

# Mission Council

## Minutes of the meeting

### 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Seventy-three members of Mission Council were present with fifteen others in attendance, and six guests.

#### **Session 1**

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Alistair Smeaton.

#### **05/23 Welcome**

The Moderator welcomed Ms Francis Brienan (Mission Enabler, CWM Europe) as the theological reflector; the Revd Jill Thornton (Moderator-Elect's Chaplain); Miss Barbara Leighton (substituting for the Revd John Macauley, Thames North Synod); Mr George Morton; Mr Steven Pryor (substituting for Gareth Jones, FURY); Mr John Rea (substituting for Mrs Janet Eccles, North Western Synod); and the Revd Graham Cook (representing the Catch the Vision steering group).

#### **05/24 Attendance**

Apologies of absence were received from:

The Revd John Arthur (Synod of Scotland); Mr Eric Chilton (Honorary Treasurer); Mrs Janet Eccles (North Western Synod); Mr Gareth Jones (FURY); The Revd John Macauley (Thames North); The Revd Peter Noble (Synod of Wales); The Revd Dr David Peel (Moderator-elect); Ms Suzanne Adofo, Mr John Brown, Miss Michelle Marcano (Staff).

#### **05/25 Notification of Additional Business**

The Deputy General Secretary gave notice of a number of additional papers and notified Mission Council of proposed adjustments to the agenda.

#### **05/26 Catch the Vision (Paper G)**

The General Secretary reported on the work of the *Catch the Vision* steering group, in a presentation entitled 'Together, making a difference for Christ's sake'. He noted that this presentation was outlined on Paper G, and briefly commented on each of the paper's six sections:

- New ways of being church;
- Deeper engagement in mission;
- A new spirituality;
- A slimmer, more rigorous organisation;
- Renewed ecumenical commitment.

He outlined the parts of the proposals that could be begun in 2005 and in 2006. The steering group had tried to hold together a series of disparate pieces of work which were coming together into a whole. The various groups and committees would report on their work. This was still a fluid report, though the group believed that it had begun to get the shape right.

Regeneration Agency. There are skilled people who are experts in this field and who are keen to help the church. A group had put together proposals for an agency which could take redundant buildings and transform them into a valuable community resource. Responsibility would be taken by the wider church to invest capital for the financial and spiritual benefit of the local church. A thorough assessment of the local church's current situation (including problems and opportunities) would be required before a business plan

could be developed and submitted to a panel of experts. The agency would then take on the development of projects.

The General Secretary believed this type of scheme merited careful examination, and suggested that the synod moderators might explore it further with those who already had experience in managing such projects.

Finance. Finance should be the servant of the church, not its master. The Church at present operated an expenditure-driven budget, with an increasingly difficult struggle to meet it. The church *is* generous, however, despite a diminishing response to the M&M fund. The group suspected that M&M was widely regarded as a tax, and that churches were unclear about the way money is used, including the true cost of ministry. The central costs of the Church could not be reduced further without the dramatic pruning of programmes. The Church needed to get serious about fundraising and move to an income driven budget.

Spirituality. The group invited Mission Council to explore what spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century might look like. The Church should embark on a reflective process which would allow it to articulate its position, and address the following questions:

- i) What does it mean to be ecumenically committed?
- ii) What does it mean to be committed to making a difference 'for Christ's sake'?
- iii) How can we prepare ourselves to engage in mission in 'post-Christendom'?

#### **05/27 Ecumenical Committee (Paper H)**

The Revd Elizabeth Nash drew Mission Council's attention to (Paper H, page 4), where 'ecumenical architecture' (a term meaning ecumenical restructuring) was described, and current action being taken by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland was briefly reported for information.

#### **05/28 Ministries Committee**

Mr John Ellis (Ministries) notified Mission Council of the Ministries Committee's intention to put a resolution to General Assembly which authorises pension enhancements for ministers who take early retirement on health grounds to be funded from the main Pension Fund.

#### **05/29 Gambling Bill**

Mr John Ellis spoke of the Churches' lobbying of the government with regard to the government's Gambling Bill, led by the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army. A petition being raised by the churches would be available for members of Mission Council to sign.

### **Session 2**

#### **05/30 Minutes of Mission Council 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2005**

Minutes of the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January were approved, with minor alterations. It was noted that attention should be given to the wider publication of minutes.

#### **05/31 Matters Arising**

05/03 - addressed in MCAG report;

05/10 see paper H (p6 para6);

05/18 The Deputy General Secretary noted that Helen Warmington had been appointed as the United Reformed Church 's Campaign Manager for "Make Poverty History."

#### **05/32 The Financial Outlook**

The General Secretary presented the paper *The Financial Outlook*. He noted that the financial outcome of 2004 had been worse than anticipated; there was a potential deficit of £816,000. Current pledges were also below target.

As the early timing of Mission Council meant that the Finance Committee had not yet met to agree the 2006 budget, Mission Council was requested to delegate responsibility for authorising the budget to the Mission Council Advisory Group.

Concern was expressed about the danger of reduction in the *Belonging to the World Church* programme in response to budget cuts if Mission Council was not to have sight of the draft budget. The General Secretary explained that MCAG would not be authorised to cut programmes.

**Mission Council delegates responsibility to MCAG in its capacity as trustees of the church to authorise the 2006 budget which will be presented after the Finance Committee has finished its work.**  
***The Resolution was carried.***

#### **05/33 Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council (Paper A)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented paper A - Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council. He gave notice of those places needing to be filled on the various Advisory Groups: Mission Council's role in nominating and electing people to them; and then explained the procedures involved.

#### **05/34 Grants and Loans Group (Paper A1)**

Mr Brian Woodhall presented the report of the Grants and Loans Group. He also expressed gratitude that the Revd Sandra Lloydlangston had taken on the role of secretary.

#### **05/35 Staffing Advisory Group (Paper A2)**

Mrs Val Morrison advised Mission Council of the Staffing Advisory Group's recommendation that the post of rural consultant should be continued, as recommended by the URC/Methodist review group. She moved the resolution:

*Mission Council approves the continuation of the post of Rural Officer/Consultant, the work and the funding to be equally shared by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.*

There followed brief discussion, which was particularly focussed on the provision of Rural Officers in National Synods.

The Revd Brian Jolly suggested the inclusion of the words 'this to be subject to satisfactory budgetary arrangements between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church'.

This amendment was accepted by the mover.

**Mission Council approves the continuation of the post of Rural Officer/Consultant, the work and the funding to be equally shared by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. This to be subject to satisfactory budgetary arrangements between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church'.**

**The amended resolution was carried with 9 abstentions.**

The Moderator on behalf of Mission Council thanked Mrs Jenny Carpenter for her service as Rural Officer.

Mrs Val Morrison reminded Mission Council of the Staffing Advisory Group's remit: to review Assembly-appointed posts when vacancies occur, as well as the specific task of reviewing all Assembly-appointed posts before 2007. As a result of this, and the vacancy caused by the resignation of Dr Andrew Bradstock as Secretary for Church and Society, Mrs Morrison moved the following resolution:

*Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Secretary for Church and Society on a temporary basis until Assembly 2007; the job description should include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of Church and Society work.*

Mr John Ellis proposed insertion of 'not later than' after the word 'until'. The mover agreed to this.

After discussion, the resolution was further amended to include the words 'until such earlier date as may be agreed'. This was not acceptable to the Convener of the Church and Society Committee.

The Revd Elizabeth Welch proposed that the words 'as a matter of urgency' be included after 'shall' (which replaces 'should'. ) This being acceptable to the mover, the amended resolution was put to the vote:

**Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Secretary for Church and Society on a temporary basis until not later than Assembly 2007; the job description shall as a matter of urgency include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of Church and Society work.**

The Resolution was carried with 3 abstentions.

#### **05/36 Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper A3)**

The Deputy General Secretary presented paper A3, Mission Council Advisory Group. He moved the resolution:

**Mission Council, having secured the agreement of the Youth and Children's Work Committee and the Church and Society Committee, agrees that the convener of the Pilots Management Committee and the Convener of the Commitment for Life Management Committee should be nominated by the General Assembly through its Nominations Committee, to serve for such periods as the policy of the General Assembly dictates.**

The resolution was carried with 1 abstention.

The Revd Peter Poulter outlined the intention to bring the *Declaration for a Safe Church - A Charter for Action*, and its associated resolution to General Assembly 2005. He moved the following resolution:

*Mission Council agrees to ask General Assembly to*

- 1. Accept the Declaration for a Safe Church;*
- 2. instruct all General Assembly Committees to operate within it;*
- 3. urge synods, District Councils and Local Churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work, and report their response to Mission Council by March 2006.*

Dr S Orchard moved the amendment to add 'for synods to' before 'report' in 3. This was acceptable to the mover and the **resolution was carried.**

**Mission Council agrees to ask General Assembly to**

- 1. Accept the Declaration for a Safe Church;**
- 2. instruct all General Assembly Committees to operate within it;**
- 3. urge synods, District Councils and Local Churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work, and for Synods to report their response to Mission Council by March 2006.**

**05/37 Section 'O' Advisory Group (Paper A4)**

The Assembly Clerk presented paper A4 - Section 'O' Advisory Group. He outlined the need for a new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, and some clarifications to the Section 'O' Process, as well as changes to the means of dealing with amendments to Section 'O' at General Assembly. The Clerk outlined the procedure of appointing a small group to look at this and report back later in Mission Council. Mission Council agreed to appoint the Revd Roberta Rominger, the Revd Roz Harrison and Mr John Ellis to examine paper A4 along with the Clerk.

**05/38 Resource Sharing Task Group**

The Deputy General Secretary presented paper A6 - Resource Sharing Task Group. The Moderator thanked the Revd Roger Whitehead and Mr David Butler for their contribution to this group over many years.

**05/39 Nominations Committee (Paper H, para 6)**

In presenting the report of the Nominations Committee, the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard reported that the Thames North Synod Moderator's Review Panel recommends the re-appointment of the Revd Roberta Rominger to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.

And moved:

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Roberta Rominger to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.**

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, approves the appointment of the Revd Neil Thorogood as Director of Pastoral Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.**

**Mission Council in the light of the exceptional circumstances that currently prevail approves the re-appointment of Mr William McVey as Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008.**

**These were agreed.**

**05/40 Clergy Employment**

The General Secretary spoke about the employment status of clergy. The Department of Trade and Industry had issued draft guidelines, all of which are already fulfilled by the Plan for Partnership. A final statement would be published later and it was hoped that any action the Church needed to take would be brought to General Assembly in 2006.

**05/41**

The Session was closed in prayer, led by the Chaplain.

### **Session 3**

#### **05/42 Local Church Initiatives**

The Moderator welcomed Victor Russell and the Revd Jill Thornton (Chaplain to the Moderator -elect) to Mission Council. She then introduced The Revd John Marsh (Norwich) and the Revd Jacqui Gavin (Daventry), who related their experience in 'New Ways of Being Church'.

**05/43** The Session was closed in prayer, led by the Chaplain.

### **Session 4**

**05/44** The Session was opened with worship.

#### **05/45 Ethical Investment (Paper A5)**

Mr John Ellis presented paper A5 on behalf of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group. The paper outlined the reasons why the pornography industry should be included among those in which the United Reformed Church would not invest. Mr Ellis also discussed the Church's level of tolerance, that is, the proportion of a company's business devoted to objectionable products. He presented the proposed revised policy and moved that it should be included in Mission Council's report to General Assembly:

**"General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the Church should avoid any investment in:**

**a) companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction;**

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

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

**This policy can only be advisory as the responsibility for specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees."**

**Mission Council agreed that the resolution be included in the Mission Council report to General Assembly 2005.**

#### **05/46 Resolution on Asylum Seekers from Church and Society Committee**

The Revd Martin Camroux moved the following resolution:

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly,**

**a) calls upon all political parties in the run-up to the General Election**

**1. to clear the confusion of the public over the different categories of: (1) immigrant, (2) refugee and asylum seeker;**

**2. to stop stirring up the racial conflict caused by their competitive hardening attitude and by the proposed tougher legislation towards asylum seekers;**

**b) calls upon Her Majesty's Government**

- 1. to review urgently and frequently which countries are safe for the return of asylum seekers**
- 2. to minimise the detaining of families in removal centres**
- 3. to work urgently to eliminate trafficking of people to this country**

After brief discussion, the Resolution was **carried**.

**05/47 The Structures of the United Reformed Church (Paper B)**

The Revd John Oldershaw reported on the work of the Structures Working Party. He reported that the major conclusion of the group was that there should be just one council of the church between General Assembly and the local church. He outlined some of the characteristics of the proposed 'new synods'.

Members of the working party explained some of the thinking that had led to the group's conclusions.

**Session 5**

**05/48**

Mission Council met in Groups to discuss Paper B, Report of the Structures Working Party.

**05/49 Structures**

Groups subsequently reported on their discussion. Points raised were:

- retention of the names 'synod' and 'moderator' may not indicate the true level of change;
- concern about the functions of present District Pastoral Committees, and how this essential work will be continued;
- proposals will release people from meetings;
- Districts are recognised in some places as 'fading away', so the proposals may be in touch with the actual situation;
- be aware of danger of becoming a disparate group of churches, seek ways of ensuring local relationships;
- concern about lack of District assessment of candidates for ministry;
- the nature of representation to General Assembly;
- concern about how much flexibility the new synods would have;
- work needed on the details of new synod working;
- there is a false perception that structures will deliver inspiration;
- proposals need to be set beside other parts of *Catch the Vision*
- everything depends on hope and vision being the root of what we do;
- concern for Moderators. Would too much be loaded on to a small number?;
- the report may not convince people that the proposals are new and dynamic;
- clarity of local decisions and synod structures; we need to know how 'District' functions will be enabled;
- will the new structure cost more or less than at present?
- disappointment at the 'slightness' of the changes;
- tendency towards larger and more efficient - tendency towards the local;
- more work needed on synod boundaries;
- what happens when there is a local dispute?

The General Secretary, on behalf of the *Catch the Vision* steering group, sought Mission Council's advice on how the Structure paper should be presented to General Assembly -

whether the paper should be presented as a draft for amendment, or as a proposal for acceptance or rejection.

The matter was discussed, with most speakers being in favour of proceeding with the proposal in the speediest manner possible. The General Secretary thanked Mission Council for its guidance.

Mission Council expressed its gratitude to Mr Oldershaw, the Synod Clerks, and all those involved in the production of the Structures Paper.

## Session 6

### 05/50 Training Committee Review (Paper C)

The Revd John Humphreys presented Paper C, the Training Committee Review. He outlined the Training Committee's recent work in the context of the review and in relationship with the *Catch the Vision* process. The Revd Roy Lowes responded, on behalf of the Training Committee, to a number of questions, before Mission Council divided into groups for further discussion.

Resuming plenary session, the groups reported:

#### Group A:

- resolution 1 - a statement of the obvious
- resolution 2 does not indicate what the difficulties are with the present system of training;
- also concerns about costs and another layer of management;
- not enough about local training;
- favours sending students on ecumenical courses;
- no mention of training of young people for membership;
- group would prefer if this didn't go to General Assembly 2005.

#### Group B:

- asks that if the report goes to the churches, it must be in a very different form;
- agrees with resolution 1
- too 'grandiose' for the United Reformed Church today, over-elaborate and not justifying the extra cost;
- introducing a new layer of management into the Church - not the way we should be going;

#### Group C:

- endorse resolution 1
- concerns about resolution 2, and the necessity for the appearance of a large structure;
- resolution 4 - concern that we should be starting by identifying and providing the learning that people need, rather than encouraging people to take up learning that is being provided;
- look more closely at costings involved both in ecumenical courses and college courses.

#### Group D:

- said 'amen' to resolution 1
- needed control over the various strands of education;
- partnership could co-ordinate and monitor the provision but not the need;
- where are the people who *want* training?;
- local research needs to be done;
- concern about pulling out of ecumenical courses;
- costings required for distance learning.



Group E:

- agreed with 1, but wondered how people are to be encouraged to train;
- noted that *Pilots* training is currently very successful;
- proposal is both 'grandiose' and 'nebulous' and is difficult to envisage;
- more work needed on budgetary considerations;
- we should not write off the Hind process;
- resolution 5 presupposes the outcome of resolution 4;
- the group was unsure whether the proposal would fulfil the aim.

Group F:

- welcomed resolution 1
- withdrawing from ecumenical courses would send the wrong message;
- suggest a rewording of resolution 5 to indicate intentions to *all* colleges.

Group G:

- general agreement with 1
- some were unclear that the proposed mechanism would deliver real change;
- some were unclear about what change needs to be delivered;
- if General Assembly is unclear about it, then the proposal will simply be 'shredded'

Group H:

- welcomed resolution 1;
- resolution 2 should be clearer; what is lacking in the present training provision?
- many in the church seem unwilling to undergo training;
- agrees that National Synods should be represented;
- resolution 7 was not clear - it seems to go against the United Reformed Church's ecumenical principles.

In response, the Convener of the Training Committee, Mr Humphreys suggested that resolution 1, though it might be stating the obvious, does not describe the reality of the way in which the Church works, and is therefore important.

He and Mr Lowes responded to the issues raised by the groups.

**Mission Council agreed that Resolution 1 should be proposed to General Assembly 2005 as part of the *Catch the Vision* report.**

Mission Council agreed that a decision on Resolution 2 should be delayed until later in the meeting.

**05/51 Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (Paper E)**

The Revd Andrew Prasad and Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams presented the report of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee (Paper E) and its associated resolution. The Revd Andrew Prasad presented a series of resolutions which the Committee proposed to bring to General Assembly 2005. (Paper ASS).

**Mission Council agreed that the resolution be proposed to General Assembly 2005 as part of the *Catch the Vision* report:**

**'The United Reformed Church declares itself to be a Multicultural Church welcoming all cultures and ethnicity in worship witness and service, and celebrating the diverse gifts of the whole people of God for the mission and ministry to which God calls us.'**

Mission Council discussed the proposed resolutions (ASS). It was noted that the cost implications have not yet been addressed.

**Mission Council agreed that Resolution A should be put before General Assembly.**

**Mission Council**, having made some comment on the content, **agreed that Resolution C should be put before General Assembly.**

**Mission Council agreed that Resolution D should be put before General Assembly.**

**Mission Council agreed, with suggestions of rewording, that Resolution E should be put before General Assembly.**

**Mission Council agreed that Resolution 1 (Paper H, page 6, replacing resolution B, paper E) should be put before General Assembly with the deletion of (d).** An amendment to include the words 'at least 50% women' fell.

The Revd Elizabeth Nash proposed the following amendment to Resolution 1 (Paper H, page6):  
add:

*3. General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor other appointments and seek a similar gender and ethnic balance in groups such as Synod Moderators, Assembly appointed staff, Westminster College staff, Conveners of Assembly Committees, Mission Council etc.*

Seconded by the Revd Terry Oakley

Following discussion, the amendment was withdrawn

**Mission Council agreed to Resolution 2 (Paper H page 7) being put before General Assembly as a resolution of Mission Council:**

**General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor appointments to the Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synodf Moderators in order to further its Equal Opportunities objectives and sets the following targets for the lists of nominations to each of these bodies presented in the annual report to Assembly:**

- (a) an equal number of men and women**
- (b) at least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups**

#### **05/52 Report of the Ministries Committee (Paper D)**

Mr John Ellis presented the report of the Ministries Committee (Paper D). He spoke of the relationship between *Catch the Vision* and *Equipping the Saints*. He noted, as an example, that the report says nothing about the ordination of elders because work is being undertaken on this matter by other groups. Much of the impact of this report will be local. Mr Ellis highlighted the salient points of the report and offered guidance for the group discussion to follow.

#### **Session 8**

Mission Council met in Groups to discuss the report of the Ministries Committee. Returning to plenary session, the groups reported:

Group A:

- questioned the need for potential elders to understand the whole of the Basis of Union;
- noted that some churches do not currently practise a secret ballot in elders' elections;
- nomination of elders is significant and should be included;
- should colleges offer elders training;
- would encourage standard induction training for elders.

Group B:

- queried the need for potential elders to be URC members for two years if already ordained as Elders in other Reformed Churches.
- would ask for further work to be done on ordination of elders;

Group C:

- liked the classification of ministers but wondered if it added anything useful;
- glad to see the end of the suggestion of flexible remuneration;
- Res 1 - those in LEP's thought this was useful;
- Res 2 - tension between call and a fixed term of service;
- difficulty of applying these principles in places where the number of members was very small;
- understanding of the Basis of Union is a weighty demand, and should be balanced by some personal qualities;
- suggestion of 'shadowing' by prospective elders;
- in Res 6, part 2, anxiety about 'not every congregation having a minister providing their day to day leadership';
- considerable concern with using M&M fund to remunerate lay people;
- a plea for constraint in the use of jargon.

Group D:

- Part 2: is it worth considering large churches supporting a Special Category Minister?
- Res 1-4 - happy with all of them;
- Res 4 - the process is very important; could the resolution be strengthened by having local churches agreeing a selection process for elders with Synod;
- Ministries might continue to look at collaborative leadership;

Group E:

- liked the flexible approach 'one size may not fit all'
- rhetoric of collaborative leadership does not fit reality, we are still a clergy-centred church;
- it might be helpful to specify that the Basis of Union does not provide for a minister for every church;
- proposed M&M report should be made widely available, and should not be written by an accountant;
- SCM - concerns about explaining why there are fewer ministers in pastoral charge; concerns about the mechanics of employing lay SCM's
- would it be more sensible to leave eldership resolutions until L&W have finished their work on eldership;

Group F:

- appreciated the paragraph about stress;
- Res 6 - discussed ecumenical deployment;
- M&M report should be circulated using a variety of media;
- SCM - this will involve some sacrifice, and this should be made clear from the outset;
- should newly-ordained ministers be made to 'serve their time' in local pastorates - the group thought not;
- SCM proposal might give opportunities for ministers to develop their skills.

Group G:

- Res 5 - wondered if some rubric of team leadership should be built in;
- Part 2 - felt to be an imaginative response

Group H:

- Res 5 - felt that the word 'structures' was inappropriate;
- would ask Ministries to do more work on styles of leadership;

- group thinks ministry is about relationships, and therefore does not like the notion of 'access' to ordained ministers;
- SCM ought to be handled by Ministries rather than Ecumenical Committee;
- notes that the final proposed number of SCM's will be 10% of ministers;

Mr John Ellis responded on behalf of the Ministries Committee.

**Mission Council agreed that Part 2: Draft Resolution on Expansion of Special Category Ministry, be put before General Assembly as part of the *Catch the Vision* report.**

**05/53**

The Session ended in prayer led by the Chaplain.

### **Session 9**

Mission Council met for worship led by the Chaplain.

#### **05/54 Election of Advisory Groups (Paper A)**

The Clerk announced the nominees for Staffing Advisory Group and Ethical Investments Group convener (Mr Peter Pay to the Staffing Advisory Group; and the Revd Raymond Singh as convener of the Ethical Investments Advisory Group). **There being no further nominations these were declared to be elected.**

**Mission Council authorised the Staffing Advisory Group to co-opt up to three members, and to extend Mrs Val Morrison's term of service as convener to 2008.**

**Mission Council agreed to the appointment of Miss Rachel Greening to the Resource Sharing Task Group and authorised MCAG to seek to fill a further vacancy.**

#### **05/55 Section O (Paper A4)**

The Clerk reported that the small group had examined paper A4, and outlined changes suggested by the group.

**Mission Council accepted the changes and agreed that the report and resolutions should be put before General Assembly.**

#### **05/56 Ministries Committee (Paper ASS)**

Mr John Ellis explained Ministries resolutions A,B,C and D (Paper ASS).

#### **05/57 Ecumenical Committee (Paper H)**

The Revd Richard Mortimer presented the report of the Ecumenical Committee in response to Resolution 41 (Paper H).

After brief discussion, **Mission Council agreed that the report and resolutions should be put before General Assembly.**

#### **05/58 Equal Opportunities Committee (Paper H, page 4)**

The Revd Wilf Bahadur sought Mission Council's approval for the updating of the Equal Opportunities Policy, and the examination of new legislation and requirements and production of a new policy statement. **This was agreed.**

Mission Council, on the advice of the Clerk, agreed to submit a resolution to Assembly allowing immediate changes to Equal Opportunities policy to be made when the law required :

**Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly shall have authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Equal Opportunities policy as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring that policy into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.**

**05/59 Training Committee (Paper C) (see 05/50)**

The Revd John Humphreys reported that he and the Secretary for Training felt that the Training Committee report and resolutions could not be amended until the whole committee had had the opportunity to discuss Mission Council's response. He therefore withdrew resolutions 2 onwards

**05/60 Catch the Vision (Paper G)**

The General Secretary reflected on the material that would be submitted to General Assembly under the *Catch the Vision* heading.

**05/61 Resolution re. Training Committee**

The following Resolution was proposed by the Revd Wilf Bahadur, and seconded by Mr William McVey:

**Mission Council affirms the work being carried out by the Training Committee and encourages it to continue to explore ways in which the key training principles may be developed to provide, design and monitor education and training for the whole of the United Reformed Church.**

**The Resolution was carried.**

**05/62 Catch the Vision (paper G)**

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss Paper G. Returning to plenary session the groups reported:

Group A:

- our multicultural nature challenges our spirituality
- do we understand our own relationships with God and the world
- how do we engage with those whose culture is different (Sunday trading, use of films etc.)
- cultural difference within the church (elderly white congregations/young multicultural congregations)
- our love of God is less than our love for the person we love least
- easier to collect money for the needy than to answer questions about why need exists
- discussion groups in Mission Council are a helpful thing, but it may be impractical for General Assembly

Group B:

- the meaning of 'Christ's sake' - what does this communicate to the world?
- the word 'Church' (in the sense of 'being church') concerned some; what is wrong with 'the Church'?
- churches may be surprised at the wider definition of 'ecumenical'

Group C:

- not reforming ourselves, but the Spirit is reforming us
- is the whole thing an activist agenda?

- 'making a difference' or 'being different'?
- it can be inspirational to see goals being achieved; goal-setting should be a consensual process
- a desire for further exposition of spirituality
- supporting and encouraging those who are different is part of local church life
- we rejoice that there are still so many who are deeply committed

Group D:

- there are some who are not as committed as they might be
- how do we make links with those in employment?
- important not to put people in boxes (elder, accountant etc)
- should we be trying to measure mission
- individual impacts isn't measurable but can be observed
- failure can be as valuable as success
- Commitment for Life may be successful because it about things 'over there' and not on our own doorstep, but it may have something to say about resource-sharing
- making a difference to people's relationship with God

Group E:

- we need to be a learning church, but is our Training budget appropriately used
- people sometimes need permission to ask radical questions
- we have to respect the views of those whose theology or ecclesiology is different
- how do we engage the world through the Bible?
- often those who can present the word in imaginative ways find themselves on the fringes of the Church; different ways of presenting the gospel must be held together
- need to seek ways of turning buildings from burden to asset
- need to examine our past
- what can we learn from culture, and from the world church
- prayer need to be the basis

Group F:

- a polarity between 21<sup>st</sup> century radically different church and preservation of past
- sometimes our literature never mentions Jesus Christ
- many people claim religious experiences: how does the church respond?
- 'holy place' resonates in a way that 'holy gathering' doesn't

Group G:

- how do we get people to realise the gap between us and the rest of society?
- we think that culture does not understand us, but in fact we do not understand culture
- we find it hard to enjoy what others enjoy or to see significance where others see significance
- those observations on the part of others are not always wrong
- proposed a visit by an expert who could illustrate and examine society's perception of the church

Group H:

- our society has 'believers' and 'belongers', who are not always the same group
- awareness of world church is important
- the parameters of internal ecumenism
- the Bible somehow is still the living word of God for our time
- 'the ecumenical scaffolding'
- noted how much the ministers are the gatekeepers of the ecumenical process

- 'those who draw close to Christ draw close to those who draw close to Christ'

The General Secretary thanked the groups for their comments.

**05/63 Theological Reflector**

The Theological Reflector, Ms Francis Brienan, briefly addressed Mission Council, outlining her impression of the way in which the worship and business was conducted.

**05/64 Close**

The Moderator mentioned those who were attending Mission Council for the last time in their present capacity, and thanked them for their service:

Revd David Bedford (Wessex); Mrs Barbara Turner (East Midlands); Mrs Jenny Carpenter (retiring Rural Consultant); Revd John Young (convener, Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee); Revd Martin Hardy, Revd Lesley Charlton, Revd Alistair Pratt (past Assembly Moderator); the Moderator also thanked in their absence Mrs Amanda Hobbs (past FURY chair), and the Revd John Arthur (retiring Moderator of the Synod of Scotland).

The Moderator thanked the Chaplain and those who had supported her during the Mission Council.

The General Secretary thanked the Moderator and the Chaplain for their year of service, noting that it was not yet over.

The meeting concluded with worship, which included the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

## **Mission Council Notes**

### **Session 1**

Roger Scopes (Thames North Synod) was present for the first two sessions. Mr Victor Russell substituted for him after that.

### **Session 2**

**05/08**

**05/16**

Minutes needed to be more full.

Need to add reference to Papers

Comment re Minutes and papers to be made public – 2004 Assembly agreed?

Paper A : Reference (2) to SAG reporting to RPAG – needs to be removed.

MCAG to authorize budget to go to Assembly: concern re cutting B2WC through

MCAG Report – alteration to Time for Action Declaration:

- Every effort will be made to offer support to those who need it

Training material will be provided.

Resolution 3 – add 'it'

' and synods to report their responses to Mission Council by March 2006'.

SAG Report

- Rural Consultant : 'this to be subject to satisfactory budget arrangements between the URC and the Methodist Church'
- Sec for Church and Society: 'until Assembly 2007 or such earlier date as may be agreed. The JD shall as a matter of urgency include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of C&S '

A4: Section O: details 4,5,6.

A6: RSTG – correct line correct ' the work of' repeated – correct for MC Report to Assembly

Nominations:

Acting on behalf of Assembly appoints Roberta 1 Sep 2005 until 31 Aug 2010.

Acting on behalf of Assembly appoints the Revd Neil Thorogood as Director of Past Studies at Westminster College Camb from 1 Sept 2005 – 31<sup>st</sup> Aug 2012.

DTI statement for MC Report to Assembly: issued a draft statement of good practice which Christian denominations and faith groups should aim to achieve: sick leave, paternity, etc – already in Plan for Partnership. Development and dispute procedures. Final statement from DTI in next few months. Guidance from DTI is to use draft until final

Mission Council agrees that Ministries and others consider this to determine which processes we are to use: action plan to DTI by autumn of year. Plan to grievance



procedures, disciplinary procedures not within Sec O. Challenge to us is to get churches to understand that these things as well – not just ministers.

#### **Session 4**

Paper A5: Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

- a) Recognised that we act ecumenically
- b) 'significant' – any number arbitrary – but need to tighten up – a lower threshold of tolerance implications for United Reformed Church Trust and Pensions Trust.
- c) Paper H – page 5 – resolution incorporated with report of EIAG into Mission Council Report to Assembly:

**General Assembly recommends that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the Church should avoid any investment in:**

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

**etc, etc. – Paper H; page 5-6**

(abuse of alcohol – not only youth in city centres: problem of alcohol in Third World much worse than Baby Milk concerns: only in UK are we unaware of alcohol – real problem is one to whom –damage throughout world is one we don't know about – Stephen Orchard).

Marketing alcohol – see also report from Cof E that deals with this

Church and Society Committee presents an amended resolution:

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly,**

**a) calls upon all political parties in the run-up to the General Election**

**1. to clear the confusion of the public over the different categories of  
i) immigrant, ii) refugee and asylum seeker**

**2. to stop stirring up the racial conflict caused by their competitive  
hardening attitude and by the proposed tougher legislation towards  
asylum seekers**

**b) calls upon Her Majesty's Government**

**1. to review urgently and frequently which countries are safe for the  
return of asylum seekers**

**2. to minimize the detaining of families in removal centres**

**3. to work urgently**

**to eliminate trafficking of people to this country**

Distinguish between immigrants – people here for voluntary reasons  
Refugees and asylum seekers – are involuntary migrants –

Call on all parties to challenge racial prejudice rather than pander to it  
Eliminate trafficking of people sex industry and work gangs –

Shameful suggestion that a quota system – Ok for those in earlier in the year – those later not admitted.

Affirm oneness of human race and neither slave or free; male or female, etc.

## Session 5

### Presentation on CtV Structures Paper:

Fewer councils would mean

- o More dynamic interface between Assembly ( Church House) and New Synods
- o Need for centre of expertise – Church House – one place for advice.
- o Lose pastoral care/ provocation of local churches: new synods need to do it – how synod teams will operate? Role of Moderator within that.
- o Leadership – in conciliar role – how to engage?
- o Relationship between synods ( N and NW; NW and Mersey) London synod – implications for other synods

Appendix 2: records the process through which Yorkshire and NW went, to change to synod as only council

Appendix 1: the conclusion of the process: e.g. small group to look at amalgamation of local church/dissolution and report to synod.

### Responses to Report on CtV Paper on " Structures"

- a) Broad agreement to thrust of report – try it – make sufficiently flexible
- b) Concern that same names retained will suggest no change.
- c) Radical element disappeared
- d) Concern how job of District Pastoral committees will be done in future
- e) Good to recognise rural and urban areas' difference
- f) Glad to release Moderators from number of district meetings.
- g) Dislike about involvement – about relation to institutions
- h) Need to ensure new structures put people in touch with structures
- j) Important to remain a national church – not disparate group
- k) App 2:14: 5 – concern about only local church and Mod assessment only – should end with national assessment
- l) Reserve right to talk about representation to Assembly especially under 26 years
- m) Need sense of new strategic direction – change names
- n) How much flexibility can synods have?
- o) Work on how things work
- p) Group in favour – yes to Assembly
- q) False perception that structures will deliver inspiration
- r) All will depend on hope and vision being the root ( route)
- s) Agree one council – closeness is a matter of heart not geography.
- t) Will implementation fall on Mods? Shift of power represented here?
- u) No hostility to report –but few inspired: really new proposal?

- v) Need to be clearer about local networks, decision-making – how enabled under new structure?
- w) Districts not universally moribund – some synods.
- x) New synods cost more?
- y) Mixed experience leads to mixed analysis: tendency to large proficient professional; the other is about the local church – some disappointment
- z) Work on boundaries should be ongoing
- a1) How are disputes handled (District to synod)

What to take to Assembly?

- a) Press on with report as it is - change to basis- : can be done issues not all constitutional
- b) Or say – this is where we are

Issues to be addressed:

Boundaries

Language – ‘dead in the water’ unfortunate (Hind)

Candidating for ministries – who takes decision about change.

Moderator: General Agreement – that we get on with this

David C: will take other comments from individuals by e-mail.

## Session 6

Presentation on Training Review Paper C:

Resolutions 1 and 2 will come under CtV and Resolutions 3-7 will come under the Training Committee's report to Assembly.

## Session 7

Plenary comments on Training Review ( Paper C)

**Group H:** welcomed Res 1 – but Res 2 – wanted clearer apologetic: what is lacking that this is the answer. – report long. Has not GA not got these expectations already. Reluctance of people in church – elders and some mins for training.

Res 6: Yes: why not people from these synods on already? Res 7b: unclear- obscure; Res 7a – against ecumenical principle; want to offer support and staffing to LTPs

**Group G:** welcomed Res 1 – approved motherhood and apple pie. Paper has a visionary element. Res 2: more difficulty: some not clear that mechanism would deliver real change. Some not sure what change was to be delivered. If Assembly fails to grasp big idea; or that it could be delivered, then will be shredded –implies more staffing at centre.

**Group F:** Res 1 – fine but ecumenical engagement good – but withdrawing from ecumenical courses: Res 2: mixed response – nothing broke why change: Res 5: suggest a rewording: Assembly to instruct Training committee to tell all colleges their requirements

**Group E:** Res 1 – good training for all – still not to say how people will come for training. Res 2: a bit grandiose and nebulous – not clear – no parallel in people's experience: ecumenical dimension also important – wait for Hind? Res 5: -need to take with 4: not clear want to keep these colleges. Not sure proposal would deliver – loose ends needed to be clear – Assembly would not be able to grasp them

**Group D:** Res 1 OK – not clear ( Res 2) what partnership was – need to co-ordinate – about provision not need – without knowing need, partnership can't achieve what they want to do. Where are the people who want training ? Some answer if research done at a local level. Res 4: concern re pulling out of ecumenical courses – where

Mansfield moves to research – leaves no provision in geographical region. Distance learning possibility – costing not done: small denomination – focussed involvement  
**Group C:** Res 1 OK: Res 2: concerned about list of participants ( page 5) – and necessity for appearance of this great structure – some people with interest in training, though not necessarily interested in this great creation. Res 4 : perplexed – ought to start from pov of providing what people needed, rather than providing everything we can think of and expect people to take them up. If going to make hard decisions on these areas, opportune to look at costings involved in ecumenical courses and our colleges

**Group B:** hard going; diagrams not easy to understand – if report goes to churches need to be simpler/shorter: too grandiose idea. Like integration but not done this way – overelaborate and not justify extra cost. Seek to be simpler, but introducing new layer of management into the Church and this isn't the way we should be going – therefore can't support Res.2

**Group A:** Res 1 – statement of obvious: Res 2 and 3: struggle to identify what is broke – want something simpler than that suggested. Partnership for Learning : what would it achieve? Cost? Support 'Learning Church' at local level – but this proposal doesn't deliver that. Little re colleges. Pick and Mix courses in college; favour sending students on ecumenical courses; stronger argument for United Reformed Church staff on ecumenical courses; nothing re training young people for membership – not enthralled by report: didn't work and shouldn't come to Assembly this year.

Convener's and Secretary's response:

1. **Res 1** – should be part of the CtV process in United Reformed Church – though obvious to some, it does not reflect the reality.
2. **Res 2:** constant tension between too much and too little: a network not part of structure of Church. Don't know what partnership will be like, or its effect will be – challenging the Church. Right to say will MC take the risk? Training Committee wants to instigate and revisit after 4 years. Steps of exploration - only Financial resource is to create opportunity for partners to meet/consultation.

