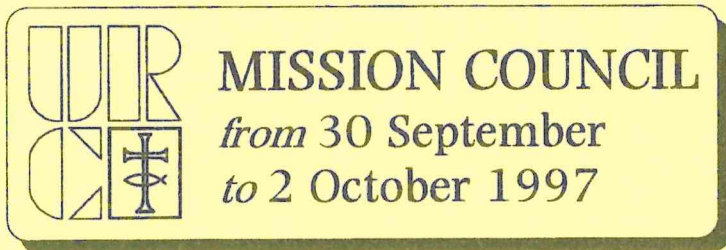
Totnes United Church

"Mission Council is requested to pass the following Resolutions to enable certain permanent endowments to be dealt with under a pre-1972 Charity Commission Scheme"

Resolutions to be proposed at the meeting of Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly to be held on 30 September 1997 pursuant to the provisions of clause 23 of the charity commission scheme sealed on the 31st December 1954 and confirmed by the Baptist Chapel and other charities (Totnes and Tuckenhay) scheme confirmation act 1956 ("the 1956 Scheme")

It was resolved that:-

1. The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church is the successor authority to the Congregational Union of England and Wales referred to in Clause 23 (3) of the 1956 Scheme as one of the "Joint Authorities" for the determination of questions arising under the said Clause 23 and that Mission Council is the proper body to discharge the duties of the General Assembly in relation thereto acting under its delegated powers.
2. That Reverend W.R.P. Adams be authorised on behalf of Mission Council to act as its representative at the Meeting of the joint Authorities to be constituted and held pursuant to clause 23 of the 1956 Scheme and be authorised to agree the following resolutions which it is intended shall be put to that Meeting:-
 - (i) that the joint Authorities are satisfied from the evidence produced to them by the Church Meeting that the number of infant baptisms in the buildings used by Totnes United Church for religious worship during the last preceding period of five years has been less than 5 and that in consequence it is desirable that the provisions of Clause 23 (2) of the 1956 Scheme take effect.
 - (ii) that for the purposes of Clause 23 (2) (c) of the 1956 Scheme all (if any) endowments held in trust for the United Church and any general purpose funds held by the United Church (as opposed to endowments referred to in Clause 23 (2) (a) and (b) for which special provision is made in the 1956 Scheme itself) shall revert to and be held in trust for the ongoing Totnes Baptist Church.
 - (iii) that the proper expenses incurred by the Joint Authorities in making their determination under Clause 23 of the 1956 Scheme (including all legal costs Value Added Tax and disbursements) shall be met by the ongoing Totnes Baptist Church.

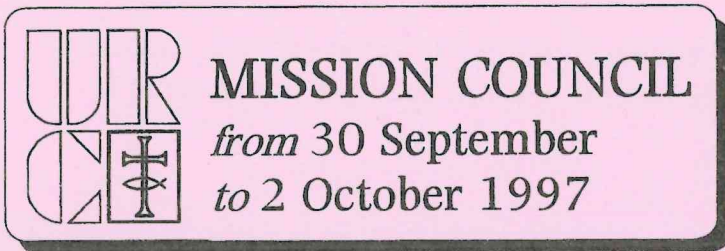


E

Composition of the Ecumenical Committee

To date the Nominations Committee have ensured that two out of the eight 'core' members of the Ecumenical Committee (i.e. those appointed by Assembly and not other committees) have come one from Scotland and one from Wales. In future the Committee would like to propose that the Synod of Wales appoint someone to represent ecumenical concerns in Wales (after David Fox comes to the end of his term in 1998) and that the same should apply for Scotland after Peter Arthur retires in 1999 (i.e. the Mid-Scotland District or the Synod of Scotland depending on where we are with the SCC by then - if union goes ahead we would expect it to be for the Synod of Scotland to name their representative). This would then leave the Nominations Committee free to fill the eight 'core' places as they thought most appropriate.

Of course, this involves an increase in the size of the Ecumenical Committee and hence we believe that such a change of practice would need authorising by Mission Council.



F

CWM Gift of Grace

At its meeting in October 1996 Mission Council decided that this money should be given for mission projects in the 3 Provinces with the least resources. The expected amount per Province was £27 - 28,000.

In January 1997 that decision was defined as follows:

- 8.1 That the criteria used by the Resource Sharing Task Group to assess relative wealth should be used also for the purpose of identifying East Midlands, Mersey and Wales Provinces as the primary recipients of the Hong Kong money.
- 8.2 That each of the above Provinces be asked to submit proposals for a mission project which will be funded out of its proportion of the Hong Kong money. This should be work that would not otherwise have been funded out of their own resources.
- 8.3 That the Mission Council in March or October 1997 will be invited to approve these proposals, or not. Once approved, occasional reports will be submitted to Mission Council for forwarding to CWM.
- 8.4 In the event that any or all of the 3 Provinces are not able to submit an approved project by October 1997, Mission Council may wish to invite the next poorest, as identified by the Resource Sharing Task Group".

The submissions from the Mersey and Wales Provinces will be available at Mission Council. The submission from the East Midlands Province is detailed below.

Proposal for a mission project

Background

The East Midlands Province has for some time had a concern to integrate and develop its approach to mission. At an all day conference in May, a great deal of existing work was identified and encouragement given to several other initiatives. Two further projects were identified as appropriate next priorities. Both would require funding and both needed more preparatory work to be done. In the case of one of these - the development of an evangelism training resources project in Leicester - further discussions have shown that more groundwork is needed before the project can begin.

In the case of the other project - the appointment of a Mission Enabler through CWM - a great deal more work has now been done. However, this is a new project which will only be possible if funding can be found. It is this proposal, therefore, which is now offered to Mission Council in relation to the CWM 'gift of grace'.

Post

A Mission Enabler; to enthuse and enable Churches to reflect on the Gospel and its relationship to contemporary culture, so that they are encouraged in evangelism.

Placing

The South Leicestershire Group has been chosen because there already exist all the requirements for ministerial and family support. The geographical location is ideal for access to the whole Province, and the Group is enthusiastic about the project.

The Person

An advertisement was sent to our CWM partner Churches. (Copy attached). We are currently looking at applications.

Budget

	<i>month (approx)</i>	<i>year</i>	<i>whole project (3 years)</i>
Housing	£400	£4800	£14400
Transport	£340	£4000	£12000
Expenses	£ 84	£1000	£ 3000

This comes to £29400. We have assumed accommodation for a family.

Conclusion

The East Midlands Province is convinced that a Mission Enabler from a CWM partner Church will be of enormous benefit, and could play an important role in the overall mission strategy of the Province.

It is hoped that such a placement will establish mutually beneficial links between the Province and various churches within the CWM region.

We ask Mission Council to approve the allocation of 'Gift of Grace' funds for this purpose.



MISSION COUNCIL

*from 30 September
to 2 October 1997*

G

PROVINCIAL MANAGEMENT OF YCWT / YLTOs.

Report Submitted by Helen M. Brown. 11/9/97

1. Preamble

Mission Council agreed that Provincial management of the YCWT/YLTOs was feasible and set out a scheme, in paper 'B' at their meeting held on 18th January 1997. Paragraph 2.2 proposed the employment of someone to manage the change, over a period of twelve months, and implement the actions listed in Section 9 of the said paper. As the person appointed to undertake this task, I submit my report.

2. Action taken to date

2.1 Having been asked to consider taking this role, I submitted my action plan for consideration. This was accepted and on 6th March 1997 I met with Revd John Waller to discuss the process which lay ahead in implementing the change to Provincial management of the YCWT/YLTOs! Since then I have kept in regular contact with John Waller and have submitted written and verbal reports to him on every aspect of the work, each stage of the process and my progress to date.

2.2 First, I wrote to all twelve Synod Clerks to introduce myself, outline the task and ask for the names of the appropriate people in their Strategy Groups ² with whom I should make contact in their Province. Eventually visits to each of the twelve Provinces were arranged over a period of five months where I met with members of the Strategy Group, or

1. YCWT is the title used throughout this paper to include the 9 Youth and Children's Work Trainers (YCWTs), 2 Youth Leadership Training Officers (YLTOs) and 1 Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer (YCWTDO). They may also be referred to as Trainers.

2. The term Strategy Group is used to include all the titles used for the Provincial group which manages the Trainers (YCWT/YCWTDO).

representatives of their group, the YCWT or YLTO. In seven Provinces the Provincial Moderator was also present.

2.3. The purpose of the visits to the Provinces was fivefold:-

- 2.3.1. to gather as much information as possible by listening to and seeking the views of the Provinces in managing the change
- 2.3.2. to find out how far they had moved in planning for Provincial management and to learn of any difficulties which were arising in implementing this change
- 2.3.3. to ascertain whether or not the scheme and recommendations set out in Mission Council paper 'B' had been read, understood and acted upon and, if not, why not
- 2.3.4. to stress the importance of the Staff Development Policy (SDP) and the need to follow the principles and guidance contained therein.
- 2.3.5. to discuss the range of issues and sensitivities which arise when implementing change and offer any help, guidance and support.

2.4. Each meeting lasted between one and a half and five hours. The meetings had a broad agenda encompassing the five points above. Provinces were encouraged to describe their situation and the action they had taken to date. They were asked to comment on the proposals set out in the scheme from Mission Council paper 'B'. My checklist of questions ensured that all Provinces made their response to the same issues as well as discussing those of

- 2.5.1. all provinces have accepted the change to Provincial management, a few enthusiastically and others with enthusiasm, welcoming the opportunity to manage provincially
- 2.5.2. some Provinces had already identified and nominated their manager and planned the necessary action. Others were at the beginning of this process. (All Provinces have now nominated their Provincial Manager).
- 2.5.3. all provinces had differing views on each aspect such as whether this move was sound or not; how Provincial management should operate; the extent of the role and the amount of power invested in the manager and their relationship with the YCWT; the role of the Strategy Group; the role of the manager, consultant, personal supervisor and person named for purposes of dispute; inservice needs and training
- 2.5.4. some Provinces did not fully understand the implications of Provincial management and the meetings served to clarify this.
- 2.5.5. some Provinces, initially against the change, could see benefits following the discussion while a minority still question the wisdom of the change to Provincial management.
- 2.5.6. most YCWTs were concerned about achieving consistent standards across all Provinces both in the management of them and of their work.
- 2.6. Following each visit, a three/four page report plus a synopsis of the main points from the meeting was submitted to Revd John Waller for information.

2.7. I wrote to all YCWTs and met with them both individually in their Provinces and

collectively at their Team meeting in June. They were invited to telephone or write to me at any time about any issue. Six have telephoned about individual issues.

2.8. I judge myself to have created maximum opportunities for consultation and collaboration as requested by Mission Council. In addition to the above, I have met and spoken on more than one occasion with Revd John Sutcliffe, Revd Lesley Husselbee, Rosemary Johnstone, Children's Advocate (CA) and Paul Franklin, National Youth Secretary (NYS). I have contacted Revd Duncan Wilson by telephone and had a meeting with four representatives of the national Youth and Children's Work Committee. Discussions have taken place with Hilary Gunn and Clem Frank. Individual people from various Provinces have contacted me for further information, assistance, advice, clarification on certain points or to give me an update on the action they are taking.

2.9. I have rewritten the Staff Development Policy (SDP) incorporating the old policy and adding or extending some sections to assist those Provinces which feel they need more detailed guidance on procedures. The first draft of the revised SDP has been submitted for consultation, comment and amendment. I shall collate the responses as soon as they are received prior to passing the document to the appropriate committee/s for approval. The final SDP will be a yardstick for all to follow as well as providing the necessary documentation for accreditation by the Youth Agency and DfEE funding requirements.

2.10 During the rewriting of the document, I have worked closely with Mr Hilary Gunn on the guidance notes for the generic job descriptions and person specifications for the YCWT and the Manager, the disciplinary and grievance procedures and the terms and conditions of employment. (This was requested in para 9.1. of paper 'B').

2.11. Discussions re financial aspects have taken place with Clem Frank (re Section 6 of paper 'B'). His comments have been shared with representatives from each Province and all YCWTs.

2.12. From 6th March to date I have worked about 392 hours plus 130+ hours travelling (excluding overnight stays for provinces at a distance) which together averages over 15 hours per week. I have attended 25 meetings; sent 100+ letters; made or received over a hundred telephone calls.

(Para 2.2. of paper 'B' suggested 2 days a week and reducing. This target is being met).

3. Comment on findings to date

3.1. All Provinces have accepted the decision made by Mission Council to move to the Provincial management of YCWTs. (Initial responses from Provinces are given in Appendix 1 in Mission Council paper 'B'). Most Provinces are well organised having developed their management structures or are well on the way to implementing Provincial management.

Two Provinces are at the beginning of their reorganisation, one due to changes in personnel which will soon be resolved.

3.2. Provincial Management Groups

In most (but not all) Provinces, the Training Committees are working in close collaboration with the YCWTs and their Strategy Group. This is reflected in the range of titles given to the groups which are managing the YCWTs e.g. Training and Development Team Strategy Group; Training Strategy Committee; Provincial Training and Development Team; Provincial Development Team Management and Strategy Group; YCWT Co-ordinating Committee. It is also reflected in the 'old' Strategy Groups developing their role with the Provincial Training Committees. The Directors of Training and the YCWT are sharing aspects of training in several Provinces.

3.2.1. All Strategy Groups meet on a regular basis both formally and informally. Formal meetings take place between three or five times a year in all Provinces. All YCWTs provide reports for these meetings in written or oral forms or both. Most Provinces have formal agendas while some are more informal in the structure of their meetings. Most Provinces identify priorities and together with the YCWT, undertake forward planning of the work on a time-scale of one or two years.