These are part of CtV process.

Rest need more work.

People are right to be worried by withdrawal from ecumenical courses: but actually it is about redescribing how we engage ecumenically: either train in a gathered way or a dispersed way: at present we do both. Never officially train stipendiary ministers on courses – as others do: or reduce to (say) one college and let regional partners to continue: have gone down road of a partnership based on courses.

Moderator suggests – deal with Res 1 and 2: needs MC support if CtV.

Other resolutions brought to Assembly from Committee.

S.O.: Critical to make a decision – won't be better by delaying it.

No answer to 'what's broke': Answer – when people link partnership to colleges and courses. ( Think about student cohorts)

EW: All groups raised major questions about 2 -

Resolution 1 – agreed.

Not afraid of risk – but connection between 2 and following resolutions ( 3 and 4)

Resolution 2 – deferred – needs to make decisions on colleges.

I think the report is trying to do too much. They attempt to change the thinking of the United Reformed Church at the same time have to deal with some hard decisions. The pressure of time is over College/courses decisions

Therefore the decision re colleges has to stand

Paper E (RJ&MM) – resolution accepted if add 'the mission and ministry to which God calls us'

Resolution B on ASS replaced by Paper H: -

- leave out (d)

A & C : if cost implications these have not been looked at.

Resolution A – can take to assembly

Resolution C – comments re date too soon/ professional/ timing – need to reconsider time. (committee to reconsider) general

Resolution D – OK to Assembly

Resolution E - not 'requires' – but 'strongly urges' – OK to Assembly.

Paper H - page 7 – additional

Page 7 – Paper H resolution 2 is now a Mission Council resolution to Assembly.

John Ellis: 'Equipping the Saints' is a Committee resolution to Assembly

### **Session 8**

Paper Ministries Report:

- a) tension between call and fixed term of service for elders.
- b) difficulty of applying restrictions on service of elders where few to choose from
- c) good example of committee doing something constructive with feedback.
- d) SCM – large churches who pay large amounts into MoM and not get f.t. minister – possible they could support a specific SCM
- e) Resolutions 1-4 OK: Res 2- process very important – strengthen resolution by 3<sup>rd</sup> line used selection process for elders in agreement with synod. Clear report.
- f) Issues for future – collaborative leadership and what leadership means.
- g) Liked flexible approach of report: Res 5: collaborative leadership fine – rhetoric does not always match reality. Res 6: deployment – Basis of Union does not say provide Min of Word and Sacrament does not say provide min for every congregation – but 'access' to one. MoM Fund appeal to local church should not be written by an accountant. SCM should not come out of deployment. Mechanics of employing lay people –
- h) Eldership resolutions – left until L&W have done their work?
- i) Res 5: didn't like 'structures' – remove. Res 6: linking of congregations in 1.1 Sc-Scheme of Union: ministry is relationship – not just 'access' to ministry; No 5 – leaflet advocating MoM funds: 'yes, but do it with pictures'; 'the human race will always need accountants – the world can't do without creative writing.' ( Peter Brain)
- j) Welcomed exhortation to employ ministers with imagination and flexibility – a small group of this within the United Reformed Church?
- k) Admiration of group, process and report. Res 6: Deployment: meaning of ecumenical deployment? Difficult but essential.

Afraid that subtext that pastoral ministry is boring – people don't always have opportunity to develop range of skills – new scheme with SCM could give ministers that broadening of experience.

John Ellis :

MC to endorse Part II to be included in CtV report: - with one or two alterations -

### Session 9

1. Decisions on Paper A : Peter Paye appointed to SAG; Val Morrison's convenership extended; Raymond Singh appointed Convener of EIAG.

MCAG to agree RSTG 'to be advised' person; Rachel Greening appointed.

OK to co-opt others;

2. Decisions on Section O – **alterations noted on I.T. stick**

-

a) p1 - para 2 of report – to expand on (JB to e-mail Hartley – need by end of week)

b) p5 – para 2(5)(xxvi)

'mens rea'

Res A – passed last year

Res B – ratification

Res C – further work to be done

Res D - ditto

Paper H – Ecumenical response to Resolution 41 – to go with CtV

Wording will change with them slightly – will print quotations from basis of union.

Paper H – Equal Opps (Paper H page 4) (p5 para 3 – 'regulations')

Want to update EO policy – to take account of changes in the law

MC agrees to update current policy age, race, gender and disability

Look at new pieces of legislation – in consultation with legal advisers to produce for MC and Ass wa new policy statement which takes into account these statements,

Wants to update policy to apply to all people who work for Church (Ch Ho, elsewhere) and not only for ministers.

(Thames North to discuss – age) – age – mandatory retirement.

Mission Council should have authority to change EO regulations – when lawyers advise it: - agreed (in line with Section O) – agreed – clerk

**Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly shall have authority by a single resolution if that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such change to any part of the Equal Opportunities policy as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring that policy into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation/and or case law.**

Agreed

Training:

As report is that of whole committee – not for two people to change resolutions or focus. Best way forward to report back to Committee. Withdraw resolutions from Resolution 2 onwards (Resolution 1 passed by MC).

Puts other people (including colleges) under pressure but work to be done. Regret not having communicated what wished to, and now in a state now need for more pressurised decision-making – not ideal, but best way to respond to what committee has heard from Mission Council.

CtV – David Cornick:

1. CtV will take on the principles of Learning Church – from Training Committee.
2. RJ&MM resolutions
3. Expansion of SCM
4. General comments re Ministries
5. Ecumenical – Res 41
6. Structures– to be incorporated
7. Financial and budgetary constraints need to be borne in mind

DC to take advice and be editorially responsible for report.

William McVey: interested in people's views about methodology of way in which CtV could be presented to Assembly:

- a) EW: please start with vision
- b) some group discussion at Assembly – to let people of God speak

### **Session 9:**

**Mission Council affirms the work being carried out by the Training Committee and encourages it to continue to explore ways in which the key training principles may be developed to provide, design and monitor education and training for the whole of the United Reformed Church**

Proposed: Wilf Bahadur

Seconded: William McVey

AGREED

### Response of Groups to CtV and New Spirituality

A) What sets us on fire? If become a multi-cultural church – then challenges us: do we understand our own spiritual relationship with God? Sunday trading – how engage? Modern music, films. As United Reformed Church aged white population and young/ multicultural churches: can we bring them together or keep them together: 'Our love of God is less than our love for the person we love least'; easier to collect money for tsunami than to answer why God allowed that to happen.

Assembly: liked the arrangement in MC – groups -but recognise impracticality of Assembly.

B) Meaning of 'for Christ's sake' - who is it aimed at? A swear word? What does it communicate to the world? Use of word 'Church' in sense of 'being the Church?'

C) Question B – we are not reforming ourselves but the Spirit who is reforming us: are the comments – an activist agenda? Do we mean 'making a difference for Christ's sake' ; or 'being different' for Christ's sake? Desire for further exposition of

spirituality – supporting those who seek to be different – affirm people's faith and calling in their work. Rejoice that many are deeply committed.

D) Key word – 'committed'; supporting people in daily lives – links to industry and those in high-powered jobs; affirm also those not in employment. Important not to see people in boxes – and accountant therefore a Treasurer. Not all things measurable – observing individual impact – not measurable; sharing good stories. C4L as a model – some of its success because issue snot on own doorstep? Involved in people's relationship with God.

E) Learning church – much put to this – but is it being spent most effectively? Bible engagement – people sometimes need permission to ask radical questions; respect views of those not on that path. (some stories – Good Friday in Leicester; Christmas story told in libraries; art workshops). Those who present outside are on edges of church – local churches can't cope: how hold together difference. Buildings from burden to asset – need leadership – congregations challenged.

F) Different wave lengths – polarity between 21<sup>st</sup> Century church – radically different v needing to bring all congregation along with us; Jesus never named. People's religious experience doesn't translate into Church loyalty: importance of internet chat room – holy place resonates for some rather than holy gathering on Sunday morning.

G) Gap between cultures and Church: Assembly should consider. How do people realise gap between us and rest of culture? Church people believe problem is culture does not understand us – whereas we don't understand culture and don't like it. We don't enjoy, don't see significance what others see: we are seen as joyless – and culture not always wrong about us. How give people hope? ICC published 'building bridges'. Confusing and depressing and affirming reading. Religion a dirty word – but author is accessible – invite him ( Nick Spencer) to address us – how people see the churches. Find ½ hour at Assembly for two substantial presentations ( Mark Green: 'Thank God it's Monday')

H) Believers and Belongers not the same – link between two is link to mission. Parameters of internal ecumenism – how diverse can we be and stay together? We need to stick to our understanding of the bible somehow – to emphasize the bible but be open to change?

Ecumenism: to be ecumenically committed to be committed to a distinctive approach. Ministers are gatekeepers of ecumenical process – in our tradition it ought to be possible for lay people to finesse ministers out of the equations. Those who draw close to Christ draw close to those who draw close to Christ – it will be as uncomfortable as for the 12 disciples.

#### Francis Brienan – Theological reflector

Unique within the CtV process: drawn together work done previously – impressed by atmosphere: appreciation of trust in staff and committee; commitment to church; bible study cameos – real sense of catching vision – hard issues.

But: bothered by CtV: danger that a catchphrase catch all for managing decline: managing decline not a bad thing – CtV raises expectations: disappointment that some proposals not radical enough – want it to be more than catchphrase: 2 logos: one URC at heart of it: other one – blue more nebulous – i) about the Church –



ourselves – our vision of the Church: determines order and agenda; spirituality comes at the end – after others – said where we come from.

In CtV – a vision for Church – but also CtV that God has for our world. All we do centrally helps us to help local churches. Process begins with where we are – ‘very much a wilderness experience’ – not only institution in crisis = also a culture in crisis with a faith in crisis – needs more analysis than we can give it so far: the gift we have to give to the world may be small but important.

Question re methodology and Assembly: when CtV starts then we start with local situation – we need to look at situation very differently – at the culture – not only alien to us but which we are deeply part of – influences us as much as influence everyone else.

Then where churches are – regeneration agency – spirituality – not only ours but of all our people in society. 70% profess a faith in God: form spirituality then how can we respond as a church what kind of church do we need, what leadership, what training? What kind of resources to be that kind of church (structures, finances, programmes, what society and world can offer us?)

An agenda influenced by outside – rather than set by ourselves – daring proposal of training review – agenda not set by ourselves.

Much more envisioning yet to be done. Requires more theologising, more communication of the vision; relatively little visioning in reports themselves; RJ report and CtV report held out strong vision – though some conflict between what kind of church we want to be – church is and church is for

Do you want to be made well? Resounding yes – comforted by verse – Jesus says My father still goes on working and I am working too: faithful.

3. Among those who are attending for the last time – add the Revd Martin Hardy (Mersey) and David Howell (Southern), Lesley Charlton (Southern), Alasdair Pratt (immediate-past moderator).

To: Members of Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

4<sup>th</sup> February 2005

**Mission Council: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005**  
**All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans**

Please find enclosed the Minutes of the January 2005 Mission Council, and notification of the March meeting with forms to be completed about your requirements for accommodation and meals when we meet at London Colney on 4<sup>th</sup> –6<sup>th</sup> March.

The March Mission Council considers the Assembly budget and looks at committee resolutions to General Assembly. This year we anticipate (among others) resolutions from Ministries, Training, and Racial Justice and Multi-Cultural Ministries Committees within the "Catch the Vision" presentation to General Assembly. The form, number and content of these will be discussed by Mission Council. We shall also consider how we can all helpfully own and promote the ' Catch the Vision' process.

The short turn around between January and March Councils means that we are unlikely to be able to issue all the papers in time, and therefore a certain amount of 'reading time' may have to be allowed in the Mission Council programme.

Those who plan their journeys well in advance should know that Mission Council will start on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> with lunch at 1.00 p.m (arrivals after 12.00 noon).

The enclosed papers are about practical arrangements. They include:

- directions to the All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney
- an updated list of members (to help people plan to share transport, where possible)
- an expenses slip (to be completed and handed in at the meeting)
- a form for your accommodation, meal requests, and certain other necessary information

Most of the rooms are on the ground floor. A lift is available to reach first floor rooms. None of the rooms is en-suite. Please include soap and a towel when packing your case.

A second mailing of papers and further details will be sent out in about two weeks' time.

In the meantime, all good wishes,

Yours sincerely

The Revd Raymond Adams  
Deputy General Secretary



# The United Reformed Church

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

To: Members of Mission Council  
and staff in attendance

24<sup>th</sup> February 2005

**Mission Council: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005**  
**All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans**

*Dear Colleague,*

The enclosed agenda/ timetable for Mission Council indicates that this will be a significant meeting in the 'Catch the Vision' process, and for the life of the United Reformed. We anticipate that members of the 'Catch the Vision' steering group will be present for most of the time, so there should be formal and informal opportunities to discuss your ideas and concerns with them.

There are several lengthy reports to be discussed, and the best way, we feel, for people to come to grips with the issues and have time to express their views, is in group discussion. The timing of business will have to be quite disciplined in full session if we are to give a fair amount of time to each report.

The early date of Easter this year has meant that Mission Council meets nearly three weeks earlier than usual. This has raised a number of problems for committees and task groups trying to complete papers on time. We are appreciative of the extra work undertaken by committee conveners and secretaries to produce papers on time for mailing, and are understanding of those who have found the deadline impossible to meet. It is therefore somewhere between 'highly desirable' and 'essential' that members **read the enclosed papers before arrival at Mission Council**, as there are other weighty papers (such as the Training Review) to be issued on our arrival at London Colney.

The following papers should be enclosed with this letter (unless otherwise indicated):

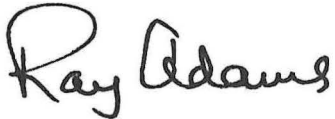
- The Agenda with timings
- A list of group participants
- Paper A            Advisory Group remits and vacancies for election
- Paper A1          Grants and Loans Group Report
- Paper A2          Staffing Advisory Group Report and resolutions
- Paper A3          Mission Council Advisory Group Report
- Paper A4          Section O Advisory Group Report
- Paper A5          Ethical Investment Advisory Group Report and resolutions
- Paper A6          Resource Sharing Task Group Report
- Paper B            Catch the Vision – Paper from the 'Structures' Task Group
- (Paper C          Catch the Vision – Training Review - to be tabled at the meeting)
- Paper D            Catch the Vision – Ministries Committee 'Equipping the Saints'
- Paper E            Catch the Vision – Racial Justice and Multi-cultural Ministry Committee
- Paper F            Resolution about Asylum Seekers from the Church and Society Committee
- Paper ASS        Committee Resolutions for General Assembly

Please remember to bring all these papers; the Minutes of the January meeting; a bible; and include soap and a towel in your personal luggage. We plan to use 'powerpoint' to project the hymns and other worship material. It is not, therefore, essential to bring a copy of *Rejoice and Sing*.

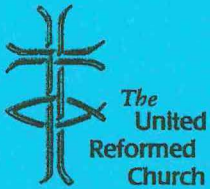
I look forward to seeing you at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney on 4<sup>th</sup> March, in time for lunch.

In the meantime, good wishes and safe journeying

Yours sincerely

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

The Revd Raymond Adams  
Deputy General Secretary



## MISSION COUNCIL

4 – 6 MARCH 2005

### MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

The Moderator  
General Secretary  
Deputy General Secretary  
Clerk

Revd Sheila Maxey  
Revd Dr David Cornick  
Revd Ray Adams  
Revd James Breslin

Past Moderator  
Moderator Elect  
Treasurer  
Legal Adviser

Revd Alasdair Pratt  
Revd Dr David Peel  
Mr Eric Chilton  
Mrs Janet Knott

#### Assembly Standing Committees

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

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

#### Fury Council

Mr Gareth Jones  
Miss Fleur James

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

1 N	Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Colin Offor, Revd John Durell, Mrs Susan Rand
2 N.W	Revd Peter Brain	Miss Kathleen Cross, Mrs Janet Eccles, Mr George Morton (temp)
3 Mer	Revd Howard Sharp	Mr Donald Swift, Revd Martin Hardy, Mrs Wilma Prentice
4 York	Revd Arnold Harrison	Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Mrs Val Morrison
5 E.M	Revd Terry Oakley	Mrs Ann Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Mrs Irene Wren
6 W.M	Revd Elizabeth Welch	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
7 E	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner
8 S.W	Revd David Grosch-Miller	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Richard Pope
9 Wex	Revd Adrian Bulley	Revd Clive Sutcliffe, Mrs Glenis Massey, Revd David Bedford
10 Th.N	Revd Roberta Rominger	Revd Dr Roger Scopes, Revd Jane Wade, Revd John Macauley
11 S	Revd Nigel Uden	Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mr David Howell
12 Wal	Revd Peter Noble	Mrs Janet Gray, Mr W Stuart Jones, Revd Stuart Jackson
13 Scot	Revd John Arthur	Revd Alan Paterson, Miss Irene Hudson, Vacancy

#### In attendance

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

Revd Ken Forbes  
Revd Alistair Smeaton  
Revd David Lawrence  
Revd Roy Lowes  
Revd Philip Woods  
Revd Christine Craven  
Ms Avis Reaney  
Mr John Brown  
Miss Michelle Marcano  
Mrs Suzanne Adofo/  
Mr Stephen Summers  
Ms Francis Brienan - CWM

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

Mrs Jenny Carpenter  
Dr Brian Woodhall  
Mrs Karen Bulley  
Revd Richard Mortimer  
Mr Lawrence Moore  
Mrs Carol Rogers  
Mrs Rosemary Johnston  
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams  
Revd John Steele  
Revd Jill Thornton

# MISSION COUNCIL – 4 –6 MARCH 2005

## GROUPS

*The first name on the list is Leader of the small group  
The second name is Reporter*

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>A</b></p> <p><b>Wilf Bahadur</b> <b>Graham Campling</b> Lucy Brierley Jenny Carpenter Melanie Frew David Grosch-Miller Pauline Loosemore Richard Pope Andrew Prasad Avis Reaney Victor Ridgewell</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>B</b></p> <p><b>Rosemary Johnston</b> <b>Donald Swift</b> Linda Austin Ann Ball Mick Barnes Kathleen Cross Roderick Garthwaite Janet Gray (8) Stuart Jones John Rea Nigel Uden Philip Woods</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>C</b></p> <p><b>Clive Sutcliffe</b> <b>William McVey</b> David Bedford Graham Cook David Howell Gareth Jones Susan Rand Howard Sharp Irene Wren Joan Turner Jane Wade Elizabeth Welch</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>D</b></p> <p><b>Kathryn Price</b> <b>Val Morrison</b> Adrian Bulley David Cornick Christine Craven Fleur James Stuart Jackson Janet Knott Stephen Orchard Peter Poulter Alistair Smeaton John Young</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>E</b></p> <p><b>Terry Oakley</b> <b>Roz Harrison</b> Ray Adams Francis Brienan Karen Bulley Elizabeth Caswell Ken Forbes Martin Hardy Roy Lowes Lawrence Moore Steve Summers Brian Woodhall</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>F</b></p> <p><b>Richard Mortimer</b> <b>Roberta Rominger</b> John Durell John Humphreys Brian Jolly Alasdair Pratt Wilma Prentice Bill Robson Carol Rogers Katalina Tahaafe-Williams Jill Thornton</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>G</b></p> <p><b>Colin Offor</b> <b>David Lawrence</b> Martin Camroux Lesley Charlton John Ellis Janet Gray (12) Arnold Harrison Barbara Leighton Glenis Massey Sheila Maxey George Morton Alan Paterson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>H</b></p> <p><b>Elizabeth Nash</b> <b>Peter Brain</b> James Breslin Martin Hazell Anthony Howells Irene Hudson John Parry Barbara Turner Peter Pay Victor Russell John Steele Barbara Turner</p>



## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

### Guidance for Groups and Group Leaders

#### Notes:

1. Some of the information below restates that sent by e-mail to Group leaders. There is additional information on the papers which will be tabled at Mission Council (i.e. **Papers C and G**).
2. If it is necessary to replace your group leader or reporter through fatigue or early departure, please appoint a substitute from within your group.

Ray Adams

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#### **Paper B: Catch the Vision - Structures - 1 proposal – 17 recommendations**

Groups should (unless instructed otherwise in the presentation of the report):

1. Read section B ('summary of recommendations')
2. Read section F ('our proposal – the argument')
3. Consider the argument:  
Groups E-H concentrate on sections C,D,E,F,G: list positives and negatives  
Groups A-D concentrate on Appendix 1& 2 ( pages 10-22)
4. Do you believe the proposal will deliver what it sets out to do? (why/why not?) and should it be brought to General Assembly as a proposal from Mission Council?

#### **Paper C: Training Review**

The report will be issued on arrival at Mission Council. Overnight reading will be required (Friday).

*(Resolutions are on page 21)*

1. All groups should consider Resolution 1, having considered the broad argument of the report and its main proposals. (text especially pages 2-5)
2. Groups A and B: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 3 (pages 9-12)
3. Groups C and D: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 4 (pages 12-14)
4. Groups E and F: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 5 (pages 12-14)
5. Groups G and H: Consider Resolutions 2,(pages 5-9) 6 and 7 (pages 14-20)

#### **Paper D: Catch the Vision – Ministries**

Groups should

- a) Consider the whole report in general terms – particularly the response of committee to reactions to original resolutions (pages 6-7)
- b) Discuss the seven new resolutions (pages 7-11) and draft resolution on page 12. Groups A-D begin with n1-4; Groups E-H begin with n5-7; and draft resolution re expansion of special category ministry (page 12)
- c) If these proposals are part of the 'Catch the Vision' process do you support them in general terms?
- d) Are the report and resolutions clear so that members of Assembly can consider and come to a decision?

**Paper G: Catch the Vision – General Secretary's Paper**

This will be distributed after David's presentation in **Session 1**, but will be discussed on Sunday in groups during **Session 9**.

Please concentrate on the Section (pages 13-16) entitled 'Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'; and the questions and comments on page 16.

**Groups A and B:** please start with question (a) on being ecumenically committed

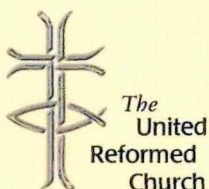
**Groups C and D:** start with question (b) 'making a difference' for Christ's sake

**Groups E and F:** start with question (c) on engaging in mission in post-Christendom

**Groups G and H:** start with pages 13-14 and your response (with ideas) as to how these issues are best explored in General Assembly and local church settings.

The purpose of this discussion is for Mission Council to think creatively to help the Steering Group plan this next important stage in the Catch the Vision process.





## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

## AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

### **Annotated Agenda for Moderator and her supporters**

#### **FRIDAY**

#### **SESSION 1**

2.15 pm                    WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY

2.45 pm                    Welcome and apologies

**The Moderator** welcomes Francis Brienan (Mission Enabler for CWM Europe) as our theological reflector; and Revd Jill Thornton (Moderator-elect's chaplain).  
Barbara Leighton (substituting for John Macauley from Thames North synod).  
George Morton (replaces Chris Vermeulen from North Western synod).  
Steven Pryor (substituting for Gareth Jones the new FURY Chair).  
John Rea (substituting for Janet Eccles from North Western synod)  
Victor Russell (substituting for Roger Scopes from Thames North synod).  
Welcome members of Catch the Vision Steering Group

(The Moderator might like to check if there are any other first-time attenders)

#### **The Deputy General Secretary**

a) presents Apologies from Revd John Arthur (Synod of Scotland Moderator); Mr Eric Chilton (Hon. Treasurer); Mrs Janet Eccles (North Western); Mr Gareth Jones (FURY Chair); Revd John Macauley (Thames North); Revd Peter Noble ( Synod of Wales Moderator); Revd Dr David Peel ( Moderator-elect); Rev Roger Scopes (Thames North).

Staff: Ms Suzanne Adofo, Mr John Brown, Miss Michelle Marcano.

b) gives notification of additional business and extra papers:

i) Spare agendas and sets of papers available

ii) **Paper ' The Financial Outlook'**

iii) **Paper C:** Training Review – to be read tonight – we may have some time in hand at the end of the second session

iv) **Green Paper** of Guidance to Group leaders and group members

v) **Paper G:** text of General Secretary's presentation will be issued at the end of this session – and will be discussed in groups on Sunday morning

vi) **Paper H:** contains some extra information and corrections to papers (or resolutions) already issued.

vii) Plan to move Ecumenical response to Resolution 41 ( Paper H) to Session 7 – to allow reading time: and move Ethical Investment Advisory Group ( Paper A5) and Church and Society resolution to Session 4 (found extra ½ hour)

2.50 pm **Catch the Vision – 1 : "Together making a difference for Christ's sake"**  
presentation **General Secretary**

3.45 pm TEA

## **SESSION 2**

4.15 pm Minutes of January Mission Council

Matters Arising:

05/03 – contained in Mission Council Advisory Group report

05/10 - Windermere Centre Appeal - **Paper H** page 6 paragraph 6

**General Secretary**

05/18 –MPH campaign manager appointed –Helen Warmington (Southern synod; begins work early April – will work from home)

Financial Report

**General Secretary and Financial Secretary**

**(Paper ‘The Financial Outlook’)**

4.45 pm Reports of Mission Council Advisory and Task Groups

**a) Paper A: Election of Advisory Groups Deputy General Secretary**

1) Elect a member to SAG

2) Permission to co-opt three extra people

3) Decide on extension of convenership until 2008

4) Elect convener to EIAG

5) Ratify ‘ replacement members’ of RSTG – names to be provided

(Suggest these decisions be made on Sunday morning at same time as election)

**The Clerk** explains election procedures: *Nominations should be with him by Saturday evening with election on Sunday morning. Nominations in writing with name of Proposer and Seconder required.*

**b) Paper A1: Grants and Loans Group: Dr Brian Woodhall (Convener)**

**c) Paper A2: Staffing Advisory Group : Mrs Val Morrison (Convener)**

i. Approve continuation of Rural Officer/Consultant (page 2)

ii. Approve appointment of Secretary for Church and Society until 2007 (page 2)

**d) Paper A3: Mission Council Advisory Group: Deputy General Secretary**

i. Conveners of Pilots and Commitment for Life Management Committees (page 1)

ii. Time for Action- Declaration of a Safe Church (page 2-3)  
(presented by Peter Poulter)

**e) Paper A4 : Section O Advisory Group Clerk and Janet Knott**

1) Change structure to provide for intro to Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 2-6)

2) Ratify Resolution 13 – 2004 Assembly (page 6-7)

3) Ratify Resolution 11- 2004 Assembly (page 7)

4) Replace Section O Pt 1 with reduced Pt 1 (page 8-10)

5) Changes to Section O Pt 2 (page 11-14)

6) Approve Pt 1 of Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 14-17)

**f) Paper A6: Resource Sharing Task Group - Deputy General Secretary**

(questions answered by Elizabeth Caswell or John Rea)

Nominations Committee

**Dr Stephen Orchard**

Ministries – Information on DTI discussion on status of ministers and implications for the Church – paper available for distribution **General Secretary**

Extra items for information:

Ecumenical - Paper H page 4 item 2 for information  
Ministries - Paper H page 5 item 4 for information  
Petition on Gambling Bill

**Elizabeth Nash**  
**John Ellis**  
**John Ellis**

(If finish early – opportunity for people to have reading time for newly-issued papers)

**Deputy General Secretary** will give some notices

Please ensure you have signed attendance register; put expenses slip in the box provided; have copies of all the papers you require

Prayers are led by the Chaplain

### **SESSION 3**

**8.15 p.m. The Moderator** : Our theme is **Catch the Vision** - considering new ways of being church; and also being the church in community:  
introduce

- Revd John Marsh (Princes Street United Reformed Church in Norwich)
- Revd Jacqui Garvin (Daventry)

followed by questions and contributions from the floor

**9.15pm:** Evening Prayers are led by the Chaplain

## **SATURDAY**

8.30am                      BREAKFAST

### **SESSION 4**

9.15am                      Worship and Bible Study

9.45 am                      Ethical Investment

**Paper A5 - John Ellis**

correction on **Paper H page 5 no.5**

Church and Society Resolution **Paper F** – altered version on screen

**Martin Camroux**

10.15 am

**Catch the Vision – 3: Structures Paper B**

– presented by **John Oldershaw**

(Deputy General Secretary to announce rooms for groups)

10.45 am                      Coffee

### **SESSION 5**

11.15 am            GROUPS    (green sheet of guidance for groups for the task)

12.10 am            Plenary

(Jill Thornton to make announcement about Assembly display)

12.45pm            Prayers led by the Chaplain

1.00 pm             LUNCH and free time

### **SESSION 6**

2.30 pm            **Catch the Vision – 4: Training Review                    Paper C**  
**John Humphreys ( Convener)**

3.00 p.m.            Groups (green sheet of guidance for groups for the task)

3.45pm             TEA

### **SESSION 7**

4.15pm            Plenary

5.00 pm            **Catch the Vision – 5 :RJ&MM    Paper E**  
**Andrew Prasad ( Convener)**

5.30 pm            Ecumenical Committee's response to Resolution 41  
**Paper H pages 1-4**  
**Elizabeth Nash**  
Equal Opportunities  
**Paper H page 4-5**  
**Wilf Bahadur**

5.45 pm            **Catch the Vision – 6: Ministries                    Paper D**  
**John Ellis**

Any notices:        - Karen Bulley on Pilots plaque  
                          - Wm McVey announcement re Assembly  
                          - The Clerk may need to be remind Mission Council that nominations for vacancies

Prayers led by the Chaplain

6.30 p.m.            DINNER

### **SESSION 8**

7.45 pm            Groups

8.45                Plenary

9.30                Evening prayers led by the Chaplain

## SUNDAY

8.00am WORSHIP AND THE WORD

8.30 am BREAKFAST

### **SESSION 9** (timetable re-worked – see accompanying sheet)

**9.15 am** Elections to Advisory Groups and other decisions **Paper A**  
**The Clerk and Deputy General Secretary**

**Paper A4** – Clerk to report on Section O resolutions

**Paper ASS** – John Ellis – on CRCW resolutions

**Paper H** (pages 1-4) – Ecumenical Committee's response to Resolution 41

**Paper H** ( pages 4-5) – Wilf Bahadur – Equal Opportunities

**9.30 a.m.** Training Committee – statement

**9.50 a.m.** Input from **General Secretary** re Assembly Arrangements Committee (if any) with **William McVey ( Convener)**

**10.15am** COFFEE

**10.30 am** Groups to consider **Paper G** (details on Green Paper)

11.15am Plenary on **Catch the Vision – Towards a new Spirituality**

11.50 a.m. Theological Reflector - initial reflections

**The Moderator** should note those who are attending Mission Council for the last time in their present capacity, and **express thanks** for their service:

David Bedford (Wessex); Barbara Turner (East Midlands); Amanda Hobbs (not present – has represented FURY as Chair); Jenny Carpenter (retiring in July as Rural Consultant); John Arthur (not present) as Moderator of synod of Scotland on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005; John Young (Convener of DPW); David Howell (Southern); Lesley Charlton (Southern); Martin Hardy (Mersey); Alasdair Pratt (immediate past-Moderator)

**The General Secretary** thanks the Moderator and Chaplain

(break at 12.00 – to prepare for)

12.15 pm HOLY COMMUNION

1.00 pm LUNCH and departure

## Sunday Morning Timetable

8.00: Worship

8.30: Breakfast

9.15: **SESSION 9**

a) **Paper A** – elect nominees and agree other proposals (box)  
- DGS to lead on 'other proposals'

b) **Paper A4** – Clerk to report on Section O Advisory Group – Resolutions:

- 1) Change structure to provide for intro to Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 2-6)
- 2) Ratify Resolution 13 – 2004 Assembly (page 6-7)
- 3) Ratify Resolution 11- 2004 Assembly (page 7)
- 4) Replace Section O Pt 1 with reduced Pt 1 (page 8-10)
- 5) Changes to Section O Pt 2 (page 11-14)
- 6) Approve Pt 1 of Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 14-17)

c) **Paper ASS** – John Ellis to comment on resolutions re CRCWs  
(*some for ratification – some not necessary for MC*)  
(*RJ&MM resolutions already discussed*)

d) **Paper H** (pages 1-4)- Ecumenical Committee's response to Resolution 41 (2004 Assembly) - Richard Mortimer. (*Mission Council is to receive this, which will become part of the CtV report to General Assembly – and their resolutions presumably!*)

e) **Paper H** (pages 4-5) – Wilf Bahadur – Equal Opps

9.30 a.m. - latest

f) Training Committee – John Humphreys/Roy Lowes

9.50: **General Secretary** – what, of CtV ( in the light of Mission Council's decisions), is likely to be brought to Assembly.

Other ( related or unrelated) Assembly matters – **William McVey**

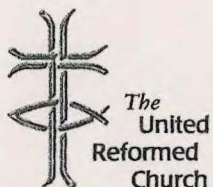
10.15: Coffee ( people move to groups a.s.a.p. because only 45 minutes in groups.

10.30 -11.15: Groups.

(*timetable should now be back on track – see notes in annotated agenda (yellow) for remainder.*)

11.15: Plenary

12.15: Communion



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

## AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

### Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March

12.00 onwards Arrivals

13.00: Lunch

14.15 **Session 1** Worship and Bible study  
Welcome  
Apologies for absence  
Notification of additional business, tabled papers, etc.

(15.00) **Catch the Vision –1: progress and issues to be considered**

- o includes the Ecumenical Committee's response to 2004 Assembly Resolution 41 (paper to be tabled)

15.45: Tea

16.15: **Session 2** Minutes of January Mission Council  
Matters Arising  
Financial report

(16.45) **Other business –1** (to include)  
Reports of Mission Council Advisory and Task Groups

- o Elections to Advisory groups **Paper A**
- o Grants and Loans Group **Paper A1**
- o Staffing Advisory Group **Paper A2**
- o Mission Council Advisory Group **Paper A3**
- o Section O Advisory Group **Paper A4**
- o Resource Sharing Task Group **Paper A6**

Prayers

19.00: Dinner

20.15: **Session 3** **Catch the Vision – 2:** Two speakers (the Revd John Marsh from Norwich; and the Revd Jacqueline Gavin from Daventry) describe the way their local churches have responded to opportunities presented by their local context – followed by discussion.

21.15: Evening Prayers

### Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March

08.30: breakfast

09.15: **Session 4** Worship and Bible study

(10.15) **Catch the Vision –3: Structures** **Paper B**

10.45: Coffee

11.15: **Session 5** Groups on 'Structures' Paper  
(12.10) Plenary response  
Prayers

13.00: Lunch

14.30: **Session 6 Catch the Vision – 4: Training Review Paper C**  
15.00 Groups on 'Training Review' Paper  
15.45: Tea

16.15: **Session 7** Plenary response

(17.00) **Catch the Vision – 5: Racial Justice and  
Multicultural ministry Paper E**

(17.30) **Other business –2** (to include)  
o Ethical Investment **Paper A5**  
o Church and Society Resolution **Paper F**

(18.00) **Catch the Vision – 6: Ministries Paper D**  
Prayers

18.30: Dinner

19.45: **Session 8** Groups on 'Ministries' Paper  
20.45 Plenary response

21.30: Evening Prayers

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

08.00: Early morning worship with the 'Breaking of the Word'

08.30: Breakfast

09.30: **Session 9 Catch the Vision – 7: and Assembly**  
(10.00) Groups on Assembly including consideration of  
Assembly Resolutions **Paper ASS**

10.45: Coffee

11.15: **Session 10** Plenary response  
**Other business – 3**

12.15: Sacrament of Holy Communion

13.00: Lunch and departure



**March 2005 Mission Council  
Resolutions**  
(Updated a.m. 4/3/05)

**Paper A: Election of Advisory Groups**

- 1) Elect a member to SAG
- 2) Permission to co-opt three extra people
- 3) Decide on extension of convenership until 2008
- 4) Elect convener to EIAG
- 5) Ratify 'replacement members' of RSTG – names to be provided

**Paper A1: Grants and Loans**

No resolutions

**Paper A2:**

- 1) Approve continuation of Rural Officer/Consultant (page 2)
- 2) Approve appointment of Secretary for Church and Society until 2007 (page 2)

**Paper A3: MCAG**

- 1) Conveners of Pilots and Commitment for Life Management Committees (page 1)
- 2) Time for Action- Declaration of a Safe Church (page 2-3)

**Paper A4: Section O Advisory Group**

- 1) Change structure to provide for intro to Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 2-6)
- 2) Ratify Resolution 13 – 2004 Assembly (page 6-7)
- 3) Ratify Resolution 11- 2004 Assembly (page 7)
- 4) Replace Section O Pt 1 with reduced Pt 1 (page 8-10)
- 5) Changes to Section O Pt 2 (page 11-14)
- 6) Approve Pt 1 of Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (page 14-17)

**Paper A5: Ethical Investment Advisory Group**

Resolution: Revised E.I. policy

( page 3)

Correction to paragraph 16:

See Paper H, page 5, paragraph 5.

**Paper A6: Resource Sharing Task Group**

No resolutions - Information only

**Paper B: Catch the Vision - Structures**

One proposal – 17 recommendations

All Group Leaders and members of Groups will be issued with a Green Paper which sets out the Groups' tasks.

Groups should (unless instructed otherwise in the presentation of the report):

1. Read section B ('summary of recommendations')
2. Read section F ('our proposal – the argument')
3. Consider the argument:  
Groups E-H concentrate on sections C,D,E,F,G: list positives and negatives  
Groups A-D concentrate on Appendix 1& 2 ( pages 10-22)
4. Do you believe the proposal will deliver what it sets out to do? (why/why not?) and should it be brought to General Assembly as a proposal from Mission Council?

**Paper C:**

The report will be issued on arrival at Mission Council. Overnight reading required (Friday).  
(Resolutions are on page 21)

1. All groups should consider Resolution 1. having considered the broad argument of the report and its main proposals ( text especially pages 2-5)  
Groups A and B: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 3 (pages 9-12)  
Groups C and D: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 4 (pages 12-14)  
Groups E and F: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) and 5 (pages 12-14)  
Groups G and H: Consider Resolutions 2 (pages 5-9) 6 and 7 (pages 14-20)

I omitted to put the question as above: Do you believe the proposal will deliver what it sets out to do? (why/why not?) and should it be brought to General Assembly as a proposal from Mission Council?

#### **Paper D: Catch the Vision – Ministries**

Groups should

- a) Consider whole report in general terms – particularly response of committee to reactions to original resolutions (pages 6-7)
- b) Discuss the seven new resolutions (pages 7-11) and draft resolution on page 12. Groups A-D begin with n1-4; Groups E-H begin with n5-7; and draft resolution re expansion of special category ministry (page 12)

Resolutions

n1- Elders and Ecumenism	(page 7)
n2- Election of Elders	(page 8)
n3- Elders and Wider Church Representation	(page 8)
n4- Personal development of Elders	(page 9)
n5- Collaborative leadership	(page 9)
n6- Deployment	(page 10)
n7- Ministry and Mission Fund Support	(page 11)
Draft resolution re expansion of SCM	(page 12)

#### **Paper E: Catch the Vision – Racial Justice and Multi-cultural Ministry**

There is no time allocated to this paper in groups so the Moderator may wish to guide a discussion in plenary after an initial presentation. N.B there are additionally a number of RJ&MM resolutions in Paper ASS.

There is a slight confusion about what should come under the 'Catch the Vision' umbrella (which is a Mission Council initiative) and what should come straight from the Committee to the Assembly.

This paper (E) is deliberately written to be part of the 'Catch the Vision' process –and its single resolution can be part of that. It might be wise, however to take the RJ&MM resolutions together. The RJ&MM Committee is looking for the guidance of Mission Council – though it would be merciful to Mission Council if a strategy could be sorted out before we hit RJ&MM's time on the agenda.

#### **Paper F: Church and Society Committee Resolution on Asylum seekers**

This resolution has been recast. See ~~Paper H – page 6; item 7 for the altered version.~~

find altered version

#### **Paper G: - no resolutions**

Paper to be distributed after David's presentation in **Session 1**, but discussed on Sunday in groups during **Session 9**.

Groups to concentrate on the Section (pages 13-16) entitled 'Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'; and the questions and comments on page 16.

**Groups A and B:** please start with question (a) on being ecumenically committee

**Groups C and D:** start with question (b) 'making as difference' for Christ's sake

**Groups E and F:** start with question (c) on engaging in mission in post-Christendom

**Groups G and H:** start with pages 13-14 and your response (with ideas) as to how these issues are best explored in General Assembly and local church settings.

The purpose of this discussion is for Mission Council to think creatively to help the Steering Group plan this next important stage in the Catch the Vision process.

#### **Paper H: Additional items and corrections**

1. Report of Ecumenical Committee's response to Resolution 41 – contains 4 resolutions for General Assembly – Mission Council should note these. (pages 1-4)
2. Ecumenical Committee – CTBI and Ecumenical Architecture – for info – (page 4)

3. Equal Opportunities – seeks MC's permission ( if needed?) to undertake rewrite of various policies (page 4-5)
4. Ministries Committee – short statement on Ill-health pensions ( for information) (page 5)
5. Ethical Investment Advisory Group – Correction to Paper A5 ( page 5)
6. Windermere Centre Appeal – statement by Gen Sec and Convener of Life and Witness. (page 6)
7. Church and Society – Rewrite of Resolution in Paper F (page 6)

**Paper ASS**

1. Note from Ecumenical Committee of resolution going straight to Assembly
2. Ministries – John Ellis will clarify these resolutions – some of which need not take up Mission Council's time.
3. Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry – some of this may be discussed under the RJ&MM slot – if not need to comment.



# MISSION COUNCIL

## *March 2005*

### The Financial Outlook

#### **Outcome of 2004**

The budget agreed by General Assembly in 2003 showed a deficit of £430k. At the beginning of last year we were aware that the total of Synod M&M pledges for 2004 were £234k short of the target figure of £20,077k. However the outcome for the year has been worse as the amount collected for the M&M fund was £152k less than the **pledged** amount, though some Synods are working to reduce their 2004 shortfall. Thus the shortfall increases the potential deficit for 2004 to £816k.

It is disappointing that most of the Synods, especially some of those making the largest contributions, are falling short of expectation. In fact two Synods offered less than for 2003. This worsening trend in not reaching targets or **pledges** does have serious consequences especially as it undermines the whole basis on which the budget is prepared. This clearly illustrates the unreliability of the budget process without an adequate prior response and **commitment** from Synods.

The outcome for 2004 is not yet clear although it should improve as there is some other income which is not budgeted, principally legacies (£788k) and the profit on sale of properties, to bring in. There has also been some under spending by budget holders. The outcome for 2004 should be available late March.

#### **Outlook for 2005**

The pledges for 2005 are again coming in under the target set when the budget was agreed by General Assembly last July despite considerable efforts by some Synods to meet their target. Final figures are not yet available.

#### **Budget for 2006**

The draft budget, see Appendix A, is based on the proposals made by budget holders last year. The draft budget was reviewed by the Finance Committee at its meeting in December 2004, when it was felt prudent not to anticipate any higher contributions to the M&M fund than targeted for 2005. However this now seems to have been optimistic rather than realistic in the light of the recent figures. At the Treasurers Consultation at Swanwick last month it was agreed that we should ask Synods to let us have their current expectation of what the 2006 M&M offer might be, for the Finance Committee to consider at its meeting later this month.

At the December 2004 meeting the Finance Committee agreed that a number areas of expenditure should be revisited with the budget holders. Although discussions continue no material reductions have been agreed yet and one committee may be requesting an additional amount.

Since this meeting two further matters must now be taken into account. Both relate to pensions.

For many years the Retired Ministers' Aid Fund has been used to improve the pensions of ministers retiring early on the grounds of ill-health. The Fund is now exhausted but if the current practice of improving pensions in these cases is confirmed as policy, this must be funded from the Pension Fund at a cost of around £90k per annum. How this is shared between the Church and ministers has yet to be agreed.

The second matter relates to the deficit in the scheme for lay staff, which requires the annual contribution rate to be increased, with effect from 1 January 2006, by 8.5%, around £120k. At present employees contribute 5% and the Church contributes 10% and a decision will be necessary on how the increased contribution is shared between the Church and employee members.

At the March meeting the Finance Committee needs to consider the impact of these changes on the budget which is before you. At this stage it has not been possible to finalise the figures sufficiently to recommend, with any confidence, a budget which General Assembly might consider. What is clear is that a possible deficit of over £500k would not be acceptable unless remedial action in the meantime has been taken to ensure the position can be recovered.

#### **Conclusion**

It is obvious work needs to be done before an acceptable budget for 2006 can be placed before General Assembly. It is, therefore, recommended that Mission Council delegates responsibility to the members of Mission Council Advisory Group, in their capacity as the Trustees of the Church, to authorise the budget which is presented after Finance Committee has completed its work.

**Eric Chilton - Treasurer**

DRAFT AS AT DECEMBER 2004.

March 2005 - Hopper  
Mission Council

**URC FINANCE/URC DI THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

1

<b>Account</b>		<b>2006</b>
<b>THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH</b>		<b>Draft Budget</b>
<b>Income</b>	1	<b>21,245,000</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
<b>Ministry</b>		
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	16	15,481,000
Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	5	572,000
Ministries Committee	5	265,500
		<b>16,318,500</b>
<b>Training</b>		
College training for stipendiary ministry	16	1,160,000
Other training for stipendiary ministry	16	198,000
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	16	140,000
Central cost of Youth and Children's Work Train	7	269,000
Lay training costs	3	95,000
Training Committee	3	135,500
		<b>1,997,500</b>
<b>Other Mission Activities</b>		
Grants (Ecumenical, and Grants & Loans group)	14/15	265,400
Ecumenical Committee and International	8	403,500
CWM	2	50,000
Church and Society Committee	9	90,000
Life and Witness	2	78,000
Windermere Centre	2	61,000
Racial Justice programme	4	91,000
Youth and Children's Work Committee	6	261,200
Yardley Hastings	6	0
Pilots Development	7	90,200
Other committees	2-4	15,850
		<b>1,406,150</b>
<b>Support Activities</b>		
Assembly	15	250,000
Mission Council	2	44,000
Communication and Editorial	10/11	273,500
Reform	11	70,500
Finance office	9	371,000
Central Secretariat	4	269,500
Professional fees	15	88,000
Computer network	6	60,000
URC House costs	12	263,000
General church costs	13	92,000
		<b>1,781,500</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>21,503,650</b>
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT</b>		<b>258,850</b>



## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# A

### Election of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

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

#### 1. Mission Council Advisory Group

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

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

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

Moderator	Sheila Maxey	
Immediate past Moderator	Alasdair Pratt	
Moderator-elect	David Peel	
2 Committee Conveners	John Ellis	2006
	Andrew Prasad	2008
Treasurer	Eric Chilton (ex officio)	
4 members of Mission Council	Adrian Bulley	2007
	Roz Harrison	2007
	Irene Wren	2008
	Val Morrison	2007

The General Secretary

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

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

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

#### 2. Staffing Advisory Group

*The Group considers any Assembly post due to become vacant, or proposals for new posts and recommends to Resource Planning Advisory Group whether this post should continue or be created.*

Convener	Val Morrison	2006
Secretary	The General Secretary	
3 members	Kenneth Forbes	2005
	Veronica Taylor	2006
	Chris Wright	2006

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

### 3. Grants and Loans Group

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

Convener	Brian Woodhall	2008
Secretary	Sandra Lloydlangston	2009
One representative from each synod plus, as consultants:		
Secretary for Finance		
Secretary for International Relations		
Secretary for Life and Witness		
Secretary for Church and Society		
A CRCW Development Worker		
Secretary for Youth Work or Children's Advocate		
Deputy General Secretary		

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

### 4. Section O Process Advisory Group

Convener	Tony Burnham	2006
Secretary	Hartley Oldham	2006
Ex officio:		
Secretary of Commission Panel		
Convener of Commission Panel (co-opted)		
The General Secretary		
The Clerk to the Assembly		
The Secretary for Ministries		
The Legal Adviser is in attendance		

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

### 5. Church House Management Group

Convener	Donald Swift	2008
Secretary	The Deputy General Secretary	
3 members	David Marshall-Jones	2006
	Val Morrison	2007
	John Woodman	2008
Ex officio:		
The Financial Secretary		

The Human Resources and Facilities Manager  
The Secretary for Communications and Editorial

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

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

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

**7. Resource Sharing Task Group**

Convener	Elizabeth Caswell	2008
Replacement members	Rachel Greening	2009
	To be notified	2009

Representatives – one per synod  
for consultation with 2 reps  
per synod.

Martin Hazell  
John Rea (Sec)  
Tom Woodbridge

**Action required of Mission Council**

**Staffing Advisory Group:**

- Elect a member - who may be (but need not be) a member of Mission Council
- The Group asks for permission to co-opt up to three people with experience of managing change in order to complete the review of Assembly-appointed staff, as charged by Mission Council
- Consider and decide on the proposal that Val Morrison's period of service as convener be extended until 2008 (from 2006) to allow continuity in the present review of staff posts (completed in 2007) and dealing with its consequences.

**Ethical Investment Advisory Group**

Appoint of 'permanent' convener to replace the Deputy General Secretary who is acting in the interim. This person may be a member of Mission Council, but, if not, may be invited to attend to present an annual report.

**Nominations shall be taken from proposer/secondor  
or from groups at Mission Council.**

**Resource Sharing Task Group**

Mission Council is invited to ratify the names of those 'replacement members' who have been approached and agreed to serve on this steering group which organises consultations of synod-appointed representatives.





## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# A1

### Annual Report of the Grants and Loans Group

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

The Grants and Loans Group (GLG) has now been in existence for nearly 5 years, having incorporated the work of the former Church Buildings Fund (CBF), Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) Self Support Fund. We have continued with the policy of giving grants only to Synods and Churches with the greatest need.

#### 2 BUDGET PROVISION

For the year 2004 the budget allocation for grants was approx £96000 from the Church Buildings Fund. This has been used primarily to assist churches in the provision of facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year grants of £101745 have been paid. This included a grant of £25000 to the Malvern Link project. Further loans of £130000 have been approved from this fund. For Mission Projects the budget allocation was £115000 and we had spent £111942 by the year end. However there are 2 grants that are temporarily suspended.

#### 3 GRANTS FOR FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

Applications continue to come in from churches (see appendix) but we expect them to drop a lot further in 2005. This should enable us to consider other projects within the scope of the 2005 budget.

#### 4 MISSION PROJECT FUND

During 2004 4 applications were received and 3 were approved (see appendix) GLG has been pleased with the reporting back on the projects. The reports are a great encouragement in that they reflect the initiative, determination and commitment of people seeking to be the 'church' in our existing society.

#### 5 CWM SELF SUPPORT FUND

The Clapton Park Project has been causing some concern and is now being closely monitored for us by the representative on the group from the Thames North Synod. This source of funding has now ceased.

## 6 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

GLG believes that the monies it makes available from Central funds is of real benefit both to local churches and their communities, and without it many projects would not get off the ground. Examples of the work supported are :-

Community development work in South Aston area of Birmingham  
Elderly day care center and visiting service in Balsall Heath, Birmingham  
Community work in Nechells in inner Birmingham  
Youth work in Derriford and Abingdon  
Youth and Community work in Newquay  
Neighbourhood Renewal in Southmead, Bristol  
Supporting ministry in Brecon and Boulevard URC  
Pastoral Work of Westborough URC

In the latter project the minister makes the comment 'Until we take church out of the religious box we have put it in, we will have nothing to say to a waiting and watching world. Conversion/becoming a Christian, whilst utterly essential, happens differently for everyone and at vastly different speeds. God needs to see that we are serious about caring for and discipling new Christians before He will give them to us. Too many new believers have been sacrificed on the religious altar. Discipleship and evangelism are the twin pillars of any growing church; if they are absent, then we become an anachronism. God is reforming His church for a new chapter, which He will uniquely write (Isaiah 43: 18-19).'

We believe that it is now recognized that church and faith communities have an important part to play in the growth and sustaining of community life. We hope that the monies that can be given in grants and loans will help churches to develop more fully their roles in the local communities.

Brian Woodhall  
Convener  
Feb 2005

**APPENDIX**

**CHURCH BUILDINGS FUND**

**SUMMARY OF GRANTS AGREED FOR FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED  
AND FOR FEASIBILITY STUDIES – January/December 2004**

	No of Churches	(2003)	Amount	(2003)
Disabled Facilities	17	(27)	£65,382	(£102,890)
Feasibility Studies	1	(3)	£ 800	(£ 2,240)
Special Grants	-	(1)	-	(£ 25,000)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18*</b>	<b>(30)</b>	<b>£66,182</b>	<b>(£130,130)</b>

**SUMMARY OF LOANS 2004**

	No of Churches	(2003)	Amount	(2003)
Building Loans	2	(1)	£70,000	(£75,000)
Professional Fees	-	(1)	-	(£25,000)
Special Loans	-	(1)	-	(£25,000)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>£70,000</b>	<b>(£125,000)</b>

E.Mids

**\*Breakdown by Synod**

- 1 Northern
- 8 Mersey
- 5 East Midlands
- 1 Eastern
- 3 Scotland

18

**SUMMARY OF "MISSION" GRANTS – January/December 2004**

**£18,000** over three years to support Community Development Worker (N. Western)

**£16,500** over three years to support Wynd Centre (Scotland)

**£1,630** Kitchen Equipment, Albany, Haverfordwest (Wales)



**MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005**

**A2**

**Staffing Advisory Group**

**1. Rural Officer/Consultant Post**

This post is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2005 at the retirement of the current post holder. The post is unique amongst Assembly appointments in that it is the only post which is a joint Methodist/United Reformed Church appointment. Both the work undertaken and the funding are split on a 50/50 basis. The post holder is based at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh and all the facilities of the centre are made available to support the work of the ecumenical team which includes the Church of England Rural Officer and the Rural Advisor to the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The work of the Arthur Rank Centre is a three-way partnership between the Royal Agricultural Society of England, the Rank Foundation and the church. Funding from the denominations supports the stipend/salary, on costs and expenses of the appointee.

A review group was set up, consisting of representatives from the two denominations and including members of the United Reformed Church/Methodist Strategy Group (a group which supports the ongoing work of the post holder). The Director of the Arthur Rank Centre was in attendance.

The review group heard about the work which has been undertaken during the tenure of the current post holder and the issues which are facing the rural communities at the present time and in which the churches are involved. A submission has been received for the continuation of the post. This submission has now to go to the Methodist Council through the Methodist Co-ordinating Secretary for Unity in Mission and the United Reformed Church Mission Council through the Staffing Advisory Group for consideration.

Whilst both denominations are at the present time giving careful consideration to their priorities for mission in the light of budgetary constraints it is felt that support should be given to this post for the following reasons:

1. The work undertaken supports a significant, though often underrepresented group of people and churches and the loss of the post would be acutely felt by those in such situations.
2. As part of an ecumenical team the post gives the opportunity for a co-ordinated church response to Government policy where that policy impinges on rural life.

3. The work clearly accords with the Five Marks of Mission.
4. A shared post, working in close collaboration with other denominations, underlines the commitment of the United Reformed Church to the Three Ecumenical Principles.

**Resolution: Mission Council approves the continuation of the post of Rural Officer/Consultant, the work and the funding to be equally shared by the Methodist and United Reformed Churches.**

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## **2. Secretary for Church and Society**

This post becomes vacant as a result of the resignation of Andrew Bradstock. Staffing Advisory Group has considered an application from the Church and Society Committee for the continuation of the post. This comes at a time when the Staffing Advisory Group is, as part of the Catch the Vision process, reviewing all Assembly-appointed posts. However, all such post holders have contracts to Assembly 2007 and it is in the light of this fact that Staffing Advisory Group at its meeting in December agreed to make the following recommendations:

1. The work is of exceptional value and ways must be found of continuing it during the inevitable vacancy.
2. Ecumenical discussions should be undertaken to investigate the possibilities of team working
3. A temporary appointment should be made until Assembly 2007, the job description should include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of Church and Society work.

Since that meeting, work has been undertaken to ensure that there is cover for necessary tasks to be undertaken in the short term and discussions have begun with colleagues from the Methodist and Baptist churches to explore the possibilities for team working.

**Resolution: Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Secretary for Church and Society on a temporary basis until Assembly 2007, the job description should include a commitment to ecumenical negotiations about the future of Church and Society work.**

Val Morrison  
Convener,  
Staffing Advisory Group



## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# A3

### Mission Council Advisory Group

1. The roles of Assembly Committee Conveners and Secretaries: A paper seeking to clarify these roles was commissioned by Mission Council Advisory Group. The General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary have been working on this and are at present in consultation with staff secretaries and conveners.

2. 'Prosperity with a Purpose': A short document and accompanying book of essays prepared by a working group on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland shall be launched in March to anticipate the timing of a General Election. Postcards and leaflets which publicise this major report (issued on behalf of CTBI member traditions) are being sent to every synod office. The report is also featured in the March edition of 'Reform'.

3. Pilots and Commitment for Life Management Group Convenerships: MCAG, having consulted the Youth and Children's Work Committee and Church and Society Committee, proposes that in future the conveners of Pilots Management Committee and the Commitment for Life Management Committee should be nominated by the General Assembly through its Nominations Committee.

**Resolution:** Mission Council, having secured the agreement of the Youth and Children's Work Committee and the Church and Society Committee, agrees that the convener of the Pilots Management Committee and the convener of the Commitment for Life Management Committee should be nominated by the General Assembly through its Nominations Committee, to serve for such periods as the policy of General Assembly dictates.

4. Review Group: The group appointed by Mission Council in March 2003 to review the case of a particular minister in dispute with the councils of the United Reformed Church, and to consider the lessons which the Church could learn from the case, had intended to bring its final report to the March 2005 Mission Council. For reasons beyond its control, the group has been unable to complete its work in time, and has asked to defer the presentation of its conclusions until October 2005.

#### 5. Matters from January Mission Council

Staff Secretaries' participation in Mission Council was discussed by MCAG in March 2003. The paper produced then is to be discussed in detail with the staff. The matter will be considered further when the Governance of the church is reviewed in the next year.

Policy about the distribution of free copies of the Book of Assembly Reports had been agreed by Mission Council within the past 18 months, and had been discussed again recently in the Assembly Arrangements Committee. It was noted again that all Church Secretaries receive copies of the Reports on behalf of all local churches, and are therefore easily available to ministers. Reports to Assembly are also universally available on the United Reformed Church website ([www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)).

## 6. Time for Action

In helping shape the United Reformed Church's ongoing response to the 'Time for Action' report produced by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Sheila Brain and Peter Poulter were appointed by Mission Council (October 2004 Minute 04/75) "to draw up a proposed charter, produce an accompanying pack, and suggest how other related work might be fed into this process".

Sheila and Peter have done further work on the Declaration for a Safe Church and accompanying material and now present the following to Mission Council for commendation to General Assembly:

### Declaration of a Safe Church A Charter for Action

This church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

We are all ~~made~~ <sup>and the Sp enables us to love in unity & peace</sup> in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place. This means that:

- dignity should be respected
- abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
- there will be sufficient support for those who need it
- allegations will be taken seriously

This church is rightly the place of loving pastoral care and concern which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged. It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone in this church to challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour.

This church will:

- inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them
- in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse is a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin
- take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken
- put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action

Every church will operate this Charter For A Safe Church.

**Resolution: Mission Council agrees to ask General Assembly to**  
**1 accept The Declaration for a Safe Church**

- 2 instruct all General Assembly committees to operate within it  
3 urge Synods, District Councils and Local Churches to affirm the  
declaration, resolve to apply in all aspects of their life and work, and report  
their response to Mission Council by March 2006.





MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

A4

Section 'O' Advisory Group

The Advisory Group wishes to recommend that Mission Council includes within its own report to Assembly in July this Group's report and the resolutions listed below:

1. Resolution to make changes to the Structure to provide for the introduction of the new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure
2. Resolution to ratify the changes to the Structure regarding the resignation of ministers approved in 2004 (Resolution 13 of 2004)
3. Resolution to ratify the changes to Section O, Part I approved in 2004 (Resolution 11 of 2004)
4. Resolution to replace the existing Section O, Part I with a reduced Part I
5. Resolution to make changes to Section O, Part II
6. Resolution to approve Part I of the new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure

MC-6  
MC-8  
MC-7  
MC-4  
MC-3  
MC-5

The report and resolutions accompany this note. The important changes proposed in the resolutions are explained in the Report.

Report of Section O Advisory Group to General Assembly for inclusion in Mission Council Report

1. During the year the Section O Advisory Group continued its detailed consideration of the Section O Process of Ministerial Discipline. In particular, the Advisory Group has responded to concerns expressed about the role of the Mandated Group which has the responsibility of investigating the case against the minister and presenting it at the Hearing before the Assembly Commission. As a result the Advisory Group is recommending significant changes in the manner of selection of the Mandated Groups in order that they may be strengthened for their task. These are set out in Resolution No. [ to be inserted ] and involve a series of amendments to Section B of Part II. That resolution also proposes an important amendment to Section E of Part II designed to improve the procedure in a Section O case which remains adjourned because the minister is appealing against the decision made against him/her in a criminal case.
2. Section O remains under the overall control of General Assembly and all changes to it, large and small, require Assembly approval. Any changes to Part I take two years to implement. The Advisory Group considers that there is a case for some simplification and that, whilst certain fundamental provisions of Part I must remain subject to the 'two year' rule, the remainder of Part I can be moved into Part II, to which changes can be made by a single Assembly. Resolution No. [ to be inserted ] brings a proposal to replace the existing Part I with a reduced Part I, the

text of which is set out in the resolution. If passed, this will be referred to Synod and, hopefully, come to next year's Assembly for ratification. The consequential changes to Part II will also be brought forward next year.

3. During the year the Church's legal advisers were asked to prepare a procedure (to be known as the 'Ministerial Incapacity Procedure') to enable the Church to take effective action in respect of those ministers regarded as unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons where the minister cannot be considered blameworthy or at fault in any conventional sense. The Advisory Group has been working closely with the lawyers as this has progressed and has been advised that the new procedure should be divided into two parts in similar manner to the Section O Process, i.e. Part I subject to the "two year" rule and Part II which can be changed by resolution of a single Assembly. In the course of the ongoing work on this, the Section O Advisory Group has consulted the Mission Council Advisory Group, the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and the Synod Moderators and has reported to Mission Council.

4. Consequently Mission Council now brings to the July Assembly Part I of the new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure. If the resolution approving this is passed, it will be referred back to Synods and presented at next year's Assembly for ratification. The Rules of Procedure are being prepared and will be placed before Assembly next year as Part II and thus the aim is to bring the whole of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure into operation in 2006.

5. The introduction of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure will involve changes to the Structure and to the Section O Process since, although the two procedures are entirely separate, there will be some inter-relation between them, where the evidence indicates a possible need to refer a case from one procedure to the other.

6. During the year the Section O Advisory Group has maintained a dialogue with the Synod Moderators on a variety of issues of common concern, but particularly about their role in the Section O Process and about the importance of the work of the Mandated Groups. A need for continual training for the Mandated Groups has been identified and the Advisory Group has established an ongoing training programme. The close liaison between the Section O Advisory Group and the Moderators will continue.

7. Mr. Brian Evans, the present Secretary of the Assembly Commission, completes his term of service at Assembly this year and we express our grateful thanks to him for his work in this demanding position and also for his wise counsel on the Section O Advisory Group. We welcome the Reverend Alison Hall as his replacement.

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1. Resolution to amend the Structure to introduce the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure

**RESOLUTION No. [to be inserted]**

**General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:**

**Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xix)**

**Add a new Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xix) as follows:**

**'Where the district council considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure of the United Reformed Church in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings'.**

The existing district council Functions (xix) and (xx) to become (xx) and (xxi).

**Paragraph 2(3)(C)**

Replace the existing 2(3)(C) with the following:

**'No appeal shall lie against a decision by the district council to initiate the Ministerial Discipline Process in accordance with Function (xviii) above or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Function (xix) above in respect of any minister'.**

**Paragraph 2(3)(E)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(3)(E) as follows:

**'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, the district council shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'**

**Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)**

Replace the words 'the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xv) below' with the words 'the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xiv) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xv) below'.

**Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv)**

**Add a new Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xv) as follows:**

**'In the absence of any reference into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure by the appropriate district council and where, either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party, the synod considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or**

**other similar or related reasons to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings’.**

The existing synod Functions (xv) and (xvi) to become (xvi) and (xvii) and alter the reference in the renumbered (xvi) from ‘para. 2.3(xix)’ to ‘para. 2(3)(A)(xx)’.

**Paragraph 2(4)(C)**

**Replace the existing Paragraph 2(4)(C) of the Structure with the following:**

**‘No appeal shall lie against a decision by the synod to initiate the Ministerial Disciplinary Process in accordance with Function (xiv) above or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Function (xv) above in respect of any minister’.**

**Paragraph 2(4)(E)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(4)(E) as follows:

**‘As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, the synod shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.’**

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xi)**

Add the words ‘..... and Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xxiv) below’.

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xviii)**

Replace the words ‘the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below’ with the words ‘the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Function (xxiv) below’.

**Paragraph 2(5)(xxii)**

**Replace the existing paragraph with the following:**

**‘To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process for the hearing of appeals under that Process.’**

**Paragraphs 2(5)(A)(xxiv), (xxv) and (xxvi)**

**Add new Paragraphs 2(5)(A) (xxiv), (xxv) and (xxvi) as follows:**

**Paragraph 2(5)(xxiv)**

**'To make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Standing Panel and to any administrative office under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Procedure (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Procedure are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding).'**

**Paragraph 2(5)(xxv)**

**'To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Review Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure for the hearing of appeals under that Procedure.'**

**Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxvi)**

**'<sup>in</sup> the absence of any reference into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure by the appropriate district council or synod (the case of any minister who is a moderator of synod be necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party, the General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceives the issue as relating to the incapacity of the minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of that minister and to follow the procedure laid down therein with regard to the suspension of the minister during the continuance of the incapacity proceedings.'**

Renumber the existing Paragraph 2(5)(a)(xxiv) as (xxvii).

Identify the Paragraph immediately after the General Assembly Functions as 2(5)(B).

**Paragraph 2(5)(C)**

Add a new Paragraph 2(5)(C) as follows:

**'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, neither General Assembly nor Mission Council on its behalf shall exercise any of General Assembly's functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'**

**Paragraph 5(1)**

Replace the existing Paragraph 5(1) with the following:

**'No right of Appeal shall lie against the decision of any council of the Church (acting with due authority) to initiate a case within either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, and once a case is properly within either of such procedures it shall be resolved in accordance therewith and not under Paragraph 5(2) below. Any decision reached in**

accordance with either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure has a status of a decision of the General Assembly and is final and binding’.

### Section C – Rules of Procedure on Appeals

Replace the existing Paragraph 10 with the following:

**‘The provisions of this Section “Rules of Procedure on Appeals” shall not apply to cases which are being determined within either the Ministerial Disciplinary Process or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.’**

2. Resolution to ratify the changes to the Structure regarding the resignation of ministers approved in 2004 (Resolution 13 of 2004)

**Resolution No. [ to be inserted ] Ratification of changes to Structure regarding resignation of ministers (Resolution 13 2004)**

General Assembly agrees to the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 2(3)A(viii)

Insert the words ‘not currently the subject of any case within the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline referred to in Function (xviii) below)’ after the word ‘ministers’.

Paragraphs 2(3)A(xviii), 2(4)A(xiv) and 2(5)A(xxiii)

In all these paragraphs, delete the words ‘following initial enquiry’ on the first line and add the words ‘at the appropriate time as specified in that Process’ at the end of the Paragraph.

Paragraph 2(3)(B)

Delete the existing Paragraph 2(3)(B) and replace it with the following:

**B.1 ‘As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the District Council shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.’**

**B.2 ‘The responsibility for calling in the District Council’s Mandated Group to conduct an Initial Enquiry which marks the beginning of the Disciplinary Process rests with the Synod Moderator acting in consultation with such officers of the District Council as s/he considers appropriate.’**

Paragraph 2(4)(B)

Delete the existing Paragraph 2(4)(B) and replace it with the following:

**‘As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the Synod shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due**

process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

Final unlettered paragraph immediately after Paragraph 2(5)A(xxiv)

Delete this paragraph and replace it with the following:

2(5)(B) 'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case against a minister under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, neither General Assembly nor Mission Council on its behalf shall exercise any of General Assembly's functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)

Amend the reference in this paragraph from Function (xv) to (xiv).

3. Resolution to ratify the changes to Section O, Part I approved in 2004 (Resolution 11 of 2004)

Resolution No. [ to be inserted ]

Ratification of Section O part I changes  
(Resolution 11 2004)

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision to make the following changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Paragraph 4.2

Add the following words at the end of this Paragraph: '....but any person who reaches the end of the term of his/her appointment on the Commission Panel whilst serving as a member of an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.'

Paragraph 9

The existing Paragraph 9 to become 9.1 and a new paragraph to be added as 9.2:

'9.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination.'

4. Resolution to replace the existing Section O, Part I with a reduced Part I

**Resolution No. [ to be inserted ] Replacement of existing Section O, Part I**

**General Assembly agrees to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:**

**SECTION O**

**Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline**

**PART I - Substantive Provisions**

**(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)  
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)**

1. 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether a Minister has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. The Assembly Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with provisions of Paragraph 1.3. Under the Section O Process the Assembly Commission is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Paragraph 1.3) and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.
- 1.2 Subject only to Paragraph 1.3, once the disciplinary case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
- 1.3.1 If it considers that the situation concerning a Minister involved in a case within the Section O Process relates to or involves a perceived incapacity on the part of that Minister which might render him/her unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may make an Order in accordance with the Rules of Procedure referring the case back to the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation that the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (as defined in Section A of Part II) be initiated in respect of the Minister concerned, whereupon the Ministerial Disciplinary proceedings shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.



- 1.3.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the above Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary and under those Rules that person shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.
    - 1.3.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure was initiated, whereupon the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall make a further Order declaring the Ministerial Disciplinary case to be concluded, subject only to the continuation of the Minister's suspension until the issue of his/her suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
    - 1.3.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall forthwith reactivate the Ministerial Disciplinary case.
  2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.
3.
  - 3.1 Subject only to Paragraph 3.2, the Ministerial Disciplinary Process shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
  - 3.2 The Ministerial Disciplinary Process may be initiated in respect of a Minister as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the Ministerial Disciplinary case and the conclusion of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.
4.
  - 4.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or (in the case of an appeal) the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

- 4.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination.
5. 5.1 A Minister may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, stating the ground/s of such appeal.
- 5.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case, where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister.
- 5.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.
6. Procedural matters arising under the Section O Process shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.
- 7 7.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 7.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.
- 7.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.
- 7.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 7.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.
- .....

5. Resolution to make changes to Section O, Part II

**Resolution No. [ to be inserted ]**

**New changes to Section O Part II**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part II of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

**Paragraph B.1.1**

Replace the word 'three' with the word 'four'.

**Paragraph B.2**

Replace the existing Paragraph B.2 with the following:

**B.2 'The Mandated Groups charged with the responsibilities ascribed to them under these Rules of Procedure shall be constituted in the following manner:**

**B.2.1 Two members thereof shall be appointed by each District Council on a standing basis from a Synod Panel itself appointed and maintained by each Synod, there normally being on such panel at least one, and preferably two, persons from each District within the Synod.**

**B.2.2 The two remaining persons shall be appointed on to the Mandated Group for that case by the Deputy General Secretary from the Joint Panel in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph B.3.'**

**Paragraph B.3**

Replace the existing Paragraph B.3 with the following:

**B.3.1 'Mission Council shall constitute and maintain a Standing Panel ('the Joint Panel') consisting of a maximum of twenty-six persons, of whom two shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably on account of some legal or tribunal or similar experience or expertise.**

**B.3.2 The function of those serving on the Joint Panel shall be to participate as members of Mandated Groups, in cases arising either under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council) or Paragraph B.9.1 (Synod) (in both of which cases two members of the Joint Panel will be required to serve) or under Paragraph B.9.3 (General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf) (in which case all four members of the Mandated Group will be drawn from the Joint Panel).**

**B.3.3 The Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, shall select persons from the Joint Panel to serve on Mandated Groups as required and shall liaise with those persons and with the person calling in the Mandated Group and such other persons as may be necessary.'**

**Paragraph B.4**

After the words 'Synod Panel' add the words 'or the Joint Panel'.

#### **Paragraph B.5.1**

On every occasion when the expression 'Standing Mandated Group' appears, delete the word 'Standing'.

Replace the words '...the Standing Mandated Group...' (the first time they appear) with the words '...either of the Panels...'.

Replace the words '...the Moderator of the Synod shall appoint another member of the Synod Panel...' with the words '...then, if the disqualified person is a member of the Synod Panel, the Moderator of the Synod shall appoint another member of that Panel and, if the disqualified person is a member of the Joint Panel, the Deputy General Secretary shall appoint another member of that Panel...'.

Replace the words '...the remaining members of the Standing Mandated Group...' with the words '...its remaining members...'.

#### **Paragraph B.6.1**

The existing B.6.1 to become B.6.1.1 and a new B.6.1.2 to be added as follows:

**B.6.1.2** 'The person calling in the Mandated Group shall in so doing take the following steps (with the participation at the appropriate time of the Deputy General Secretary):

- (i) s/he shall notify those two persons who, as members of the Synod Panel, will form part of the Mandated Group by virtue of Paragraph B.2.1 that they are called upon so to participate, advising them of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point;
- (ii) s/he shall request the Deputy General Secretary to appoint two persons onto the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel, advising him/her of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point;
- (iii) whereupon the Deputy General Secretary shall select two persons from the Joint Panel to form part of the said Mandated Group, notifying them of their participation and advising them of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point and shall notify the person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group of the names of the persons who will serve;
- (iv) in the event that any of the proposed appointees on to the Mandated Group is unable or unwilling to act, the process(es) of appointment from the Synod Panel and/or the Joint Panel shall continue until a Mandated Group consisting of four members has been duly constituted;
- (v) as soon as the above steps have all been taken, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall issue to each member thereof a written statement setting out the reasons for the calling in of the Mandated Group, the names of possible informants and any other sources of information at that time available. To avoid prejudice, that statement must not contain any assumptions or inferences or any personal reflections or opinions.'

### **Paragraph B.8.1**

After the word 'concludes' insert the words 'unanimously or by a majority'.

### **Paragraph B.9**

Make the following changes at Paragraph B.9:

**B.9.1** Replace the word '...three...' with the word '...four...'.

**B.9.2** Replace the existing B.9.2 with the following:

**B.9.2** 'In connection with any such steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by a Synod, if at any time the Moderator of the Synod, in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister in membership of that Synod, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod to form part of the Mandated Group for the particular case, at the same time informing the minister that this step has been taken and requesting the Deputy General Secretary to appoint two persons onto the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel, whereupon the procedure for the constitution of the Mandated Group shall follow that laid down in Paragraph B.6.1.2. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to a Mandated Group called in under Paragraph B.6.1.'

**B.9.3** Replace the words '...a Mandated Group for the particular case drawn from the Panel of Synods other than that of the Synod out of which the case arises...' with the words '...a Mandated Group of four persons for the particular case all drawn from the Joint Panel...'.

Replace the words '...the Standing Mandated Group of a District Council...' with the words '...a Mandated Group...'.

**B.9.4** Replace the words '..B.10 and B.11..' with the words '..B.10, B.11 and B.12'.

Delete the Paragraph which begins with the words 'In Paragraph B.5.1...'.