Mission Critical identified 9 roles in Section 3.4, 5.4, 5.6, 5.9 of paper 'B'. The main role was that of the Provincial Manager to be responsible for the management of the YCWTs in the Province. All twelve Provinces have identified a manager with most already in post and actively managing their YCWT. This is a key post in the success of Provincial management

4.1.2. The interpretation of the role as given in section 5.4. of paper 'B' differs between Provinces as they develop their own strategies for all aspects of Provincial training. At one end of the scale there are Provinces who interpret the role of the Provincial Manager as overseeing the low key (yet important) day to day issues with the Provincial Strategy Group working closely as a Team, having a collaborative approach to the Provincial team management of the YCWT and this management team taking the decisions. At the other end of the scale are the Provinces which delegate decision taking to the Provincial Manager within the principles and structures previously agreed by the Strategy Group. Other Provinces fall between these parameters. Both systems are acceptable management structures in fulfilling the aim to oversee the day to day work of the YCWT and being responsible for ensuring the processes outlined in 5.4 & 5.5 of paper 'B' take place.

4.2. Consultant

The role of **Consultant** has not been universally supported in the Provinces. Four

Provinces questioned the need for such a post and questioned its validity and necessity. Seven have not identified one as they were uncertain as to the role or purpose of such a post. One (YLTO) has a consultant who is also his personal supervisor. It is felt to be a grey area in need of further thought. The range of opinion includes comments such as:-

- * there is no need for a consultant; one could be found should it be necessary
- * the personal supervisor or, in some cases, the manager could act as consultant (i.e. in agreement with 5.6. in paper 'B')
- * there should be one National consultant who understands the work of the YCWT and can be called upon by any of the twelve YCWTs or the Strategy Groups at agreed intervals to give external support or ensure professional development and inservice needs are being met. (Others disagreed as this was seen as one of the functions of the manager and Strategy Group).
- * a national consultant should be available to guide both the YCWTs and the Provincial Manager to oversee all Provinces and ensure continuity and consistency between all.
- * the support of a consultant should be optional
- * the money suggested as an allocation for this post (6.4. paper 'B') would give better value for money if it provided for quality inservice for the 12 members of the Team either as group or in 2/3 provinces sharing their allocation for regional inservice.
- * the name 'Consultant' is pretentious and if the role is to continue it should be changed to 'Mentor', 'Adviser' or 'Professional Adviser'. The term consultant has inappropriate connotations.
- * The £5,000 proposed allocation was considered either insufficient or too much depending on the differing viewpoints as to the role. Some feel payment is unrealistic and unfair especially when the manger is in a voluntary capacity and if the personal supervisor is unpaid and performing a similar task.
- * If a consultant was appointed, it would be difficult to monitor and administer
- * It could be difficult to find the appropriate person
- * some question how often this post would be needed in reality
- * Three Provinces have intimated they would be willing to share a consultant with another Province, if one was needed.

4.2.1. A consultant would only be needed where the manager or personal supervisor did not have the appropriate skills or experience. It was suggested by one Province that selection of the personal supervisor should ensure that they had the appropriate skills or experience if the manager did not possess these.

4.2.1. It was stated by some that the denomination needs someone to oversee reviews, schemes, procedures and to ensure good employment practices are maintained. This could be the 'link person' within the Training Committee or other nominated person who understands the work of the Team.

4.3. Personal Supervisor

Two thirds of the YCWTs have a personal supervisor, the others do not want or feel they need one. Of those having a personal supervisor, some use them extensively, others rarely. Some have had one in the past but not currently. All YCWTs understand it is their responsibility to find such a person if they want one.

4.3.1. Some Provinces commented that Supervisor was the wrong word as the manager is the supervisor so 'Adviser', 'Mentor' or 'Supporter' may be more appropriate.

4.4. Named Person (ref. 5.9. paper 'B').

Most Provinces felt there was no necessity to name someone at this stage to resolve differences which may arise. It was felt that if a situation was so serious or difficult that the Province, through its Strategy Group and Moderator, could not resolve the difficulties then the issue would be sufficiently serious to be referred directly to central office staff.

4.4.1. Some Provinces nominated the Moderator or Synod Clerk as the named person; others disagreed strongly with this as they felt the Moderator should have a pastoral role only. Those who wanted a named person felt that it should be someone external to their Province or in central office.

4.4.2. Others suggested it should be one person for the whole country, someone who is not a member of any Province, who can understand their work, their concerns and represent their views to the committee.

4.4.3. Some suggested that the URC needs such a person for all its central office, Assembly and Provincial Office staff and this person could also cover this role on behalf of all.

5. Team Meetings

5.1. The YCWTs have already organised their Team meetings closely in line with the suggestions made in Section 7 of paper 'B'. The role of chair and secretary is rotated for each meeting and the Secretary of the Training Committee, Children's Advocate and National Youth Secretary have been invited to and attended the meetings.

5.2. A representative of the Training Committee needs to attend most meetings of the Team to oversee national practice is being maintained, share information and give central direction where it is required.

6. Additional Comments/points raised

6.1. The demise of the NYCTO post has resulted in some positive 'spin-offs', despite the

concerns by some, by raising the awareness of the Provinces and requiring them to re-look at their provision for youth and children's work, the role of the YCWT and the functioning of their Strategy Groups. This has enhanced the role of the Trainers and raised awareness of their work and status. It has identified where provision and practice can be improved.

6.2. Two Provinces commented that they have previously lacked direction and been insufficiently rigorous. This change in management structure has prompted them into action which will result in greater efficiency and effectiveness as they are more aware of the need to plan and support their YCWT and to improve their communication and information flow. Some who originally questioned the change, now state that they would have replied positively had they understood the issues more fully.

6.3. Many stated that they are eager to improve their practice and this change has prompted them into reviewing the situation. They want the national pattern to be adhered to and delivered Provincially.

6.4. All Provinces are continuing to develop ecumenical links in a variety of ways.

7. Consequent Actions

Paper 'B' Section 9 lists the six consequent actions which the person appointed to the post would oversee. I state below where I have reached in relation to each point listed.

- 7.1. The Staff Development Policy (9.1.) - the first draft has been written and is out for consultation (see 2.9. of this paper).
- 7.2. Consultation with the Welsh Office and DfEE (9.2.) -Will be undertaken at the appropriate time on completion of the Staff Development Policy
- 7.3. Provincial Implementation (9.3). This is well advanced for most Provinces. They need to be given an agreed date for formal implementation.
- 7.4. Committees. (9.4) A decision on which committee will oversee the YCWTs is needed prior to the finalisation of plans proposed in section 5 of paper 'B'. I have discussed the issues with members of both committees and reported on this matter.
- 7.5. The Team (9.5) has had and will have further discussions on the points identified in section 7 of paper 'B'; they have already moved some way towards this.
- 7.6. Oversight (9.6) is taking place to the best of my ability through collaboration and regular consultation with all relevant parties.

8. Oversight of the the Team: Training Committee or National Youth and Children's Committee? A Recommendation to Mission Council.

- 8.1. There is a groundswell of opinion that the responsibility for the Team of YCWTs

should rest with the Training Committee rather than the National Youth and Children's Work Committee (see suggestion made by Mission Council in section 5.7. paper 'B').

8.1.1. The main reasons given are that:

- * this committee already gives oversight to the YCWT/YLTO programme and understands their role and function
- * the Team has confidence in this committee and judges it to be the appropriate committee to oversee their work
- * the YCWTs are trainers of adults who work with children and young people not primarily youth workers
- * most Provinces have included their YCWTs within their Provincial training and development structures already.

8.2. The overall views of the Youth and Children's Work Committee is that neither their committee nor the Training Committee should have overall responsibility. YCWTs should be managed by the Province with any grievances arising being dealt with centrally by the committee or person appropriate to the query e.g. disciplinary, grievance and appointments by the Personnel Officer; appraisal by the Ministries Committee and training issues by the Training Committee. All committees could communicate and liaise with the Team.

8.3. Recommendation

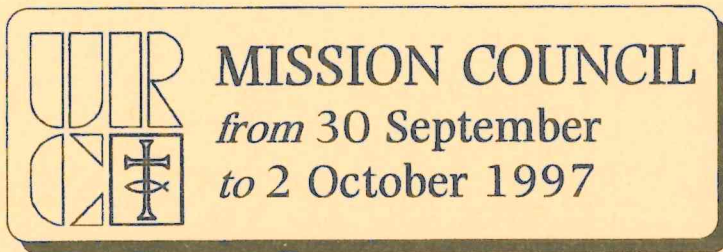
That the ultimate responsibility for the programme should rest with the Training Committee rather than the Youth and Children's Work Committee. The Training Committee is expected to share parts of that responsibility with other committees as appropriate.

Personal Note.

On a personal note, may I thank you for giving me the opportunity to undertake this task. It has given me a greater insight into the Church's mission and work which I would not have experienced otherwise. I have met many people and everyone has been most pleasant, helpful and patient with me. It has enriched my membership of the United Reformed Church enormously as well as my life.

H.M.B.

11/9/97



H

URC Holiday Forum

At its meeting in October 1993 Mission Council decided that no further URC Forums be held. The Forum had been a feature of church life for many years but recently numbers had declined and financial losses had been incurred.

At its meeting in January 1994 Mission Council was told that the October decision had been conveyed to those who had recently attended URC Forums and as a result an independent group had been set up and had agreed to run a Forum Holiday in August 1994.

This venture was successful and the group has run Holiday Forums each year since. Some 210 people attended this year, when Peter McIntosh was the speaker and Peter Poulter the worship leader. At some point the Discipleship and Witness Committee agreed that the group could use the title "URC Holiday Forum".

The steering group for Holiday Forum now wishes to regularise its position and proposes to set up a charitable trust for the purpose. It has asked;

- a) for the blessing of Mission Council to the setting up of a separate charitable trust, and
- b) for approval to the use of the initials "U.R.C." in the name "U.R.C. Holiday Forum Charitable Trust".

The request was discussed by the Mission Council Advisory Group and the advice of the Legal Adviser has been sought. MCAG is very sympathetic to the aim of the steering group to put the Holiday Forum on a more secure basis but it is not sure that the way proposed is the best way forward. The question may hang on some fairly technical legal points. MCAG therefore proposes that;

"Mission Council appoints Julian Macro, Graham Stacy and John Waller to represent it in discussions with the steering group of the URC Holiday Forum regarding the legal standing of the Forum and its relationship to the United Reformed Church".

John Waller
September 1997



MISSION COUNCIL

from 30 September
to 2 October 1997

I

MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE WORKING PARTY - FINAL REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL

1. General Assembly in July 1997 received and accepted our Report proposing a completely new Process for Ministerial Discipline. From this moment of acceptance, this new Process superseded all other disciplinary procedures and became operative.
2. The Working Party has met twice since Assembly and has completed the following tasks:
 - 2.1. It has written an Introduction which seeks to explain the Process and Rules of Procedure, mainly for the benefit of those whose responsibility it will be to initiate the Process, usually at District Council level.
 - 2.2. It has written Guidelines to assist those who will operate the Process within the Assembly Commission and the Appeals Commission.
 - 2.3. It has drafted 39 Forms of Notice which will be required at various stages of the Process.
3. The whole body of literature - Introduction, *Part 1*, *Part 2*, Guidelines and Forms - will be available at Mission Council for the perusal of those who wish to see it.
4. As soon as possible, the Introduction, Part 1 and Part 2 will be printed as a new "*Section O*" of the Manual of the United Reformed Church, together with consequent amendments to other sections of the Manual which have also been agreed by Assembly. The Guidelines will be published separately for those who need to have them. Forms 1 and 2 will be required at local level and will be held in the Provincial Offices. The remainder will be held by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission Panel (or the General Secretary in the case of Appeals).
5. There are several further pieces of work concerning aspects of discipline which the Working Party believes are not within its brief. These are as follow:
 - 5.1. *A new document to replace the existing Pastoral Measure*, taking up matters there which are not part of the newly accepted Ministerial Discipline Process. We understand that the Deputy General Secretary is looking into this matter as part of his responsibility for the regular revision of the Manual.
 - 5.2. *Revised Terms of Reference required for the Assembly Pastoral Committee* in the new situation. We understand that the General Secretary is attending to this matter.
 - 5.3. *Other aspects of Church Discipline*, including that of Elders and Members (as called for by Assembly but not tackled by this Working Party) together with aspects of Ministerial shortcomings which do not call for disciplinary action under the Section O Process e.g., allegations of laziness or inability to do the work.

- 5.4. We suggest that, at a later stage, Mission Council should decide how to deal with such matters.
6. Assembly will doubtless wish for an Annual Report from the Commission Panel. As the Panel will probably meet rarely as a body, we suggest that this might be provided by its officers. We further suggest that the first such report should be made in 1999 when the Process will have been operative for nearly two years.
7. We are aware that there are imperfections within the work we have done, despite our best efforts to eliminate them. We have already prepared a list of possible amendments which may be required at some time in the future to improve the Process and have passed this list to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission Panel. None of them, in our judgement, drastically affects the operation of the Process. Further amendments will doubtless be found necessary in the light of experience. We propose that the Secretary of the Panel maintains a list of all these and brings proposals to Assembly in 1999 as part of the first Report of the Panel.
8. We have been greatly assisted in our work by close contact with those in the Methodist Church who have been drafting and proposing procedures for their own Church while we have been drafting ours. The officers of the Panel hope to keep in touch with them as our separate proposals take effect, for we have much to learn from one another and there are many situations where we work in very close partnership.
9. The expert guidance of our Legal Adviser, Hartley Oldham, has been available to us more than grateful. It will continue to be available to the Panel in times of need. None of the remaining members of the Working Party, however, with the exception of the General Secretary, continue to hold the roles they held when appointed to do this work. In any case, we judge that the work to which we were commissioned is now complete. It therefore seems to us inappropriate that the Working Party should continue in existence and thus we ask that we be discharged.

Margaret Carrick Smith -former Convener, Accreditation Sub-Committee

Martin Cressey -former Assembly Clerk

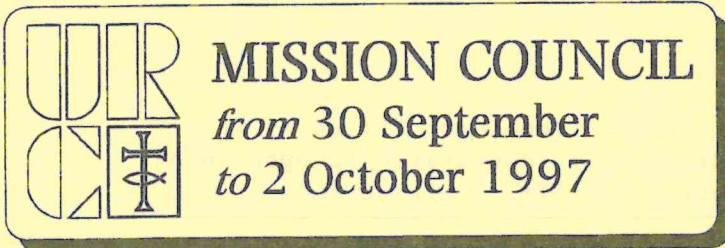
Hartley Oldham - Legal Adviser

Tony Burnham - General Secretary

Keith Forecast -former Convener, Ministries Committee - Convener of Working Party

Michael Diffey - former Secretary for Ministries)Secretaries to

Christine Craven - Secretary for Ministries from October 1996) Working Party



MISSION
COUNCIL

PAPER

MISSION COUNCIL STAFFING ADVISORY GROUP

REPORT TO MISSION COUNCIL 30th SEPTEMBER to 2nd OCTOBER 1997

INTRODUCTION

1. The Staffing Advisory Group met on 11th September 1997 primarily to consider a proposal relating to the following post:

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

SECRETARY FOR ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

2. This post is lified until 31st August 1998 and is currently filled by Revd Sheila Maxcy.

3. A paper which argued for the continuation of the post, prepared by Revd Bob Andrews (new Convener of the Ecumenical Committee), had been made available to the members of the Group in advance of its meeting. During the meeting the Group had the opportunity to question Revd Bob Andrews in person and the exchanges and resultant discussion were most helpful. Also made available to the Group was the revised Job Description (dated September 1997) which is attached to this Report.

4. The United Reformed Church has long understood that mission and ecumenism go hand-in-hand together. Increasingly, it is seen that for mission to be successful it must involve working in partnership with other churches, both in this country and overseas. It is clear to the members of the Group that the developing relationships between churches, both bi-laterally and through the Ecumenical Instruments, requires there to be a credible, full-time member of staff who can serve as the focal point of the URC's ecumenical enterprise. Accordingly, the Group recommends to Mission Council that the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations should continue for a further lified period of 5 years from 1 September 1998.

5. It is also clear to the Group that post should be filled by a person who has experience, knowledge and expertise within both mission and ecumenism, but it is also necessary for the post-holder to have theological training and insight, and be able to bring and articulate a Reformed understanding of issues which arise in the course of discussions and developing relationships with other churches and traditions. The Group recommends

that although it might be assumed that the post would be filled by an ordained Minister of the Reformed tradition, it should also be open to be filled by a lay-person who has the requisite gifts, training and experience.

6. The Group recognises that the General Secretary is often called upon to take a lead role in ecumenical discussions and believes that the close working relationship between the General Secretary and the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations should be more precisely spelled out in the Job Description (perhaps in the section headed "In General"). The close relationship which must exist with the Secretary for International Relations is clear and is referred to, but that with the General Secretary is not, the Group believes, sufficiently stated.

7. In examining the Job Description and in discussing the work actually done by the post-holder, the Staffing Advisory Group suggests that the Ecumenical Committee should be asked to consider allocating priorities. It feels that this action would enable the post-holder to be given freedom to operate creatively and engage, in a pro-active way, with the issues which arise at both local and national levels.

8. In making its recommendations the Staffing Advisory Group brings the following RESOLUTION to Mission Council:

RESOLUTION. 1. *Mission Council authorizes the continuation of the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations for a period of 4 years from 1 September 1992 or until it becomes vacant whichever*

is more appropriate.

2. *Mission Council urges the Ecumenical Committee to re-draft the job description for the post to make more specific the requirement for the post holder to be in a close working relationship with the General Secretary. It also invites the Ecumenical Committee to consider allocating priorities for the post-holder to encourage more creative and pro-active engagement with ecumenical issues at all levels.*

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Job Description

Responsible to : the General Secretary

The Purpose of the Job

1. To develop and maintain the relationships, at local, regional and national level, of the United Reformed Church with the other churches and the ecumenical instruments in the United Kingdom.
2. To help and encourage the United Reformed Church to receive and learn from personnel coming from partner churches overseas, particularly through the Council for World Mission.

Main Duties

1. General Assembly, Mission Council, Provinces and Districts.

To attend and provide the General Assembly and the Mission Council with information necessary for the proper conduct of its business. To network, inform, advise and consult the province and district ecumenical officers through visits, consultations and mailings.

2. Ecumenical Committee

In consultation with the Secretary for International Church Relations to prepare the agenda, documentation and minutes in relation to that part of the committee business dealing with ecumenical relations within the United Kingdom. To conduct correspondence in the committee's name.

3. Ministry in Ecumenical Situations Grants for Ecumenically Appointed Ecumenical Officers

To co-operate with the Secretary to the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans in consulting with the provinces about their needs for such grants, preparing the annual budget and arranging for payment.

4. Invitations to General Assembly

To initiate invitations on behalf of the General Secretary to voting representatives and official visitors from partner churches in the United Kingdom to the General Assembly.

5. Other Ecumenical Bodies

To represent the United Reformed Church, by virtue of office, at the Assembly of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, the Forum and the Enabling Group and the Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England, and the Free Church Federal Council.

To service bi-lateral liaison groups and set up and service occasional bi-lateral consultations and conversations.

To keep in close contact with the United Reformed Church's different and developing ecumenical relations in the three nations.

6. The Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee

To assist the Secretary for International Church Relations in the preparation of the agenda and documentation for this committee in relation to receiving personnel from overseas, whether as Special Category Ministers, young volunteers or scholarship holders at St. Andrew's Hall

7. The Five Special Category Posts of the *Receiving Church* programme

The Ghanaian chaplain: to be the staff member responsible for the chaplaincy, its budget, the support of the chaplain, any necessary reviews, liaison with the two churches in Ghana responsible for the appointment, and also to chair the Chaplaincy Committee.

To be responsible for promoting and servicing the other four posts from the initial enquiry to the review after the missionary has returned home.

Some additional responsibility for placements for young volunteers from overseas.

8. St Andrew's Hall, Birmingham

To serve on St. Andrew's Hall Council, along with the Secretary for Training. To process the selection of the United Reformed Church sponsored students at St. Andrew's Hall, paying their allowances, and visiting them from time to time. To arrange for Christmas and Easter placements/hospitality for them.

(Faint, illegible text)

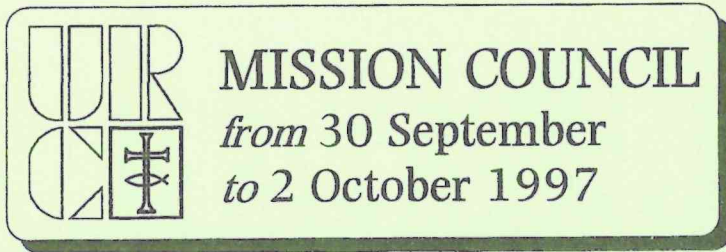
To remain well informed about the environmental issues in the United Kingdom in its world, and especially European, context and to alert the General Secretary to any necessary initiatives.

In addition

To ensure personal compliance and that of support staff with the Health and Safety at Work provisions

To remain open to new patterns of work and to new responsibilities should the General Assembly, or its appointed committees, so decide.

September 1997



K

Pilot Development Officer

At its meeting in October 1996 Mission Council discussed and then passed a resolution on this subject. The minute and resolution read:

MASTER PILOT Following a discussion on whether this post was open to women as well as men and lay persons as well as ordained the following resolution was carried although it was recognised that changes might have to be negotiated. It was also noted that there were ecumenical considerations to take into account.

Mission Council recommends that the post of Master Pilot (or Pilot Development Officer {Master Pilot}) should be continued for a further period of 5 years from an appointment being made or until the post holder leaves, whichever is the shorter. The appointment should be made on the understanding that the post is linked to a half-time pastorate in East Midlands Province, with the half-time Master Pilot counting against that Province's ministerial deployment quota.

Serious efforts to fill the post within the terms of the resolution failed. The search was therefore widened to include other Provinces than the East Midlands. The post was advertised and candidates interviewed. The Revd Erica Beglin, part-time minister at Walton-on-the-Hill, was chosen for the appointment and the Youth and Childrens Work Committee confirmed her appointment as from 1 August 1997 for 5 years.

However, Southern Province was not prepared to count her work as Pilot Development Officer against its ministerial deployment quota. The reason is that the Province has recently worked very hard to reduce its number of ministers and did not feel able at this time to accept what is effectively a further reduction.

The Province was prepared to contribute the stipend costs of this appointment, however. It has agreed to pay the cost of a half-stipend for 5 years.

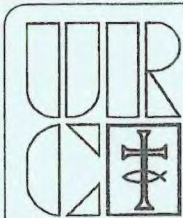
This enabled the appointment to be made and Erica to begin her work. However the status of the post is not clear and the principle of Provinces paying for national posts (however welcome it is) needs to be questioned.

It is suggested that Mission Council regularises the present position and initiates some further thinking by resolving as follows:

"Mission Council

- (a) confirms its resolution of 2 October 1996 regarding the continuation of the post of Pilot Development Officer;
- (b) accepts, with thanks to the Southern Province, the arrangements that have been made for the appointment of the Revd Erica Beglin;
- and (c) asks the Mission Council Advisory Group to consider and advise on the future standing of this post".

John Waller
September 1997



MISSION COUNCIL

*from 30 September
to 2 October 1997*

L

Theology of Ministry

As part of its consideration of the Patterns of Ministry report, the Assembly of 1995 requested the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee to produce a further statement on the Theology of Ministry based on Appendix A of that report.

The statement prepared by the Committee is attached.

There are 4 drafting corrections to be made:

In section 3.13 the words "under the Gospel" are added after the word "service" in the phrase "the minister's service to the congregation and to the world in which it is set".

In section 4.8 "Zwingli" is removed and "for instance" added.

In section 4.9 "rhetoric" is mis-spelt in line 6 and "Diet" is mis-spelt in line 12.

The Committee seeks the guidance of Mission Council as to how best to carry forward discussion of the document's contents and implications. It sees this as a working document and the Committee is willing, for example, to produce a simplified document, to consider further the implications of the theology, or to encourage ecumenical discussion of the document.

THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

Introduction

Each tradition which is contained within the United Reformed Church originally justified its pattern of ministry on the ground that it reflected the pattern of the New Testament Church. The historic pre-Reformation patterns were rejected on the ground that they needed reform, and the criteria for the reformed pattern were derived from scripture, as the reformers understood it. Few today would wish to argue either that the New Testament provides a single pattern of ministry or that the patterns in the various Churches can be evaluated by the extent to which they conform to a single New Testament pattern. On the other hand, there is disagreement on the relative importance of historical continuity and contemporary functionality. This issue is not addressed in the Basis of Union and only to a limited extent in *BEM*. The use of the historic present tense in both documents leaves it unclear whether the primary reference is to theological or historical affirmations.

The following abbreviations are used in the text which follows:

BEM: *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982. References are to the text on Ministry unless otherwise stated. The General Assembly approved a formal response to this text in 1985;

GRU: *God's Reign and our Unity*, the Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, London & Edinburgh 1984. The General Assembly of 1985 asked the Doctrine and Worship Committee to prepare a response which was contained in the Committee's report to Assembly 1986;

URC Basis and *URC Structure*: the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church, originally approved by the Uniting Assembly of 1972, but (except where otherwise noted) quotations are from the Basis as revised by the General Assembly of the Church from time to time and printed in the 3rd Edition of *The Manual* of the United Reformed Church, 1991.

1. Ministry in the universal Church

1.1 God created the heavens and the earth, including human beings, as an expression of the divine glory; despite human resistance to God's purpose, God's grace and love are manifested in a continuing mission to reconcile humanity and the whole universe to God (*GRU*, 25).

1.2 God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. By sheer grace God chose Israel and then in fulfilment of that purpose called the Church into being through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit: mission refers primarily to God's continuing activity in the world, summed up in the accomplished work of Christ (*URC Basis* 1, *BEM* 1, *GRU*, 26).

1.3 The life of the Church is based on Christ's once-for-all victory over the powers of evil and death and comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, given to those who believe in the Risen Lord and are recreated as the Body of Christ (*BEM* 2-3).

1.4 The sovereign rule of God, to which the Church bears witness, is the reality underlying the world God created: the Church is the beginning of the new creation, but has only a provisional character in the service of God's rule, provisional first because it contains only part of the human family and secondly because those within it are only partly conformed to God's purpose (*GRU* 29, 30).

1.5 The task of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to be a

foretaste of the joy and glory of God's rule by its witness and service (*BEM* 4; *GRU* 73). Christ thus continues his ministry in and through the Church (*URC Basis* 19).

1.6 The Holy Spirit bestows on the members of the Church diverse and complementary gifts; members should discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world (*BEM* 5, cf. *URC Basis* 19-20, where these gifts are attributed to Christ). Through the power of the Spirit members of the Church are enabled to participate in the ministry of Christ to the world (*GRU* 74).