Replace the paragraph beginning 'In Paragraph B.7.1...' with:

**'In Paragraph B.7.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly the words 'Deputy General Secretary' shall replace 'Moderator of the Synod'.**

### **Paragraph E.7.4**

At the end of the paragraph add the words – '...unless the Minister shall have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, within twentyeight days of the

passing of the sentence in the criminal case, written evidence that s/he has lodged an appeal against the decision of the criminal court, whether it be against the conviction itself or the sentence imposed.'

**Paragraph E.7.6**

Add a new Paragraph E.7.6 as follows:

**E.7.6 'If the Minister has given to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the written evidence of appeal in the criminal case referred to in Paragraph E.7.4, it shall be his/her responsibility to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of the outcome of his/her appeal in the criminal case as soon as s/he becomes aware of it and to supply to the said Secretary a duly certified court record or memorandum of the decision on the said appeal, whereupon the Section O Process shall be reactivated and the case brought to a hearing as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Minister shall respond promptly to any requests for information from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission as to the progress of the appeal in the criminal case. If the Minister fails to comply with the provisions of this Paragraph, the said Secretary may him/herself seek and obtain the required information as to the progress and outcome of the appeal in the criminal case.'**

**Paragraph E.8.5**

Add a new Paragraph E.8.5 as follows:

**E.8.5 'Any failure, unnecessary delay or obstruction on the part of the Minister in complying with the requirements of Part II, Paragraph E.7.6.'**

**Paragraph H.4**

Add a new Paragraph H.4 as follows:

**H.4 'Within one month of the conclusion of each case as provided in Part I, Paragraph 17, the Mandated Group shall prepare a written report of its conduct of the case and submit it to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister's church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of any individuals involved in the case. The sole purpose of the report shall be to help those charged with the ongoing review of the operation of the Section O Process to monitor the performance of Mandated Groups and thus to ensure that all appropriate training and assistance is provided and the highest standards are maintained.'**

**6. Resolution to approve Part I of the new Ministerial Incapacity Procedure**

**Resolution No. [ to be inserted ] Introduction of a new procedure to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure**

General Assembly (i) resolves to introduce a procedure (to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) designed for dealing with cases involving Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical,

psychological or other similar or related reasons and (ii) approves Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below and (iii) notes the intention to introduce Part II thereof to coincide with the intended ratification of this resolution at the General Assembly of 2006:

**SECTION [ to be inserted ]**

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

**PART I – SUBSTANTIVE PROVISIONS  
(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)  
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)**

**Note:** The words and expressions marked \* are defined in the Rules of Procedure contained in Part II of this Procedure.

- 1 Under the provisions of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure\* a Review Commission\* and, in the event of an appeal, an Appeals Review Commission\* shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of considering and deciding upon cases properly referred to it in which Ministers, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of ministerial discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons.
2. The Review Commission, the Standing Panel\* the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure\* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.
3. 3.1 Subject only to the provisions of Paragraph 3.2, when the case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, it must be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that procedure and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.  
  
3.2.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, an issue of Ministerial Discipline is or may be involved, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission may make a Referral Order\* in accordance with the Rules of Procedure\* referring the case back to the council of the Church which initiated it with the recommendation that the Ministerial Disciplinary Process\* should be initiated in respect of the Minister concerned, whereupon the proceedings under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.

3.2.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the Referral Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on a person properly representing the council of the Church referred to in Paragraph 3.2.1 and under those Rules that person shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.

3.2.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Disciplinary Process was initiated, whereupon the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission shall make a further Order declaring the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure to be concluded, subject only, if the Minister has already been suspended under that Procedure, to the continuation of his/her suspension until the issue of the Minister's suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.

3.2.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission shall forthwith reactivate the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

4. 4.1 Subject only to Paragraph 4.2, the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.

4.2 The Ministerial Incapacity Procedure may be initiated in respect of a Minister as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Ministerial Disciplinary case.

5. Although the operation of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the Minister of the promises made at ordination, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the evidence and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union\* and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

6. The Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall have the authority to make orders and decisions in the terms specified in the Rules of Procedure.

7. The Minister who is the subject of a case, but no-one else, may appeal against any decision of the Review Commission but not against an order of an interim nature only. An appeal must be made in writing within the time limit specified in the Rules of Procedure and in accordance with those rules and the grounds of appeal must be stated in the notice.



8. Procedural matters arising under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall in every case be dealt with under the Rules of Procedure.

9. 9.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 9.2, this Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) on the Structure.

9.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring that procedure into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

9.3 All such changes to the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 9.2 shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

A5

Ethical Investment Advisory Group

1. On behalf of Mission Council, its Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) continues to meet periodically. The Group includes representatives of the two major central URC capital funds (the URC Trust and the Ministers' Pension Fund), the Finance Committee, the Church and Society Committee and our Anglican and Methodist colleagues.
2. During the year, EIAG has kept abreast of work on a wide variety of topics ranging from alcohol via stem cell research to proposals for disinvestment from Israel/Palestine. An article in *Reform* raised the profile of the subject and the Group is always keen to hear from church members of their concerns.
3. This year, EIAG has also returned to the subject of Nestle and this is discussed in the Church and Society report to Assembly.
4. EIAG's capacity for original work is severely constrained by available staff resources. Therefore, the relaunch of the Church Investors Group is particularly welcome. More than a dozen British denominations are active members of this Group which is now equipped to provide much better background information and advice on the highly complex issues behind investment policy decisions. The URC's Financial Secretary, Avis Reaney, is a member of the Steering Group.
5. This year, there are two matters Mission Council wishes to bring to Assembly from EIAG. The 2002 Assembly adopted revised investment guidelines but noted they were not a "final position". These new guidelines added pornography to the products to be avoided and amended guidance on how to decide whether a minority activity of a diverse company was large enough to justify avoiding investment in the company as a whole. EIAG subsequently indicated they intended to provide further clarification.

**Pornography**

6. The current guidance has a separate clause on pornography urging that URC bodies avoid investment in "those companies whose business is the promotion of pornography".
7. Pornography is easier to recognise than to define. However, it is obvious that current social attitudes in Britain allow, and arguably encourage, a more sexually candid media to flourish than in previous times. Members of the

United Reformed Church are unlikely to be shocked to find images in the arts, advertising and on television which would not have been authorised a generation ago.

8. Nevertheless, however widespread and familiar, pornographic material fits awkwardly alongside Paul's instructions to Christians to live in a way that honours the body (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4) and to fill our thoughts with "all that is true, all that is noble, all that is just and pure, all that is lovable and gracious, excellent and admirable" (Philippians 4.8). As the Anglican equivalent of EIAG commented in their consideration of this issue:

Sex is a gift from God. Representation of its mystery should be identified with spiritual values such as joy, caring, compassion and dignity. Exploitation, crudity, violence and oppression transgress the Christian vision of humanity that is created in the image of God.

9. For such reasons EIAG sees investment in pornography as inconsistent with the theology of the United Reformed Church. We are therefore glad the Assembly thought it right to add pornography to the product areas to avoid.
10. EIAG suggest companies promoting pornography should be taken to mean those which (a) publish "top shelf" pornographic magazines; or (b) own pornographic television channels; or (c) manufacture explicit sexual material in video or other forms marketed as "adult entertainment"; or (d) are wholesale distributors of such material.
11. Consistent with the United Reformed Church's approach to other objectionable product areas, EIAG would advise that companies should be avoided as investments when the share of their business in pornography is significant. We suggest parallel measurement criteria should apply as for other non-weapon product areas included in the policy and that pornography should be addressed in the same clause of the guidelines as these.

### **Defining "Significant"**

12. Concern has been expressed to EIAG at Assembly and otherwise about the current interpretation of "significant" in deciding when a company is sufficiently involved in an objectionable product to be discouraged as an investment opportunity.
13. The 2002 guidelines were accompanied by a suggestion that although EIAG would be happy to advise on a case by case basis, they would generally take as a starting point 30% of a company's business as being the threshold for "significant". In other words, if a company had less than 30% of its business in objectionable products, it would generally still be consistent with the Assembly policy to invest in it.
14. EIAG is well aware of how complex the whole area of ethical investment is and would still wish to avoid a rigid definition of significance that might then be applied with little regard to individual circumstances. However, EIAG

would now propose that the United Reformed Church reduces its benchmark to the region of 10-20% of a company's business. We believe this threshold, while still higher than some URC members would wish, is sufficiently low to show we are serious about our policy. It recognises that there is a balance to be struck where the majority of a company's business is desirable and only a small part objectionable. It is also realistic about the possibility of unravelling the detailed structure of complex companies, with many business lines and subsidiary operations, and identifying tiny percentages of their activities.

15. A further important advantage of this definition of "significant" is that it would bring the United Reformed Church more into line with the criteria used by other Free Churches. The increasing ecumenical co-operation on ethical investment policy issues makes it desirable that we work with similar criteria as our sister denominations. While no two Churches have exactly the same approach, in broad terms the equivalent figure used by the Methodist Church is usually around 20%, and by the Salvation Army 10%.

#### **Revised Policy**

16. In the light of this advice from EIAG, **Mission Council proposes that the Church's formal policy statement be revised to read as follows:**
  - (a) **companies directly engaged in the manufacture or supply of weapons of destruction;**
  - (b) **companies a significant part of whose business is in the supply of alcoholic drinks or tobacco products or military equipment (other than weapons of destruction); or the provision of gambling facilities; or the publication or distribution of pornography.**

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

This policy can only be advisory as the responsibility of specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.

John Ellis  
20/02/05



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

A6

Resource Sharing Task Group  
(for information)

In the last report for 2004, at paragraph 4.1.3. it was reported that eleven synods had resolved to work towards greater sharing between synods. It can now be reported that all thirteen synods have made a commitment towards the target set for 2013, and the work of the work of the Task Group and the Consultations continues in that direction.

It is important to point out that there has been a significant change of emphasis in the approach to resource sharing, from what has been described as "trading money" to an approach which is "needs driven". To achieve this, synods in the early summer of 2004, met in duo formation and subsequently in quartets to discuss synod budget proposals for 2005.

All the meetings were conducted in good spirit and synod representatives were able to recognise major differences and, in some cases similarities between synods not only financially but in ways of best practice. All synods were able to examine and compare budgets and highlight areas of difference and consistency of approach in many cases. All those involved felt the exercise to be worthwhile and ultimately at the conclusion of the process, agreed:

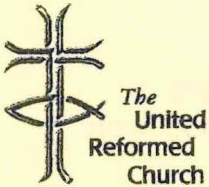
- each synod would continue to contribute towards resource sharing;
- each would identify core costs;
- prioritise expenditure;
- work to the schedules provided.

It has been agreed the same format will be followed in respect of budget preparations for 2006 and, work is already underway to ensure meetings are arranged and take place.

There is still much work to be done in seeking to harmonise synod policies on a number of issues related to sources of income. This work will continue under the leadership of the Rev'd Elizabeth Caswell. New appointments to the Task Group will be made in due course.

The Rev'd Roger Whitehead retires from the Task Group this year. He has made a significant contribution over many years to the Task Group and the consultation process and his knowledge and experience will be missed. Mr David Butler, Secretary to the Task Group and the Consultations, also retires after many years valuable service. He has been the driving force behind the whole concept of resource sharing and his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed. The United Reformed Church are indebted to both Roger and David for their service.

*John Rea*  
*Secretary*



**MISSION COUNCIL**  
**4-6 March 2005**

**B**

**Catch the Vision**  
**Report of the Structures Working Party**

**A. Introduction**

It is simple to state our proposal. There should be just one Council of the Church between the Church Meeting and General Assembly. (We perceive Mission Council to be an executive of the Assembly and not a separate Council.) Our debate has been what this should be, its size and its closeness to the local church.

This paper seeks to give some insight into the discussion of the Structures Working Party and to be persuasive of our conclusion that the one council should be the Synod. We begin with a summary of recommendations, and then explain in more detail. We introduce the term "New Synod", a phrase used for ease of discussion only.

**B. Summary of Recommendations**

**Synods**

1. The number of New Synods should remain largely the same as at the moment.
2. We would encourage New Synods actively to explore, together and with ecumenical partners, opportunities for boundary changes which might improve effectiveness and which take account of sociological and ecumenical needs.
3. We support the suggestion that a London Synod should be established with appropriate changes to neighbouring Synods.

**Districts**

4. District Councils should cease to exist.
5. The functions of District Councils should be reallocated to New Synods in order to create one locus for decision making about resources and policy.
6. New Synods must encourage local Churches to work and share together (wherever possible ecumenically) to develop local mission (e.g. clusters, mission partnerships).
7. Key decision processes and functions (e.g. Candidating) should be reviewed to ensure they are both rigorous and equitable<sup>1</sup>.

**Expertise**

8. Specialist expertise should be employed with central coordination, especially in the areas of Human Resource, Law and Health & Safety, to support and assist New Synods and local Churches.
9. Property and trust functions should remain at Synod level.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix

## Councils

10. Committees and councils at all levels should be reviewed and, where appropriate, simplified in terms of membership and agenda with a focus on building relationships and enabling action.
11. The means of agreeing balanced representation on the councils of the United Reformed Church will need to be reviewed.

## Leadership

12. Each New Synod will have a Moderator who will provide enabling, participative leadership and ensure appropriate levels of pastoral care for Churches and Ministers.
13. Moderators will seek opportunities to engage with other communities within their Synod outwith the Church.
14. They will provide a focus for ecumenical leadership.
15. In view of the other changes proposed, Moderators should review their involvement in other operational aspects of their Synod and within the wider church.
16. The role, scope and purpose of the Moderators' Meeting should be reviewed and defined<sup>2</sup>.
17. With the removal of District Councils there should be a radical review of the work, strategy, processes and staffing of New Synods both paid and unpaid, including the role of the Synod Clerk to ensure that new levels of relationship and pastoral care with local churches are established.

## C. Why Change?

From the 'Catch the Vision' process,  
**there is a discerned mood for change within the United Reformed Church<sup>3</sup>.**

**There is a perception that in some cases .....**

- the existing structure does not deliver inspiration or resources (local and regional) effectively to engage in mission
- Energies are sapped at too many levels
- Decisions take too long and have to pass through too many bodies
- There are too many meetings which are agenda led and where no real 'meeting' takes place
- The current structure is too complex and costly in time and sometimes in cost, is frustrating and encourages institutionalism
- The structure re-invents wheels and practice
- There is no pool of specialist expertise
- The principal focus of the current structure is not ecumenically friendly

From our consultation, **we have heard that .....**

- One layer less in the structure will make a positive difference

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<sup>2</sup> Ref. 4.11.5.10 Report of Mission Council on personal and conciliar Leadership and Authority

<sup>3</sup> Catch the Vision Report

- Centralised expertise and advice will be of value (Human Resource, Health & Safety, Legal)
- There is a desire for pro-active leadership (personal and conciliar)
- Decision making should be felt to be close to the local situation (this is not just geography)
- Ecumenical harmonisation of boundaries is desirable. In England this is likely to be most practical with Anglican boundaries.
- Boundary changes should be ecumenically, not politically, driven
- London, Scotland and Wales are special cases
- Collaborative working between Synods is growing in effectiveness and should be encouraged
- There is a desire for greater resource sharing between and within Synods
- It would be unwise to dismantle Trusts
- There is no enthusiasm for centralising property trusts and property work which should be Synod based
- There must be local benefit to any proposal
- The Church is not just local

#### **D. Qualities of a proposed structure**

Our early discussions were about the feel of any new structure.

What would be its quality/character? We identified as being important:

- spirit led
- enabling
- network
- mission focussed (5 Marks)
- mutually accountable
- mutually supportive
- bonding
- trusting
- confidence building
- 'freed' yet belonging
- accepting
- ability to make difficult decisions
- allows risk taking
- communicating and listening
- decisions by consent not consensus
- legal and professional
- willing to work ecumenically with all God's people

This led us to confirm our conviction in a church which is conciliar, but does so in an open way which also has scope for individuals to act with accountability.

#### **E. Ecclesiology**

Christ continues his ministry in and through the church, the whole people of God. The Basis of Union states:-

" Within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, the United Reformed Church acknowledges its responsibility under God:



to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ

1. to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met
3. and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organized life"<sup>4</sup>

The structures of the church are there to enable us to fulfil those purposes. They can be likened to a skeleton which supports the body and enables it to function.

In 1972, both Congregational and Presbyterian systems of church government were adopted. The importance of the church meeting was upheld and also the importance of the role of elders. The Presbyterian system of District Councils was retained. Both denominations held an annual Assembly which was also retained. The main change for the Congregationalists was that the County Unions ceased to exist, being replaced by provinces, which were introduced largely to provide a conciliar setting for the work of Moderators who were part of Congregationalism's gift to union. District and Provincial boundaries were prepared on the basis of the 1970 local government review which became effective in 1974. Since then, there have been further changes in local authority boundaries, notably with the creation of unitary authorities.

The URC holds in tension the relationship between personal and corporate authority under Christ. Christ is the head of the church but how is his will to be discerned? Traditionally we have believed that it is by meeting together in council, whether minister and elders, District Council, Synod or General Assembly under the prayerful guidance of the Holy Spirit. These councils of the church are upheld by principles of interdependence and mutual responsibility. The question we now have to ask is what form of conciliar structure is appropriate for the future which allows us to maintain our conciliar system but without becoming a burden?

It seems that Calvin, in correspondence with English presbyterians, was fairly flexible in his attitude to church structures.<sup>5</sup> No doubt he would be the first to argue that our structures are not set in stone and to remind us of the Reformation principle *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always reforming itself).

## **F. Our Proposal – the argument**

We looked at various models for this new Council of the Church. Whatever its geographical boundaries we are convinced that it should have a closeness of relationship to the local church and a dynamic interface with the work of the General Assembly especially that embodied in the officers who work

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<sup>4</sup> Basis of Union #11

<sup>5</sup> "Under God's Good Hand" – David Cornick

at Church House.

In summary, we examined aligning our 'regions' (we rapidly became aware of the inadequacy of this name, not least because of the national status of Wales and Scotland), in England with the Government Regions, or the ecumenical training areas as set out in the Hind Report. We also looked at the Methodist Districts, and considered a model of our own devising based on the realistic expectation of a Moderator giving pastoral care to Churches and Ministers in this time of change, and as a mid-way option between District and Synod.

Deciding on the precise geography came after we had considered what the 'regions' would do. This is set out in an appendix to this report. We also examined documents presented to Mission Council on Authority and the Nature of the Church. We considered the impact of any changes on the working of United Reformed Church Trusts and the moving toward a system of resource sharing. Work carried out by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan was studied.

i. Government regions. These apply to England and are nine, so, with the addition of Scotland and Wales, would give us eleven regions. These would not match with the ecclesiastical boundaries of any other Church and would create upheaval in the working of the United Reformed Church for little gain. Also, government bodies do have a tendency to change.

ii. Hind Training Regions. There are nine of these in England. Whilst the boundaries are based on Church of England dioceses the groupings match no other ecclesiastical boundaries, and to align ourselves with these would gain little and the Hind Report (Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church) is, if not 'dead in the water', certainly in rough seas. The areas are, in any case, intended as Training Regions, and are not in any other sense organisational.

iii. Methodist Districts In many ways our most natural ecumenical partner is the Methodist Church. We have many Local Ecumenical Partnerships together and the pastoral agreement encourages continuing the close relationship. There are 31 Methodist Districts. Creation of a similar number of United Reformed Church regions in England, Scotland and Wales would require the appointment of over twice the number of Moderators as currently in post; or the grouping of United Reformed Church regions into consortia sharing a Moderator and other resources; or Moderators serving part-time in that post and having a part-time pastorate ~~to~~ another role, such as Training Officer.

During the consultation process, it became clear that the appointment of thirty-one Moderators would not find favour within the church and that role sharing would create unacceptable tension and stress.

iv. Smaller URC regions. We considered regions smaller than Synods. This focussed on seeing the Moderator as a Regional Enabler. The role of the 'Regional Enabler' is focussed on the development of mission, pastoral support and deployment of ministry. The Regional Enabler would keep abreast of local activity, providing support and encouragement.

It may be appropriate for Regions to be smaller than some of the current 'Synods'. The current average ratio of 1:88<sup>6</sup> ministers is too great for effective pastoral oversight. A ratio of nearer 1:40/ 50 would seem more realistic. This might imply up to 28 Regions. London might be a special case.

The Regional Enablers might in some cases be part-time, in which case they might also be linked to a specific pastorate.

The prime role of the Regional Enabler is to provide pastoral oversight to the Ministry, staff and congregations in the Region and encourage, stimulate and support mission and ministry, local projects etc. With the likely increase in numbers of lay workers (including, of course, Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders) and also the likely increasing diversity in the ways in which ordained staff are used, pastoral oversight of the 'team' and knowing where to find expertise or good-practice will become increasingly important for a successful and vibrant church.

During consultation we were aware that in this model we had underplayed the significant role of the current Moderators as Leaders of the United Reformed Church in an ecumenical context. Many of the arguments against iii. also apply here. Whilst some argued that two regions could be put together and served by one Regional Enabler, and the view expressed that in some cases a role of Regional Enabler linked to another post could work, we decided to reject this model and the title 'regional Enabler' as the leader within it.

v. New Synods. This brings us therefore to 'New Synods'. We are not too happy with the nomenclature, but we do see the Synods in the new structure working in a different way to current Synods. Before they are implemented we recognise that some more work is required and there is a need to test how the tasks would be carried out, e.g. testing the Call of a Candidate for the Ministry and giving concurrence to a Call to Ministry in a Pastorate, but we are confident that this offers a creative way forward.

In addition to comments already made in rejecting models above we also offer these comments in support of this proposal.

No change is required to the Act of Parliament.

The only references to the District Council in the United Reformed Church Acts of Parliament are in the Second Schedule. The removal of District Councils has no impact on the references in paragraph 2 and subparagraph 2(d). Only in paragraph 5 is a responsibility given to District Councils. If there were no District Council, paragraph 5 could not be used. While this may be a theoretical limitation, it is understood that paragraph 5 has been used very rarely indeed, if at all, as a means of removing property from the local church. In all other situations, paragraph 2 makes adequate provision for the disposal of property and the use of sale proceeds without the need for District Council involvement.

Experiments have taken place in some Synods to develop simplified structures. This proposal enables this work to be built on, and lessons learned to be

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<sup>6</sup> The 2004 Yearbook shows 677 Stipendiary, 153 Non-stipendiary, 26 CRCWs, 36 active retired and 263 Ministers of other Churches. These 1155 are spread across 13 Synods making an average of 88. This excludes pastoral oversight of retired ministers which would continue to be a role.

developed in other Synods.

The proposal is easy to grasp and its implementation should not distract the church from its mission by protracted debate on internal structures. Whilst costcutting was not the prime motivation for this exercise, we envisage that there will be some financial savings. However, the greatest savings will be in time, effective decision making and reduction in frustration.

We are not proposing any changes to the membership of Synod, nor in its frequency of formal meeting. The changes to the functions of District and Synod are set out in Appendix 1. A revised schedule is Appendix 2.

United Areas would continue by decision of the New Synods concerned in devolving responsibilities which belong to these areas.

This proposal is flexible allowing for changes in the number of churches and members.

## **G. Additional comments on the recommendations**

*Recommendations 1, 4 and 5.* These are dealt with above.

*Recommendations 2 and 3.* These recognise that there have been significant changes since 1972 in the political and social geography. Our boundaries should reflect this, and take into account the current ecumenical mood. Rather than offer a precise blueprint we encourage adjoining Synods, as appropriate, to discuss co-operation and adjustment to boundaries. Northern and North Western Synods have already carried out some sympathetic adjustment.

London has changed since 1972. There was no M25, nor a Mayor of London, although there was a Greater London Council. We are aware that a London Methodist District is being created. We have done some work on the feasibility of a United Reformed Church London Synod. We encourage the Thames North and Southern Synods to give serious consideration to the advantages of creating a Synod broadly based on the Boroughs within the M25 motorway. This would have an impact on Southern, Wessex, Eastern and East Midland Synods. It would create a Synod of approximately 150 United Reformed Churches, Southern would reduce to approximately 120 churches and the 50<sup>+</sup> non London churches currently in Thames North would need to be distributed to other Synods.

We believe that it would be possible to deal with the Trust implications by co-operation rather than embarking on a time and financially costly change of trusteeship of local church property.

*Recommendation 6.* Whilst we propose one decision making council of the church, we recognise the need for churches to gather together in smaller units for fellowship, mutual support and the development of local mission. Synods have already begun this process with clusters and local mission partnerships.

We are aware that this has not been an easy process but we feel that by the removal of District Councils it will be easier to perceive the role of these groupings, and time/space created for this vital work to take place. Synods will be free to develop this level of working in ways which best suit their geography, culture and ecumenical partnerships. This freedom comes because the consistent structure across the United Reformed Church in the Synod; it is to this body that General Assembly, Church House, and local churches will relate.

*Recommendation 7.* It is our hope that this change in structure will enable the Church to make key decisions for the future. There are difficult issues to address and we envisage that in the consultation process from presentation of this report to its implementation there will be scrutiny of process and refinements to the functions we are currently proposing. At the Synod level it is essential that the same systems are in place across the United Reformed Church.

*Recommendations 8 and 9.* We expect there to be a review of the way Church House relates to Synods and local churches/mission projects. We look to a centre of expertise, able to cope with the increased legislation which now impinges on churches and charities; a place where definitive advice is available.

#### *Trusts*

We considered a proposal that ~~Trust~~ be centralised and money distributed according to a predetermined formula. This did not find favour. Whilst we support moves for greater resource sharing, we feel this can be achieved by developing the processes already in place, rather than the costly task of changing the myriad of Trusts. Also local identity and sense of ownership/belonging is important.

*Recommendations 10 and 11.* Our initial feeling was for geographically smaller regions. We argued ourselves out of this and in so doing realised that a closeness of relationship and decision making is not about geography, it is an attitude of mind. We hope that Synods will be “all of us”, and not “them”. Synods will need to develop committees which enable effective decision making and support within their own context. We used a phrase of “decisions by consent, not consensus”. By this we recognised that not everyone can be involved in all decisions, so we need to trust people to act on our behalf, with agreed systems of delegated authority and accountability.

*Recommendations 12 to 17.* A considerable amount of time was spent in discussing what we understood by conciliar government and the nature of personal leadership within it. It is important that New Synods operate in creative ways, receiving clear leadership in terms of process for working and able to give leadership in taking the Church forward.

We were aware that a Task Group on “Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority” reported to Mission Council in October 2002.

From this we noted:

“The Task Group suggests that the hallmarks of a reformed council meeting include:

- Its members being open to God and to each other
- The meeting having a clear sense of its role and purpose
- A way of working being adopted that enables the council to fulfil its functions efficiently and appropriately
- Inclusivity being taken seriously – the voice of every member should be able to be heard and be listened to in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Hallmarks of personal leadership and authority – both lay and ordained:

- Ministry exercised as part of the ministry of the whole people of God
- A sense of call tested and recognised by the councils of the church
- Accountability to the church and its councils
- The acceptance of the church's authority over its ministries and ministers.

Para 4.11.5.9

Collectively, the Moderators have a collegial role which has evolved significantly since 1972 and which exercises authority in the life of the Church. Once a month, the Synod Moderators meet together. Though this meeting provides fellowship and enables Moderators to discuss general issues of importance, its main function is to decide upon the introduction of ministers to vacant pastorates. The annual Moderators' report to Assembly is also influential.

Para 4.11.5.10

In affirming what God is doing amongst us in this collegial ministry, we acknowledge the need for it to be recognised, accepted and treated as a gift from God. It is not as yet integrated into the structures of the United Reformed Church – there is no theological justification for it in the Basis of Union. And lines of accountability are not clear.”

We suggest this thinking should be re-visited as part of the discerning how New Synods might work.

## H. Final Words

We believe that, whilst the proposal is simply put, it has radical implications for the way in which we work. It takes us back to something we know and asks us to look at it in a new way.

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know that place for the first time.*

Little Gidding  
T.S. Eliot

## APPENDIX 1

### Newly defined functions for newly defined structure

		<b>Newly defined Synod Functions</b>
a) The United Reformed Church and its constituent churches	(i)	To take action which supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad,</li> <li>• the life and witness of the United Reformed Church,</li> <li>• the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole</li> <li>• the well-being of the community in which the church is placed</li> </ul>
	(ii)	To encourage church extension within the province or nation decide upon the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects.
	(iii)	To decide upon all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches.
	(iv)	To take appropriate action on matters referred to the council by the General Assembly, and to initiate or transmit proposals for consideration by those bodies.
	(v)	To provide a forum for concerns brought forward by local churches and to advise thereon
	(vi)	To make proposals to and raise concerns for consideration by the General Assembly
	(vii)	To give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the moderator's deputy presiding to conduct, in fellowship with the local church, any ordinations and /or inductions of ministers within the synod.
	(viii)	To appoint, in consultation with the local church and the moderator of the synod, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister, a retired minister or an elder.
	(ix)	To care for all the churches of the synod ensuring that visits are made at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work.
	(x)	To appoint from time to time such number of representatives to General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, a representative under the age of 26. As far as possible all appointments shall be made in rotation from local churches.

	(xi)	To consider the appointment to service on synod of: (I) United Reformed Church ministers/lay people serving as (a) full-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) secretaries and other full-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship; (II) United Reformed Church ministers giving significant oversight to local churches, under the general direction of the council concerned (III) Ministers of other churches appointed to serve on behalf of the United Reformed Church in charge of a United Reformed Church or in an Ecumenical group including United Reformed Church interests; (IV) Ministers not in pastoral charge who perform duties within the synod in respect of which the council has some direct responsibility.
	(xii)	To devise strategies which enable and support the exploration of mission opportunities in the region and to encourage in the local churches concern for service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad.
b) Ministers, candidates for ministry and local preachers	(xiii)	To exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3)(a), (b), (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who are responsible to the General Assembly.
	(xiv)	To give oversight to candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry determine their eligibility for a call.
	(xv)	Where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the synod considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section 0 of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under this process.
	(xvi)	To appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals.
	(xvii)	To accredit and provide support and training for local preachers and worship leaders



		and, in consultation with the local churches concerned and the moderator of the synod, to give authority for appropriate lay persons to preside at the sacraments.
	(xviii)	To receive the resignation of ministers and, in consultation with the moderator of the synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraphs 2.4.viii and 2.5.xviii).
Ecumenical	(xix)	To seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly
Buildings	(xx)	To decide upon all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings.
Other	(xxi)	To receive, hear and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted
	(xxii)	To do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.

## APPENDIX 2

### Suggested changes, additions and deletions from the functions of Synods and Districts

Existing wording as found in The Manual - 2000				
	Current Synod Functions		Current District Council Functions	Suggested changes
(i)	To take such action as it deems conducive to the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the church is placed			Reword To take action which supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad,</li> <li>• the life and witness of the United Reformed Church,</li> <li>• the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole</li> <li>• the well-being of the community in which the church is placed</li> </ul>
(ii)	To have oversight of district councils and in consultation with the district councils and local churches concerned to determine the boundaries and number of district councils within the province or nation. All such changes shall be			Delete if no district councils.

	reported to General Assembly.			
(iii)	To promote church extension within the province or nation and decide upon proposals submitted by district councils for the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects.	(xi)	To promote church extension within the area and to submit proposals to the synod for the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects.	These functions are two parts of the same process which could be simplified if one layer of council was removed. There would need to be some local input in these circumstances.
(iv)	To receive and decide upon recommendations from the district councils on all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches.	(xii)	To make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod in consultation with the moderator on all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches.	These functions are two parts of the same process which could be simplified if one layer of council was removed. There would need to be some local input in these circumstances.
(v)	To receive and decide upon applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry which have been previously considered and transmitted by district councils	(vi)	To consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision.	Suggest this stage of the candidating process be taken out and recommendation from local church together with advice from the moderator should take the applicant direct to the Assessment Conference stage.

(vi)	To give oversight to candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry determine their eligibility for a call			No change
(vii)	To receive and forward with a recommendation through the moderator of the synod to the General Assembly applications for admission into the United Reformed Church from ministers, probationers or congregations			Suggest this becomes a moderator responsibility.
(viii)	To consider questions regarding inclusion on the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and make recommendations thereon to General Assembly (but excluding consideration of any matter which is being dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary			Does this differ from Function (vii)?

	Process referred to in Function (XV) below			
(ix)	To deal with reports of committees of the General Assembly	(xvi)	To take appropriate action on matters referred to the council by the synod or General Assembly, and to initiate or transmit proposals for consideration by those bodies.	The district council function seems to better reflect what is required
(x)	To examine matters sent to it from district councils or the General Assembly	(xiv)	To provide a forum for concerns brought forward by local churches and to advise thereon.	Suggest that the synod function (x) and district function (xiv) are combined
(xi)	To make proposals to and raise concerns for consideration by the General Assembly			No change
(xii)	To foster ecumenical relations and action, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly	(xvii)	To maintain contact with ecumenical and missionary work in the area.	Suggest this is reworded to make it stronger.
(xiii)	To receive an decide	(xv)	To hear and make	Suggest amalgamating these

	upon references and appeals duly submitted		decisions upon appeals brought forward by local churches and church members.	functions
(xiv)	In the absence of any reference to the Assembly Commission by the appropriate district council and where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the synod considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section 0 of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the	(xviii )	Where following initial enquiry the district council considers that a Minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section 0 of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under this process.	The Section 0 process would require amending!

	resolution of the matter under this process.			
(xv)	To appoint at its discretion additional members to district councils in accordance with recommendations made by such councils under the provisions of paragraph 2.3 xix above.			
(xvi)	To do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.	(xx)	To do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.	No change
		(i)	To exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3)(a), (b), (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who are members of each district council in the province or nation and are responsible to the General Assembly.	Function transfers to synod

		(ii)	To give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the moderator's deputy presiding to conduct, in fellowship with the local church, any ordinations and /or inductions of ministers within the district.	Function transfers to synod
		(iii)	to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals.	Function transfers to synod
		(iv)	to appoint, in consultation with the local church and the moderator of the synod, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstance an elder may be appointed.	Function transfers to synod
		(v)	To care for all the churches of the district council, and to visit	Function transfers to synod



			them by deputies at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work.	
		(vii)	To accredit lay preachers and, in consultation with the local churches concerned and the moderator of the synod, to give authority for appropriate lay persons to preside at the sacraments.	Some rewording required Function transfers to synod
		(viii)	To consider resignation of ministers and, in consultation with the moderator of the synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraphs 2.4.viii and 2.5.xviii).	Function transfers to synod
		(ix)	To appoint from time to time such number of representatives to General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, a representative under the age of 26. As far as possible all	Function transfers to synod

			appointments shall be made in rotation from local churches within its district.	
		(x)	To engage in study concerning the Church's mission in the region and to encourage in the local churches concern for youth work and social service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad.	Rewording required Local churches/groupings of churches
		(xiii)	To make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod on all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings.	Function transfers to synod
		(xix)	To make recommendations to the synod for appointment to service on district council of (I) United Reformed Church ministers/lay people serving as (a) full-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where	Local churches/grouping of churches?

		<p>their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the district concerned, (b) secretaries and other full-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;</p> <p>(II) United Reformed Church ministers giving significant oversight to local churches, under the general direction of the council concerned</p> <p>(III) Ministers of other churches appointed to serve on behalf of the United Reformed Church in charge of a United Reformed Church or in an Ecumenical group including United Reformed Church interests;</p> <p>(IV) Ministers not in pastoral charge who perform duties within the district in respect of which the council has some direct responsibility.</p>	
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## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# C

### Training Committee Review

*This report assumes the existence of the Training Committee's report to General Assembly 2004 in which we set down the reasons for the Review and the theological principles that we have adopted. They are referred to in this document but only in summary form.*

#### **A Charter for a Learning Church**

The United Reformed Church's Charter for Children, written in 1990, widely admired, and re-affirmed by more recent Assemblies, contains some pretty explosive messages for all of us over 14. But because it's entitled '...for children...' the dynamite intended for the rest of the church has often failed to detonate, its implications not fully taken up. The Training Committee, whose work has been in tune with the Charter's vision, now intends to light the fuse.

Just three of the ten Charter commandments (the whole of it is given in Appendix 1) are enough for our work

- 2 The full diet of Christian worship is for children as well as adults*
- 3 Learning is for the whole church, adults and children*
- 9 As a church community we must learn to do only those things in separate age groups which we cannot in all conscience do together*

In other words for some time - perhaps for a long time - the United Reformed Church has been saying that we are communities of people whose Christian discipleship involves learning, and that learning is wherever possible to be done together. We don't encourage separate compartments in our church (old vs. young; ministers vs. lay people, elders vs. youth workers) by learning separately - unless there is good reason to do so.

The work of Jesus Christ in inviting us into the Kingdom of God and redeeming the world is a much wider work than that of education. Our essential response to Jesus is to become disciples, and take part in the ministry or service of the church. But we need equipping and strengthening for that service. Our learning is very much a part of that equipping and strengthening. Our knowledge, understanding, reasoning, skills and insights (adapted to the challenges of our own aptitudes, backgrounds and interests) need development.

- Not for nothing was Jesus known as a rabbi or teacher and can we see the disciples learning from him.
- Not for nothing has the church been caught up in the provision of education in society down the centuries.
- Not for nothing was John Calvin, (one of the great influences on the churches of which we are comprised) involved in a system of public education in Geneva.
- Not for nothing do the churches from which we come have an honourable history in the establishment of state education which grew out of church provision, (different in each of the three nations of which we are a part).
- Not for nothing have the traditions we have come from valued a learned ministry of word and sacraments IN ORDER THAT the whole church's learning might be enhanced.