1.7 The first disciples were both the first followers and the first apostles sent to call others to follow (*GRU* 76). Thus from very early times people were called and set apart to lead and build up the local churches in their life and service to the world, particularly in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the exercise of oversight (*episkopé*) (*BEM* 8-9, 13).

1.8 By the third century a common pattern of ministry was emerging which involved a chief pastor in each local church who worked with a body of colleagues and a staff of helpers or assistants to forward the work of Christ in Church and world: this was the origin of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon (*GRU* 91, *BEM* 19-25).

2. Ministry in the United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church is a united church, based on the historic "threefold" ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon, which is the common and traditional ministry of the United Reformed Church, the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ.

The *Basis of Union* states the common understanding of church and ministry underlying these traditions.

2.3 The United Reformed Church undertakes to make available, so far as possible, ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament to every local congregation, to accredit suitable men and woman as lay preachers, and to recognise certain members, normally elders or accredited lay preachers, who may be invited to preside at baptismal and communion services where pastoral necessity so requires (*URC Basis* 24).

2.4 Within the local congregation the elders' meeting (which consists of the minister(s) and elders) is responsible for ensuring that public worship is offered, the sacraments are celebrated and the word is preached (*URC Structure* 2(2)). A congregation or group of congregations, with the concurrence of the District Council, calls an ordained minister or ministers of Word and Sacraments to *undertake* these tasks (*URC Basis* 21). Some ordained ministers are stipendiary and others are non-stipendiary; the difference between them relates primarily to availability for service. Many congregations, to an extent which varies significantly from place to place, also invite lay preachers to lead worship.

2.5 Responsibility for pastoral care and oversight is shared among ordained ministers and elders, who also constitute the wider councils of the Church (*URC Basis* 20, 21, 22). The pastoral responsibilities of elders are usually exercised through the assignment of groups of members to each elder for

pastoral care. The responsibilities of elders in the government, oversight and leadership of the church are necessarily corporate or collegial in character, and by its relation to the wider councils of the Church the elders' meeting represents the whole Church to the local church.

2.6 The procedures for recognising and calling people to ministry vary according to the ministry concerned. Elders are called, elected and ordained within each congregation; ordination to the eldership is not repeated if an elder moves to another congregation, but such a person does not become a serving elder in the new congregation unless that congregation so decides. Ministers of Word and Sacrament are selected for training by a process involving several councils of the Church but the decision on eligibility for ordination rests with the Provincial Synod; *the call comes from the local church, and ordination is* by the District Council on behalf of the whole Church. In each case ordination is to a ministry recognised throughout the United Reformed Church.

2.7 The *Basis of Union* (23) provides that the General Assembly shall decide what other ministries shall be exercised within the United Reformed Church and how those who are to exercise them shall be set apart. Lay preachers are accredited by District Councils but not ordained; there is also a list of nationally accredited preachers kept by the Accreditation Sub-Committee. The General Assembly keeps a roll of accredited Church-Related Community workers.

2.8 Other ministries are recognised within local congregations with varying degrees of formality, e.g. youth workers, childrens' workers, organists and leaders of music.

2.9 The United Reformed Church recognises the work of Youth and Childrens' Work Trainers and Youth Leadership Training Officers, but they need not be ordained ministers.

2.10 The General Assembly appoints a Moderator for each provincial synod, who is a minister, separated from any local pastoral charge, and appointed for a period of years, with the possibility of reappointment for further periods if the General Assembly so determines. The task of the Moderator is to preside over meetings of the provincial synod and exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the province. The Moderator is involved in the process of suggesting names of ministers to vacant pastorates, and presides, or appoints a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and inductions of ministers within the province. The Moderator is also a member of each district council in the province and shares in the council's responsibility for oversight of local churches and ministers (*URC Structure* 2(4)). The Moderator therefore exercises a personal *episkopé* in a conciliar setting, but a Moderator's ministry is not understood as constituting a separate order of ministry. Constitutionally Moderators are officers of the General Assembly, though unlike other Assembly officers they have responsibilities which are primarily regional rather than national.

[2.11 The current discussion requires us to clarify our understanding of:

- a) ordained and non-ordained ministry;
- b) stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry;
- c) elders and lay preachers;
- d) *diakonia*.]

3. Ordained ministry

3.1 Christians understand the qualities of character, which enable them to live the Christian life and show forth the good news of the Kingdom of God in the service of others, as gifts from God rather than resources originating in themselves. Everyone has a unique combination of such gifts. The exercise of such gifts is what we mean by the ministry of the whole people of God. That

ministry of self-offering in sacrificial service to and prayer for the world is one way in which Christ's completed work is re-presented to the world. (See further in *Section 4.*) For the building up of the whole people of God in God's service, certain members of the Church are called to a particular ministry within this wider ministry.

3.2 In ordination certain members of the Church are designated for public ministry in the Church in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands. Such public ministry is understood as a particular gift of the Spirit, which builds upon the individual combination of gifts of the candidate concerned (*BEM 39*). The existence of such ministry points to the initiative of God in Christ for redemption.

3.3 Those who ordain do so not in their own right but as representatives of the Church, and the ordination prayer is a reminder that the risen Lord is the true ordainer who calls to and bestows the gift of ministry. The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit to a particular person in a particular place at a particular time and also an acknowledgement of the prior gifts and commitment which that person brings to ministry. The prayer of the congregation represents their commitment to support the one ordained (*BEM 39-44*).

3.4 The word "ordination" has traditionally been used to refer to the commissioning for public office within the church. It has different intentions, according to the specific tasks of the ministries concerned, which are reflected in the liturgies of ordination (*BEM 39*). Ordination to a particular ministry, like baptism, is not repeated: this is why ordination has been described as "for life". The Basis of Union recognises the crucial point ~~and precisely~~ which it says that "those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to the life of long and hard work" (*BEM 20*).

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...either to designate a person or to cast a vote...*Ordo* and *ordinare*, on the other hand, are terms derived from Roman law where they convey the notion of the special status of a group distinct from the plebs, as in the term *ordo clarissimus* for the Roman senate." Within the discussion there is a cluster of ideas, which can usefully be separated.

3.6 The act of ordination is described in *BEM* as involving invocation to God that the new minister be given the power of the Holy Spirit in the new relation between minister and Church, the sign of the granting of this prayer by the Lord who gives the gift of the ordained ministry, acknowledgement by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained, and commitment by Church and ordinand to the new relationship (*BEM 42-4*, reprinted in *GRU 84*). The emphasis in this description on the new relationship in which the ordained person stands is significant for the long debate over whether ministry is to be understood essentially in ontological or functional terms. Public ministry is never completely described by listing the minister's tasks: the relationship to others created by a public recognition of the minister's calling to those tasks itself reshapes the being of the minister, as those who exercise such ministry can testify. The ordinand is therefore different from those not ordained because of the new relationship. Moreover the fact that ordination to a particular ministry is not repeated emphasises the definitiveness of the act.

3.7 Although *BEM* and other documents use the term "the ordained ministry" as

though it were a single ministry, the United Reformed Church is not alone in using the term ordination to denote the setting apart of at least two different orders of ministry. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church now use the term "ordination" in relation to bishops, priests and deacons, whilst clearly understanding that those ministries are different. Ordination has usually been linked with presidency at the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word: these actions in worship are the way in which the whole community is especially built up in their ministry to the world. Those responsible are also those most intimately concerned in the pastoral care of the congregation. Nevertheless the act of ordination has to be understood in terms of the intention of the ordination prayer which defines the character of the ministry exercised.

3.8 What ordination does in a particular way is to point beyond itself and the person ordained to the initiative of Christ. A person may feel called by Christ to ministry, but that call has to be tested and recognised by the Church: ordination is the solemn ratification of that call by the Church as it prays that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, will enable the ordinand to use and develop his or her gifts for the public ministry to which he or she is called. It is in this sense that the United Reformed Church can endorse such statements in *BEM* as "In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity" (8) or "Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ" (12). The idea that the minister is a pointer to Christ is perhaps more helpful than the commoner view that the minister is the representative of Christ, a view which tends to lead implicitly to the idea that there can be only one minister in a congregation. Moreover there are some who are called to special ministries, such as hospital or industrial chaplaincies, etc., which cannot be understood in the same way as ministry within a local congregation.

3.9 The United Reformed Church can readily accept the statement in *BEM* 13 - "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry". The question of the difference which ordination makes tends to be focussed on the extent to which such responsibilities are exclusively those of the ordained ministry - a point which is not adequately met in the Commentary on this paragraph "These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way", even though that was presumably its purpose. What can be said firmly is that ordination is a matter of authority rather than power: it is concerned with relationships (compare 3.6 above) and particularly the relationships between congregations in different places, since the mutual recognition of those authorised embodies the links which bind the Church together and manifest its unity (*GRU* 82). Furthermore, whilst it can be said that ordination confers status, in a Christian context that is the status of the servant of all, following the example of Christ himself. The fact that ordination is understood as primarily a matter of authority explains why Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ have all had procedures which enabled those responsibilities entrusted to the ordained to be exercised by those not ordained on occasions. In each tradition the argument for the normal exercise of such responsibilities by the ordained is one of order in the sense of orderliness, not because they have exclusive powers or rights.

3.10 If ordination is understood as the process of authorisation, rather than the conferring of power, the question as to which ministries in the Church are to be the subject of ordination is raised more acutely. Why does the United Reformed Church ordain elders as well as ministers, but not, for example, lay preachers or Church-Related Community Workers? Historically, the answer to this question for the Church as a whole is largely pragmatic and traditional.

However, there is a sense in which ordination has been reserved for those ministries which most closely recall us to the foundational ministry of Christ himself. The ministries of Word and Sacraments are linked because each amplifies the significance of the other. The ministry of oversight and pastoral care is linked to Christ as king and shepherd. The diaconal ministry is linked to Christ as servant. A case could therefore be made for ordaining Church-related Community Workers as deacons. A case could also be made for ordaining lay preachers to the ministry of the Word if they were regular rather than occasional preachers, and in view of the link between Word and Sacrament it would seem more logical to ordain those who regularly conduct worship to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, particularly if their ministry is exercised in several congregations. The important point here is that made in GRU 83 when the advocacy of "lay celebration" on the ground that it witnesses to the priesthood of all believers is shown to be self-contradictory since it implies that the president alone is the priest. It is important that the theology behind ordination is understood, since an extension of ordination might be opposed both by ministers concerned to defend their clerical status and by lay people who wished to reject that same clerical status.

3.11 The practice of the United Reformed Church in the ordination of ministers is that this is an act of the District Council, in fellowship with the local church. The Provincial Moderator, or his/her deputy, presides, and will be assisted in the laying on of hands by at least two other ministers and often one or two elders appointed by the District Council (unlike the Church of Scotland where elders do not lay on hands at the ordination of a minister: Cox, *Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland*, 6 ed, p 116).

[Questions of elders in connection with the ordination of ministers by the wider community of the Church, particularly the District Council, it would be appropriate for the District Council to be formally represented at the ordination of elders and for the Council to provide appropriate training.]

3.13 The relationship between ordination and the ministry of the whole people of God, the links between spiritual gifts, patterns of ministry and experience, and the relationship between servanthood and leadership *may be stated as follows:*

The Church embodies an upside-down reflection of the world - the first shall be last and the last shall be first, the greatest among you shall be your servant etc. Secular leadership models, whether based on ancient kingship or modern business practice, will always need to be transformed in a Christian context to embody this reversal of worldly values. This means that the authenticity of ministerial leadership will be experienced in the minister's service to the congregation and to the world in which it is set. It is as a servant of God to the people of God that a minister preaches, presides or takes the chair. More particularly the minister has a responsibility to help congregations interpret the Gospel for today and to pray for the Church and the world. This helps to make sense of ordination, because ordained ministry points beyond itself to Christ, upon whose reconciling work all ministry depends. Ordination to representative servanthood emphasises identification with rather than separation from. It involves the recognition of gifts given by God, which can be nurtured by appropriate training or experience. Ordained ministry does not therefore detract from the ministry of any Christian, but it adds an availability to all which is costly service. It is essentially

reciprocal in character, depending on the wider community in which it is set. In sum, therefore, the distinctive identity of the minister, like the distinctive identity of every Christian, is created by relationships rather than tasks.

4. The Priesthood of all Believers

4.1. God's people are on pilgrimage, caught up in adoration, spent in joyful and sacrificial service to one another and all people everywhere, all the time growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. By sharing in the life of the local church, they enter into the life of the Church throughout the world and in all ages, being made part of the communion of saints (*URC Basis* 16; cf *BEM* 2-4). The church meeting is the place where the priesthood of all believers is gathered to confess the Lordship of Christ. It is through this whole people (the *laos* of God), not through clergy alone, that the Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry (*URC Basis* 19). (It cannot be too often emphasised that the clergy are part of the *laos*, which has a more all-embracing meaning than the popular connotation of the "laity".)

4.2 In the Basis of Union (20) the role of those who exercise particular ministries in offices recognised within the Church is understood as the equipping of the whole people of God for their total ministry. This total ministry is sometimes referred to as "the priesthood of all believers". That phrase in turn is sometimes misunderstood as implying that "anyone can do anything". Since it is important that the calling of ordained ministers is affirmed in a way which does not derogate from the calling of the whole people of God, the relationship between "lay" and "ordained", "priesthood" and "ministry" needs to be explored and placed in the context of Scripture and our traditions.

4.3 The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers finds its principal New Testament support in 1 Peter 2:9 and occasional references in Revelation - 1:6, 5:10. 1 Peter 2:9 is a notoriously difficult verse to translate and interpret; but however it is translated, it is the Church as a corporate body which shares in the high priesthood of Christ. The verse is not speaking about the ministry or priesthood of Christians as individuals. Priesthood is a corporate description not an individual mandate. It is a function of the community of believers, derived from their participation in the high priesthood of Christ.

4.4 "The priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the baptized have in their respective ways the function of sacrifice and intercession. As Christ has offered himself, Christians offer their whole being "as a living sacrifice". As Christ intercedes before the Father, Christians intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Nevertheless the differences between these two kinds of priesthood cannot be overlooked. While Christ offered himself as a unique sacrifice once and for all for the salvation of the world, believers need to receive continually as a gift of God that which Christ has done for them" (*BEM* 17 Commentary).

4.5 Christ's sacrifice has broken down all barriers both between God and humanity and between peoples, so the Christian priestly community is inclusive, not exclusive. It is the whole people who are called and sanctified by the Spirit to share Christ's ministry (1.2; 1.5). All ecclesiology is ultimately an expression of God's self-revelation in Christ, which is another way of saying that its focus must be a missionary focus.

4.6 The New Testament doctrines of the high priesthood of Christ and the priestly function of the believing community undergird the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers properly belongs in that context. There is little evidence in the

New Testament of a doctrine of the ordained ministry being built on the foundations of the priesthood of all believers. There is no clear link between the two concepts in the New Testament.

4.7 Although the New Testament speaks of an exciting and creative diversity of ministry in the primitive communities, it is equally clear that most (if not all) of these churches had a ministry which was less than the sum of its members (eg I Cor 12:27-30; Eph 4:11-12). Ministry in some form (rarely Ignatian orthodoxy, cf. 1.8) was pervasive, its purpose to enable the ministry of God's people, not to usurp it, "to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

4.8 The traditions belonging to the United Reformed Church derive their emphases on the priesthood of all believers from Scripture and the writings of the reformers of the 16th century. It is therefore important that their understanding of the doctrine is appreciated. The agenda of the reformers was to recover that set of relationships between Christ, his people and the ministry, which they perceived to have been lost. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were not against the ministry but against a particular view of the priestly office. They did not intend to wreck the unity of Christendom. They have surprisingly little to say about the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Their attention was focussed primarily on the relationship between God and humanity, on sin and forgiveness and the workings of the penitential system. Ministry was a secondary concern.

4.9 Luther is regarded as a champion of the doctrine. However, although it is a necessary consequence of his conviction of the free availability of God's grace, his treatment of it is ambiguous and frequently polemical. Luther's

of 1530 Melancthon could dismiss the priesthood of all believers as of secondary importance, and it is passed over in silence by the Augsburg Confession.

4.10 Calvin was logical and clear on the subject. Ministry was derived from the universal priesthood, which in turn was dependent upon the priesthood of Christ. He was equally clear that the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the ordained ministry were distinct. Ministry was essential to the life of the Church - "neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolic and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth" (*Institutes* 4.3.2). Ministry was not priesthood, a point made with admirable clarity by the Second Helvetic Confession:

"Accordingly, there are great differences between a priesthood and a ministry. For the former is common to all Christians...but the same is not so with the latter, and we have not removed the Ministry out of the midst of the church when we have cast the papistical priesthood out of the Church of Christ."

In other words by denying a separated priesthood and affirming the priesthood of all believers, it was possible to base the theology of a separated ministry on a different foundation.

4.11 It should now be abundantly clear (in Gordon Rupp's words) that the priesthood of all believers did not mean for the reformers what it tends to

mean for us, "an otiose ministry and an omnicompetent laity". The reformers did not think that anyone could do anything in church, far from it. They had discovered something much more exciting - that the whole people of God participated in the intercessory priesthood of Christ.

4.12 The blurring of the doctrinal boundaries between the priesthood of all believers and the doctrine of the ministry is a relatively recent phenomenon. Early Congregationalist and Presbyterians did not doubt the truth of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, or the calling of some to ministry.

4.13 The Evangelical Revival and the explosion of church planting and building which followed increased the demand for ministry and hastened the breaking down of prejudice against lay preaching - most clearly evidenced by "Mr Wesley's preachers". It was the occasion of little theological comment because the right of the believer to preach was part of the English dissenting tradition. The theological difficulties began when English dissenters (particularly Congregationalists and Baptists) reacted against the sacerdotal emphasis of the Tractarians and their successors in the mid-nineteenth century. Ministers strove to become as un-priestlike as possible. Amongst the leaders of this movement (like R.W. Dale) distinctive clerical dress was rejected along with the title "Revd". Ordination fell out of favour and testing of calls became much less stringent. It was in this context that Dale asked the Carr's Lane, Birmingham, church meeting to allow a layman to preside at communion once a year as a reminder of the priesthood of all believers. Such a view prevailed for some thirty years, when it was severely criticised by such leaders and scholars as J.D. Jones and P.T. Forsyth.

4.14 This was at best an aberration in the history of Congregationalism. It is ironic that Dale's real aim, the spiritualisation of the laity, led only to the debasing of the ministry. In any doctrine of ministry within the Reformed tradition, a distinction between the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the ministry must be maintained (as in the New Testament and the writings of the reformers) or else neither will be honoured.

4.15 *God's Reign and our Unity* provides an attractive snapshot of ministry in the early church, when it observes that "the company gathered behind their closed doors on that first Easter evening was the church in embryo" (para 74) and "also the ministry in embryo" (para 75). To extend that image, the infant church's DNA included a patterning of "calling and sending" so that the church always had a structure of leadership. "Ministerial leadership in the church may therefore be defined as following Jesus in the way of the cross so that others in turn may be enabled to follow in the same way" (para 76). Although it is true that different accounts of Easter evening (e.g. Luke 24:33 and Acts 1:14) present a different theology of the relationship between church and ministry, the emphasis in John 20:19-23 is paralleled elsewhere: those whom Jesus called, he also sent to proclaim God's word of peace and forgiveness. This strand in early Christian experience echoes our own experiences of ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that we remain uncomfortable with the language of "clergy" and "laity". Ministry is Christ's gift to the whole *laos*.

5. Historical note on ordination

5.1 The constituent traditions of the United Reformed Church had different practices in relation to ordination. Congregationalists ordained ministers but not deacons (elders having disappeared quite early on in the history of English Congregationalism). Presbyterians ordained ministers and elders, but not usually deacons (although the United Presbyterians did prior to 1876). Churches of Christ ordained ministers, elders and deacons.

5.2 Although Calvin's views were differently expressed in different editions

of the *Institutes*, in the final edition (*Institutes*, iv, 3.8) regards bishops, presbyters or pastors (the terms are for him equivalent) as exercising the ministry of the word in local churches, and sees two other ministries as of perpetual duration - viz. government and care of the poor. "By these governors I understand seniors selected from the people to unite with the bishops in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline." The care of the poor was committed to deacons, among whom Calvin distinguished two distinct classes: those who administered alms, and those who actually took care of the poor (3.9). In discussing the appointment of ministers he emphasised that "if any one would be deemed a true minister of the Church, he must first be duly called; and secondly, he must answer to his calling (3.10). The choice of ministers lay with the people, though the fact that this was accompanied by prayer and fasting showed the serious nature of the action (3.12-15). Calvin understood ordination by the laying on of hands to have apostolic precedent for pastors, teachers and deacons. He acknowledged that there was no fixed precept concerning the laying on of hands, but said that it would be regarded "in the light of a precept" because of its careful observance by the apostles. He added that it was useful "that by such a symbol the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church" (3.16).

5.3 Within the Reformed tradition there have been different approaches to the office of elder in different countries. The evolution of the office in Scotland in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century is a complex one. The Scottish *Book of Discipline* of 1560 made elders and deacons offices to which election was made annually, and they were clearly understood as lay offices. The *Second Book of Discipline* (adopted by the General Assembly in 1578 but repudiated by parliament) reflected the triumph of presbyterianism both in its emphasis on the election of elders and deacons and in its emphasis on the election of elders and deacons.

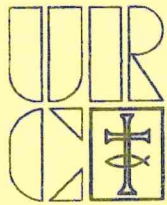
Chairmen at the beginning of the sixteenth century reinforced the position of elders indirectly to the development of managers as a distinct group from the elders concerned with matters of church finance and fabric.

5.4 Elders and deacons are mentioned in *The Form of Church Government* of 1645, when the English parliament passed an ordinance regulating the election of elders. But ordination was not a central issue, and indeed the opposition of independents to presbyterianism at this point was based mainly on the fear that the Church would henceforth have an authority which would come into conflict with that of the state. Ironically the Statement on *The Institution of Churches* annexed to the *Savoy Declaration* of 1658 specifies ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands for pastors, elders and deacons (para 12), probably because its authors were clearer in their minds that these were officers of a congregation, rather than a civil parish. (The *Savoy Declaration* omitted the *Westminster Confession's* paragraph on Church Censures.) Nevertheless it was within presbyterianism rather than congregationalism that the practice of ordaining elders and deacons persisted. In congregationalism deacons became the the primary group of lay church officers, and ordination was dropped.

5.5 The United Secession Church (and later the United Presbyterian Church after 1847), whose formularies on the relation between church and state and on the ordination of ministers and elders were reflected in those of the Presbyterian Church of England and the United Reformed Church, was clear that elders and deacons should be ordained, and as a non-established church had a congregational, rather than a parochial, view of the extent of their

responsibilities. This was the source for the views of Alexander Campbell on church government, who grew up in the Secession tradition, when he specified them in *The Christian System* for Disciples or Churches of Christ in the 1830s. Campbell distinguished three ministries - of bishops, deacons, and evangelists - and argued that all should be set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands (*Christian System*, xxv, 6, 16-17). He was also clear that "it is, indeed, the Holy Spirit, and not the congregations, which creates Bishops and Deacons" (*ibid*, p 185). Churches of Christ in Great Britain, where full-time ministers have always been few, placed much more emphasis on the ordained eldership in the leading of worship, than Disciples of Christ in the U.S.A., where full-time ministers have been more plentiful. Within Churches of Christ, in fact, elders tended to have a more important public role in the leading of worship, preaching and pastoral care, while deacons (though ordained) tended to be more like Congregationalist deacons and Presbyterian elders. The mid-twentieth century practice in Churches of Christ was determined by the Reports of two Commissions approved by the Annual Conference, that on Ordination approved in 1942 and that on the Ministry approved in 1954. The Report on Ordination proposed forms of service for the ordination of ministers, elders and deacons, and for services in which voting on the election of elders and deacons took place. The emphasis, however, was on the divine action: "It is Christ himself, *through the Church*, who appoints, ordains, and sends His Ministers forth" (*Year Book*, 1942, p 134). Also ordination has been the mark of those called to ministry rather than paid service.

5.6 Interestingly, the question of the length of tenure has tended to influence attitudes to ordination. Mention has already been made of the shift between the First and Second Books of Discipline in the tenure of elders in Scotland. After reunion in 1929 the Church of Scotland specified that elders would always be ordained, as would deacons if elected to office for life. However, it is open to congregations to elect deacons for a term of years, and if this happens they are not ordained (Cox, *Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland*, 6 ed, 117, 132-7, cf *Book of Common Order* (1940), 194). The same provisions existed in the Presbyterian Church of England before union, except that the option of election for a limited time was mentioned before the option of election for life (*Book of Order*, 7 ed, p 29). No provision was made for deacons in the United Reformed Church. In Congregational churches it was customary for deacons to serve for a specified period of years; in Churches of Christ it was customary for elders and deacons, once elected, to serve for life.



MISSION COUNCIL

from 30 September
to 2 October 1997

M

Decision needed on
paragraphs 8 and 12

Assembly resolution on the discipline of all members

Assembly commends Mission Council for the work done on the disciplinary procedures for ordained ministers of word and sacrament and asks Mission Council to continue this work by reviewing:

1. all the procedures for disciplinary action for all members of the URC whether they be ordained or not.
2. and also its procedures for when pastoral difficulties or break down occur.

(Resolution 54 of General Assembly 1996: Record p.23)

This paper is written in two parts. It begins with the first part of the resolution, which requires Mission Council to review "all the procedures for disciplinary action for all members of the URC whether they be ordained or not".

1. Disciplinary procedures for ministers have been agreed by the General Assembly of 1997 and it therefore seems unnecessary to consider ministers again. The review sought really relates to church members who are not ministers.
2. Discipline may be required on either doctrinal grounds or on grounds of conduct.
3. The structures of the United Reformed Church make it clear that the Church Meeting is responsible for maintaining standards of membership, and suspending or removing names from the membership roll, always on advice from the Elders' Meeting. (Structures 2(1)(ix). The foundation upon which such decisions are made should be Schedules A, B and D of the Basis of Union, as relevant, and of course the Basis itself.
4. It is clear that the discipline of members is presently regarded amongst us as a local matter, with the normal possibility of appeal to the District Council.
5. It may now be argued that it would be helpful to prepare some guidelines to aid Elders' Meetings in forming their advice. There is something of a precedent for this in the statement of good practice for those working with children and young people. The argument against could be that the circumstances affecting church members are so varied that in every case local knowledge has to be paramount.
6. The production of disciplinary procedures for ministers carried the implication that a particular ministry requires particular standards. Is the logic of this that there should be disciplinary procedures

- for elders, recognising both that they have a key role and that it may be difficult for them to judge one of their number;
- for lay preachers, recognising their great responsibility in relation to the faith of the congregation;
- for local leaders, lay pastors, pastoral assistants, who will carry many or all of the responsibilities of an ordained minister?

In other words, while church membership is reckoned amongst us to carry both privileges and responsibilities, so also do the particular ministries to which some of us are called. It is when we fail in those responsibilities that discipline may be required.