## And what have we been doing recently?

In recent decades the church has reacted to the pressures of living in an increasingly secular society and the decline of our membership (see the earlier Catch the Vision reports) by asking the Training Committee to increase the resources it puts into education for the whole church. In this way it has sought to stay true to the principles indicated above. Let just one quotation suffice here:

1996 Training Committee Assembly Report:

*'.....The Review group believes that a national policy is needed in order to use all the resources of the Church most effectively and to make available to the whole church the most appropriate range of opportunities for learning and training. The presumptions of such a policy are that the church is committed to encouraging its members and ministers alike to be as well equipped as possible and that the pursuit of the highest possible standards is part of its offering of service to God'*

*The review group welcomes the creation of Provincial Teams...and would like to see this model of partnership extended between provinces. We see great potential benefit in the trainers in three or four neighbouring Provinces meeting to share ideas, insights, material and other training resources. Colleges and Course staffs in the region and where appropriate national (sic) officers of the Church should be drawn into such consultation' (Assembly reports 1996 page 158 para 4.1 5.1 and 5.2)*

So since the mid 1990's we have

- developed the Training for Learning and Serving programme for all people in the church
- responded to 'grass roots' demands to develop TLS LITE
- used those programmes as the main way in which we train Lay Preachers
- produced Developing Discipleship (for new church members)
- produced The Elders Course
- made sure that all ministers train for four years, including one year on placement
- provided increased support for ministers and Church Related Community Workers in their first three years of ministry, having been encouraged by the United Reformed Church's Growing up Report of the late 1990's
- agreed that the training of ministers in Education for Ministry 1 and 2 (that is pre and post ordination training) be reconfigured as a coherent programme, with the learning of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers in EM 2 remaining under the care of Synods and the Continuing Ministerial Education sub Committee until the completion of EM 2
- made available time and money for them to continue in education thereafter
- noted and encouraged the way the institutions we use for ordination training have offered their resources to the wider church

(See Appendix 3 for a by no means exhaustive list that gives some indication of the range of training now available.)

## So what's the problem?

WELL - and here is where the dynamite is needed – despite all the things that we have said – despite all the good things done in recent years, the exciting programmes developed, and the good number of people on Training for Learning and Serving, etc., WE DO NOT LIVE UP TO THE CHARTER AS WE WOULD LIKE TO. THE WHOLE CHURCH IS NOT ENGAGED IN LEARNING PROGRAMMES AS WELL AS IT MIGHT BE AND STILL DOES A LOT OF THIS LEARNING IN SEPARATE COMPARTMENTS. The Training Committee is very keen to address these problems dynamically – as it indicated more fully in last year's report.

It intends to:

- i. Break the mould of the assumption that lay education is tacked onto the end of the main priority of education and training for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work. Whilst giving due weight to the vital need of the church for such ministries, and any new ministries that Assembly defines, it seeks to be inclusive of education and training for the whole people of God and to integrate all aspects of lay education including that of Eldership. This is explored further on pages 5 and 12 and included within the Resolutions at the end of the Review.
- ii. Show we are serious that education and training is for the whole people of God. The consequence of this is that we are in a growth and not a declining market, for the education market is the whole church, as demonstrated by the whole TLS programme. We will thus promote the idea that the education and training needs of the church are an expanding not a shrinking field.
- iii. Hold together being ecumenical and Reformed. As part of the integrity of its ecumenical commitments, the committee is keen to undergird a distinctive awareness amongst all those in learning of the contribution to the ecumenical family of the life, witness, ethos and history of the traditions represented by the United Reformed Church.
- iv. Undermine by its policies the habits of speech in conversation, church councils and policy development which refer to the preparation and strengthening for the ministry and discipleship of the whole people of God as if it were only about the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.
- v. Promote an understanding that the aim of education and training is so to equip the church that it can better continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in and for the world. Thus the ultimate objective of education and training in the church needs to be more clearly understood as serving the world through the church.

*And more specifically*

- vi. Ensure the re-alignment of education and training so that Assembly programmes, synod provision, colleges, Education for Ministry 1, 2 and 3 (initial ministerial training, post ordination and continuing ministerial education), lay and ordained training and different types of courses, are integrated wherever this is feasible.
- vii. Address the issue of the small groups of those people studying for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and the precarious nature of the financial viability of the institutions that we use. Part of our approach is of course, to broaden our understanding and practice to see that the students of an institution could be training for all sorts of reasons and not just for *'the ministry'*, nor just from within the membership of the United Reformed Church!! Nevertheless the committee, whilst prioritising the provision of training that the church needs for its mission, wants also to be financially responsible.

**In brief then our statement of intent is to:**

- **be inclusive of education and training for the whole people of God and of all aspects of 'lay' education including that of Eldership**
- **assert that the education and training needs of the church are an expanding not a shrinking field**
- **hold together being ecumenical and Reformed**
- **undermine the habits of speech which refer to the preparation for the discipleship of the whole people of God as if it is only about the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.**
- **assert that the aim of education and training is to equip the church, so that it can better continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in and for the world**
- **ensure the integration of education and training between different educational packages**

- address the issue of the small groups of those people studying for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in line with all of these statements.

### And these concerns are in step with Catch the Vision and Equipping the Saints

*Catch the Vision* is urging us to consider:

- ❖ new ways of being church, including
  - new ways of serving our communities and
  - experimenting with new ways of being community.

This will require us all to be equipped and strengthened for these tasks.

- ❖ a deeper engagement in mission, including
  - finding a voice to speak to the unchurched.

This will require us all to be equipped and strengthened for these tasks.

- ❖ new forms of spirituality, including
  - becoming a learning church.

This is what we are advocating. There are and always have been a variety of ways, Bible studies, prayer groups, lent courses etc., in which people have learnt and grown in the local church. We want these to be added to, improved and strengthened – learning for all and learning together so that every part of the people of God might explore the faith with confidence, both within and without the church.

As it says in one of the publications of the Church of England's 'Hind' process (see below) in which we have collaborated, we want people to:

Become more confident in faith, discipleship, and understanding in relation to God and to their engagement as Christians with the world.

Grow in their understanding of Christian identity, both within the Church community and in society at large.

Be able to draw effectively on a solid grounding in knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the Christian Tradition

Be able to voice an understanding informed by Christian reflection and dialogue with others.

Grow in their awareness of themselves and others.

Be open to the exploration of a variety of personal pathways in response to God's call to discipleship.

Develop a deepening and sustainable life of prayer.

And we might add:

Learn to be a conciliar community developing consensus as the People of God on the pilgrimage of faith.

In *Equipping the Saints* there is strong emphasis on the church's promotion of lay ministry and the urgent need to make sure that it is properly supported and equipped. Here is a quote from *Equipping the Saints* report to assembly 2004:

*In our interim report to the 2002 Assembly, we suggested that the Church's response would need to recapture a sense of the ministry of the whole people of God (Para 1.1), and our post-bag has supported this view.*

*If the Church is to develop more diverse leadership patterns then it needs more flexible arrangements for the training, funding and deployment of Ministers and other church leaders. (Para 1.4)*

*We are concerned to emphasise that the ministry of the whole people of God requires the active participation of every church member, and that it relates to every aspect of their lives*

*not just when they are together in church. The particular ministries of individuals should be understood as being within the context of the ministry of the whole people of God, out of which they emerge. (Para 2.6.4)*

*Equipping the Saints* also clearly proposes revitalised support for Elders as part of an overall strategy to re-animate the life and work of our congregations.

**(Resolution 1 –see also page 14f)**

## **So what's the Big (Training) Idea?**

It is to say that to achieve these goals and light the fuse of a learning church we will give responsibility for providing and designing the learning Assembly requires, and the local church wants and needs, to those people who have expertise in this area. What's more we should ask them to do it together - in partnership and call it ***The Partnership for Learning***.

## **What might be its membership?**

The Partnership will reflect those bodies that both require and provide education and training in the life of the church. A provisional list of those who might be in partnership and represented is as follows:

- Belonging to the World Church
- Commitment for Life
- Education for Ministry 2
- Education for Ministry 3
- Equal Opportunities
- Life and Witness Committee (Christian education/membership/evangelists etc)
- Pilots
- Racial justice
- Synods through representatives of their training and development teams
- Theological Education and Training Colleges/Courses
- Training for Learning and Serving
- Training Committee (who are responsible for Training for Learning and Serving - and other training)
- Youth and Children's Work Committee and Trainers
- Windermere Centre

There might be other bodies, too, for example the Cheshunt Foundation, Rural Consultants, Communication and Supplies.

Note that this assumes that the Partnership will be of **all** those involved in providing education and training and not just those currently under the care of or in relationship to the Training Committee. We take encouragement from the Catch the Vision process and its intention to address structural issues that it might allow us to provide a genuine partnership of training across the whole life of the church and not just limited by present committee remits.

## **We believe we are pushing at an open door.**

There are already lots of examples of trainers in our church working in partnership. Much of this we knew, much of it we have discovered as we have engaged in our consultation process in the last eighteen months or so.



The Synod Training Officers meet regularly themselves but also have occasional meetings with the Youth and Childrens Work Training and Development Team and with the staffs of the colleges. Northern College, the Scottish College and the Windermere Centre are in conversation about collaboration in a number of ways. College staffs have been very supportive of a number of training initiatives outside of the colleges not least Training for Learning and Serving. The colleges are beginning to work together in promoting the resources they have for ministers to use for their Education for Ministry 3 (continuing ministerial education).

There are also examples of a different sort of partnership between what people want and are trying to create locally and Assembly's Training Committee. For example in churches and districts there was a heartfelt cry for local training for people who wanted to lead worship but who didn't feel that they could undertake the full Training for Learning and Serving programme, which leads to Assembly accreditation. So locally some Districts and Synods began to produce worship courses of various sorts. However the provision was patchy and Lay Preaching commissioners through the Assembly's Ministries Committee, asked the Training Committee to help. What resulted was the production of Training for Learning and Serving LITE. This built on all the training that had already been designed. It produced something that indicated a standard for such training and itself could be used locally across the Church.

It's these sorts of Partnerships that we want to build on...

### **Enthusing and involving the whole church – a Conference**

We propose the establishment of a 'United Reformed Church Conference on Education and Being a Learning Church' which would be promoted by the Partnership. This would be a self – funding gathering, perhaps every other year, of all those (whether policy makers, providers or consumers) engaged in education and training. It would gather all those involved in theological education of any sort for an inspirational conference, workshops and seminars on various aspects of education being delivered in the partnership. It would be a major event between Assemblies, if these are held once every two years, and could make recommendations to the Partnership and Mission Council/Training Committee. It would be the church discovering what it means to be a learning church.

### **How does all this help the problems listed above and light the fuse?**

It works to break the mould that considers ministerial training and lay training, Belonging to the World Church, Commitment for Life, Equal Opportunities, Pilots, Racial justice, Training for Learning and Serving, Youth and Children's Work Training, the Windermere Centre and so on, as separate things. It does this by getting all the providers of training to consider in partnership how training might be brought together and training resources integrated, both within the United Reformed Church and in our ecumenical engagements.

By having all the providers together considering the needs of the whole church it focuses attention in one organisation on the training market of the whole church and not just one part of it (e.g. the training of ministers, youth work, and concerns of racial justice).

It ensures that the cutting edge mission questions - evangelisation of our culture, church related community work, racial justice, making poverty history, youth and childrens work etc - are represented centrally in the considerations of what is provided for the learning church and are not just an adjunct to those considerations.

By bringing together training providers in the United Reformed Church it enables cross fertilisation of good practice, sharing of resources and understandings of the ethos of the United Reformed Church in relation to our ecumenical engagements. Thus those who are engaged in ecumenical training - and especially those who have been or might be somewhat isolated or under resourced in this provision - will be supported in ensuring the contribution of our ethos into that field.

By bringing together the full range of training providers with their very varied remits it will strengthen the ability of all to see the aim of education in the church as serving the world.

It will allow those who have responsibility for various parts of the church's programmes (lay training, elders training, youth work, synod provision, ministerial training in its various phases) to work together to build coordinating bridges across the separate provision currently on offer.

We will look to the Partnership for Learning to develop its own style and evolve in ways that tackle the problems indicated and the unfolding needs of the church.

## **What might we say about the Partnership's organisation?**

### A Light but flexible structure

The Partnership for Learning would not become a 'heavy' structure but would be light. By this we mean that it would be less of a management organisation and be characterised more by acting to: coordinate, enable, inspire, communicate, encourage and promote.

It will be flexible so as to be responsive to the changing needs of a changing church and the range of ways in which training occurs already. Training now occurs in many locations in the URC; local churches, Districts, Synods, colleges and courses and more. It is designed and delivered by lay, ordained, professional, and amateur; it is instigated by learners and by those who feel something must be learnt. Further to this, some training is contracted from places with no URC financial connections, while some training is financially connected and other training is funded entirely in-house. So the Partnership will aim to be robust and flexible, allowing new partnerships to develop at the same time as honouring historical training contributions and relationships.

### So how might it work – and what about the Training Committee?

The **Training Committee** would remain but in reduced form, as the body which would carry the authority of Assembly, be responsible to Assembly and develop the strategic policy of Training.

The Training Committee will retain an overseeing and validating/inspection function and continue to be responsible to Assembly for standards and curricula for United Reformed Church required courses. Its policies and protocols would seek to ensure that the environment for learning might exist in reality. It would be there to deal with problems and loose ends in order that the partnership is free for its tasks and purposes.

The Training Committee would be the holding body whilst the Partnership for Learning is established and its effectiveness assessed. It will ensure that what the church requires in the Partnership is being delivered.

The Training Committee would advise Assembly as to who should be members of the Partnership. It would continue to hold the Training budget and thus provide a budget for the Partnership.

The Training Committee would continue to have a membership established by the Nominations Committee as now. However it is our suggestion that the membership should consist of those who have an interest in the outcomes of the learning and who have knowledge about teaching environments and the church, both local and ecumenical.

It is our assumption at this stage that this committee will still require staff as at present, i.e. a Secretary for Training, a full time coordinator of the Training for Learning and Serving Programme, two other part time Training for Learning and Serving staff and a part time officer for the Education for Ministry 2 programme. In the implementation of the partnership these initial assumptions would be open to testing by the Training Committee as it oversees the outworking of the establishment of the Partnership.

The delivery function rests with the **Partnership for Learning**.

***Function and overall aims – (delivering the dynamite)***

Under the policy of the Training Committee the Partnership for Learning will incorporate and refine, as appropriate, the present provision for education and training for the whole People of God and will encourage the development of ever new and imaginative ways of accompanying God's people. It will operate more like a network than an institution.

***Responsibilities – (lighting the fuse)***

We envisage that training for the people in local churches, at regional level and training for recognised ministries of the church would become more integrated. The Partnership would encourage us all to learn and grow together and to see ourselves as a dynamic partnership in education for mission in Christ's church.

The Partnership for Learning will determine and develop a life of its own incorporating all engaged in learning, teaching and training. The ways, frequency and pattern of its meetings will develop as the Partnership discovers its character within the changing ecumenical and denominational contexts that we will experience in the next stage of the church's life.

It would handle the nuts and bolts of training policy, brokering relationships, ensuring good and consistent communication. The Partnership as a body would not mainly or even at all itself deliver training. It would encourage and enable relationships and negotiations between providers so that quality training is received.

***In Action – (Exploding)***

For example, currently staff of training institutions offer, on an ad hoc basis, to contribute to training in synods or on training programmes. In future, the Partnership could act as a clearing house to ensure a greater degree of coordination in the offering of this vital and much appreciated support across the church.

The Partnership will continue to provide and resource all levels of learning ecumenically where possible. It will strive to ensure that first class quality education and training can be available to all people in the local situation and in regional locations and according to the resources and need. It will seek to ensure that training in professional development is made available. With these endeavours under the overview of the Partnership for Learning, good practice and course content of excellence can be shared across the United Reformed Church and beyond, so that all may have access to the best that is available.

It would encourage the work already begun under the Education for Ministry Committee (Continuing Ministerial Education) to ensure that the division between Education for Ministry 1 and 2 are integrated. A consultation is planned in the second half of 2005 to take this work further.

***Accountability – (Keeping the Momentum)***

For non-Assembly programmes it would have a role in monitoring provision of training across the church. The Training Committee wants to find an appropriate balance between encouraging locally designed training to enable discipleship of all where they are and, on the other hand, of seeking to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of training. Its guiding principle has been that training should be delivered locally wherever feasible and fit the local need and context but be formed within the best practice and policy of the whole church. Thus it foresees partnership being at least in part between local training providers and those charged with maintaining standards at a denominational level. Where training is for a specific local context, the Partnership's role will be to facilitate interchange so that wheels are not re-invented and best practice is available to all.

Accountable to the Training Committee, the Partnership would be comprised of members who include those who represent training delivery from all areas of the United Reformed Church and from contracted out training providers. The actual membership may vary depending on training

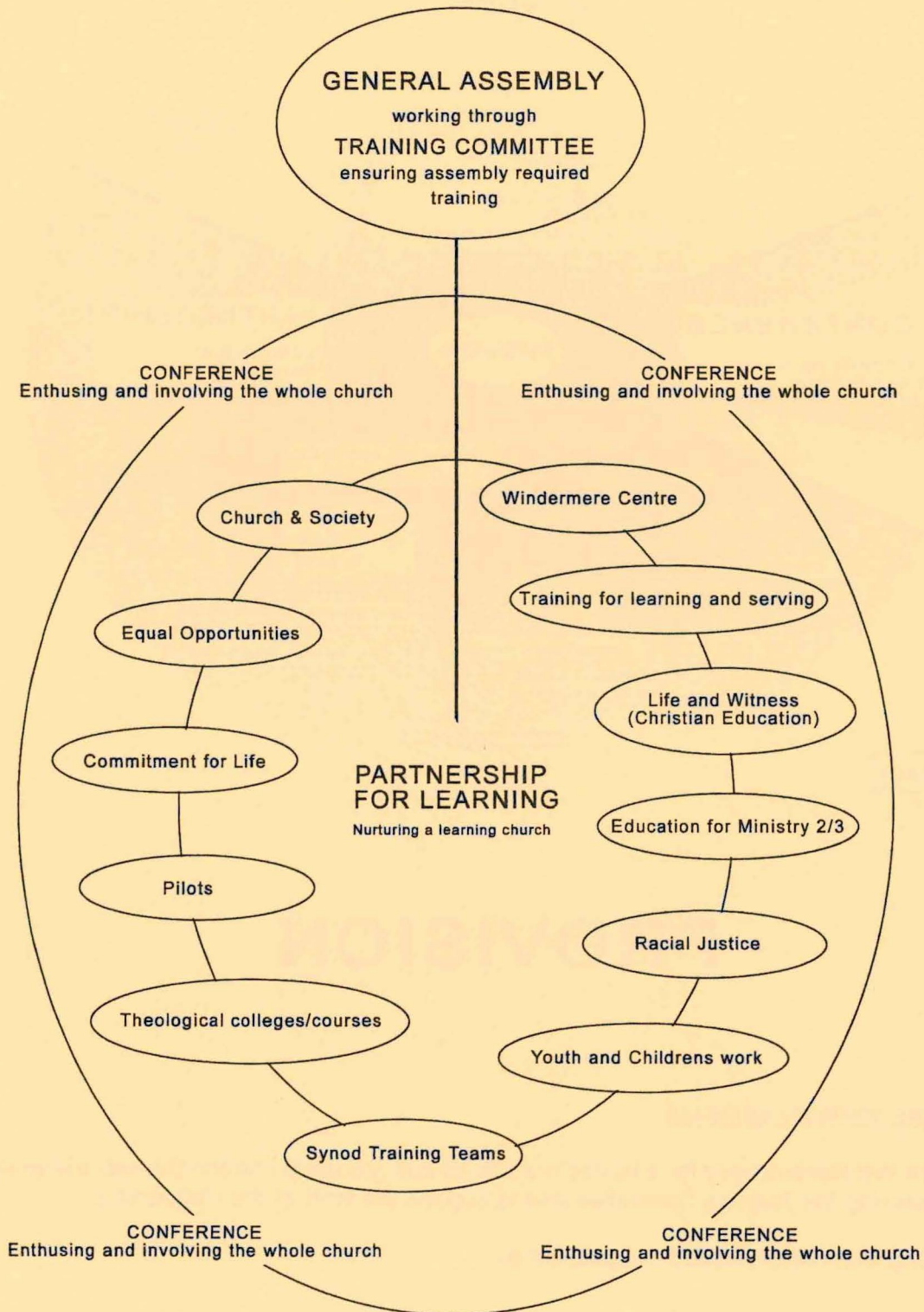
provision, but it will show the full range of training provision available to the United Reformed Church, as indicated above.

It would meet twice a year with the Director and task groups engaging in more detailed work in between times.

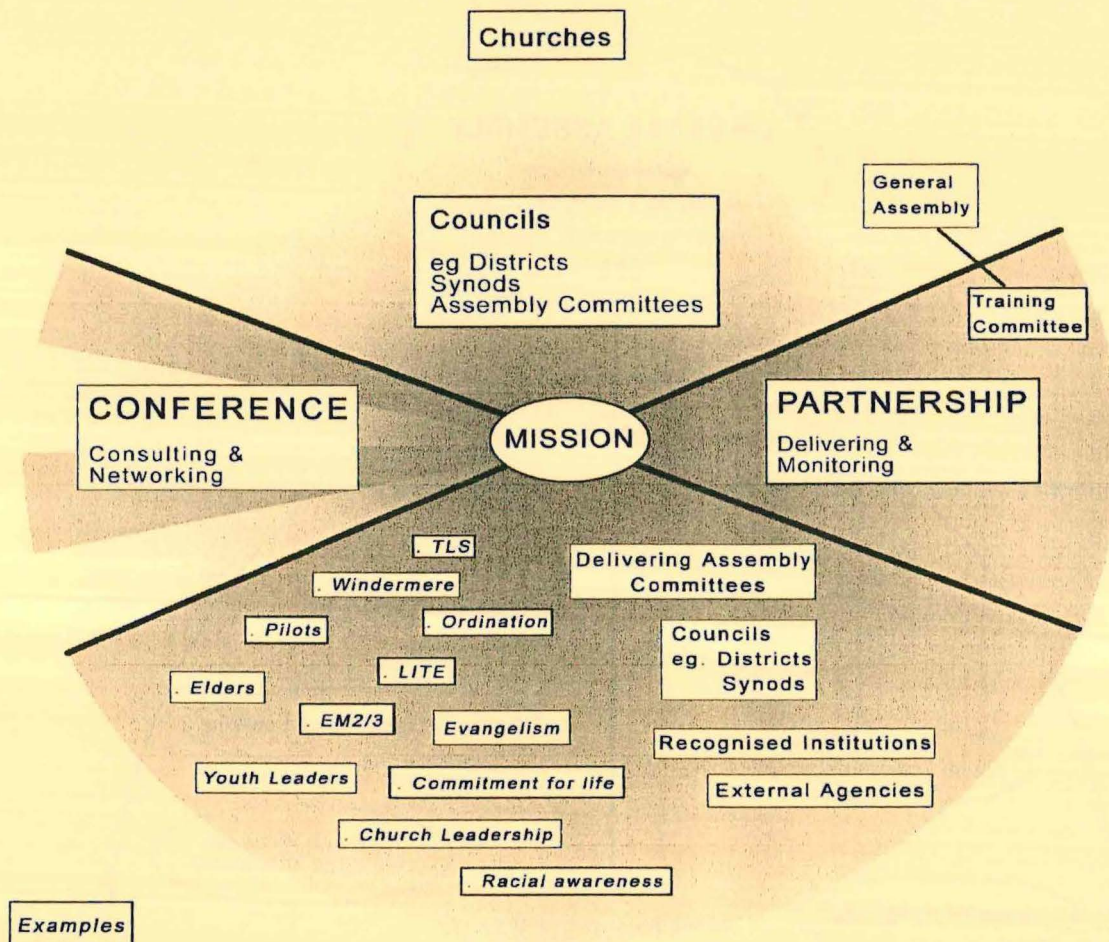
**(Resolution 2)**

So how might it look?

The two alternative diagrams below indicate the relationships and participants. One of these only, or a new version, will be used in Assembly Reports



# REQUIREMENT WORLD



# PROVISION

Sub Groups, some in - some out

We believe that there is need for a limited number of sub groups to replace the sub committees currently serving the Training Committee and to support the work of the Partnership.

*The Training Committee would be supported by:*

- ❖ A group to monitor the Criteria for Curriculum, for the range of provisions we undertake to be our link with the Church of England's HIND curriculum work and perhaps with such work in Scotland and Wales.
- ❖ A group to develop the 'monitoring/validation(inspection)/accreditation' process might well be required to reduce the fragmentation and increase the effectiveness of our work.

*The Partnership would be supported by:*

- ❖ A group to foster research and encourage networking. Given the committee's commitment to the development of intellectual skills and the United Reformed Church's need to encourage future teachers and academicians as well as to equip people with the whole range of skills needed by the church, the establishment of a research group or network seems important to us. (see College specialisms in Appendix 8)

*And both by:*

- ❖ A Finance sub-group which will remain essential.

However, there are some sub groups that will no longer be needed. We suspect these might be the Studies Panel and the Education for Ministry 2/3 sub Committee and perhaps even the TLS Management Group. There are questions too about whether Training Officer and other such gatherings might be subsumed in the work of the partnership.

Would there be additional staff required?

It would be vital for the Partnership to have a dedicated full-time education/training professional as 'Director' to empower its image and provide a consultancy service to the churches of the United Reformed Church and the training organisations it uses. It needs someone who understands where issues live in an organisation and who is strong on coordination, delegation, monitoring and communication. A staff of Director with administrative support, is all that is necessary. Employment would rest with General Assembly in the same manner as other Church House appointments.

We envisage that the Secretary for Training post would continue to be needed to service the Training Committee as would current Training for Learning and Serving staff and the Education for Ministry Officer and Church House support staff. However, the relationship of these posts to the Director of the Partnership and their hours can only be considered when the details of the work of the Committee/Partnership are clearer.

## **A Phased approach – managing change**

We believe that this cannot be established in a rush and that the precise workings of the Partnership will need developing over a period of time and involve the potential partners. We propose that if Assembly 2005 accepts the principles that we have outlined here:

- we will thereafter engage in a series of negotiations with potential partners to see what they believe they could offer to the partnership and then
- out of these discussions the details of the Partnership's mode of operation will become clear.

The discussions will be framed by a consultation paper that will, in effect, ask the potential partners and especially the Colleges for their development plans. In this way the Partnership for Learning will be to some significant degree determined by the partners.

We also recognise that such a transition to new ways of working will bring some extra burdens to those working for the church in all sorts of capacities. Where this will involve people learning new

skills, e.g. in adult education, dispersed learning or reorientation of role and work, the Training Committee will be prepared to offer support and encouragement in the process.

### **We'll see how it's going**

The Training Committee proposes that this Partnership for Learning will be reviewed after four years of its life to see if it is meeting the objectives laid down for it. These objectives can be seen in the statement of intent on page three of this document but will also have to be used in a way that takes fully into account the ecumenical and educational context operative at the time.

We intend that the Partnership will work primarily through groups set up to undertake particular tasks and that these groups should not necessarily be made up of those individuals who are on the Partnership so as to avoid a relatively small number of people becoming burdened by too much work.

### **(Resolution 3)**

### **So how would the Partnership affect a member of a local church as it turns us all more fully into a learning church and fulfils the intentions on page 3?**

The partnership will develop a life of its own and it is not possible now to see into the future. However even at this stage we can say some things. A member of a local church looking out for some training might notice:

1. Opportunities; opportunities for training and advertising for them might increase and will be less confined to particular 'boxes' either in subject matter or trainers. There might be an increase of contacts and resources for training available to a local church
2. Assumptions: it is assumed by Equipping the Saints that those seeking to become elders will undertake training. This training might be supported not just by local ministers but also by training institutions, or staff that had previously been associated with other areas of the life of the church, for example someone involved in youth and childrens work or ordination training or church related community work.
3. Monitoring of requests and provision. Someone on behalf of the partnership, (training officer, field officer, training institutions), will be a contact person for a local church to use when they have a training need. The Partnership will be able to indicate training that is to the standard that the Partnership recommends. There will be contact between regional gatherings of Partnership representatives and a local church to encourage local reflection and review on training that is being undertaken.
4. Tutor support: There will need to be a recognised pool of tutors available to help local churches in their training programmes who will themselves have been supported by training that might have been provided through the Partnership.
5. The church exists for those who are not part of it. There needs to be increased resources made available for engagement with those who are not of the church - some things to offer them and to open up dialogue and exploration.

### **But doesn't this mean that we will be adding another tier to our organisation and more burdens to staff?**

We do not underestimate the very real concern that staff of synods, colleges, courses and others have. We understand that with their own institutions to support, their own local ecumenical engagements, the potential new Regional Training Partnerships, and now the proposed United Reformed Church Partnership, they may well feel daunted by the apparent increased layering of commitments.

We believe that a light touch Partnership with staff to support its on going work, phased in over time, with the partners determining much of its life and focus, will repay dividends for the

commitment and save some energy. It will be a way to re-channel old commitments rather than making new ones. Further, Training Officers, College staff and others already have many commitments to committees of the church, and support and deliver learning across the church. The establishment of the partnership provides opportunities to renegotiate engagements and reduce some of the older sub committees and perhaps the size of the membership and agenda of the Training Committee. Programmes developed by one partner will be utilised more easily than now by another thus relieving them of work. Indeed it allows us to draw on the work and resources of all the partner bodies involved in training. The re-structuring of the church's councils might allow further saving of energy in some cases.

### **So how do we create viable numbers in learning communities within Colleges and Ecumenical Courses?**

- A major thrust in this report is to encourage our denomination to think of colleges and courses as being involved in the whole learning church and not just providing training for students for the ministry of word and sacraments and church related community work. (To some degree or another our colleges at least have seen it this way for some time).
- We believe that there is a major and increasing need for education to equip people for varying forms of service in a learning and mission orientated church. It is in that context that we record that we do not anticipate a significant influx of new students for the ministry above the current rate and that candidate numbers are low, and especially so, at the time of writing (March 2005). Appendices 5 and 9 give some more detailed indication of the training institutions we use and the current and past student numbers involved. We are clear however that this Review ought not to be reduced to this single issue.
- We acknowledge that there are real issues in creating educationally viable groups of learners in institutions. However we believe that there are ways of creating core groups of students that are not dependent only on those who are students for the ministry.
- We acknowledge that there are real issues in creating financially viable groups of learners in institutions. However further thought has to be given to ensuring that patterns of funding institutions reflect the range of ways in which they are involved in the church as a learning community and not just their involvement in ministerial training.
- We propose therefore, if agreed by Assembly, to use the Partnership to pursue these matters in conversation with potential partners - including the colleges.
- We believe that the Partnership context is one in which groups of learners can be expanded, not least through improved collaboration in identifying training needs and in advertising resources.

### **And the principle of the Partnership with the pressure of the very low numbers of students for the ministry brings us to a proposal.**

The dominant principle expressed above is that training partner's capacities should be used to deal with the increase in education and training needed in the life of the church. Nevertheless, we recognise an impetus to ask whether we should remain in partnership with all the colleges and Ecumenical Courses which we currently recognise for ordination training. That is to say five colleges and nine Ecumenical Courses, (as in Appendix 5). There are at least three reasons for doing so.

- 1 We are not convinced that even for our expansionist theme we need the capacities of all of these institutions at a time when the United Reformed Church's membership and ministry base is shrinking.
- 2 The Ecumenical Courses are all likely to be engaged in some sort of change. The Church of England's 'Hind' process seeks to make each of its new Regional Training Partnerships (there will be somewhere between 9 and 11 of these in England) have the capacity to offer one part time ministerial training provision – or Course. We do not believe that we have the need or resources to be intimately involved in this particular element of all the RTP's. (For more details on the 'Hind' process and RTP's see the ecumenical paragraphs below).



- 3 We should only continue in relationship with institutions that we feel have the willingness and ability to work in the Partnership for Learning as we have been describing it.

For these reasons the Training Committee feels ready to suggest that in the first three years of the Partnership's life the Committee will move towards phasing out its direct use of most of the Ecumenical Courses, or their successors in the RTP's. It would look to its Colleges to provide the appropriate training for students who need dispersed, part time learning.

In that same period of time its consultation with the colleges, as part of its consultation with all potential Partnership for Learning members, will seek to determine the extent to which they can play a full part in that Partnership. Further, it considers, on the basis of consultation so far, that it is unlikely that Mansfield College will be able to respond with sufficient flexibility to contribute basic ministerial education and training to the Partnership for Learning. Its restricted flexibility in being able to offer education to equip people for varying forms of service in the church, is the biggest problem. Nevertheless, the Committee hopes at least to be able to continue a new relationship with Mansfield College built on Mansfield's Education and Training Committee's proposal that it develops a specialism in a Research Network. We believe that there is good reason to include this project in the Partnership. Further information on that proposal can be found in the Appendix 8. Further argumentation and reasoning regarding the Ecumenical Courses and Mansfield College can be found in the Appendix 7.

The committee wants to stress that the paragraph above does not suggest any criticism of the current two members of staff on the Mansfield ministerial training programme or with the students or the support of the Principal or Fellows of the College - quite the reverse. Indeed the College and the Education Training Committee have done wonders in recovering from an earlier phase of uncertainty in the late 1990's. The current staff are to be congratulated unreservedly for the exceedingly positive result of the ecumenical Inspection of the College in 2004. The judgements above are on the narrower but not insignificant grounds indicated there and in Appendix seven.

#### (Resolution 4 &5)

### So what of our ecumenical relationships within the three nations we serve?

1. The Committee believes it right to ..'encourage and enable the integration of the training of the whole people of God', to quote our remit and re-emphasise our theme, through the development of appropriate relationships in the three nations in which the United Reformed Church serves. To this end, **it proposes that the Synods of Scotland and Wales both have permanent membership on** the Training Committee (chosen by those Synods, with the same periods of service as other members), acknowledging that the lead for the United Reformed Church in both nations, in education and training policy development, will be taken by the national synods, in close relation to the Assembly Training Committee and its policy.

#### (Resolution 6)

2. It notes that in **Wales**, where despite recent set backs ecumenical engagement has progressed significantly, ecumenical partners are exploring the development of an ecumenical partnership for Education for Ministry 3 (CME) and lay education and training modeled on the 'Hind' process in England.
3. It notes that in **Scotland**, whilst the ecumenical education and training scene in that country has a different history, (the loss of the Scottish Churches Open College in 2003 for the lack of ecumenical funding, is still being felt) conversations and collaboration are taking place. It also notes that in the close relationship between the United Reformed Church Synod and the Scottish College there is an advanced type of training partnership that sees the college as a major provider of education and training in the synod for 'the whole people of God'. The Scottish College Principal is also the Education Secretary (training officer) for the synod.

4. It determines to continue to work in close partnership with the Church of England in the implementation in **England** of the 'Formation for Ministry Within a Learning Church' (Hind) process. It thinks that the main elements of this process address the same problems which we have identified within the United Reformed Church and in a broadly similar way. That is to say by bringing people into partnership and making training happen together across previous divides. 'Hind' proposes:
- The integrating into a single framework of pre and post ordination education and training and of lay and ordination training
  - The establishment of Regional Training Partnerships to provide such integrated education and training and to include training the whole learning church
  - The ecumenical delivery of this provision
  - Addressing, at least in part, the low student cohorts by including in the student catchment: Education for Ministry 2 (post ordination training), Education for Ministry 3 (CME), lay education, eldership training and local leader's training.
  - Dealing with the need for financial savings by bringing into closer working arrangement a range of institutions.

Nevertheless:

- In the second half of 2004 it became clear that the development of the Regional Training Partnerships was rather erratic. At the time of writing one is progressing close to timetable but the others are well behind the schedule set. There are still many uncertainties about the exact workings of these RTP's and how and when they will provide educational advantages, financial savings and increased cohorts of students. So we propose that the United Reformed Church, should continue the Training Committee's current policy of being a partner in the unfolding Church of England Hind process whilst also developing its own coherent training strategy.
- There are also concerns that our ecumenical engagement in the Hind process, especially if its implementation is fitful, might damage our existing programmes until they can be safely 'offered up' in new provisions available in all RTP's. Likewise, the developing understanding of the governance of RTP's raises questions about the ability of churches with central offices that have responsibility for resources and programmes across three nations (the United Reformed and Methodist Churches) to mesh safely with the Church of England's diocesan structure. Another uncertainty lies in the possibility of RTP's (in which we are likely to be a minority partner) making decisions affecting the resources and programmes that we hold. And as yet, precise proposals about the financial implications for the United Reformed Church of financing training in and through the RTP's have not been formulated. We have however, joined with the Church of England and the Methodist Church in offering a proportionate and relatively small amount of start up funding for the RTP's.
- Indeed, the United Reformed Church might need to consider whether it sees itself as necessarily a member of every Regional Training Partnership to the same extent, as this may be spreading our denominational resources too thinly. For example, if the part time provision for ministerial training in each RTP is not one that the Training Committee uses directly in the future, and a synod does not have access to part time training within its region, it might still be good for it to use its RTP for lay, elders, lay preacher training etc. Alternatively it could take advantage of the permeability of RTP boundaries to use another RTP in which the United Reformed Church still has a college resource.
- These concerns do not diminish our enthusiasm for the principles of Hind or our commitment to be a partner in the process. However, they have given us cause to proceed with caution and reminded us that, though we have been represented in the process from early days, and have

been increasingly encouraged by the Church of England to work in partnership with it, Hind was not ecumenically designed from the outset. In some places that shows and it is something on which all the churches involved might reflect.

### **(Resolution 7)**

### **And how would the Church of England's Regional Training Partnerships mesh (in England) with the Partnership for Learning?**

The URC Manual declares that the Church Meeting is the council charged with furthering the Church's mission locally and that General Assembly oversees the total work of the church. '*Catch the Vision*' and '*Equipping the Saints*' both emphasise the importance of the mission of the local Church.

- Where and when Regional Training Partnerships begin to take effect their work will be to support the education of the church for mission in that region with United Reformed Church synods, and training organisations in that RTP.
- Where they do not, existing United Reformed Church patterns of training network will continue to operate - though they themselves might be subject, in due course, to changes to United Reformed Church structures effected by the Catch the Vision process.

Thus the whole scene will be characterised by learning dispersed from the centre of the United Reformed Church which will also be happening in increasingly varied and changing contexts. Programmes of learning will also continue to change and develop and dispersed learning (where the learner lives at some distance from the institution and gathers with other students only on given occasions) might become even more the norm than it currently is.

But dispersed organisations and learning programmes need a strong 'central' influence and overview if they are to operate smoothly and effectively. This is where the United Reformed Church's Partnership for Learning comes in:

- Whilst the cutting edge of the training engagement will be local and regional the Partnership will act to support that work.
- It will give an appropriate balance between enabling disciples in and for their local context on the one hand, and on the other seeking to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of training across the whole church.
- As we have said above, it would seek to: coordinate, enable, inspire, communicate, encourage and promote education and training across the whole church to similar standards and out of a similar church ethos but bearing very much in mind the local context.
- Further, as the Partnership will be comprised of training providers they will know at first hand the importance of supporting the needs of local and regional trainers and not over stretching them between local and regional demands.

### **Funding**

We have been encouraged by the leadership of the Catch the Vision process to concentrate on the training needs of the church rather than on budget constraints. Nevertheless though we are complying with this guidance we are also concerned to offer responsible stewardship in the Training arena. We offer these thoughts about the training budget in light of the above proposals.

In doing so we note that they, like the Partnership for Learning itself, will be effected by more detailed work and discussions.

In broad terms our approach seeks to:

- ❖ acknowledge some modest increased expenditure to support the Partnership
- ❖ attempt, at worst, to involve the church in no overall increase in training expenditure
- ❖ indicate some small scale suggestions of how compensatory saving might therefore be explored
- ❖ recognize that the major expenditure of the central training budget relates to the support of colleges and courses. We therefore note that,
  - even small changes in the relationship here could bring relatively significant financial efficiencies
  - our theological education and training institutions have given and continue to give invaluable resources across the whole church. Yet, in these days where a more careful scrutiny of our stewardship is necessary and where even the charity commissioners are asking us to account more carefully for the use of our resources, drawing the institutions more fully into partnership will increasingly realise their worth for the whole of the United Reformed Church's life and witness. It is in no way to undervalue that worth to ask whether the church is getting value for money?

1) Staff of the 'Partnership'

The cost (including on-cost) of the option of providing a 'Director' would be in the region of £27-£35k p.a. This might be offset by improved financial efficiency and the alteration of existing staff's job descriptions and through the consolidation of some functions within United Reformed Church House and from the Synods, but such 'savings' are notoriously hard to achieve in practice. Nevertheless, the relationship between the new and existing posts would need to be explored as mentioned above. The Director would require full time administrative assistance at a cost (including on-cost) of approx £30,000

2) In principle there might be offsetting opportunities through improved student/staff ratios in RTP's which could conceivably benefit the United Reformed Church – but it is too early to guess these and they are also easier to assume than achieve.

3) A relatively small but not insignificant expenditure within the training budget relates to Education for Ministry 3 costs (formerly Continuing Ministerial Education). Assembly policy allocates £700 per minister per year (together with two weeks) to be devoted to his or her EM3. This figure of £700 is viewed within and without the denomination as a generous allowance. It was one offered in the encouraging environment of the late 1990's when the Growing up Report and the generosity of the Council for World Mission meant that the United Reformed Church had money and motive to offer ministers encouragement to grow and develop in their service to the church. However some facts and figures might qualify or view of this scene:

- a) It is highly debatable whether the Training budget would be allowed by Assembly to grow sufficiently to cope with the amount of expenditure were all ministers to take up this allocation. If they did the total outlay (assuming 821 ministers based on figures in the 2005 Year Book) would be £574,700.
- b) In fact the outlay from the training budget for such grants in 2003 was £71,414. Even if one adds another 50% to this to account for the contributions to the grants paid by synods, the total spend is only £107,121.
- c) Looked at another way this figure divided by the number of ministers in the United Reformed Church Year book of 2004 (thus reflecting pretty nearly those in service in 2003), reveals an average ministerial spend on EM3 of £126.
- d) It is the case that a minority of ministers, but not an insignificant one, do spend their £700. This is usually towards substantial and expensive training programmes such as Masters degrees or Doctorates. That being the case and with an average spend of £126 approx. we can see that a substantial proportion of ministers are either deriving support for their learning from elsewhere or spending very little on it at all.
- e) In light of this at least three concerns are before us:

- i) If the £700 allowance is effectively beyond our budget to sustain ought we not to arrange the EM3 allowance to more nearly reflect what we can afford as well as the pattern of take up that actually exists?
  - ii) But if we did this would we not want to ensure that the option for some ministers and others to withdraw substantial sums to support them in expensive research and higher degree work still exists? We are after all committed to an educated Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work and to Research as a part of the education resources of the whole church. Or do we feel that the onus for such funding ought to lie more and more with the individual themselves?
  - iii) If the EM3 take up is in the main so far below the money that has actually been put on the table, does this mean that it has been so underused as to question the effectiveness of the programme as a means to resource a wide proportion of ministers? Yet if this proportion were increased what would be the effect on the budget?
- f) All of these matters are before the Education for Ministry 2/3 Committee (formerly CME) which is following its successful review of the post ordination training provision with a review of EM3 to be completed by April 2006. This review will cover other (significant but less expensive) aspects of EM3 not referred to here, including Sabbaticals, Refresher Courses and Synod Schools.
  - g) In conducting this review the committee's care for stewardship and the need to encourage the continuing education of ministers will be constant factors.
- 4) Another area for serious consideration is the funding implication of the further expansion of lay training, including elders' training. Training for Learning and Serving has set a model of a course funded by participants and training committee subsidy. This model might well be one we would wish to pursue as the partnership develops training frameworks in response to church requirements. Many variables come into play. One set has to do with RTP's in England and Wales and how their programmes of training are going to be funded. Another is the structural re-organisation of the United Reformed Church that might release staff and funding that could be utilised in this venture. More work needs doing here.
- 5) Of course, as indicated above, a major factor will be the number of institutions that we use for ordination training and their increasing role as a resource in our learning church. Information about the institutions and some training costs appear in Appendices 5 and 6. It is the cost of student grants and fees for the training of the ministry for word and sacrament and church related community workers which has been the training budget's biggest expenditure but in recent years there has been an increased subvention element too. That is to say we have given extra support to some institutions over and above the student fees. In 2004 the total cost of these elements of the budget was just under £1m out of an overall spend of £1.7m approx. Prior to 1999 the Training Committee held a policy of giving no subventions to training institutions but paying them only fees for students trained. At present however the situation, in brief, is as follows:
- a) all of the Courses, the Scottish College and Queens College receive from the United Reformed Church fees for the students that we ask them to train. Fee levels are negotiated in a range of ways.
  - b) Westminster College is a college of the United Reformed Church. Ultimately the denomination underwrites its expenditure whilst expecting the college to run itself with a mind to good stewardship and efficiency. The college presents to the church a break even budget each year.
  - c) Since the 1999 Assembly decision to maintain four English colleges Mansfield College, to whom despite that decision we have been sending far less than the five students per year they require for minimum financial viability, has needed additional financial resourcing.
  - d) In a different but not unrelated way Northern College has needed additional support over and above fees in order to maintain the training operation requested by the church.
  - e) All the Colleges have been struggling to cope with the low number of students that the church has been sending for training in relation to the places that are available.

It is clear that any decision of the Training Review to amend the number of institutions used could have a significant effect on the budget. The Training Committee believes that over the three years after 2005 Assembly its proposals will ensure savings (even though these weren't the main reasons for the proposals). These will be:

- a) the re routing of part time students - and thus their fees - through its Colleges. This will mean more fees for the colleges thus opening the possibility of either reduced subvention payments or that that money, as we suggested above could be used for the payment of the range of other training in which the institutions will be involved in the Partnership.
- b) Reduced support to Mansfield College, where an amount of money approaching that that is needed to support a staff post has been made available to the college. This money might be released in whole or part depending on the financial support needed for the research network proposals. However early enquiries have indicated that such a proposal might attract some independent funding.

These proposals will need further detailed work in the light of on going discussions but we believe that these general indicators give confidence that we can achieve our aims of both encouraging the concept of partnership and remaining cost neutral. In summary then:

- ❖ any increase in the central resourcing of the partnership could be offset by;

Any pooling of resources from various partners

Encouraging a pattern of students contributing to course costs – as happens already in Training for Learning and Serving

Increased efficiency savings in the Regional Training Partnerships in England

The use of colleges for part time training and use of Mansfield college for its research network project rather than Education for Ministry 1 (ministerial training)

Consideration of Education for Ministry 3 funding

### **Getting serious about being a Learning Church through a.... Partnership for Learning**

Let's remind ourselves why we got into this training review in the first place. It was to:

- i) develop our provision of lay education
- ii) supply education and training needs identified in Equipping the Saints and implied in Catch the Vision and the flexibility to provide education and training as further initiatives in the life of the Church unfold
- iii) respond to the need for the institutions we use for ordination training to be educationally, socially and financially viable in the light of the number of students being trained for ordination/commissioning
- iv) consider the wider value of these institutions as theological resources for the education and training of the whole church, building on the service they already give
- v) respond to the impact of the Church of England's new programme Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church
- vi) be supportive of the different opportunities for educational and ecumenical partnership in the three nations we serve.

Let's remind ourselves of the educational principles that the Committee basis it's work on and which were spelt out in its 2004 report:

- vii) that there ought to be a drawing together of the different strands of theological education (including lay) to make best use of resources and for mutual reinforcement without improper confusion
- viii) that there is also an issue of the importance of institutions and place
- ix) that we must make new skills available at professional levels
- x) that 'training for training' is an aspect of the 'learning Church'. This includes upgrading supervision practices.
- xi) that: open access, diversity and unity; integrity, enrichment and confidence; inspiration, transformation and community; flexibility and the development of intellectual skills, will play a serious part in our work
- xii) that we have a commitment to a more coherent, integrated and balanced education and training policy for the whole church. The United Reformed Church Basis of Union and Training Committee documents reinforce the point.

The Training Committee believes that these concerns and principles are best addressed by the Partnership for Learning and policy developments proposed - phased in over a period of time. By putting this Partnership as a sort of Russian Doll in our midst to gradually unpack its training initiatives we will be able to take more decisive steps to ensure that we put our learning where our policy statements are. We will be able to say more confidently that learning is for the whole church, adults and children and that we learn separately only when we cannot in all conscience do it together.

In a church culture where the old certainties of our church life, buildings, ministries and identities are fading, and where new ways of being church are exciting us and bewildering us by turn, what will matter for us is what we have learnt about how to exercise a Christian witness. That needs us all to be equipped and supported together. The idea has been smoldering for some time and we hope the Partnership will fan it into flame.

We finish with our statement of intent to:

- **be inclusive of education and training for the whole people of God and of all aspects of 'lay' education including that of Eldership**
- **assert that the education and training needs of the church are an expanding not a shrinking field**
- **hold together being ecumenical and Reformed**
- **undermine the habits of speech which refer to the preparation for the discipleship of the whole people of God as if it is only about the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.**
- **assert that the aim of education and training is to equip the church, so that it can better continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in and for the world**
- **ensure the integration of education and training between different educational packages**
- **address the issue of the small groups of those people studying for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in line with all of these statements.**

## RESOLUTIONS

### 1) Principles

(C+V)

policies

General Assembly endorses as key training principles for the United Reformed Church:

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

(C+V)

### 2) General Assembly agrees to the establishment of a United Reformed Church Partnership for Learning based upon the key training principles and intended to provide, design and monitor education and training for the whole of the United Reformed Church.

(Tr C)

### 3) General Assembly, acknowledging that the precise nature of the Partnership for Learning will be dependent on discussions with potential partners, authorises the Training Committee to phase in the development of the Partnership over the next three years.

(Tr C)

### 4) General Assembly, supports the intention of the Training Committee to:

- a) phase out the use of the Ecumenical Courses as the Partnership for Learning develops over the next three years, in order to provide a college focused training for all ministers and CRCW's which will increasingly expand the provision for dispersed learning programmes and
- b) invite the colleges to offer their participation in this development but with an anticipation that Mansfield College may wish to make a different and specific response.

Tr C

### 5) General Assembly instructs the Training Committee to indicate to Mansfield and Westminster Colleges, whose Director of Training and Principal respectively retire in 2007, clear indication of its intentions regarding its continuing use of the Colleges, and thus of future staffing needs, by January 2006.

Tr C

### 6) General Assembly, accepting that the training situation varies considerably between the three nations, requests the Nominations Committee [with immediate effect] to secure a representative on the Training Committee from each of the national synods of Scotland and Wales, such representation [with immediate effect] to be on the same basis as the other members of the committee.

Tr C

### 7) General Assembly, recognising that the Training Committee is working within a climate of considerable change,

- a) encourages the Training Committee to persevere in constructive partnership with the Hind process in England while seeking to contribute the distinctive emphases of the United Reformed Church to its development; and
- b) emphasises the need for the Training Committee to take care for the aims and parameters of its programmes in any arrangements to subsume them in new ecumenical provision.



## Appendix 1

# Charter for Children in the Church

- 1) Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church
- 2) The full diet of Christian worship is for children as well as adults
- 3) Learning is for the whole church, adults and children
- 4) Fellowship is for all – each belonging meaningfully to the rest
- 5) Service is for children to give, as well as adults
- 6) The call to evangelism comes to all God's people of whatever age
- 7) The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults
- 8) The discovery and development of gifts in children and adults is a key function of the church
- 9) As a church community we must learn to do only those things in separate age groups which we cannot in all conscience do together
- 10) The concept of the "Priesthood of all Believers" includes children

## Appendix 2

**Some quotations from the Training Committee's work over the last 15 years to indicate the stress on the learning of the whole people of God**

### The Whole People of God.

This is not understood by the committee as a euphemism for a diminishing of commitment to Eldership, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers. The committee recognizes what is reinforced in the Equipping the Saints and Catch the Vision reports, namely the vital nature of these ministries within the church and the degree to which the church values them and their role in equipping and enabling the ministry of the whole church. But it is to reinforce a commitment to a more coherent, integrated and balanced education and training policy for the whole church. The United Reformed Church Basis of Union and Training Committee documents reinforce the point:

The Basis of Union's understanding of ministry..

*'The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God ... The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.'*

The Training Review delivered to the 1996 Assembly:

*'.....there need to be no distinction between the learning of lay people and of ordinands and ... learning together would be of mutual benefit' (Assembly reports 1996 page 158 para 3.3)*

Again,

*'...the Church should...be committed to giving its lay people the maximum amount of support and appropriate training. This will require considerable flexibility in the style and content of training available and adaptability about the place of delivery. (Assembly reports 1996 page 159 para 6.3)*

And in the Training Review interim report delivered in 2004 we reinforced the theme and committed ourselves to it:

*'As part of the end of an assumed Christian culture, the churches have rediscovered the understanding of the 'whole people of God' with its concomitant stress on the diversity of ministry and the nature of the 'laity'.....3.3.5*

*....Furthermore the Training Committee believes that the United Reformed Church needs a pattern of theological education and training which is accessible, has internal integrity, promotes the growth of communities and individuals, is disciplined, flexible and promotes the highest possible intellectual rigour..... 3.4*

*...We look to an internal integrity in the training we offer to the church. It should tackle both the continuities and the fractures between training and education for membership, for elders, for worship leadership and all that Training for Learning and Serving offers as well as preparation for the variety of ministries developed or being developed by the church....  
3.4.2*

*....there ought to be a drawing together of the different strands of theological education (including lay) to make best use of resources and for mutual reinforcement without improper confusion. 3.3.6*

## Appendix 3

### Examples of training going on now

This is a by no means complete list of current training within the life of the church and is in no particular order:

- United Reformed Church Elders' training
- Synod-designed training (worship courses – management training etc)
- Synod-designed Local Church Leaders' training
- Developing Discipleship
- What is the United Reformed Church? – for those newly serving in the United Reformed Church who have come from other denominations
- Good Practice training for working with children and young people
- Wholly Worship
- Evangelism and Mission training (SOUTH)
- Training for Learning and Serving Support Network training
- Training for Learning and Serving 'LITE'
- Training for Learning and Serving Foundation
- Training for Learning and Serving one-year courses
- Ministerial Refresher Courses
- Enquirers' Conferences
- Ordination training in Colleges and courses
- New Ministers' Course which orientates new ministers and CRCW's to the central administration for the Church
- Introductory course for those about to start ordination or commissioning training
- Introductory Course available for elders, local leaders or in many other ways.
- Accompanied Ministerial Self-Appraisal training for partners
- Lay training options at the Colleges including degree programmes
- Urban Churches Support
- Masters and Doctorates available through Colleges
- Lay preaching annual event at Westminster College
- Lay Preaching commissioners' annual gathering
- Youth work development with individual churches
- Church development and mission enabling with individual churches
- Training the trainers for working with adults
- Leadership for churches without Ministers
- District Officers' consultation
- Church Secretaries' consultation
- Storytelling
- Ethnic and cultural diversity
- Education for Ministry 2 (Post ordination training)
- Promotion of Commitment for Life
- Training for those involved in the Section O disciplinary process
- EM3 (CME) grants for ministers' own education and development
- Synod Ministers' Schools
- The Windermere Centre's annual programme of training opportunities
- 'Kaleidoscope'
- Pilots
- 'Spectrum'

## Appendix 4

Ordination and CRCW student numbers at Colleges and Courses since 1996 – (these are generic figures and include full and part-time training at some institutions and CRCW training at Northern College). The figures below vary at some points from those included in the annual Assembly reports. This is partly because they do not include students who have completed their three year course and are doing a placement under the care of the synod prior to ordination.

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<i>Mansfield, Oxford</i>	19	16	18	18	12	11	9	6	8	6
<i>Northern, Manchester</i>	33	39	46	48	49	45	36	37	35	26
<i>Queens, Birmingham- includes West Midlands Ministry Training Course</i>	8	4	2	5	8	10	6	5	5	6
<i>Scottish College, Glasgow - -from 2000 only</i>					4	4	3	4	3	4
<i>Westminster, Cambridge</i>	27	29	27	28	32	34	31	26	22	18
<i>East Midlands Ministry training Course (EMMTC)</i>	8	6	4	0	0	0	2	2	3	1
<i>North East Ecumenical Course (NEOC)</i>	1	1	0	1	1	4	4	3	3	2
<i>Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS)</i>	5	5	3	5	4	6	8	8	9	7
<i>South West Ministerial Training Scheme (SWMTC)</i>	1	1	1	1	0	1	2	4	3	3
<i>East Anglian Ministerial Training Course (EAMTC):</i>	2	2	3	1	6	5	5	1	2	2
<i>South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE)</i>	1	1	0	0	1	3	3	3	2	3
<i>St Albans &amp; Oxford Ministerial Training Course</i>	1	6	6	6	2	0	0	0	0	0
<i>South Wales Ordination Course</i>						0	1	1	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>78</b>

## Appendix 5

### Training Committee selected actual expenditure 1996 to 2003

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Student grants for Stipendiary ministry	*Combined with box below – figures otherwise not readily available	£419,014	£433,111	£473,350	£548,124	£549,553	£477,404	£422,236	£405,563
Fees paid for students at colleges – includes any additional subvention support to colleges	*£623,048	£253,924	£298,776	£348,200	£422,413	£455.644	£510.825	£492,441	£593,109
Part time training on courses	£80,879	£70,919	£92,998	£106,732	£126,340	£165.788	£160.723	£149,583	£113,810
CME grants costs	£30,294	£21,900	£29,982	£39,288	£66,061	£68.874	£84.521	£71,414	£71,890
Lay Training costs – largely Training for Learning and Serving	£12,000	£20,000	£22,000	£32,000	£36,000	£83,000	£45,000	£57,000	Figures not to hand
Total costs of training budget	£1.4m	£1.5m	£1.6m	£1.5m	£1.9m	£2.00	£1.8m	£1.7m	Figures not to hand
Percentage cost of Training within Assembly's budget	6.5%	7.9%	8%	7.3%	8.5%	9.1%	8.2%	7.8%	Figures not to hand

- These figures are useful for general guidance but hide a number of complexities or other factors, which ought to be noted. For example the relatively small amount on lay training does not reflect the cost and work of Training Officers in synods who support lay training, nor the benefit to the laity of the training of Ministers of Word and Sacraments.

- A few students train for part time ministry in colleges, and some for part time ministry on courses, and these complexities have not been reflected in detail.
- The costs for CRCW training (2003 £75,000) have not been reflected in these figures at all.
- The amount spent on CME grant costs is from the central training budget and does not include costs borne by synods which could in broad terms be assumed to add another 50% to the overall figure.
- The figures are intended to give a general feel for the range of expenditure within training.
- Over the period 1994 to 2003 the percentage of the total expenditure of the Church's central budget averages at 7.9% for Training
- Over this period £16,172,000 (including the central costs of the YCWT programme at approx. £200,000 per annum) has been spent from the central budget on training as against a total central spend of £204,476,000
- As has been said the Training Committee was previously opposed to subvention payments to colleges and yet, for reasons given, has been operating them since the turn of the millennium. Our future policy will need to be flexible and evolving. As we have said further thought has to be given to ensuring that patterns of funding institutions reflect the range of ways in which they are involved in the church as a learning community and not just their involvement in ministerial training. This does not necessarily mean that we intend to revert to a principle of opposing subventions to training institutions or a totally per-capita system. The block grant system gives both the United Reformed Church and the institution some element of predictability over future years. Because it is to some extent based on staffing levels it is more transparent to the United Reformed Church than a totally per-capita system is likely to be. Yet such subvention payments can leave the Training Committee budget carrying excessive risk and burden and this will be challenged in the church. Our preferred option might be a per capita system where the 'capita' are students learning in a range of different capacities. But even here in order to give some security to institutions a mixed mode of support might be needed. We will certainly seek ways of giving some security to the institutions based on the assumption that they are continuing to provide excellence in education for the range of education that the church requires in order to be a learning church.

## Appendix 6

### **Issues surrounding the proposals regarding Ecumenical Courses and Mansfield College's Ministerial training programme**

The Committee believes that the following factors undergird the policy expressed on page 15 regarding the Ecumenical Courses and Mansfield College.

#### ECUMENICAL COURSES

- a) The United Reformed Church, in about the early 1990's, began to use the ecumenical courses of necessity. It needed a new way of training Non Stipendiary Ministers who might be in full time weekday employment and did not have within its college based resources the ability to do so. This no longer necessarily applies. The development of dispersed and part time learning programmes now means that it is possible for students living some distance from an institution to be trained by them. There are useful and creative examples within and without our training institutions from which the United Reformed Church can learn. It might even be possible for example, for the colleges to out-source some parts of the training to

the ecumenical courses close to a student's home area whilst maintaining overall control and the provision of residential aspects of the training.

- b) The United Reformed Church's ecumenical commitment would be amended by this move and some good regional United Reformed Church engagements with these courses adversely affected, but the committee believes that these negatives are offset by a range of factors:
- (i) Many of the Courses have suffered in not being able to deliver substantial ecumenical interrelation because of the United Reformed Church's inability to provide more than an occasional student and, in certain places, only an occasional input from a United Reformed Church staff member.
  - (ii) All of the colleges which we recognise for the training of Ministers are engaged in very well developed ecumenical relationships. Strengthening the number of United Reformed Church students amongst them would increase overall our ability to be ecumenically engaged.
  - (iii) All of these ecumenical courses in England are affected by the developments under the Hind proposals. At least one of the courses we recognise currently will go out of existence in its present form. The others will feed into the ability of each of the Regional Training Partnership to provide part time non-residential training.
- c) Focussing our part time students mainly from England and Wales on the four Colleges in England would strengthen the cohorts of students in those places more substantially than would be achieved by ceasing to use one or even two colleges. Using the actual figures for February 2005, if we had not been training students on the English courses (with the exception of those on the West Midlands course which is part of the Queens Foundation and those at the Partnership at Manchester, or those under 800 hours placement supervision in synods) we would have released eighteen students across the four colleges. Trying to increase student cohorts by ceasing to use the two colleges with the smallest number of United Reformed Church students would only have increased the number of students for the remaining colleges by twelve.
- d) It is recognised that having full time and part time students in one institution does not necessarily mean that they are together at the same times in the week. Nevertheless the possibility of such interaction is provided by their coming under the care of the same staff in the same institution which also provides new possibilities and a greater consistency of educational provision and care.
- e) The fees paid for those students would be supporting institutions with whom we have close relationships and where, in three cases (Northern, Westminster and Mansfield), we continue to offer financial support over and above the money paid in fees. Providing more students could reduce the amount of additional support the Training Committee would need to give.
- f) It recognises the Equipping the Saints report's intent to do away with the differentiation between Non Stipendiary and Stipendiary Ministry. Such an argument, if accepted by General Assembly, together with the possibility of dispersed learning being provided by colleges and the general flexibility in training patterns and pathways, undermines the need to have NSM and SM student ministers training in different institutions and modes as has been the case in the past.
- g) In those synods where good relations have been developed with the ecumenical courses the synods will experience this breaking of engagement as a loss. One hopes that whatever form the United Reformed Church Partnership takes, a synods' engagement with either the burgeoning Regional Training Partnership or the work of the United Reformed Church Partnership will provide a new vehicle for ecumenical engagement, if not in the training of students for the Non Stipendiary Ministry then for Education for Ministry 2 and 3, lay training and elders' training etc.

## MANSFIELD COLLEGE'S MINISTERIAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Committee is highly sensitive to any change in deep rooted relationships with institutions that through the years have shaped people's lives and instilled warm hearted affections. Such change cannot be carried through without concern for those involved. Nonetheless, it feels that it is difficult to avoid a conclusion that Mansfield College's ministerial training programme is the least well equipped to contribute to the emerging pattern of integrated education and training for the whole people of God which includes the training of ministers and Church Related Community Workers. There are a range of factors, a number of which the staff at Mansfield have themselves identified, which considerably govern the future for the College. These are:

- (i) the college would currently find it difficult to work within the context of integrating lay and ordinand training;
- (ii) the college suffers from a serious shortage of staff for ministerial training;
- (iii) it has no staff accommodation; indeed the current Director of Ministerial Training is accommodated in the manse of the pastorate associated with his wife's local ministry: any new appointment after 2007 not so associated will incur housing costs at Oxford rates;
- (iv) in the light of (iii) above continued use of the college will require a very substantial capital investment as well as additional staff.

Other factors were identified by the Committee, including

- (v) the academic requirements and learning aptitudes associated with Oxford University as well as residency requirements in some instances;
- (vi) the image of Mansfield College (particularly reinforced by (v) above) widely held throughout the United Reformed Church;
- (vii) the problem of the lack of living accommodation at Mansfield itself i.e. no accommodation for anyone other than students willing to share a house provided by Wessex Synod.

### Appendix 7

#### **Specialisms to offer to the Partnership being developed by the colleges we now use**

The institutions that we use in England could be encouraged to develop specialisms in the Partnership for Learning and within their Regional Training Partnerships.

The Training Committee has previously encouraged **Northern College** to develop its focus on contextual theology. Their work in the Partnership for Theological Education in the north of England region, which they are developing further, is itself a prototype of the Regional Training Partnerships which are a feature of the Hind report. The College continues to recruit international students to the MA in contextual theology especially from Council for World Mission churches from around the world. They also offer the Church Related Community Work training programme and are in discussion with the Windermere Centre, the Scottish College, the Synod of Wales and others about mutual support in informal arrangements for training. Through the part time use of their Faith in Living Course, they offer part time training for the Non Stipendiary ministry across a wide area of England.

There has also been encouragement to **Westminster College** to develop its Reformed Studies expertise that is embodied in its Cheshunt Institute of Reformed Archives, a centre for the United Reformed Church's conception of its history and ecclesiology. It is a resource internationally used by Reformed students. The College also emphasises the provision of its D.Min programme, the only doctoral programme with United Reformed Church leadership for Education for Ministry 3 (CME) at a high level, and the MA in Pastoral Theology available to any one living within an hour or so of Cambridge.



The Education and Training Committee at **Mansfield College** want to develop research as a specialism in a 'partnership' friendly way. That is to say they want to develop a network of United Reformed Church people, certainly PhD's but probably involving all people working for the church, who have at least a Masters. This will not include Scotland but will, in a sense, be modelled on the practice of the Scottish College and their research network. It will aim to keep people better enthused and sharp in their thinking and, through networking, will seek to stimulate further study and encourage further publications. There may be 50 to 100 people in this category. They envisage a summer school or conference which could be related to the Partnership for Learning's bi-annual conference - though not necessarily coterminous. The College is also seeking to develop its ability to offer genuine part time training, and a stronger relationship with the training staff and programmes of Wessex synod.

**Queens Foundation** considers itself to have three specialisms: i) the development of ministerial education in a global context, (it has close links with Birmingham University and its expertise on e.g. Islam) ii) a distinctive experience of ecumenism in a college which is organically ecumenical and iii) black theology, working in a multicultural context especially Black and Asian.

The **Scottish College** is of course the only college not within England and therefore is outside the English Regional Training Partnerships. Nevertheless its role in the provision of lay training, of Education for Ministry 2 and 3 (Post ordination and CME) and in ordination training in and with the Synod of Scotland makes it a particularly striking model of educational partnership. It has particular specialisms in adult education and the milieu of Scotland: legal, political, social, educational and cultural.

The specialisms of the colleges give us scope to encourage their development for the education and training for the whole church. Within England this would, of course, need to be done in tandem with the development of any specialisms within the RTP's of which these institutions are a part and who are also being encouraged to develop in that way.

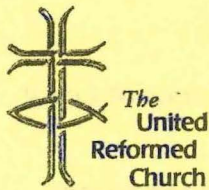
## Appendix 8

### **Extract from the Minutes of the Training Committee in February 1999** **Subject: Student Numbers required by the English colleges (NB Figures quoted below relate only to students for the Stipendiary ministry)**

1 The numbers of students required by Colleges. Responses from Northern, Westminster, Queens and Mansfield Colleges to an enquiry about minimum and maximum numbers of students may be summarised as follows

<u>College</u>	<u>Minimum Number of students</u>	<u>Maximum number of students</u>
Mansfield	15-20	30
Queens	6-8	30
Westminster	30	50
Northern	26	35
Total	77-84	145

The actual number of equivalent students for February 2005, including 5 CRCW's is 59



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

D

Catch the Vision  
Report of the Ministries Committee

This report to Mission Council is in two parts.

The first part is a draft report to Assembly responding to the feedback from the 2004 report Equipping the Saints.

The second is a draft section for the report from the Catch the Vision Steering Group which supports a Resolution addressing issues raised via Equipping the Saints and elsewhere.

Part I: EQUIPPING THE SAINTS: 2005 REPORT

The History

1 The 2004 meeting of Assembly welcomed the report Equipping the Saints, produced at the request of the Assembly by the Ministries Committee. Assembly challenged every congregation to respond locally to the first two recommendations (have you done so yet?); asked for comments on the remaining recommendations; and sought further proposals for the 2005 meeting of Assembly in the light of the feedback received.

2 The 2004 report was in the book of Reports to Assembly and is also on the United Reformed Church website ([www.urc.org.uk](http://www.urc.org.uk)). The text below reproduces the Summary and the list of recommendations.

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**SUMMARY: WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?**

**A fast changing society provides a challenging context for the Church's mission. In our interim report to the 2002 Assembly, we suggested that the Church's response would need to recapture a sense of the ministry of the whole people of God, and our post-bag has supported this view. One way of viewing this key concept is to think of making people more active members of the Church focused outwards into the world - from disciples to apostles. We challenge every local church to think afresh about its support of its members when they are dispersed in their daily living.**

Fortunately our heritage provides many riches to help us understand and implement ministry that is not restricted to the clergy. We believe that the ministry of the Elders is central in this and, indeed, that it is a precious gift the United Reformed Church has to offer its ecumenical partners. The Church needs to be more careful and focused in the way it appoints,

develops and uses Elders. It also needs to be clearer about the role of Local Church Leaders within the Eldership.

Ministers of the Word and Sacraments are a valuable and scarce resource that the Church must use more effectively. As Elders become more confident in their leadership of local churches, the Church can allow itself to think differently about the deployment of Ministers. Spreading Ministers ever more thinly cannot possibly be the best mission strategy. We believe that the assumption that every congregation should have a slice of its own Minister is unsustainable, but every congregation does need effective leadership. The Church needs to be much more imaginative in its development of flexible collaborative leadership patterns.

If the Church is to develop more diverse leadership patterns then it needs more flexible arrangements for the training, funding and deployment of Ministers and other church leaders.

More diverse leadership patterns also make it desirable and necessary that the Church should think again about presidency at the sacraments.

In presenting this report we know that the changes it recommends cannot happen instantly, that some of them require further work, and that they do not address other major issues for the Church. But we believe that they would contribute to Changing Ministry for the Challenge of Mission.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

**1** Every local church should be challenged to review its life at all levels with the specific aim of being more supportive and enabling of the dispersed ministry of its members even if this means doing less 'in church' activities. Local churches should look for ways, within the context of worship and otherwise, of affirming the ministries of their members outside the church. This needs to be an inclusive activity from which no one is left out.

**2** Every local church should be encouraged to explore new ways of gathering at different times and places – the Church going to meet people where they are rather than the Church expecting people to come to where it is.

**3** The appointment and ordination of Elders should involve a commitment to continuing development, including appropriate training. Synods should facilitate this training, working with local Ministers and making full use of available resources. District Councils should formally acknowledge the call of Elders by local churches and be represented at their ordination and, if they are transferring from another District, their induction.

**4** Whilst welcoming the current Local Church Leaders as successful experiments and effective forms of local leadership, the Church should build on this experience to create a flexible framework for the introduction of Pastors of local congregations, a role working from within the Elders'

meeting. All Synods could then be encouraged to make use of this as one optional form of leadership available to local churches.

**5** The United Reformed Church should adopt the title 'local preacher' in place of 'lay preacher'.

**6** The United Reformed Church should re-commit itself to the development of appropriate and effective leadership in every local congregation, whilst recognising that this does not mean that every congregation will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership. The deployment of Ministers should be determined by the need to make the best use of this scarce resource in equipping, empowering and leading the Church in its participation in God's mission.

**7** Churches should be encouraged to work in groups or clusters, wherever possible ecumenically, with Ministers, Elders, Local Church Leaders, Lay Preachers and others offering them collaborative leadership.

**8** The Church should develop a new way of classifying its Ministers according to the service being offered that can supersede the existing stipendiary 'Patterns' and non-stipendiary 'Models'.

**9** The Church should continue to develop the flexibility of the initial and continuing training of its Ministers and Church Related Community Workers to meet more effectively their varied circumstances and their fast changing contexts and to enable them to more easily transfer between different forms of service.

**10** Work should be done on the implications and mechanics of making the remuneration package of all Ministers and Church Related Community Workers more flexible according to their circumstances, such as dependent relatives, within the maximum figures approved each year by Assembly.

**11** Detailed consideration should be given to broadening the terms of the Ministry and Mission Fund so that it could be used not just to pay for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers but also to support other forms of leadership within the Church. An attractive annual report on how the Ministry and Mission Fund is spent should be made available to local churches.

**12** Area/District Councils should recognise and use the flexibility provided by the *Basis of Union* with regard to presidency at the sacraments to ensure that the needs of each local church are properly met. Where 'situations of pastoral necessity' occur, the Councils should take great care to keep them fully and regularly under review, out of respect to the congregations concerned and to the Church's ecumenical partners.

**13** Formal discussions about the recommendations in this report should be arranged with representatives of the Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners.

3. Equipping the Saints is one dimension of the Catch the Vision process. Issues relating to ministry intertwine with many other issues being reviewed and so it is natural that work which flows from the 2004 report will appear in various places in the Assembly agenda in 2005 and beyond.

#### The Feedback

4. We are very grateful for all the thinking, praying and discussing that lay behind over 200 written responses. We heard from the majority of Synods and District/Area Councils. While some responses were formal statements agreed by a Council of the Church, others were confined to reporting the flavour of various personal views.

5. We were encouraged that the overall tone of the responses was to support strongly the thrust of Equipping the Saints.

6. As we expected, the responses underlined the variety of situations in which local congregations and their Ministers and other leaders work. The village chapel, the suburban congregation and the inner city ecumenical partnership will not necessarily need or produce the same ministry patterns. Some people searched Equipping the Saints for a new standard pattern of ministry to apply everywhere. They searched in vain.

7. Our patterns of ministries need to be rooted in our shared principles set out in the Basis of Union, but the feedback reinforced our belief that the United Reformed Church is not best served by a standard pattern. Nor do we want a hierarchy of patterns with hints that some patterns are superior to others. Rather we want to make it easier for the pattern best suited to the possibilities of each place to be available in that place.

8. We were also glad that the feedback underlined the comments in Equipping the Saints about the special and vital place amongst us of our Ministers of the Word and Sacraments. Their theological expertise and leadership is clearly highly valued and perhaps even more prized as their numbers diminish.

9. This reinforces the need to provide our Ministers with the best possible support and to make sure that the work we ask each of them to do makes the best use of their particular gifts.

10. Mission Council has asked the Ministries Committee, in consultation with the Training Committee, to shape a policy on the development of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs). This will include looking at Continuing Ministerial Education and best practice in appraisal patterns. Non-stipendiary (or 'self-supporting') ministers, CRCWs, ministers in Assembly appointments and those on the Special Category Ministry scheme, together with some other paid ministers, already benefit from periodic review procedures. We note moves in the Church of England towards compulsory annual appraisal for all clergy.

11. Our postbag and e-mails have also reminded us of the stress felt by some Ministers. As in any organisation in a period of change, the leaders bear the double burden of dealing with the personal implications of change as well as having to be its advocate to others. While workload is often a factor in stress, we believe the root problem is often ambiguity about the role. We remain strongly in favour of honest

and explicit discussions between Ministers and others involved to identify agreed, realistic expectations concerning this particular Minister in this unique setting. These expectations then need to be regularly reviewed by the Minister and their pastorate.