7. All that has been written so far is about church members. There is an apparently growing tendency among us for people to resist membership yet to be willing to take responsibility for aspects of the life of the church and of individuals. It is not clear on what basis such people can be disciplined by the church.
8. Before Mission Council is ready to report back to Assembly there are two points of principle to be decided:

8.1 In the light of paragraphs 2-5, should general guidelines for Elders' meetings be produced? If so, the work will need to be

done by the appropriate persons (to be decided).

The second part of this paper deals with procedures in the case of pastoral difficulties or breakdown.

9. In 1996 the General Assembly commended the Mission Council for the work done on disciplinary procedures for ordained ministers and asked it to continue this work by reviewing"..... its procedures for when pastoral difficulties or breakdown occur".
10. This is a difficult resolution to which to respond. Procedures in the case of pastoral difficulty or breakdown are the responsibility of District Councils (and occasionally Synods) rather than Mission Council or General Assembly. In the case of church members who are not ministers, the procedures should be those of Elders' and Church Meetings.
11. MCAG asked the moderators to consider this part of the Assembly resolution. They declared themselves to be cautious in offering alternatives to the procedures already in place and then made five comments which can be summarised as follows:

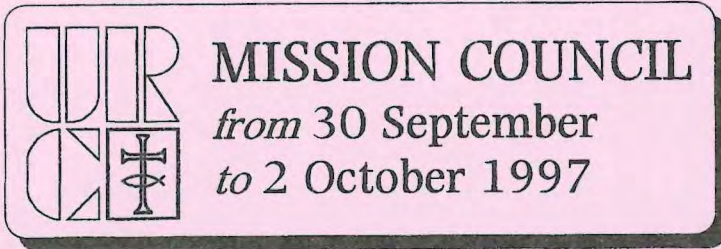
- (a) The church at large may need to be reminded of the structures that already exist and in particular that it is always possible to seek the help of the next widest Council.
- (b) The experience of some Provinces in arranging courses in conflict management and intervention might usefully be shared with others.
- (c) The example of some Provinces in arranging courses in conflict management and intervention might usefully be shared with others.
- (d) Attention could be drawn to Alan Sell's book on 'Church Discipline'. (The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is currently considering the future of the series of books, of which this is one).
- (e) A dossier of successful methods of resolving pastoral breakdown might be assembled.

12. If the general tenor of the Moderators' response is one we wish to follow, then Mission Council might respond to the Assembly in the following way:

12.1 Dealing with pastoral difficulties and breakdown is primarily the responsibility of Elders' and Church meetings, together with the District Council whenever a minister is particularly involved. District Councils in particular need to be sure that their procedures are reviewed and publicised at regular intervals, and that available resources of support are also made known.

12.2 Provinces are urged to give support and training to those who may be involved in seeking to resolve difficulties. In particular, attention is drawn to the experiment of appointing pastoral consultants in Thames North Province, and the organisation of courses in conflict management and intervention in East Midlands, Thames North and Southern Provinces.

John Waller
September 1997



N

Task Group on Authority

The production of this report was the result of a long and rather complex process. It was the work of a task group but the final version was produced by Philip Morgan and Bert Worrall.

The report, with an introduction by the Deputy General Secretary on behalf of MCAG, was presented to Mission Council as Paper D on 18 January 1997. The wide range of the report, and the shortage of available time, made it impossible for the Council to come to any conclusion. It was agreed that MCAG should prepare a paper for the October Mission Council which would indicate areas of work that needed to be done and offer suggestions for the way ahead.

MCAG makes the following recommendation to Mission Council:

That the report of the task group on Authority, without further discussion or amendment, be offered as a resource to those appointed by Mission Council to process Assembly resolutions 18(a) and 18(b) on human sexuality.

The grounds for this recommendation are:

- The work of the task group should not be lost.
- The human sexuality discussion needs to make use of work already done in the area of its remit.
- It would be confusing to let the two discussions run separately. Account needs to be taken of the fact that some of the questions addressed by the task group are outside the remit of resolution 18, but MCAG believes that this is not the time to pursue them.

John Waller
September 1997

C

Reflections of the Moderator of General Assembly, 1996-97

1 These reflections are written on my own initiative, with the encouragement of MCAG. No precedent is intended.

2 Before I agreed to be nominated as Moderator, I discussed with the General Secretary what commitment, particularly in terms of visits to churches, would be expected from someone who has a secular job. Tony's response was that, if the Church wished to elect people with such other commitments, it had to recognise the consequences; and he encouraged me to allow my name to go forward. I was grateful for that encouragement, and all the support I have received from Tony and other Church House staff this year.

3 Because my youngest son is still at school, I decided early on to try to be at home at least one Sunday in four. I also decided upon two priorities: to visit every province; and to visit each of our theological colleges in England. Both of these aims were achieved, though the province I visited least turned out to be the West Midlands. A Moderator's diary is largely demand-led; but I took steps to encourage certain invitations. I also tried to ensure that there were a number of smaller congregations and some that had either never received the Moderator or had not for a long time. Inevitably there are a number of special anniversaries, which either have to be accepted on a specific date or rejected. I had one 300th, one 200th, two 150ths, one 100th and one 50th.

4 The statistics of the year are as follows:

Attending the Cenotaph service in November;
Preaching/conducting worship in 30 local churches (+1 in Canada and 3 in South India);
Preaching at 5 District services;
Speaking at 3 special District events in local churches;
Speaking at 3 District elders' suppers;
Question and answer sessions in 3 Districts;
Speaking at 3 District Councils;
Visiting 2 Provincial Synods and 1 Provincial Day;
Preaching at 4 theological colleges;
Preaching at the 25th anniversary of the North Eastern Ordination Course;
Speaking at 2 church-related schools;
Speaking at 1 ministers' Spring School and 1 ministers' meeting;
Inducting 1 Provincial Moderator;
Attending Windermere 10th Anniversary;
Attending FURY Assembly;
Visiting the European institutions in Strasbourg;
Attending the Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

In Canada I attended the Canadian Disciples' Assembly, the World Convention of Churches of Christ, and met with leaders of the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church of Canada; in France I attended the Synod of the Reformed Church of France; and in South India I represented the Church at the 50th Anniversary Celebrations.

5 When visiting local churches I usually preached on St Matthew's Gospel, but apart from that I had no set theme or objective for the year. The Districts which invited me often asked me to develop the themes of my Moderator's address, which I did. I found that offering open-ended question and answer sessions on anything connected with church life (or indeed national life) worked well as a way of getting an impression of what people's concerns were. If one only gives an address, the feed-back one gets is limited - though two people told me after a Sunday morning sermon that they disagreed!

6 The most rewarding visits I made were those where the District had planned an integrated programme for the weekend. This was particularly true in North Wales, South Yorkshire and Devon. I was enabled to visit other activities in which the Church was involved, such as the hostel for the

homeless in Wrexham, the church and neighbourhood project in Sheffield and the homeless breakfast in Doncaster. I understand that the visits of the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland are usually organised on a presbytery basis, with two presbyteries in each synod having a turn each year. Whilst one-off events such as anniversaries could never be integrated into such a pattern, and the individual opportunities of Moderators will always be different, I think that it would be worth while exploring the possibility of evolving a similar pattern for ourselves.

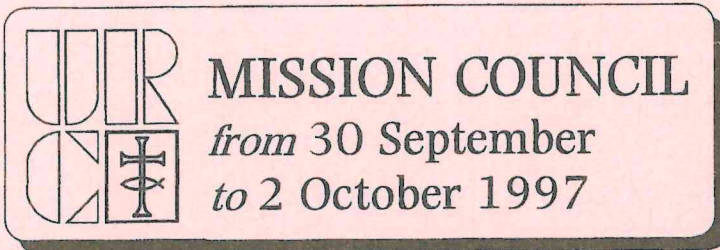
7 I have given attendance at national committees the lowest priority, though I received all the papers. I probably attended about half our national committees at least once. This confirmed a concern I have had for some time about the way we handle our business. The difficulty we have experienced in the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee of getting sufficient committee members to undertake work between our (relatively infrequent) meetings is not unique. I also think that we could improve our methods of working. In the college and university committees which I have served, it is customary for the agenda to distinguish sharply between matters for report and matters for decision, with the former usually being taken on the nod, unless there are questions to be asked. Furthermore the nature of the decision required is indicated clearly through an agenda note. Few of our committee agendas are any more than a list of headings, and I have sometimes felt that several of our committee members have no clear idea of what they are expected to do about the various matters brought before them, which does not aid clear discussion and decision-making. I also wonder whether our minutes are as intelligible as they should be for those who will refer to them in the future about what was decided and why: many refer to circulated papers, without any indication that these will be attached to the minutes to make them intelligible.

8 The question one is most often asked as Moderator is, Are the churches in good heart? I doubt whether a sample even twice the size of that which I visited would be sufficient to answer that question. But the congregations I visited were in their various ways outward-looking and confident: is that because they are those which invited the Moderator in the first place? Given that I was visiting during the time of the observance of Lent, there was a strikingly little sense of anxiety or impending crisis.

9 I was struck in my visits to other Assemblies by the relatively greater emphasis they placed than we do on encouraging a sense of the world Church. This year we made a special effort to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the PCE Mission, which was greatly appreciated, but routinely we have not made such an emphasis. The Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee's report is included in that of the Ecumenical Committee, but that rarely raises questions of policy. Might our CWM representatives report to Assembly, or at least have a report included in the Information section of the Book of Reports?

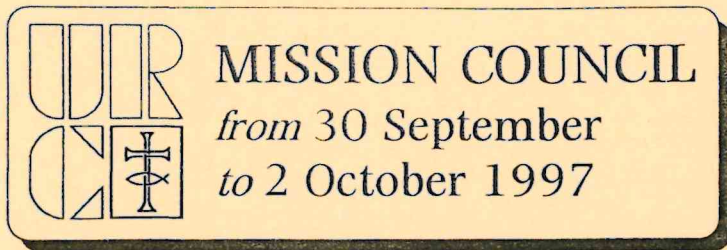
10 My visit to Canada made me aware of the extent to which, with the passing of the generations, we are gradually drifting apart from the 'Old Dominions'. Those of us with regular international ecumenical contacts are probably less aware of this than those without. Mutual exchange of official visitors and others are important to sustain these links if we want to keep them.

11 The Jubilee of the Church of South India was an overwhelming climax to my year. I was very grateful to be able to stay with an Indian family in Madras (the parents of John Samuel at Northern College) before moving into the official accommodation for the celebrations themselves. I also visited the Diocese of Vellore and United Theological College at Bangalore. Lesslie Newbigin is still remembered with great affection. At the Jubilee Service I was greatly moved by watching the vast throng of men and women, rich and poor coming forward to receive communion, just as I had been by the long procession with representatives from every diocese which walked through the streets of Madras. I felt part of the world Church - and the privilege of serving this year as Moderator.



Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group

1. The Group has met twice since last Mission Council, on 29 April and 2 September.
2. At its last meeting Mission Council agreed to accept the New Community Church, Halstead, into the United Reformed Church. There had been considerable discussion about the circumstances that had led to the formation of that church, so MCAG has asked that the general issues raised be discussed by the meeting of the representatives of Provincial Listed Buildings Advisory Committees.
3. MCAG advised the General Secretary (and through him the Training Committee) that the question of advising on which colleges the United Reformed Church should use in training ministers might best be remitted to an ad hoc group.
4. The request for comments in the operation of Mission Council in its first 5 years brought seven responses. No common themes emerged and MCAG concluded that time should not be given to pursuing this matter.
5. At its September meeting MCAG learned that the Revd Dr John Clark was unable to be the theological reflector at this Mission Council due to a diary conflict that had just been discovered. It was agreed that it was too late to seek a replacement.
6. The report on Oversight Ministries was not considered at the March Council meeting due to lack of time. All the members of the group which produced the report have been thanked and a written apology given to the convener (Rhona Jones) for the time she spent waiting to present the report. MCAG asked for a recommendation as to how to take this matter forward but, at its September meeting, did not feel ready to proceed. For this reason, and recognising agenda pressure, it has deferred the Oversight Ministries report to the January meeting.
7. Discussions have taken place between the Clerk, her predecessor and Christine Hardwick about more efficient ways of producing the minutes of Mission Council and General Assembly. In future this will be done with the use of lap top computers. Christine did not feel competent to use the new technology but she generously agreed to stand down as minutes' secretary in order to allow a change to be made. She has been warmly thanked for her work for us. MCAG wishes to propose that Mrs. Sally Brooks be appointed as minutes secretary for Mission Council and General Assembly for a period of 4 years, ending with the Assembly of July 2001.
8. *Election to vacant place on MCAG:* The Constitution of the Group includes two people elected from among the conveners of Assembly committees. One of these places is currently filled by Wilma Frew but she now becomes a member of MCAG as Moderator- elect. There is therefore a "Convener vacancy". All the current conveners are eligible, apart from John Sutcliffe who is already a member of the Group.
9. Under separate headings MCAG will bring recommendations on the response to Assembly resolution 18; the discipline of members and pastoral procedures; the report on Authority; and the future status of the URC Holiday Forum.



Q

Memorandum from Church and Society Committee on ADVISERS and work around AIDS

1 Mission Council members will probably not recall (even if they were around!) that in 1991 the then Executive Committee gave approval to the proposal from Church and Society not to appoint a second full-time generalist staff member (to replace Mrs Anne Sutcliffe who had recently moved on) but to develop a programme of part-time Advisers on a few selected issues from the wide range of potential agenda, using the equivalent of that salary. Since 1992 the major pieces of work have been on Housing (Craig Russell) and European Issues (Philip Woods) and we have been able to devote some resources to Regional Advocacy (Susan Flynn). We think this strategy has worked well.