12. We are also aware that some Ministers and others feel their work is devalued by being seen as merely 'maintenance'. A mantra like 'From maintenance to mission' may be helpful shorthand but becomes unhelpful if it is heard to denigrate faithful, unglamorous tasks that actually build the foundations on which other work can rest. As one correspondent put it, 'Blessed are those who keep the roof on and make the tea - they enable mission to happen'.

13. So the vision of patterns of ministries we offer the Church is one where we seek to use our resources to equip everyone to engage in God's mission in the world. To further that aim, we envisage a wide variety of patterns in different congregations. In all of them we look for an Eldership focused on its key tasks and able to be the core leadership team. In some places, the Elders might be complemented by a Minister (paid or self-supporting) working in that one church and community. In more places, a Minister would be deployed as part of a collaborative leadership team across several congregations, with an agreed role for the Minister. In other places, there would be no Minister providing day-to-day leadership but the District or Area Council would ensure the congregation had access to a Minister when support was required.

14. With this pattern in churches, we would hope Ministers would be released from stressful and sometimes quite impossible expectations. We believe it is possible to provide effective leadership across several communities provided the model of leadership used takes account of the more limited time and engagement available in any one community. And sometimes the best use of a Minister's gifts will be to engage with a community not as a leader of a settled congregation but as a chaplain; or to be a trainer; or an evangelist; or....

15. Identifying the best pattern of leadership for an individual congregation or the best pattern of working for a particular Minister is a responsibility of the local Councils of the Church. It is not a task for an Assembly Committee.

#### This Report

16. Having considered the feedback from the 2004 report, we have reviewed all the Recommendations. In the next section we outline where matters now stand on those Recommendations which are not the subject of formal proposals at the 2005 Assembly. Then, in the following section, we explain the Resolutions we are bringing to Assembly now.

17. The delivery of most of our proposals depends on Elders' Meetings, Church Meetings, District and Area Councils and Synods. We are aware that the Church will be debating the future of all these bodies in the near future, but for clarity in this report we refer to current structures. If the structures change in the future, we believe the proposals will need to be picked up by the new bodies.

## The Journeys of Our Recommendations

### Recommendations 1&2: Style of Local Church Life

18. We are glad to hear of congregations that have risen to the challenges set by Assembly and started fresh thinking about their life. We have pointed out to those working on the Structures part of Catch the Vision that the ability of local churches to respond to these challenges does depend on the wider church structures owning them as well.

### Recommendation 5: The Title 'Lay Preacher'

19. There is no consensus favouring any new title so we bring no proposals for change. We need to remain alert to the problems the title can cause ecumenically, especially in relation to the status of 'lay' presidents at the sacraments.

### Recommendation 8: Classification of Ministers

20. There was general support for this Recommendation. We therefore intend to change the classification in the URC yearbook to move away from a classification based on payment to one based on role. We envisage categories such as the following:

F/t	Full-time
P/t	Part-time
MSE	Minister in Secular Employment
Chap	Minister principally engaged in Chaplaincy
SCM	Minister working under the Assembly Special Category Ministry Scheme
R	Retired
R(a)	Of retirement age but authorised to continue in active Ministry

Thus a full-time University Chaplain working under the Special Category Ministry Scheme would be designated as 'F/t SCM Chap'. Ministers in the list with no classification against their name would be those who have been given permission to remain on the Roll of Ministers while below retirement age but not actively engaged in any form of ministerial service within the Church.

21. There is further work to be done on the implications of decoupling payment from classification. We welcome Assembly's endorsement for the concept of Non-Stipendiary CRCWs. The Ministries Committee will continue to work with the Training Committee on issues relating to the training for, and transfer between, paid and unpaid ministerial roles.

### Recommendation 9: Training Needs

22. Response to this Recommendation was positive but the action will await further progress on the Hind review and the URC Training Committee's own review.

### Recommendation 10: Flexible Remuneration

23. We suggested that the logic of the concept of a stipend (a payment according to need) ought to lead to more variation in the levels of stipend actually paid. This

idea received only minority support from our correspondents and so we have not pursued the idea. We trust that all Church members will give to the Ministry and Mission Fund with an enthusiasm that demonstrates this commitment to paid ministry.

#### Recommendation 12: Presidency at the Sacraments

24. The gist of what Equipping the Saints said received strong support. We therefore simply reiterate the importance both of using the flexibility already available and of reviewing arrangements regularly and carefully so that our provisions and practice do not fall into disrepute.

#### Recommendation 13; Ecumenical Consultation

25. We received a substantial and thoughtful response from the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church, which may be of particular interest to those in united congregations. Copies can be obtained from the Ministries Office.

#### Resolutions

##### The Eldership

(Derived mainly from Recommendation 3)

26. Our feedback reinforced strongly the emphasis given in the 2004 report to the central role of the Elders in each local congregation. We want to harness the momentum behind these ideas and so bring four resolutions to capture some of the key points concerning the working out of our principles in practice.

27. In addition to our work, included within Catch the Vision is a wider review of the structures of the local church, which obviously involves the Eldership. The Life and Witness Committee were asked by the 2004 Assembly to take the lead in this and to bring proposals to the 2006 Assembly. They hope to build on the work in Equipping the Saints and so further resolutions on Elders may be proposed in a year's time. In the light of that we have avoided bringing any proposals this year which would involve a change to the Basis of Union.

#### Resolution n1: Elders and Ecumenism

General Assembly reaffirms the place of Elders in the work of the United Reformed Church as described in paragraph 23 of the Basis of Union. Assembly requests that District and Area Councils seek to ensure that even when the precise processes and title set out in paragraph 23 are not used, some leaders of each congregation cover the functions of Elders and can properly be recognised as Elders for the purposes of the wider councils of the Church.

28. We believe the distinctive characteristics of Elders, drawn from the Reformed tradition, need to be reflected in the life of every congregation which is part of the United Reformed Church. We are of course aware that in many local congregations, including a large number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, patterns of leadership draw on traditions other than those which shaped the United Reformed Church. Whilst we applaud the aspiration to find leadership patterns appropriate to local circumstances, this Resolution seeks to ensure that the essence of the Eldership does not disappear.



### Resolution n2: Election of Elders

Given the importance of Elders in the leadership of United Reformed Church congregations and the need for ecumenical partners to respect the office, Assembly urges every local church to use a selection process for Elders which reflects the significance of their appointment.

29. An issue for the wider review of local Church structures is the question of whether those called to be Elders should be ordained. In this and subsequent resolutions we therefore avoid reference to ordination as such, but focus on principles that we believe are important whatever the precise form of entry into the office.

30. This resolution is to encourage the wider use of best practice. For example, we believe that a selection process should include at least the following characteristics. The process:

- i. is only open to those who have been members of the United Reformed Church for at least two years;
- ii. requires the candidates to have understood the Basis of Union and any applicable local church Rules;
- iii. requires the candidates to have understood the promises in Schedule B and how the office of Elder is exercised in their local congregation;
- iv. provides opportunity for prayerful consideration of candidates by their fellow church members;
- v. involves a secret ballot held at a Church Meeting and publicised to all the members in advance.

### Resolution n3: Elders and Wider Church Representation

General Assembly, recognising that an Elder is part of the leadership of the whole Church as well as of the local congregation, requests the explicit involvement of the wider Church in the induction of Elders.

31. Whether or not Elders are ordained, it would be valuable to find ways in induction services to show more clearly that the ministry of Elders is recognised by the wider Church and that there are wider dimensions of Eldership than those exercised within the local congregation.

32. At an induction the local church minister normally presides and he or she will be a member of the District or Area Council *ex officio*. Involvement by the local church's elected representative to the Council, or by the other Council personnel, would make more visible the interest of the wider Councils of the Church. Options would include:

- a. a District or Area Council officer being present at the induction;
- b. a letter of greeting from the Synod being read at the induction;
- c. the local congregation's elected representative to the District or Area Council taking part in the induction;
- d. all newly inducted Elders being received at a District or Area meeting or service.

#### Resolution n4: Personal Development of Elders

To promote the development of the gifts and skills of Elders, Assembly requests:

- a. Synods to ensure the provision of locally based opportunities for the development of Elders in local churches or groups of churches; and
- b. each local church to set aside time and resources at least once a year specifically for the development of the gifts and skills of Elders.

33. Taking the high calling of Elders seriously implies that every effort should be made to encourage personal development of those called to this ministry. Various structured and informal opportunities are available to do this, both within the local church and beyond it. We want to encourage these opportunities to be given a high priority, in the lives of individuals and of congregations, even when the other pressures threaten to squeeze them out.

34. Some correspondents were anxious that our original Recommendation might lead to a compulsory, standardised (and not very relevant) training course. We had no such intention. We hope this Resolution will make clear the priority without prescribing the means and by the time of Assembly the Training Committee may be able to say more about new options for delivery. We hope local churches will be nudged into thinking more systematically about the needs of their Elders. We hope that will include giving more attention to the individual needs of new Elders and of potential or proposed Elders. The proposal for a regular review of development needs is partly about recognising that changing circumstances can also make it desirable for experienced Elders to acquire skills not previously needed.

#### Relationship of Minister and Elders

(Mainly derived from Recommendations 6&7)

#### Resolution n5: Collaborative Leadership

General Assembly urges local churches and groups of churches to develop collaborative leadership structures, and wherever possible to do so ecumenically.

35. We heard virtually unanimous support for collaborative leadership but also anecdotes suggesting it is by no means everyone's experience.

36. In Equipping the Saints we said that the purpose of collaborative leadership was 'to make best use of the particular people available in each place for the good of the whole people of God and the effectiveness of (the Church's) ministry in the world... The opportunities for mutual support and personal development available to members of ... teams are of great benefit to the Church as a whole as well as to the individuals.' We are envisaging more than just Ministers working well together; we are looking to Elders to be at the heart of this, working with Lay Preachers and others as well with Ministers.

37. This style of leadership may need careful explanation to ecumenical partners, but is enriched further when it can involve them too. It demands a commitment of will, time and effort from all involved, ongoing training and development, and the ability to cope with change within the team, not least as personnel change.

38. Collaborative leadership also makes it possible to set more realistic boundaries around the expectations on any one individual. For Ministers and others in leadership roles recognised by the wider Church, the District or Area Council has a key responsibility for ensuring that the expectations of those leaders and the pastorates are reasonable.

#### Deployment

(mainly derived from Recommendations 4&6)

#### Resolution n6: Deployment

General Assembly, recognising that the number of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments continues to fall much more rapidly than the number of congregations, requests Synods, District and Area Councils to deploy Ministers with imagination and flexibility, and in particular:

- i. to focus on present and future opportunities not historical patterns;
- ii. to look at leadership needs and resources in each congregation, accepting that not every congregation will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership;
- iii. to take account of the deployment plans of sister denominations;
- iv. to take account of the service offered by self-supporting Ministers;
- v. to take account of the Church's policy on Local Church Leaders as agreed at the 1998 meeting of the Assembly;
- vi. to remember the possibilities provided by the Special Category Ministry scheme.

39. This resolution embodies the thinking in Recommendation 6, which received strongly positive feedback. It is the responsibility of the District and Area Council to ensure that deployment is effective and that as far as possible each local church has effective leadership. However Assembly is invited to say that it may not always be right to provide a Minister for the day-to-day leadership of every congregation. The Resolution gives District and Area Councils permission and encouragement to break free from inherited patterns of ministerial deployment and look at current and future priorities.

40. Currently a large and rising proportion of paid Ministers are responsible for at least two congregations and over a hundred serve three or more. We remain concerned that in some cases this is not the result of a careful identification of key priorities and the matching of gifts with possibilities; rather it reflects the easy option of simply adding extra churches to a Minister's workload. With a likely further reduction of a hundred in the number of paid ministers by the end of the decade, it is all the more vital that we identify carefully and prayerfully the best possible deployment of all our Ministers.

41. This Resolution does not remove any of the District or Area Council's responsibility to have oversight of the whole District or Area. In particular, where a congregation does not have a Minister for day-to-day leadership the Council will want to ensure it has access to one when such support is desirable.

42. The Resolution also encourages some best practice that is not followed everywhere: to consult ecumenically; consider all the ministerial resources available,

paid and unpaid; and to explore creatively whether the options provided by Local Church Leaders or Special Category Ministry might provide part of God's answer.

Use of M&M Fund

(Mainly derived from Recommendation 11)

Resolution n7: Ministry and Mission Fund Report

General Assembly resolves that a report showing how the Ministry and Mission Fund contributions have been spent should be sent each year to every local church.

43. Our suggestion of a report to show people in local churches how their M&M Assessment has promoted the Mission of the Church was warmly received. Although a substantial amount of information is already available, it often does not penetrate into the minds of local churches. We envisage a lively leaflet containing stories, not a bulky document rich in numbers. It would be a particularly relevant resource when Church Meetings are deciding whether to accept the challenge of next year's Assessment.

44. Other aspects of Recommendation 11 are taken up in a Resolution concerning Special Category Ministry contained within the Catch the Vision Steering Group report to Assembly.

The Worker Bees

45. The Equipping the Saints work in 2004-5 was mainly done on behalf of the Ministries Committee by:

The Revd Pauline Barnes  
The Revd Christine Craven (Secretary)  
Mr John Ellis (Convener)  
Mrs Wilma Frew  
The Revd John Piper  
The Revd Dr David Thompson

## Part 2: DRAFT RESOLUTION ON EXPANSION OF SPECIAL CATEGORY MINISTRY

General Assembly rejoices in the valuable and creative work done by the small minority of Ministers working under the Special Category Ministry scheme, who are complemented and supported by the equally crucial work led by Ministers in more traditional roles. Noting the pleas from around the Church for ministry in situations where no suitable United Reformed Church Minister is available, and requests for the Ministry and Mission Fund to be used more flexibly, Assembly resolves:

- a. to increase the maximum number of posts on the Special category Ministry scheme by six (full time equivalents) in each of the five years 2006 to 2010;
- b. to make the additional posts open not just to United Reformed Church Ministers but, where appropriate, also to accredited Ministers of sister Churches and to suitably qualified lay people;
- c. to continue to fund the scheme within the Ministry and Mission Fund, recognising that some posts might require a financial contribution from local sources; and
- d. to request the Ministries Committee to continue to administer the Special Category Ministry scheme, including overseeing the support and accountability structures for each post.

1. One of the United Reformed Church's success stories is the Special Category Ministry (SCM) Scheme. Assembly has made 30 places available for stipendiary Ministers to serve outside standard Synod quotas in posts which could not otherwise be supported. Several posts are usually filled by full-time Education Chaplains and others by Workplace Chaplains; these Ministers are almost invariably working in settings where they represent the whole Christian Church and not just the United Reformed Church. Most of the other posts are pioneering roles, often with no guarantee of success, but with a view to building up the work of the Church in support of God's mission. All SCM posts are subject to careful oversight and periodic review.

2. The Catch the Vision process, and especially the responses to the Equipping the Saints report, suggest there are several needs that we could best address by expanding and broadening the SCM scheme. In particular:

- i. the outstanding commitment to develop a ministry of Evangelists;
- ii. the need to be able to call ministers with the necessary language skills and cultural background to serve in our multicultural congregations;
- iii. the need to find a way to welcome onto the United Reformed Church Roll of Ministers those from other denominations with particular skills and callings;
- iv. the need to have resources available to explore new ways of being Church.

3. An expansion of the SCM scheme and opening its posts up to a wider range of people would allow us a controlled way of responding to these needs within proper financial disciplines. To achieve the maximum benefit, we propose that it should be possible for the Scheme to fund work jointly with other sources of money and that in exceptional cases it could support a lay person with key skills for a particular mission challenge. There are some specialist chaplaincy posts, for example, for which lay as well as ordained candidates are suitable.

4. The SCM is funded from the Ministry and Mission Fund and that would continue. As the money cannot be spent twice, an expansion of the SCM scheme would reduce the money available for supporting other forms of ministry; but even after the gradual expansion proposed had been fully implemented, the impact on Synod deployment quotas would be small compared with the reductions already agreed by Assembly due to falling membership numbers.



## MISSION COUNCIL 22 January 2005

# D

### The Ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church

*(Information about the background of this paper which has been revised by the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee is found in Paper B)*

#### Notes:

1. In what follows the quotations from the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church, a foundation document, have a status which the other quotations do not possess. It should be remembered, however, that the United Reformed Church: *'affirms its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede'* its foundational Basis *'so that its life may accord more nearly with the life of Christ.'* (BU §9)

2. The way members of the United Reformed Church use the terms 'local congregation' and 'local church' can cause confusion. If the former is understood to mean 'the congregation of the saints,' it means the same as 'local church'. But if by 'local congregation' we mean all who gather for worship: church members, unbaptised adults and children, adherents, visitors, passing atheists..., then clearly this company is not the 'local church', and does not, for example, call ministers and elders. In the interests of clarity, in what follows 'local church' refers to the covenant fellowship of professed believers (the enrolled saints) in a particular place.

#### I. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

With the Church of the ages the United Reformed Church affirms that the Church, the Body of Christ, is one, holy, catholic, apostolic.

##### The Church is one

1. *'There is but one Church of the one God. He called Israel to be his people, and in fulfilment of the purpose then begun he called the Church into being through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.'* (BU §1) The unity of the Church is a matter of fact; it is the gift of God, who graciously calls out one people and makes a covenant with them: *'the unity we seek already exists; it is God, the perfection of unity who gives life to the Church.'* (*The United Reformed Church and Visible Christian Unity*, 1996, p. 116)

- 1.1 The oneness of the Church is rooted in the sole Lordship of Christ, its Head, in whom God's covenant of old is renewed. This is foundational for all discourse about Church unity.
- 1.1.1 It follows that the Church has a different understanding of unity from any other human organisation. The Church witnesses to the given unity, and seeks to manifest it ever more fully.
- 1.2 Hence, in the freedom that stems from the grace of God in Christ, and in obedience to our Lord's vision for his people, the United Reformed Church actively participates 'in initiatives leading towards organic union.' (Assembly resolution 31, 2c, 1996)
- 1.2.1 This is integral to the self-understanding of the United Reformed Church which *'sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and*

*as a united Church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.'* (BU §8)

- 1.2.2 In 1972, the majority of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England united. In deep and joyful response to the grace of God which inspired their life and witness, these two churches committed themselves to a future life together as the United Reformed Church.
- 1.3 In so doing, no single pattern of Church life was taken to be normative. This was the case also in 1981 when the United Reformed Church was joined by the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ, and again in the further union in 2000 with the Congregational Union of Scotland. The formation and re-formation of the United Reformed Church involved structural changes for all.
  - 1.3.1 It also involved relating to other Church traditions on a new basis; there was fresh participation in the 'rich pattern of inter-church relations already developed in Scotland' and a commitment to 'maintain and develop the inter-church relations of the former Churches of Christ in Scotland.' (Reports to Assembly 1982, p.49)
  - 1.3.2 As a basic ecumenical principle, the United Reformed Church understands that the Bible does not provide an eternally fixed pattern for the ordering of the Church, and that none of the Church traditions as we know them is impeccable, self-sufficient, or unable to learn from others. It recognises that we need to be completed by one another, not least because *'Not all the developments of the last nineteen centuries are to be regarded as divinely sanctioned simply because they have occurred. The ministerial forms which we inherit have been developed in the course of the Church's missionary advance through the centuries and among the nations.... Our duty is first to receive and cherish them with gratitude, and then to learn, as those before us have done, to adapt and reform them under the guidance of the Spirit in faithfulness to the apostolic witness, and in accordance with the missionary needs of today.'* (GROU §78) The point is made succinctly in the response of the United Reformed Church to BEM, when it states, in relation to the ministry: *'it is not clear why the Spirit might not have been as much at work in the breakdown of the threefold pattern in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as in the creation of it in the second and third.'* (p.104)
  - 1.3.3 The United Reformed Church was formed in obedience to the call of God *'to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled.'* (BU§8) In 1972, we took the step of uniting when there was sufficient ecclesiological agreement, but before all outstanding differences had been reconciled. Successive unions, in 1972, 1982 and 2000, raised successive challenges. Within the bond of unity, we have wrestled with difficult issues concerning baptism, communion, ministry and Church order.
  - 1.3.4 In January 1981, the then Missionary and Ecumenical work at Home Committee of the United Reformed Church wrote *The bringing together of divided Christians is always difficult because they always assert divine sanction for the principles that separated them. But sin must also be a factor. There has been – and still is – blinkered perception, satisfaction with the status quo, maintenance of security, unwillingness to understand others. And all this is painful to overcome. (The Covenant and the URC- Some of the major issues)* As the United Reformed Church lives in awareness of God's call to manifest the unity of his one Church, it repents of its part in the failure and weakness of the Church. (BU§7)
  - 1.3.5 The way forward in ecumenical dialogue is not to try to fit into one another's categories, making compromises here and there, but for all churches to review their polities in relation to the work of God the Holy Spirit who, in the Son, has made us one with the Father. The structures of all partners in ecumenical dialogue will then be equally open to reform and renewal.
  - 1.3.6 The process of ecclesial convergence is joyful but it can also be bewildering; it can give rise to a loss of cherished identity. Ten years after Union, the World Church and Mission Department commented: *Our experience leads us to say that union becomes creative at the point at which it demands the sacrifice of that separate identity which*



*belongs to division...we ourselves came together after many years of conversation and not without pain. We have discovered that even though we shared much in our heritage, much labour and much charity is required to achieve unity* (First response on behalf of the United Reformed Church to the Ten Propositions). Underlying the debates between 1980 and 1982 on the Covenant proposals was the issue of the nature of the United Reformed Church, still working through the implications of union for its life and witness. The United Reformed Church is constantly engaged in this process.

- 1.4 Steps towards further union may be suggested by doctrinal debate, in worship, service and mission, and the quest for social justice.
- 1.4.1 As our Church seeks to come ever closer to Christ, we will inevitably come closer to those others with whom we are one in Christ. In 2001, the United Reformed Church affirmed its desire *'to persevere in the search for the visible and organic unity of the Church through church-to-church conversations on matters of faith and Church order so that sinful, and sometimes death-dealing, divisions may be healed and the Christian message of reconciliation be proclaimed with integrity.'* (Record of Assembly, resolution 22 p.12)
  - 1.4.1.1 The United Reformed Church is committed to working for full, visible unity in Wales through the Commission of Covenanting Churches (ENFYS). It was a full participant in the Scottish Church Initiative for Union.
  - 1.4.1.2 The United Reformed Church benefits significantly from reciprocal ecumenical representation, expressed in its own life across its Councils and Committees. For example, it is represented at the Methodist Conference, on the Methodist Faith and Order Committee and also at the General Synod of the Church of England, while the Church of England and the Methodist Church are represented at the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and on the Ecumenical and Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committees.
  - 1.4.1.3 Joint theological education with those of other traditions has become the norm.
- 1.4.2. We experience what it means to be Church in worship; in worship we encounter God together; in worship the catholicity of the Church is displayed. In worship, we rejoice in our communion with the Church visible and invisible. In prayer, fellowship with Christ and fellowship with one another are indissolubly connected. *Yet we are still not able to come together at the Lord's Table. We still have to celebrate the Eucharist today across boundaries drawn by our divisions. When we pray for each other, however, we reach across these divisions. (Intercession, Lukas Vischer, WCC, 1980, p.4).* Through intercession, we include in our celebration those who still do not share in it. *As they accept the common bond of mutual intercession...the churches will also strengthen one another in their freedom for the future and their openness to love.* (ibid, p.64)
  - 1.4.2.2 As we recognise and celebrate the grace of God in Christ, we also resolve that with God's help we will commend his love to others by word and deed.
- 1.4.3 The Church's oneness is experienced in mission and service. The 2001 General Assembly resolved to encourage Synods and Districts ( Areas in Scotland ) to *'expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community.'* (Record of Assembly, Resolution 22, p.12) This commitment stands in places experimenting with new models of wider church life. The resolution provides the momentum for Churches Together, where congregations of the United Reformed Church are linked at local, regional and national level by covenant with neighbouring churches of other traditions.
  - 1.4.3.1 Again, a desire for joint mission and service is an important consideration given that, in 2002, approximately a fifth of the congregations of the United Reformed Church are either joint churches with Methodists or Baptists or Local Ecumenical Partnerships

with these and the Church of England. There are around twenty-eight single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships with the Church of England, and some with the Baptists, the Moravians, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Church of Scotland.

- 1.4.3.2 It underlies the creation of the United Areas which function as District Councils of the United Reformed Church and as Methodist Circuits.
- 1.4.3.3 With other Church traditions, the United Reformed Church is exploring ways in which, where there is only one congregation in an area, this may be genuinely a church for all the people in that place.
- 1.4.4 As the Church engages in struggles for social justice, it also takes further steps towards the unity of humanity at large. The United Reformed Church joins with Christians of other traditions in tackling issues of homelessness, unemployment, poverty and debt. A member of Church Action on Poverty, and the Churches' National Housing Coalition, it participates actively in Poverty Hearings and political debate.
- 1.5 The unity of the Church is dynamic—'by the power of the Holy Spirit' it is continually engaged in the search for a more adequate shape to proclaim the Gospel.
  - 1.5.1 Rooted in Christ, the Church can respond to changes in society and in its own life and order without fear of losing its identity.
- 1.6 The United Reformed Church demonstrates that unity does not necessarily entail uniformity. Political devolution in Scotland and Wales sharpens the point that this is a church in three nations. The national Synods in Scotland and Wales differ to some extent from the Synods in England because they take account of this national dimension. In matters relating to Scottish and Welsh public affairs, they speak on behalf of the United Reformed Church. *'Through their continued participation in and commitment to the conciliar structures of the United Reformed Church...the national synods honour the trust that has been placed in them.'* ( Union Proposals, 1998, p.12) The relationship of openness and mutual relatedness is affirmed. *'In setting out these procedures, the authority of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church in the management of the affairs of the whole church is affirmed but it is recognised that there may be situations in which the General Assembly will need to acknowledge national distinctions.'* (ibid.)
  - 1.6.1 Individual congregations may be distinctive in language and culture, reflecting a trans-national mobility that has been a feature of Reformed congregations in Europe since the sixteenth century. In Walthamstow and in Slough, there are two congregations of the United Reformed Asian Christian Church whose members are Urdu-speaking and mainly of Pakistani background and Presbyterian tradition. Models to enable single-ethnic congregations, largely not worshipping in English, to be fully part of the United Reformed Church continue to be explored, drawing on the experience of the Uniting Church of Australia.
  - 1.6.2 There is diversity too within our congregations. These, in large towns in particular, can include people from many different Christian traditions, from the United Kingdom and from other parts of the world. We have a long history of receiving church members, not least ministers, from other branches of the Reformed family, and from traditions other than our own.
- 1.7 While all Church traditions embrace diversity, *'diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8); and salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in holy scripture and preached by the apostolic community.'* (*Signs of the Spirit*, statement on the unity of the Church, WCC, Canberra Assembly, 1991, p.173)

- 1.7.1 *'We live in a constant tension between awareness of a unity which transcends our divisions and awareness of a division which mars our unity.'* (Churches Respond to BEM, vol 1, p.108) To be divided as Christians in one place makes it impossible for a local church to be what it should be—a complete embodiment of the one universal Church in that place. (BU§5)

### The Church is holy

2. *'The one Church of the one God is holy, because he has redeemed and consecrated it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and because there God dwells with his people.'* (BU§2) *'In the New Testament, the call to God's people to be holy is grounded in God's holiness...God's gift of grace in Christ and God's demand for holy living are inextricably linked.'* (Assembly reports, 1997, p82). Christians are 'saints by calling' (Rom. 1: 7): they are called out of 'the world', 'separated unto the Lord', and challenged to 'adorn the gospel' by leading lives sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In their personal and corporate lives, Christians have to rely on God's grace and forgiveness, for the saints are also sinners. As they respond to God's call to holy living, they discover something of the cost of that grace and the joy and freedom of that forgiveness.

- 2.1 In Christ's mercy, (BU§6) the United Reformed Church is continually called to conversion, to that change of heart and mind which enables it to be renewed. The Gospel which is entrusted to it leads to freedom and guards against going astray.
- 2.1.1 And so the United Reformed Church is called to cleanse and enrich its own inheritance in the light of that calling to reconciliation which is at the heart of the Gospel. (BU§§7, 8)
- 2.1.2 As it tries to respond to God's gift of grace in Christ and God's demand for holy living, the Church will find itself wrestling with hard ethical choices; sometimes there is significant convergence, as in the repudiation of racism; sometimes there is deep divergence as in the debates on human sexuality. Such divergence, when it occurs, frequently issues from differing views regarding the authority and interpretation of the Bible, and it can be profoundly painful. For example, the United Reformed Church in its conscientious attempts to grapple with the debate on human sexuality at all levels of the Church's life, experiences the challenge which comes with the quest of corporate holiness. (Assembly Reports, 1997-2000)

### The Church is catholic

3. *'The Church is catholic or universal because Christ calls into it all peoples and because it proclaims the fullness of Christ's gospel to the whole world.'*(BU§3) In Christ we are united with all Christians in heaven and on earth as branches of the Vine, and are engrafted into a fellowship in which all barriers of race, sex and class have been broken down.
- 3.1 The Church transcends time and space. *'Participating in the common life of the Church within the local church, [the baptised] enter into the life of the Church throughout the world. With that whole Church they also share in the life of the Church in all ages and in the communion of saints have fellowship with the Church triumphant.'* (BU§16)

### The Church is apostolic

4. *'The Church is apostolic because Christ continues to entrust it with the Gospel and the commission first given to the apostles to proclaim that Gospel to all peoples.'* (BU §4)

- 4.1. The Church's continuity through the ages is grounded in the gift to the Church of the Spirit through whom we participate in Christ's continuing ministry, and stand in the succession of those who proclaim the apostles' doctrine: *'The Church is apostolic both in tracing its origins through the first apostles and in continuing that apostolate today. The Church's journey is both to the ends of the earth and to the end of the age.'* (GROU §35)
- 4.1.1 As it lives in continuity with the witness of the first disciples to the risen Christ, the United Reformed Church looks to the full realisation of God's purposes at the end of time.
- 4.1.2 It is primarily through the community of the baptized and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the faith first entrusted to the apostles is transmitted from one generation to the next. Christ thus continues his ministry in and through the Church, (BU §19) the whole people of God.
- 4.1.3 Although the Church is an eternal body, containing the saints of all times and places, it is also an historical body, entrusted with the Gospel within creation and time, as it awaits fulfilment at the end of time.
- 4.1.4 In the providence of God we have a rich ecclesial heritage from which we may draw resources for our present witness. For example, we inherit from John Calvin the view that all forms of Church order, personal and conciliar, must be measured against the standard of the fullness of spiritual life they sustain. But if we try to live in the past alone we deny the Spirit's leading, and obstruct the Church's freedom in the present and its openness to the future.
- 4.1.5 As it responds to historical circumstances, the Church is marked by contingency. British history over the last four hundred years has left its mark on the shape of the Church. Where questions of Church order became embroiled in politics the bloody confrontations that ensued drove Christians into differentiated traditions. Within the Church, doctrinal disputes and differences over church order and evangelistic practice have resulted in division. In the way we evaluate these developments today, there is a need to clarify the distinction between events and their theological interpretation.
- 4.1.6 As helpful summaries of the faith of the Church in the great things God has done, the United Reformed Church *'accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene creeds'* (BU A16§4) And it recognises too, *'as its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ. These formulations stated the Gospel and sought 'to make its implications clear.'* (ibid.)
- 4.1.7 But, as is right and inevitable, formal doctrinal statements are historically and culturally conditioned. No single formulation can ever do justice to the love and wisdom of God in Christ for all time. Hence the United Reformed Church *'affirms its right to make such new declarations of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the..Spirit.'* (BU A16§6)
- 4.1.8 Accordingly, General Assembly in 1996 approved a supplementary Statement of Faith—a rewriting in inclusive language of the Statement of Faith which had been published in 1972.

## II. THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

5. If the traditional terms, 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic', *define* the Church, the 'marks' or 'notes' of the Church show us where it is. The Reformed of the sixteenth century - both Presbyterians and the Separatist harbingers of Congregationalism - affirmed with Calvin that the Church is found where the Word of God is faithfully preached and the sacraments rightly administered, and with Knox also where

discipline is duly exercised. Through all of these means the good news of God's redeeming grace and mercy is proclaimed by, and within, the community of faith.

### The Word of God

- 5.1.1 Through '*preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known in every age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world.*' (BU§13)
- 5.1.2 The people of God are in a state of receptivity to the challenge of the Word, open to being continually reformed and renewed by Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The United Reformed Church '*acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.*' (BU A2§12)
- 5.1.3 Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is interpreted in the light of God's gift of grace in the Gospel. Its authority derives from that of Jesus Christ, to whom it bears witness.
- 5.1.4 While God addresses individual believers and the Church alike by the Spirit through the Word, the message of the Bible, as the book of the people of God, is most normatively heard when its message is discerned within the fellowship: '*The Word of God is addressed to all God's people and it is only by our listening together that the Word can be heard to be the Word that God would speak to the Church.* (Ibid., §7.2).
- 5.1.5 Whereas the Bible may be studied in a variety of contexts within the Church, it is the awesome responsibility of the preacher to proclaim the Gospel and expound the Scriptures in the context of the people's worship. This is done in the confidence that the Holy Spirit will address the people through the Word preached.

### The Sacraments

- 5.2 The sacraments are signs and seals of God's covenant of grace. The United Reformed Church proclaims the Gospel visibly through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (BU §§14, 15).
- 5.2.1 Baptism '*makes explicit at a particular time and place and for a particular person what God has accomplished in Christ for the whole creation and for all humankind—the forgiveness of sins, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, and newness of life in the family of God.*' (BU §14) Baptism may be administered either to an infant or young child on the profession of faith of the parents, or to those who are of an age to make their own profession of faith. It is a single unrepeatable act, which marks a person's entry into God's covenant family. It proclaims the Good News that when we can do nothing, God does everything: the saving initiative is always his.
- 5.2.2 Baptism is normally celebrated in the context of an act of public worship. Members of the church affirm their intention to support and encourage by their prayers those who have newly been baptised
- 5.2.3 On profession of faith the baptized commit themselves to the life and witness of the local church and their names are placed on its roll of members.
- 5.2.4 While there are signs that patterns of belonging are changing and boundaries between members and adherents are less clear than was once the case, it remains true to say that by virtue of the Church's holiness, and of that engrafting of believers into Christ of which baptism and profession of faith are signs; and because of the challenge of mission which is presented to the church as a whole, the gathering of a vibrant company of the faithful in each place should be our aim. We are a people in a covenant relationship with God and with each other. This entails distinct embodiment in the world for the sake of joyful and effective witness to the world. Nor should we overlook the fact that our baptism into Christ has more than temporal significance.
- 5.2.5 In the Lord's Supper each local church proclaims the Gospel of God's saving love, supremely active at the Cross.

- 5.2.6 The broken body and the shed blood of Christ are re-membered. *'His people show forth his sacrifice on the Cross. By the bread broken and the wine outpoured for them to eat and drink, he himself, risen and ascended, is present and gives himself to them for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.'* (BU §15)
- 5.2.7 Nourished by Christ's offering of himself, and in fellowship with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, his people in their turn *'present their sacrifice of thanksgiving and renew the offering of themselves'* (ibid.)
- 5.2.8 The Lord's Supper is normally presided over by a minister who, by ordination, has received the authority so to do. The presidency of such ordained men and women does not result from their possessing a status which others lack: they possess no such status; rather, it makes for the good ordering of the life of the Church as it exercises corporately the priesthood of Christ. (Assembly Reports, 1995, pp. 136-8).
- 5.2.9 The Lord's table is open to all members of the church, who come to it in response to the invitation of Christ the Lord of the Church.

### Church Discipline and Order

- 6 Through Church discipline and order the people of God are nurtured in the faith, their worship is facilitated, their spheres of service are determined, and their mission is, under God, enabled. In offering their gifts and using their resources both individual church members and Church Councils seek the mind of Christ and confess him as the only Lord of the Church.

### Particular ministries

- 6.1.1 The particular ministries of the people of God are rooted in the prior and constitutive ministry of Christ, the Lord of the Church. All ministry is a participation in Christ's ongoing ministry. For the building up of the whole people of God, individual members of the Church, men and women, are called to particular ministries within the ministry of the community of faith.
- 6.1.2 Some are called to the ministry of Word and sacraments. Such ministry is rooted in, and sustained by, the Gospel they are given to proclaim. Through the grace of God in Christ, they are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world. (BU§21)
- 6.1.3 This personal ministry is exercised through the councils of the Church to whom the minister is accountable. In terms of decision-making, the minister in council is part of the group and participates in the group debates. The exercise of ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discernment of God's will and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- 6.1.4 Some are called to be elders. The responsibilities of elders are both corporate and personal. In the Elders' Meeting, they share with the minister of Word and sacraments in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local church. (BU §22) They will refer to the Church Meeting matters which fall within its remit. In addition, each elder will normally have a group of church members entrusted to his or her pastoral care.

### Ordination

- 6.2 Ordination points beyond itself and the person ordained to the initiative of Christ. *'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) (Assembly Reports, 1995, Appendix A, §3.8)*

- 6.2.1 Both elders and ministers of Word and sacraments are set apart by ordination, in the name of Christ and by the action of the Holy Spirit. They are not thereby accorded a status above that of church members. *“There is a sense in which ordination has been reserved for those ministries which most closely recall us to the 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.”* ( Assembly Reports, 1995, Appendix A, §3.10)
- 6.2.2 The ordination of a minister of Word and Sacraments is an act of God, affirmed by the calling church(es) and the District Council. The Synod Moderator normally presides over services of ordination. This symbolises the fact that the person ordained exercises ministry in a wider context than the local church, and witnesses to the mutuality of episcopate as between the local and wider spheres of churchly life. The ordination of an elder is an act of God affirmed by the local church, presided over by the minister (or Interim Moderator) of that church. In each case, the whole Church is represented to the local church.
- 6.2.3 The prayer at ordination is that the ordinand be endowed with the gift of the Spirit and enabled to be used by God for God’s gracious purposes. The laying-on of hands by representatives of the Church is a sign of the gift of the Spirit; the prayer of the congregation representing its commitment to support the one who is ordained.