2 After a review in early 1996, we are now embarked on a fresh selection of themes, with specialists to work for us and with us. Most of this was reported to Assembly. (pp. 69f)

- We shall work on Environmental Concerns with David Pickering; we appreciate the willingness of his colleagues and congregation to encourage this work by a distinctively qualified minister.
- We have currently a preliminary investigation under way on work on Ageing and Older Persons jointly with Discipleship and Witness Committee involving Nigel Appleton as consultant and we shall commission more work leading up to 1999, the designated International Year of Older Persons.
- Thirdly, we are commissioning Pathway productions (the Church of Scotland production unit) to produce a video on Economics, with the William Temple Foundation of Manchester assisting with the preparation of associated training material and events.

3 We are now coming to terms with the fact that the 'special category ministry' of National AIDS Adviser will cease at the end of this year. We have been considering how to sustain a little work on certain specific tasks under this heading subject into 1998, because we feel that the matter is still a vital one. These tasks will be refined by the congoing Working Group on AIDS which has now been established by Church and Society. The committee decided, at its recent September meeting, to commission this work from Revd Justine Wyatt and from the London Ecumenical AIDS Trust (LEAT), the body which it was agreed by Mission Council should receive a grant from the church.

Our reason for reporting this to Mission Council now is to reinforce and clarify the point that such a consultancy will be very modest in terms of the time to be spent; we estimate the work to be done will take at most 50 days in 1998 and probably less in 1999, with no plans to continue beyond then. But the committee was unanimous that some consultancy work would be appropriate in this field and that, given her recent experience and continuing commitment, it would be appropriate for Justine to be asked to be involved, even though there may be a risk of confusion because her full-time ministry will have just ended, and that it would be perverse to ask someone else simply because of that risk. We shall help her cope with the possible difficulties in making the change from one style of working to another.

The Task Group recommendations

We recommend that the money be allocated to the following:

1. Pembrokeshire District Minister for Youth & Children. £2,000.
We see this as a valuable area of mission work which is not being tackled at present and could enable significant areas of growth in an area of concern.
3. Builth Wells Mission & Church Growth Project. £1,600.
Builth has already begun a creative project which is bringing about growth in various ways. This development will further a new outreach programme to young people.
6. Brecon Rural Group. £4,500.
Rural churches and ministry are often overlooked. This special category minister as well as encouraging growth in this area of Breconshire begins to redress the situation.
7. Newport URC Christian Resources. £400.
While this is small scale it aims to draw together the network of youth and children's work pursued by the church so that the faith can be presented in helpful and relevant ways.
8. Fairwater, Cardiff. Time for God worker. £3,000.
Fairwater URC have begun to reach out to the Fairwater community by making their building available. However, they are aware that unless the congregation gets to know the groups using their building it will not result in growth. This worker will begin that face to face process.
9. South Wales District Council Mission Enabler. £10,000.
This seems a substantial piece of work which will encourage local churches to respond to the opportunities for mission in their locality and wrestle with the underlying issues and causes of decline and growth.
But this is to be paid over once District Council have concurred fully with calling someone to the post.
11. Christchurch, Rhyl. Rent Guarantee Scheme. £1,000.
Homelessness is a major social evil and we wanted to encourage participation in a project which could help release people from the spiral of debt.
14. Canton Uniting Church, Cardiff. CRCW project. £5,500.
This represents a long term serious piece of community outreach whereby a church could become deeply involved in bringing change to community life in Canton.
This is to be paid over once the CRCW project in Canton has been properly established with the CRCW Programme nationally and District locally.

TOTAL: £28,000



S

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

1. **Review Group - Secretary for Ecumenical Relations**
Convener: Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow
Members: Revd. Fleur Houston, Revd. Brian Bailey
Revd. Gethin Rhys, Mr Desmond Curry
2. **Thames North Moderator Appointment Group**
Revd. Bernie Collins unable to serve. Revd. Alasdair Pratt nominated in his place.
3. **Youth Secretary** - No nomination at present.
4. **Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness** - No nomination at present.
5. **Y.L.T.O. Yorkshire Province** - Mr Michael Maskell for 5 years to 31.9.02

Committee Vacancies

- a) Communications and Editorial - Revd. Peter Moth, Revd. Roger Hall
- b) Equal Opportunities - Revd. Nanette Head, Revd. Wilf Bahadur
- c) National Assessment Board - Dr. Christopher Whitehead
- d) Youth and Childrens - Mr Lewis McKenzie
- e) URC Trust - Directors - Mr Martin Daldorf, Dr. Brian Woodall, Mrs Christine Meekison
- f) Finance Committee - Mrs Elizabeth Reeve has resigned, suggested replacement - Mr John Woodman
- g) Assembly Arrangements Committee - Convener: Revd. Alasdair Pratt
- h) Discipleship and Witness - Revd. Jean Forster has resigned

Representation on Other Bodies

1. Milton Mount Foundation - Revd. Peter Grimshaw (appointment for a further term), Mr David Butler
2. Lord Wharton Trust - Mr Norman Fabb
3. Mansfield College Training and Education Committee - Revd. Derek Wales, Dr. David Peel, Revd. Janet Sowerbutts.

100

T

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
MERSEY PROVINCE

September, 1997.

NEW PROVINCIAL OFFICE AND RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT

1. When the Mersey Province was informed that a gift of money from CWM might be forthcoming for a project, which would not otherwise be considered due to lack of Provincial funds, the Synod Mission Executive quickly set out to prioritise a list of ten possibilities. The outcome was to recommend to the March, 1997, Mersey Synod that such a gift be used towards the provision of facilities in a new Provincial Office and Resource Centre. A resolution was agreed by Synod as follows: *"Synod submits to the Assembly Mission Council its proposal that its share of the CWM Gift be used to equip a Provincial Resource Centre."*

Why a new Office/Resource Centre?

The present accommodation is of a "Portakabin" build and was set up in an emergency situation in 1986 when the first and second floors of the YWCA premises in Birkenhead were closed by the Fire Authority, giving the staff five days in which to vacate the premises. The alternative provision was of a temporary nature in the car park of a local Methodist/URC Church in Birkenhead. The report to Synod (October 1986) stated - *"A permanent site for the Office is still under discussion -"*. As time has passed and reviews of the Province Administration have been held, several factors have featured concerning some disadvantages of the present arrangement - the location is not easily found by visitors and local public transport is not convenient. In the last ten years the staffing has increased to give support to the Moderator, the work of the Province Trust, and the additional work generated by the Province. There was in operation for some years the URC Covenant Office, which was transferred to Church House with the onset of computerisation.

The standard of sound-insulation in the mobile is unsatisfactory, particularly for the Moderator's work, and the problems of security have increased.

In the last three years the Province has added to its staff with the appointments of a full-time Youth/Children's Officer, a full-time Training Officer and a part-time Communications Officer. The Office provision needs to take account of the growth in support required by its Officers, the extra room required for storing records and archives and the necessary updating of Information Technology.

The location of the office/resource centre is likely to be in the Liverpool/ Warrington area of the Province; this takes into account that the present Moderator chose to live in Warrington in preference to Birkenhead, so as to give better access by road/motorway to different parts of the Province. This change was fully supported by the Synod at the time of appointment of the Moderator. The Resource Centre aspect needs to be in a place more easily and widely accessible to members of the local churches, as well as providing a base for the Officers, so that training materials, displays and a place for meetings is seen as an important contribution to the resourcing of mission to churches in the Province.

2. Following the March, 1997, Synod a working party was formed, drawing expertise from the Property Task Group, and an architect undertook a feasibility study to examine potential locations, accommodation requirements, and costs. Another group began the process of reviewing the office administration - staffing and facilities - with a view to future needs and taking into account the changes which have recently occurred.
3. **Ecumenical consultations** have taken place with Roman Catholics and Methodists in Liverpool. At the present time there may be the possibility of the Methodists sharing accommodation and further consultations with the Methodist Property Division are necessary. The feasibility study indicates that accommodation for the Methodists/ or others could be included at a future date. Methodist enquiries are not as advanced as the Mersey Synod.
4. On 25th. September the Synod Mission Executive met to receive the reports of the feasibility study and staffing requirements, an outline budget for the provision and running costs of the Office/ Resource Centre. The Mission Executive will bring a recommendation to the meeting of Synod on 1st. November, 1997, for a decision to agree to the funding of a new Provincial Office and Resource Centre. Before the meeting of Synod consultations with the Elders and Church Meeting of the local church likely to be involved with the project will take place.

It is clear that there is still considerable work to be done before Synod will have the opportunity to consider and, hopefully, approve the project. If approval is given, the aim would be for the new facilities to be available by mid 1998.

5. The potential CWM gift of £26,000 has been the spur to the Mersey Province to pursue this project with a sense of excitement and is seen as part of the fulfilling of our mission vision for the future.

Angus W. Duncan
Synod Clerk
26.9.97.



7 SEP 1997

The United Reformed Church Wales Province Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig Cymru

Provincial Moderator: Revd. John Ll. Humphreys, B.A., B.D., Th.M.
Home and Work Base: 8 Warwick House,
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01222 493606 (Moderator and Trust)

Please reply to: Provincial Office

18th September 1997

Revd John Waller
Deputy General Secretary
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
LONDON
WC1H 9RT

Dear John

CWM Money

The Provincial Executive Committee which met yesterday considered the enclosed report and accepted the recommendations on page. 3.

We trust that Mission Council will endorse the Province's decision.

Yours sincerely,

John Rhys
Synod Clerk

Enc.

'GIVEN FOR GROWTH'

PROVINCIAL TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

We received 15 applications for grants from the money allocated to us by Mission Council from CWM. We were very impressed by the majority of applications but were, as expected, unable to fund all the projects. We allocated £28,000 in total.

The criteria we agreed as a Task Group

1. We will not fund building work.
2. We will not fund maintenance of existing church work.
3. We will fund new mission centred projects which are evangelical in nature, which are about outreach and service of a community, or both.
4. We would prefer to fund long-term projects rather than short-term projects.
5. We would favour work with vulnerable people in our society over work with the 'general public.'

A precis of the 15 project proposals:

1. Pembrokeshire District Council Minister for Children & Youth Work.

The request was for £2,000 to meet the expenses of Non-stipendiary Minister in such a post for a period of 2 years.

2. Peter Devaney.

A £12,000 District/Provincial Church growth project to encourage local churches to look at what makes churches grow. *N.B. We disregarded this application as it had neither District nor Provincial backing.*

3. Builth Wells Mission and Church Growth Project.

The request was for £1,800 to provide instruments for a drama and music project aimed at 16 - 20 year olds which has grown out of their outreach work with young people.

4. Caebach URC Boiler House Renovation Project.

The request was for £6,000 - £7,000 to enable the congregation to make use of their adjacent property. *N.B. Unfortunately we disregarded this application as we had made it clear that we would not give money for building work. However, we have advised them of the URC access grants for facilities for people with disabilities.*

5. Garden City URC.

The request was for £1,000 to buy a new piano for their Sisterhood and Crusader meetings. *N.B. We regarded this as maintenance of existing activities rather than the development of new mission work and so we disregarded this application.*

6. Brecon Rural Group Special Category ministry expenses.

The request was for £7,000 towards the local expenses of ministry aimed at mission and growth in an area experiencing the classic signs of rural poverty and isolation.

7. Newport URC Christian Education Resources Library.

The request was for £400 towards the cost of establishing a library of Christian resources aimed at children and young people.

8. Fairwater URC, Cardiff, Time for God Worker.

The request was for £3,000 towards the cost of a Time for God worker to draw the congregation closer to organisations presently using the church premises, with particular emphasis on children and youth work.

9. South Wales District Council Mission Enabler.

The request was for £10,000 towards the expenses of a 5 year project in which the District would call someone to work alongside congregations in the District to develop congregational strategies for mission, community outreach and growth.

10. Llanishen URC, Cardiff. Cost of employing the Director of Music & Drama from the Welsh College of Music & Drama to develop congregational music.

The request was for £8,000 to pay the expenses and costs of the Director's part-time sessional involvement over two years to develop a vibrant programme of music in worship.

11. Christchurch URC, Rhyl. Priming capital for Rent Guarantee Scheme.

The request was for £1,000 - £2,000 to begin a multi-agency rent guarantee scheme which would help break the cycle of homelessness, whereby tenants are refused housing because they are unable to find/guarantee the deposit.

12. Parkfield Community Centre, Mold. Summer Bible Club and Concerts.

The request was for £1,650 to fund a summer Bible Club and Gospel Concerts.

13. Park URC, Llanelli. Social Services worker to develop a drop in centre.

The request was for £10,000 over 3 years to pay a senior Social Services manager to develop a drop in facility in Park URC.

14. Canton Uniting Church, Cardiff. CRCW project & Community Outreach proposals.

The request we considered was for £7,500 towards the expenses of a Church Related Community Worker to work for a 5 year period in the Canton area.

15. Ely Pastorate, Cardiff. CRCW Management Committee Community Empowerment & Organisation worker.

The request was for £26,000 to establish a worker with support team to spearhead work to empower people and a community of major social and economic deprivation.

Comments

- 1. The successful projects should submit reports after 12 months so that the Province can hear of the stories of growth that emerge from this gift to the Province.**
- 2. The grants are to be spent on the projects that they have specified in their application. Any changes should be negotiated with the Province.**
- 3. If the grant is not taken up by South Wales District Council or Canton the province may reconsider decisions not to fund Park URC's project or that of Llanishen URC.**

Revd Peter Cruchley-Jones
Convener
CWM Gift Money Task Group
July 1997



The United Reformed Church

East Midlands Province

Moderator: Revd. Malcolm G. Hanson B.A.

Province Office: The United Reformed Church, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood,
Nottingham NG5 3AA Telephone: 0115 960 9241 Fax: 0115 960 9202

Strategy and Ministries Committee

Convener: Revd David Gardner
45 Palmerston Boulevard
Leicester, LE2 3YS
Tel: 0116 2885163

Secretary: Revd Lesley McNeil
1 Stewart Drive
Loughborough, LE11 5RU
Tel and Fax: 01509 646201

The General Secretary
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT

- 5 SEP 1997

1 September 1997

Dear Tony,

The East Midlands Province submits this application for funding from the Hong Kong 'gift of Grace' finance, and would be grateful if it could be placed before the Mission Council at its next meeting.

Yours in Christ,

Lesley McNeil

copy: Revd Sheila Maxey



The United Reformed Church

East Midlands Province

Moderator: Revd. Malcolm G. Hanson B.A.

Province Office: The United Reformed Church, 1 Edwards Lane, Sherwood,
Nottingham NG5 3AA Telephone: 0115 960 9241 Fax: 0115 960 9202

Proposals for a Mission Project which will be funded out of the Hong Kong Gift of Grace Finance.

Background

The East Midlands Province has for some time had a concern to integrate and develop its approach to mission. At an all day conference in May, a great deal of existing work was identified and encouragement given to several other initiatives. Two further projects were identified as appropriate next priorities. Both would require funding and both needed more preparatory work to be done. In the case of one of these - the development of an evangelism training resources project in Leicester - further discussions have shown that more groundwork is needed before the project can begin.

In the case of the other project - the appointment of a Mission Enabler through CWM - a great deal more work has now been done. However, this is a new project which will only be possible if funding can be found. It is this proposal, therefore, which is now offered to Mission Council in relation to the CWM 'gift of grace'.

Post

A Mission Enabler; to enthuse and enable Churches to reflect on the Gospel and its relationship to contemporary culture, so that they are encouraged in evangelism.

Placing

The South Leicestershire Group has been chosen because there already exist all the requirements for ministerial and family support. The geographical location is ideal for access to the whole Province, and the Group is enthusiastic about the project.

The Person

An advertisement was sent to our CWM partner Churches. (Copy attached).
We are currently looking at applications.

Budget

	month (approx.)	year	whole project (3years)
Housing.	£400	£4800	£14400
Transport.	£340	£4000	£12000
Expenses.	£ 84	£1000	£ 3000

This comes to £29400. We have assumed accommodation for a family.

Conclusion

The East Midlands Province is convinced that a Mission Enabler from a CWM partner Church will be of enormous benefit, and could play an important role in the overall mission strategy of the Province.

It is hoped that such a placement will establish mutually beneficial links between the Province and another church within the CWM family.

We ask Mission Council to approve the allocation of 'Gift of Grace' funds for this purpose.

**The East Midlands Province of the United Reformed Church
is seeking a Mission Enabler for the period April 1998 - April 2001**

Job description

1. To be a mission enthuser within the Province
2. To enable churches to reflect on the Gospel and its relationship to contemporary culture
3. To encourage congregations in evangelism

Suggested pattern of work

1. An initial 6 month period, mostly within a pastorate, during which URC/English ethos and culture would be explored. Some local preaching and pastoral work would be undertaken.
2. During the remainder of the 3 years, 25% of the time would be in this 'home' church.
3. During the second 6 months, work in depth in a specific situation within the District. This might include leading workshops, Bible study groups, community outreach projects and so on.
4. During the next two years, work with specific projects within the wider Province. These would arise out of the experience of the first year.
5. Liaison with the Province Evangelism team throughout.

Person specification

1. The person would need a good depth of theological understanding, and to be an experienced minister with awareness of mission.
2. The person would need a good command of English, written and spoken, since the appointment of three years is too short to allow for the length of time required for a language course.
3. An understanding of British culture would be an asset.
4. The person would need to be flexible, outgoing, and a good listener with analytical abilities.
5. A driving licence would be an advantage.

Applications, with a CV, must reach

Revd Sheila Maxey
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT

by 31 August 1997. Late applications, on this occasion, cannot be considered.

F10

MC OCT 97

Deputy General Secretary

The Revd. John Waller MA

Direct line telephone: 0171 916 8646
Direct line fax: 0171 916 1928

Mr Hartley Oldham
Messrs Towns, Needham & Co.
6/8 Albert Road
Levenshulme
Manchester M19 3PJ

4 September 1997

Totnes United Church

I refer to your letter of 27 August to Tony Burnham.

I have noted that you wish a slot for this item at Mission Council. That will be arranged. It is possible for the resolutions and any necessary supporting information to be in my hands by 12 September?

Yours sincerely

Revd John Waller
Deputy General Secretary

John - for Action

TOWNS, NEEDHAM & CO.

TEL: 0161 225 0040

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J. M. TOWNS A. C. MIDDLETON

OUR REF: L.NHO.AG.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH JOHN REDMOND, SOLICITOR.

YOUR REF:

27 August 1997

Rev A G Burnham B.A.
General Secretary
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT

28 AUG 1997

Dear Tony,

RE. TOTNES UNITED CHURCH

Thank you for letting me have copies of the recent correspondence in this matter.

Under the Charity Commission Scheme, Mission Council, on behalf of General Assembly as the successor to The Congregational Union of England and Wales, needs to appoint a representative to meet a Baptist representative to pass certain Resolutions.

Valerie Silverthorne says that the Baptists have appointed their representative and I suggest that Mission Council should appoint Ray Adams as its representative.

Can you therefore please ask John Waller to reserve a "slot" on the next Mission Council agenda for this matter.

I will let you know when Valerie and I have sorted out the wording of the Resolutions which we would like Mission Council to pass.

Yours sincerely,

Harvey

Deputy General Secretary

The Revd. John Waller MA

Direct line telephone: 0171 916 8646

Direct line fax: 0171 916 1928

The Revd Raymond Adams,
URC South Western Province,
The Manse,
Norton Fitzwarren,
Taunton, Somerset TA2 6RU.

19 June 1997

Thank you for your letter of 7 June, making me aware of the strong concern of the Moderators for an agreed policy on the number of ministers set in context of a mission strategy which has been the subject of analysis, thought and prayer. Both Tony Burnham and Christine Craven have told me of the discussion you had with them.

I agree that the Mission Council is the forum in which such a policy can be crafted before commendation to the General Assembly. However I hope that can be done by using existing structures rather than by creating new ones.

RPAG has been given the task of preparing "a rolling five year plan which takes account of possible changes in society and in the life of the church on which the allocation of resources may be based". It is responsible for budgets and for consulting about both financial and human resources. It is an advisory group to Mission Council. "Mission Council will make all recommendations to the Assembly about the use of resources".

This is an immense task and I believe we should not underestimate the time it will take to get the Church thinking and planning in this way, after years of deciding policy almost exclusively by annual budgets and the occasional special appeal.

The Five Year Plan presented to the 1996 Assembly was a first step and I felt it was welcomed by the Assembly as a valuable mission tool. However it was certainly open to criticism. It declared a policy on the number of ministers without saying how it could be achieved. It asked questions about the relationship of the number of ministers to matters of mission and growth without being clear how answers would be sought. And it proved statistically very unreliable in regard to both finance and the number of ministers (the two being very closely related). These are only examples of its flaws.

Cont/d.....

My hope was that an improved Five Year Plan would have been presented to the 1997 Assembly. No doubt it would have been if changes of personnel had not slowed down the whole process. There is no reason why the process cannot be picked up in 1997/8 and I am sure RPAG will want to stimulate the Mission Council to do just that. It may also want to commission particular groups or committees to do work on some of the big issues.

In short, I believe that we set up the mechanisms to do what the Moderators seek, some three years ago. We need to learn how to use them effectively.

Your letter makes reference to the mechanism agreed in 1995 to control the number of ministers. Some of us spent many hours working that out! However it quickly became apparent that the notion behind the mechanism, namely that floods of ministers were about to come on to the payroll, was a misconception. It would, I believe, have been very unhelpful to have asked the 1996 Assembly to undo immediately what had been done in the previous year. However my view is that the mechanism should now be reviewed. There is need to have a system of control, even if we cannot see it being used in the next year or two.

I hope you will not mind my copying your letter and my reply to the officers of RPAG and also to Tony and Christine. We all share the Moderators' concern and we will be encouraged by the searching questions being asked.

Finally, being fully aware of the Moderators' anxiety not to appear as a council of the Church, I will take the risk of reminding you that individually you are members of many of the Church's councils and not least of the General Assembly. It may be that if you press your concerns there, it will make easier the task of those of us who work with committees. It will also help combat the dangerous conception that "the URC" is anything other than all of us together.

Talk about teaching grandmothers to suck eggs!! See you all in Portsmouth.

Yours,

c.c. Revd. Duncan Wilson
Mr Dai Hayward
Revd. Tony Burnham
Revd. Christine Craven

- 9 JUN 1997



The United Reformed Church

South Western Province

The Manse • Norton Fitzwarren • Taunton • Somerset • TA2 6RU
Tel: 01823 275470 • Fax: 01823 331750

Moderator: The Revd W. Raymond P. Adams BA

The Revd John Waller
The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place
London
WC1H 9RT

7 June 1997

Dear John,

The number of ministers

At the last two or three Moderators' Meetings there has been passionate concern about the reducing number of ministers in the Church, and the feeling that the carefully crafted agreement with the RPAG two years ago is, at best, in limbo. We re-discovered the Report to the 1995 Assembly, which sets out in careful detail the mechanism to be followed in regulating the number of ministers. The new Secretary for Ministries was grateful to be shown it, as she was unaware of its existence. We believe neither does the RPAG.

The report of the RPAG to Assembly mentions the number of ministers available, without any comment about this being the accepted policy of the Church, or with any thoughts about making up the shortfall, by, for example, activating the recruitment programme from churches in the U.S. and Canada.

The budget seems to assume a decline in numbers of ministers, without any policy about the number of ministers we need.

People in the Provinces are still confused about the relationship of the budget to number of ministers.

In short, there needs to be some co-ordinated discussion about vision and aims before we can have a clear strategy.

The Moderators, ever conscious that their Meeting is not a council of the Church, have asked me to convey their urgent concerns to you:

- a) The Church needs to ask how many ministers it needs.
- b) Are we planning for decline or growth?
- c) Recruitment of ministers needs a strategy - and possibly a strategy group to define it.
- d) Prior to any policy or strategy about ministerial numbers, we need to analyse the decline of the church, and decide what we believe God is saying to us through this experience. People want revival without asking why they have declined. There needs to be much careful thought, analysis and prayer.
- e) A co-ordinated discussion about agendas and priorities is required - a discussion which

takes account of financial policy, the concerns of the Ministries committee, the RPAG, and which takes account of those who created policy in recent years. The URC seems remarkably short on memory, vis-a-vis recent Assembly decisions.

f) It was felt that Mission Council is the structure to co-ordinate and prioritise these different approaches.

It is because of (f) above that I am writing to you about this.

What I have written to you arose from a discussion with Christine Craven, but we had a prior discussion with Tony on some of the same ground. I enclose the minute on that earlier conversation:

" Concern was raised about the way the number of ministers available to the Church was to be reported to the forthcoming General Assembly, as if the figures were either inevitable, or agreed policy. There was a misunderstanding in the Church that the low numbers of ministers were due to financial constraints.

It was unclear whether the recruitment programme for ministers from the U.S. had been reactivated. It was argued that a national policy on recruitment and the required number of ministers was essential. The Meeting agreed that a task group on the recruitment of ministers, set up by Assembly, could be beneficial.

The General Secretary pointed to the discrepancy between Provinces in the number of candidates in training for ministry. Provinces should consider as a matter of urgency the importance of their initiative in challenging individuals within their own churches."

With thanks and all good wishes

*Yours sincerely ,
Ray .*

The Revd Raymond Adams
Secretary to the Moderators' Meeting

Synod Clerks of East Midlands, Wales and Mersey Provinces

John Rhys

Angus Duncan

24 January 1997

In October 1996 Mission Council decided in principle on the allocation of the CWM Hong Kong money.

At its meeting last Saturday the Council accepted advice from its Advisory Group in the terms set out below (Mission Council Paper C Paragraph 8 - amended):

"8. CWM Hong Kong Money. Although Mission Council decided that this money should be given for mission projects in the 3 Provinces with the least resources, it did not define its terms. The Advisory Group recommends:

- 8.1 That the criteria used by the Resource Sharing Task Group to assess relative wealth should be used also for the purpose of identifying East Midlands, Mersey and Wales Provinces as the primary recipients of the Hong Kong money.
- 8.2 That each of the above Provinces be asked to submit proposals for a mission project which will be funded out of its proportion of the Hong Kong money. This should be work that would not otherwise have been funded out of their own resources
- 8.3 That the Mission Council in March or October 1997 will be invited to approve these proposals, or not. Once approved, occasional reports will be submitted to Mission Council for forwarding to CWM
- 8.4 In the event that any or all of the 3 Provinces are not able to submit an approved project by October 1997, Mission Council may wish to invite the next poorest, as identified by the Resource Sharing Task Group."

There are no criteria set down because the Council believes that Provinces should be free to decide on a mission project on the basis of their own knowledge of needs and opportunities. The "approval" by Mission Council will therefore be of a very general nature, to enable us all to identify with the opportunity that the Hong Kong money has created.

You can work on the basis that about £27-28,000 will be available for each Province.

Your reply to this letter is one that I shall await with more than usual interest!

Yours sincerely,

Revd. John Waller
Deputy General Secretary