#### **Ordination and authority**

- 6.3 In ordination, the Church, under God, authorises those who are called to exercise their ministry. Such authorisation confers authority on those who are ordained to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world.
- 6.3.1 This authority is founded on the Word of God, and it is expected that those called and those calling will together foster the well-being of the Church. This they are called to do in the freedom of the gospel, in the power of the Spirit and with the support of the local and wider Church. The whole Church is responsible for nurturing the faith and developing the skills of those called to be ministers.
- 6.3.2 Sometimes the freedom that comes with the Gospel is misused. *‘From time to time, (disciples) err and require discipline to remind them of the standards they have espoused, to correct them and bring them into renewed commitment.’* (Manual O1) When ordained ministers are alleged to have committed a serious breach of discipline, then a special disciplinary process is put into effect with a Mandated Group of Synod representatives. The Moderator and the Officers of the Pastoral Committee are then free to offer appropriate pastoral help to those concerned.

#### **Ordination and orderliness**

- 6.4 In that ordination is about orderliness, it is expected that specific responsibilities will normally be exercised by those who are ordained. The Basis of Union also makes provision for the occasional exercise of these responsibilities by those who are accredited conduct public worship. By authority of the District Council and in consultation with the local church concerned, specified persons may preside at services of baptism or the Lord’s Supper where pastoral necessity so requires. (BU §24)
- 6.4.1 The United Reformed Church recognises that 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 these 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.’* (Assembly Reports, 1995, Appendix A, §3.6) This difference is not one of status, but concerns the nature of the calling and the equipment given by God for the fulfilment of it.
- 6.4.2 The prayer of ordination recognises that the activity of God is central; while the United Reformed Church does not see ordination as a sacrament, it does perceive it to be a

biblically-grounded means of grace. In the case of both ministers and elders, ordination, a non-repeatable act, is for life.

- 6.4.3 A person whose name has been deleted from the Roll of Ministers for disciplinary reasons (and not, for example, because of formal transfer to a sister denomination) must refrain from any activity that may lead others to believe that that person is acting as a Minister of Religion. But in the event of his/her name being reinstated on the roll and a call being issued by a pastorate, that person will be inducted to the pastorate, not ordained, since ordination is unrepeatable. (BU A21 §5)

#### Other ministries

- 6.5 BU §23 provides that General Assembly shall decide what other ministries shall be exercised within the United Reformed Church. There is a list of nationally accredited lay preachers, commissioned for service by their District Councils; General Assembly keeps a roll of Church Related Community Workers.
- 6.5.1 Additional ministers (e.g. youth workers, musicians, workers with children) are recognised within the local congregation with varying degrees of formality. Through the exercise of their gifts, these build up the church in faith, love and service.

#### The councils of the church

- 6.6 The oversight of the United Reformed Church is the concern of the local church and of wider representative councils. All councils of the United Reformed Church are credal assemblies in which the sole Lordship of Christ over the Church is confessed. They are obliged to seek the mind of Christ, the only Head of the Church, and to pray for unanimity in him. The Manual affirms that Church Meeting, Elders' Meeting, District Councils, Synods and General Assembly shall each be recognised '*by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned.*' (Manual B1 (3)) Local councils make decisions appropriate to their sphere, while the wider councils exercise an oversight which may on occasion, in the interests of unity and peace, "*set limits to local liberty and to conciliar decisions and actions.*" (Assembly reports, 2002, pp 135ff)
- 6.6.1 At the time of union, the United Reformed Church affirmed that there are limits to diversity. Schedule D of the Manual states: '*Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit, we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction. For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide when differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.*'

#### The Church Meeting

- 6.7 The Church Meeting of the local church is composed of those whose names are included on the membership roll of that church. Organically related to the church's worship, it is the place where the baptised and covenanted believers who have sat under the preaching of the Word and received the bread and wine at the Lord's table, address the fundamental agenda item: How are we to witness to the Gospel we have by grace received?
- 6.7.1 Church Meeting is convened at least once a quarter and is normally presided over by the minister, on the ground that the one called to lead the saints to the throne of grace is the one called to lead them in determining their mission.
- 6.7.2 The Meeting has authority under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit to make decisions for the life of the church in that place. (Manual, B1) "*Members have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision and care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.*' (Manual B2) A wide range of issues come before Church Meeting. For example, members may address calls to ministers and elders; they may take decisions about property and finance; the care of members and adherents; the



church's outreach, and Church discipline. When the well-being of the Church is called into question by the behaviour of a member or members, elders and minister will discuss the matter together. They will pray for discernment and seek to come to a common mind. They will then refer their conclusion to the Church Meeting for action. It should never be forgotten that the primary objectives of church discipline in this sense are the honouring of God, the integrity of the Gospel, and the restoration of the offender.

#### The Elders' Meeting

- 6.8 The Elders' meeting is responsible for ensuring that public worship is regularly offered, sacraments are duly administered, and that pastoral care of the congregation is provided. In its decision-making, the Church Meeting receives guidance from the Elders' Meeting which has immediate responsibility for the oversight of the local church. Individual elders are elected to serve in the wider councils of the Church.

#### The District Council

- 6.9 The local church is linked structurally to the wider Church in and through the District Council, the link being derived from our understanding of catholicity, which issues in principles of interdependence and relatedness, mutual responsibility and accountability.
- 6.9.1 The District Council consists of ministers and representative elders of all the local churches in that district grouped together four times a year 'for the purpose of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action.' (Manual B4)
- 6.9.2 As there are no regulations governing the size of districts, these may be varied by Synods in response to fluctuations in the numbers of members, financial considerations, or congruence with ecumenical or regional boundaries.
- 6.9.3 The Council gives or withholds concurrence to calls. It consults regularly with all churches in the district about their life and work.
- 6.9.4 In the life of the Council, personal leadership is given by the President, District Secretary and Chair of the Pastoral Committee – who are elected from the members of the Council for such time as each Council may determine and who work in close collaboration with one another and with the Synod Moderator. While Synod Moderators are not officers of District Council, they will bring their perspective of the wider Church to bear on its decisions.

#### The Synod

- 6.10 The Synod is representative of the local churches and district councils in that area, united twice a year to deal with matters of wider concern. (Manual B7)
- 6.10.1 As there are no regulations governing the size of Synods, these may be varied by decision of General Assembly .
- 6.10.2 Personal leadership is exercised by the Synod Moderator.

#### The Synod Moderator

- 6.11 General Assembly appoints a Moderator for each Synod. Moderators are not ordained to a separate order of ministry; they are ministers of Word and Sacraments, separated from local pastoral charge to a wider pastoral engagement exercised in a conciliar context. They are appointed for a period of seven years. Their role is thus comparable with that of the regional moderator of the Eglise Réformée de France. The Hungarian-speaking Reformed churches have bishops (whose status remains that of ministers of Word and sacraments) and lay presidents in parallel.
- 6.11.1 Synod moderators are appointed for a period of seven years, with the possibility of reappointment if General Assembly so decides. They may seek a call to another sphere of service at any time during their term of office or when it comes to an end.

- 6.11.2 While the role of the Moderators within our present structures is distinctive, they do not comprise an order distinct from that of the minister of Word and sacraments
- 6.11.3 As members of local churches Moderators have the same duties and privileges as any other local member. In General Assembly, their respective votes carry equal weight with those of other members.
- 6.11.4 The Moderator chairs meetings of Synod and presides (or appoints a deputy to preside) at all ordinations and inductions of ministers within the Synod. The Moderator also exercises pastoral care of ministers and churches within the Synod. This is facilitated by the fact that the Moderator is also a member of each District Council in the Synod.
- 6.11.5 Their ministry is distinct from that of the ministers in their care and from that of the Synods which they chair, but it is not exercised in separation from these, for in Christ we are mutually interconnected.
- 6.11.6 The Church does not know of impersonal structures. The mutual interconnectedness in Christ is given institutional form through the councils of the Church through which the Moderator's ministry of oversight is exercised, and to which he or she is accountable.
- 6.11.7 With their unique overview of a number of local congregations in the Synod, Synod Moderators are able to relate the local to the wider Church from a broad basis of discernment.
- 6.11.8 By virtue of their representative status, Moderators can foster new relationships between individuals and also between Church traditions.
- 6.11.9 Owing to the large geographical area covered by the Synods, their ministry is exercised on a wide public scale. With the development of the ecumenical instruments, they can be called upon to speak as Church leaders.
- 6.11.10 Each Moderator will exercise ministry in different ways. In some cases, particular responsibilities are shared with training and development teams.
- 6.11.11 Collectively, the Moderators have a collegial role (which has evolved significantly since 1972) through which they offer leadership and oversight to the Church. Once a month, the Synod Moderators meet together. Though this meeting provides fellowship, and enables Moderators to discuss general issues of importance, its main function is to decide upon the introduction of ministers to vacant pastorates.
- 6.11.12 Whilst grateful for what God is doing amongst us in this collegial ministry, we acknowledge the need for further theological reflection upon its character as collegial.

#### The General Assembly

- 6.12 The General Assembly '*shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life.*' (Manual B10)
- 6.12.1 The General Assembly makes decisions on reports and recommendations from its own departments and committees with a view to promoting '*the propagation of the gospel, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.*' (Manual B12).
- 6.12.2 The General Assembly meets at least once in every year.
- 6.12.3 Members of Assembly are elected by District Councils and Synods to serve for one year.
- 6.12.4 Half of the representatives are ordained ministers, half drawn from the wider membership of the United Reformed Church. Decisions are always made jointly—never in separate houses or ministerial sessions.
- 6.12.5 The Moderator of the General Assembly is a member of the United Reformed Church, elected by each General Assembly one year in advance, and holds office for one year. As the Moderator exercises oversight of the life of each Assembly, guiding the

conciliar discussion, he/she works in close collaboration with the General Secretary and the Clerk to Assembly.

- 6.12.6 The General Secretary, who is accountable to General Assembly, is a minister of Word and Sacraments appointed for a period of seven years, renewable at the discretion of Assembly. The administrative tasks of the office will always be in the context of the Gospel imperative to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world.
- 6.12.7 It is generally true to say that '*Personal oversight apart from the wisdom of a corporate body is apt to become arbitrary and erratic; oversight by a corporate body without a personal pastor is apt to become bureaucratic and legalistic*' (GROU §112.c) There is equipoise between personal and conciliar oversight in all aspects of the life of the United Reformed Church. Conciliar government requires personal leadership; personal leadership is rooted in the conciliar.
- 6.12.8 Insofar as such oversight carries authority, it is not the authority of the person or the council as such, it is always the authority of Christ, discerned in the Word of God through the action of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, it is ministerial, not magisterial, in nature.

### Cautionary words

- 6.13 In all our Church affairs, God's freedom to speak a word of judgment and reconciliation is the one freedom that really matters. As our structures evolve, they will echo or muffle that word.
- 6.13.1 The abuse of freedom can lead to an exalting of the individual or the group at the expense of others. Church history gives ample evidence of the abuse of power by individuals and by councils of the Church.
- 6.13.2 Wary of the abuse of power by individuals, the United Reformed Church has often failed to receive and recognise the gift of personal leadership; in its embracing of conciliarity, it has often failed to see that councils too can abuse their power. In such cases the mutuality between the personal and conciliar has been undermined.

### III. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

- 7 'Within the one, holy, catholic apostolic Church the United Reformed Church acknowledges its responsibility under God...to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life (BU § 11).
- 7.1.1 Participating in the common life of the Church within the local church, (believers) enter into the life of the Church throughout the world.' (BU§16)
- 7.1.2 In what it says and does, the Church points to God's continuing activity in the world he created, summed up in the accomplished work of Christ. (BU§1) As the Church thus proclaims 'the fullness of Christ's Gospel to the world,' it engages in mission. '*As the Church goes out to bear witness to Christ among the nations, its own partial understanding of God's purpose is corrected and enlarged.....The work of gathering all the nations to become God's people and to worship him from whom their life flows is the work of God himself. It is the presence of the Spirit ...which constitutes the effective witness to Jesus.*'(GROU §37f)
- 7.1.3 The report *Growing Up*, accepted by General Assembly in 1999, draws upon a variety of ways to describe the task of mission. One of these is the statement of purpose of the URC (BU A2), another the Five Marks of Mission originally advanced by the Anglican Lambeth Conference and endorsed in 1997 by the Churches Together in England Forum.
- 7.1.4 Mission seeks by word and action to witness to God's loving and liberating purposes for the world as we know them in Jesus Christ and through the Spirit. This calls for a

firm grasp of the Gospel, and an openness towards people of many different types in a variety of personal, cultural, social, employment and recreational situations. In this way good relations are established.

### **Mission, evangelism and social action**

- 7.2 Relationship makes communication possible. In its knowledge of the Gospel as liberating power, 'good news to the poor... release to the captives... sight to the blind... liberty to those who are oppressed,' the Church finds words through which God the Holy Spirit may work renewal. This happens in worship, catechesis, and the sharing of every-day life as well as in public statements and social activity.
- 7.2.1 Our mission, evangelism and social action are effective only as God enables us. Christians discover what the will of God might require of them.
- 7.2.2 The task of evangelism is part of the mission of the whole Church. In 1988, the General Assembly passed a resolution which 'encouraged local churches to engage actively in evangelism and evangelisation, using those with appropriate gifts.' (Assembly Reports, p.73) In 2001, this was restated, with an encouragement to the Church to review the ministry of evangelists in the context of ongoing discussion about future patterns of ministry.
- 7.2.3 God's loving purposes are also furthered through social action. In 1986, the Doctrine and Worship Committee stated, in its response to *God's Reign and Our Unity*, '*We welcome the Report's demonstration that evangelism, social justice and church unity are not conflicting but complementary aspects of the one mission of God.*' (Assembly Reports, 1986, p.95) The first Child Contact Centre was set up in a United Reformed Church, and a significant number of congregations are involved in other projects to help those who are disadvantaged in our society.
- 7.2.4 This will 'expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community.' (Assembly Reports, 2001 p.59)

### **Mission and the shape of the local church.**

- 7.3 Pragmatic considerations of mission and ministry have also affected the shape of the local church.
- 7.3.1 Some of the larger urban congregations of the United Reformed Church are single pastorates. Of these, many were originally 'church plants,' founded by neighbouring churches and in response to situations where there was discerned spiritual need. In other cases, small mission stations, originally supported by larger neighbouring churches have themselves become local churches. Over recent years there has been a decline in single congregation pastorates. And there are signs that this trend may continue.
- 7.3.2 Others are linked together in group pastorates. In the case of small congregations in proximity to one another, these may assume the form of one church worshipping in different places. *Since the proper functioning of the local church is so fundamental to the life of the United Reformed Church, where there is a number of small congregations in proximity to one another unable separately to provide leadership and resources for the work of the church, such congregations shall consult with the district council to formulate an acceptable scheme for joining together with a single membership, a common church meeting and elders' meeting, representative of all the constituent congregations, and a shared ministry (Manual B1 (1))* In so doing we are seeking forms of local unity and ministerial order which will manifest in these places the fullness of Christ's redeeming presence and power.
- 7.3.3 In cases where it is not possible to implement this model in its entirety, churches within the group continue to function as local congregations, coming together as one for certain purposes. In rural areas in particular, such pastorates can cover a significant geographical region. If 'local' is used for too wide a geographical area, there is a risk that the problems and opportunities of real communities may be

overlooked – the local church in the sense of local congregation is the primary location of missionary activity and outreach.

- 7.3.4 While the councils of the local church have authority to minister at that level, yet there is an emphasis on the need for local churches to engage together in joint decision making to further their mission and service to the wider community. This need is addressed by the District Council
- 7.3.5 The personal leadership of the local church in its mission to the world is exercised through the minister of Word and Sacraments. This is a call from God which has been recognised by the Church as a whole and tested under appropriate training. It is endorsed by the decision of the local church to invite that person to minister within its life. Only those whose call is duly recognised can be called to a local church; but without such a local call the process is incomplete and ordination cannot normally take place.
- 7.3.6 The desire to *'expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community'* undergirds the ministry of Lay Leaders, of chaplains in industry, hospitals, the forces and universities, and of ministers who are called to serve otherwise than in regular pastoral charge. It is particularly distinctive in the office of the Church-Related Community Worker in the United Reformed Church. This, *'in the broadest sense, is a community worker who enables the church to work with and in its local community rather than someone employed by the church to act on its behalf... Churches have sought the help of a CRCW when they are set in urban priority areas, or when their neighbourhood has within it ethnic minorities, or groups with special needs...'* (Manual, K11)
- 7.3.7 The shape of the Church evolves as it seeks to determine the unchanging will of God in each local context.

#### **Mission and the world Church**

- 7.4 In the context of the wider world, the United Reformed Church is a partner in God's global mission to bring healing to the nations.
- 7.4.1 It is a member of the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Leuenberg Church Fellowship, the Conference of European Churches, and an associate member of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council.
- 7.4.2 Through the Belonging to the World Church programme, adopted by Assembly in 1998, the United Reformed Church seeks to raise awareness of the World Church amongst its local congregations. As encounters take place with other churches whose circumstances are markedly different from its own, it derives a fresh awareness of God's purposes.
- 7.4.3 So provision is made for overseas training for ordinands and CRCWs; each Synod is encouraged to have visiting speakers from an overseas partner church; and there is a grants system for continuing ministerial education and overseas training opportunities.
- 7.4.4 Most Synods are linked with a partner church on the continent of Europe; in some cases, as in the link with the Church of the Pfalz in Germany or the French Reformed Church, this reflects long-standing relationships. These are facilitated by the Synod European Partnership Co-ordinators.

#### **Mission and the world**

- 7.5 As we engage with the World Church, we also engage with the world.
- 7.5.1 In the name of the triune God who liberates, we concern ourselves with issues of justice and peace. As we do so, we affirm an ethical understanding of global reality which can be endorsed by all people of goodwill.
- 7.5.2 These struggles can be prophetic. They can lead to a questioning of the policies of the State. The United Reformed Church believes that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it must be free to dissent from civil government on questions concerning moral values and religious faith. *'The United Reformed Church declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has therein appointed a government*

*distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto, and that civil authorities, being always subject to the rule of God, ought to respect the rights of conscience and of religious belief in order to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind.'* (BU A17 §8)

- 7.5.3 The United Reformed Church was one of the founder members of Jubilee 2000, and individual members and local congregations actively campaign for the eradication of Third World debt. Through the Synod advocates, local congregations support Commitment for Life.
- 7.5.4 It engages with issues of human rights, notably through contact with refugees and asylum seekers.
- 7.5.5 It affirms the equality of women and men before God.
- 7.5.6 It also challenges Christians to defend creation against destructive arrogance, greed, and cruelty and to give expression to God's persistent love for every creature. (Assembly Reports, 1998, p.52)

#### **Mission and world religions**

- 7.6 As we engage with the world, we also engage with other world religions. The second ecumenical principle approved by the 2001 General Assembly resolves: *'to proclaim more clearly, in word and deed, that in Christ we are one World Church family living in a world which God loves. (The United Reformed Church) will therefore seek to celebrate the rich diversity of cultures, languages, church traditions and religious faiths within each local community and world-wide.'* (Record of Assembly, resolution 22, p.12)
- 7.6.1 There is a close link between mission and dialogue. A paper presented to the 1988 General Assembly by the then Mission and Other Faiths Committee continues to undergird the work of the present Inter-Faith Relations Committee. It states: *'.....the Christian mission must have the character of dialogue. Whether that mission is directed towards people of other faiths or people who profess no faith or lapsed Christians, it must be based on people meeting each other, building a relationship of confidence and trust, working together for the common good, and witnessing to their deepest convictions.'*
- 7.6.2 While we cannot bypass the 'scandal of particularity' which accompanies our primary conviction that in Jesus Christ God has acted once for all for the redemption of the world, our doctrines of creation in the image of God and of the Holy Spirit require us to affirm with confidence those insights which we share with people of other faiths. As we bring together dialogue and mission, we show our willingness to recognise in other faiths aspects of the truth which we have not seen or have chosen to ignore. 'Inter-faith encounter can renew, enrich and transform our Christian discipleship.' (Assembly reports, 2000, p. 82)

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

- 8 The present reality of the United Reformed Church has come about through a mix of intention, chance, and providence. As it wrestles faithfully with what it means to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic in its life and witness, and as it seeks to manifest the marks of the Church and to engage in mission, it lives in the gracious freedom of God's love, mercy, justice and forgiveness, looking ever to that day when God will be all in all.



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

E

## Report of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee

### ***Catch the Vision - For God's Tomorrow***

#### ***The Vision***

*The United Reformed Church has embarked on a journey to hear again God's call and claim on Christian lives, and to re-vision how to respond to that claim with the resources and opportunities that are ours in these times. We are standing on the brink of God's tomorrow, seeking to catch the vision that will give us life praying that... 'the Spirit of God may rest upon us, as we seek to be Christ's people, transformed by the gospel, announcing good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for those in prisons of wealth, poverty, disease and disorder, committed to making a difference to the world's kingdoms as we live Christ's Kingdom.'*

*(Catch the Vision, Assembly 2004)*

Our Church's response to God's call involves seeking new ways of being church, becoming more consciously and intentionally mission focused, embracing a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that rejoices in the diversity of God's rainbow people, and a renewed commitment to the Unity of the Body of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Committee welcomes this vision with much rejoicing for it is for us a re-articulation of the vision of multicultural ministry and what it means to be a multicultural church. In re-visioning what it means to be church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our committee is clear that a community of faith, a church that is truly multicultural is central to that vision. And we rejoice that *Catch the Vision* in its wisdom has reaffirmed for us the centrality of the vision of multicultural ministry for the new millennium. Welcoming new ways of being church, rejoicing in diversity as God's gift, a passion for mission, commitment to ecumenism, building God's kingdom and making a difference in a broken world - they are characteristics of a multicultural church.

The Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry urges General Assembly and the whole United Reformed Church to take seriously the vision of Multicultural Ministry and to be more intentional about developing churches that are truly multicultural. The vision of Multicultural Ministry is for a Christian community in which:

- The uniqueness of each culture are recognised, celebrated and valued;
- All people are actively encouraged to accept and respect each other;
- All people can share and learn from each other;
- All can participate equally in decision making;
- Unity in Christ is more than a union of denominations but includes the harmonious sharing of life with people from diverse cultures unified by their love of Christ;

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<sup>1</sup> Catch the Vision Update, Mission Council Jan 2005

- Commitment to justice is normative;
- People of no faith and other faiths are served with the love of Christ.

Multicultural Ministry involves all people across the boundaries of their various cultures. It involves deeper engagement and mutual impact and transformation between individuals and groups of different cultures. Multicultural Ministry is an integral part of the life of the whole Church, enriching every aspect of it, as new opportunities for mission grow. It is about God's diverse human family, living together, equally belonging, with a new spirituality and a new way of being where we can trust, forgive, practice active hospitality, share resources willingly and justly, affirm our interdependency, and belonging to one another right here in the United Reformed Church. It is about unity without uniformity. It needs to be said that the necessary empowerment and support for minority ethnic groups is not a means for distancing the whole Church from the needs and struggles of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Living and witnessing multiculturally is a necessity for the whole Church and includes every member.

The committee wishes to emphasise that the idea of the multicultural church is not a new phenomenon for the followers of Christ. To the contrary, we suggest that it is our Christian tradition and heritage. The 1<sup>st</sup> century church was diverse and multicultural. From a small congregation of 120 that gathered in an upstairs room, faced with the challenge of living Christ's vision of a house of prayer for all the nations, grew a congregation of thousands consisting of Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> The Christian Church was multicultural and multilingual from existence. So, in becoming a Church that is multicultural we are reclaiming who we truly are called to be as a community of Christ's followers. The painful yet wonderful emergence of a multicultural church is vividly recounted all through the book of Acts and graphically illustrated in the letters of Paul. All along, the motive force for the embracing of diversity in the growing church would seem to be none other than the very Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup> So, the call to mutual acceptance and sharing in a culturally diverse community is not an optional extra, but the very heart of the Christian calling, the treasured gift of the Spirit of Christ for us all.

It is a fact that the United Reformed Church, as indeed is Britain itself, is ethnically and culturally diverse. It is a fact that we are becoming increasing multi-ethnic and multicultural in our membership. As David Cornick has noted in *Inside Out*,<sup>4</sup> URC minority ethnic and multicultural churches are vital and thriving, a point of growth amidst the general malaise of decline. They remind us that the world church is right here with us and that we have the opportunity to learn from and share with the world church right here in our midst. In addition, figures from the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry 2004 survey of the URC strongly suggests a rapid increase in the number of migrant groups using our church premises throughout the UK for fellowship and worship.

For many years throughout London and in many other towns and cities local URC congregations have been grappling with the opportunities and challenges of building just and caring multicultural faith and worship communities. Many congregations have remained focussed on specific migrant communities as they explore how best to sustain both unity and diversity within the body of Christ. Their experiences are a rich resource for the Church and their journeys are testimonies to the wonder of multicultural ministry. The ongoing

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1: 15-26, 2:5 & 41, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2:1-11, 10:34-35; Galatians 2:11-16, 3:26-29, 5:22-26; 1Corinthians 12:4-27.

<sup>4</sup> CWM Magazine, June 2003, Issue 34 p.10



challenges they face reflect the rich complexity of the multicultural journey that God's spirit invites us all to share. It needs to be emphasised that the Committee's vision is not for one particular model of multicultural ministry, or even a fixed menu of models. We pray that new ways of releasing the joys and challenges of multicultural ministry may constantly emerge and be welcomed by the whole Church, even when they bend and challenge our existing models and structures. Let us listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The United Reformed Church's history of striving for racial justice is an affirmation of the fact that it is a multicultural church with membership composed of different cultures and ethnicity. Indeed the URC has a tradition of embracing diversity in its worship styles, theology, and discipleship which reflects an openness and willingness to become a truly multicultural Church. The Committee recognises that living and witnessing multiculturally, and learning to rejoice in the rich mix of ethnic cultures that is characteristic of British life are not easy. But this is a journey the Church must make and these are mission opportunities the Church cannot afford to miss. As churches we need to consider just how welcoming we are to those strangers in our midst. We need to find creative ways to welcome all people in our communities and neighbourhoods with care and hospitality. And we need to find expression for Christ's love and welcome for all in how our church is structured and functions if we are to be faithful to the Gospel.

To that end the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry urges Assembly to:

- affirm the multicultural vision of building a Church characterised by justice and mutual respect
- encourage the whole Church to be more intentional in developing multicultural churches and communities if we are to become a *vibrant and sustainable Christian community in the next ten years*
- make clear its commitment to embracing cultural diversity

by adopting the following resolution:

***The United Reformed Church declares itself to be a Multicultural Church welcoming all cultures and ethnicity in worship witness and service, and celebrating the diverse gifts of the whole people of God for the mission and ministry God calls us.***  
*to which*

*The Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry  
Convener: The Rev Andrew Prasad  
Secretary for RJ&MM: Katalina Tahaafe-Williams*



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

F

## Resolution on Asylum Seekers from Church and Society Committee

### **Background**

The nationally supported United Reformed Church petition from Teesdale for Edneth, a Zimbabwean woman, has highlighted a very major problem. She is not an isolated example, but represents the problem of many. The latest scheme of deporting vulnerable asylum seekers back to face great danger in a so-called 'safe' country such as Zimbabwe or Uganda is happening more and more. There is an urgent need for a review of which countries are safe for the return of failed asylum seekers.

Certain sections of the press are using inaccurate and misleading statistics to provide sensational headline news. This leads to prejudice and racism. Immigration and asylum have become a major issue for the expected General Election in most of the political parties, with promises of harsher ways of excluding those we do not want. Initial decision-making is often poor. There are frequent instances of so-called 'failed' asylum seekers, many with families, being harshly arrested in dawn raids and deported without legal representation being available for an appeal. In Scotland especially there is a need for immigration to bolster the workforce in an ageing population. The task of eliminating the trafficking of people, both women and men - the modern slave trade - is urgent.

**The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church calls upon all political parties in the run-up to a General Election to:**

- 1) clear the confusion of the public over the different categories of immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker;**
- 2) stop stirring up the racial conflict caused by their competitive hardening attitude and by the proposed tougher legislation towards asylum seekers;**
- 3) review urgently and frequently which countries are safe for the return of asylum seekers;**
- 4) minimise the detaining of families in removal centres;**
- 5) work urgently to eliminate trafficking of people to this country.**



## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# G

### Catch the Vision

'Together, making a difference for Christ's sake'  
Catch the Vision interim report to the March Mission Council 2005

## What is the vision?

A path to God's future which leads...

- Towards new ways of being church
- Towards deeper engagement in mission
- Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Towards a slimmer, more rigorous organisation
- Towards renewed ecumenical commitment

## A summary

### 1. Towards new ways of being church...

- A direct contact church, in regular contact by e-mail

Communication is the key to all relationships. We have been impressed by the dynamism of networks of workers and enthusiasts in the church. Some of our most significant and successful pieces of work have been generated in this way. We need to learn from major charities like the National Trust and Christian Aid. Direct contact is about good relationships. All projections about future communications strategies predict a huge increase in computer use. We doubt that there is any church in the URC where at least one person is not on-line.

We therefore propose that the church invest in the creation of an e-mail direct mailing network which will allow members and adherents greater access to, and participation in, the life of the United Reformed Church.

- Networks and short-term task groups rather than committees

In 2003 central committees cost us £138, 181. We are not convinced that committees are the most productive way of achieving the ends of policy and programmes, and we give due notice that during 2005 we will be considering other options for achieving those goals.

- A thorough review of M&M

One of our greatest achievements has been the creation of the M&M Fund and the centralised payment of ministers. Those whose memories are long enough will recall the previous system of paying ministers locally and therefore understand the magnitude of the achievement. However, experience of Synods failing to meet their pledges for the last two years suggests that a review of the Fund and its operation is badly needed. We recommend that this take place during 2005/6 and that a report be made to the 2006 Assembly.

- Fundraising and the creation of an income rather than expenditure led budget

We have been deeply impressed by the ways in which giving to Commitment for Life has increased at precisely the same time that giving to the general funds of the church has been falling. We believe this bears witness to the generosity of God's people, and we believe that to be a response to God's generosity to us. We also note the increase in outside funding available for faith-based community projects.

We believe that the church needs to 'get real' about stewardship (which in other professional worlds is called fundraising). We are lamentably unprofessional in our approach. During 2005/6 we will be considering the possibility of appointing a professional Director of Fundraising for a five year period.

- An agency which will allow buildings which are a burden to have the opportunity of new life

We know that the expertise exists within the United Reformed Church to turn the unwanted hulks of yesteryear into possibilities of spiritual and community regeneration. We are working on a proposal to create an agency which will begin by managing a few projects and as it grows and takes on life, spreads its expertise across the church.

- Extending Special Category Ministry to enable licensed experiment in new ways of being church

## 2. Towards deeper engagement in mission

- More 'Heineken' ministry in the gap between church and world.

This will be achieved by gently increasing the number of Special Category Ministers over an agreed period (see the Ministries Committee report)

- Leadership of each church grounded in the eldership

(see the Ministries Committee report)

- A new, flexible deployment system which will take account of lay as well as ministerial resources

## 3. Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

- A values / discipleship project which will develop the profile of local churches in accord with the five marks of mission, the three ecumenical principles and the 'Catch the Vision' prayer

- The creation and sustaining of 'a learning church' which is committed to learning about the faith, how to speak of it and live it in post-Christendom.

This will involve the deliberate shifting of resources for training to pay more than lip service to the training and equipping of the whole people of God (see the Training Committee report).

## 4. Towards a slimmer, more rigorous organisation

- A new conciliar structure with one level of council between Assembly and the local church

(see the report of the Structures Group)

- A much reduced Assembly which meets every two years

Our traditions treated their 'Assemblies' in different ways. Presbyterianism regarded its Assembly as primarily a business meeting, there to set policy and act as the supreme court of the church. English Congregationalism inherited a tradition of an annual meeting which was not simply deliberative but also inspirational. The structure of the United Reformed Church ensures that its Assembly is structured in a presbyterian manner, but it behaves in a way which encompasses both dimensions. Those two functions will inevitably be interwoven to some degree.

The Assembly Arrangements Committee have thought at length about Assembly. Their concerns are partly finance driven. Assembly is a very expensive exercise. It costs us upwards of £250,000 pa (and rising) - or £7,000 per hour of debate. It is annual, and it is the same size as it was in 1972 when our church was twice the size it is now. We note that every time Assembly has debated its size with a view to reducing it, it has actually increased it.

We wish to test the mind of the church that a radical change is needed. We believe that the proposal we bring will reduce the costs to church significantly, and ensure more efficient government. We propose that an Assembly of 250 meet every two years for five days. We believe this would save in the region of £170,000 pa.

The governance of the church needs closer attention than we have yet been able to give it. We need to do more work in this area, perhaps reporting in 2006 rather than this year. However, in the meantime we would like to test the mind of Mission Council and propose:

- An Assembly Executive Council of 26 people which meets every two months, which includes elected Trustees. As far as is possible the business of the Trustees and the Council shall be taken at the same meeting, even if there is a legal requirement for separate agendas.
- A Mission Forum which meets every six months to review and steer the mission strategy of the church

## 5. Towards renewed ecumenical commitment

- Deepening mutual understanding with the Church of England and the Methodist Church

(see the Ecumenical Committee report)

- On-going discussions with the Methodist Church about the possibilities of bringing our two national operations under one roof

- Challenge all local churches to explore again ecumenical possibilities

Our commitment to ecumenism is unwavering. We are not, nor will we ever be, builders of barriers that prevent ministers of other churches from presiding at the sacraments in our churches and pastoring our congregations. We long for the day when the church universal will share that openness, but we recognise that it is not yet. We remain committed to the belief that unity is an essential prerequisite of effective mission, and are sad when creative local possibilities are disabled by barriers to which we do not subscribe.

The Ecumenical Committee were asked by last year's Assembly to assess what possibilities exist for us to '...take further steps towards the unity of all God's people.' After due care and thought, they bring proposals which will allow us to develop further our relationships with the Church of England and the Methodist Church in England. Their hope is that these conversations might further the mission of the church in these islands by patiently addressing the barriers that still exist to our joint working. However, they are persuaded, after due and diligent discussion amongst our ecumenical partners, that the time is not ripe for the proposal of unity schemes. That is not to be interpreted as a measure of our commitment, but rather as a sensible reading of the position of our partners and a due recognition of their varying priorities. However, our goal (as it was in 1972) continues to be the visible unity of the people of God. We believe that this should therefore be under constant review.

- A commitment to examine our own life to see where we can help ecumenical partners understand us better - eldership and episcopate.

We sometimes assume that our commitment to ecumenism is obvious because of our history and our commitment to local ecumenism. That is sometimes more obvious to ourselves than it is to our partners. If we are actually serious about preparing ourselves for further ecumenical engagement, we need to work on two specific parts of our life. The first is the theology and practice of eldership. Although commonplace in the Reformed world, eldership is simply not understood by our ecumenical partners who find an ordained lay ministry at best a paradox. Indeed, if we are honest we must admit first, that we do not actually understand it ourselves, and second, that it has generated controversy in Reformed ecclesiology through the centuries. We owe it to ourselves and our partners to work this through.

The second is to return to the question of personal episcopate which we have not examined in detail since the English covenant debates of the 1980s (when we grudgingly accepted the principle), although we did approve the concept of an ecumenical bishop for Ely in Wales in 2003. The most natural dialogue partners for the United Reformed Church in all three nations include episcopally ordered churches. The Methodist Church (with whom we have over 300 united churches, 116 of which are three way partnerships or more) are considering at this Conference how they might take episcopacy into their system. We will not be able to avoid the question of episcopate in any future unity discussions with our closest partners. We therefore propose that we begin to consider this question anew.

# Background Papers

1. A theology of relatedness and the shaping of a Reformed church
2. Finance
3. Towards a spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## A theology of relatedness and the shaping of a Reformed church

(presently intended as a preamble to the work of Structures Group, and to be incorporated with it for the report to GA)

1. The church catholic is the company of those who are 'in Christ'. The fundamental reality of the church is therefore relatedness - relatedness to Christ, and through Christ to the holy and blessed trinity; relatedness to all who proclaim themselves to be 'in Christ'; and relatedness to the creation which God has reconciled to himself through the work of Christ. (2 Cor 5:19) Relationship is primarily about being, not doing, and yet relationships needs tending. That is true in the church of our relationships with God, with each other and with the world of which we are an intimate part.
2. The sermon on the mount begins with 'being' and what one might term qualities and dispositions of the soul. The blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted for the Lord's sake. Only then does Jesus employ (or Matthew place) more dynamic, transformative images - salt, light, yeast - which turn our minds inexorably to mission. Being results in doing, but doing cannot replace being.
3. First and foremost the church is the company of those who are 'in Christ'. Its other tasks - offering thanksgiving, heralding good news, standing in solidarity with the poor, comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable and so on - are secondary to that reality. When we ask what the church is for we are perhaps asking the wrong question, for the church is before it is for anything. As Augustine wrote 'You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.' The church should be the place where people find their rest in God. Too often it looks more like the aftermath of the London marathon.
4. The church is the space and time where God and humanity meet in Jesus Christ. It is a place for being, for resting in that reality and becoming who we really are, and that in relationship to each other. It is a source of doing, because being the people we really are has implications for both the socio-political and created orders. If our spiritual life is to be holistic, that balance has to be maintained. If we are to be church fully and creatively, that balance has to be maintained.



5. God has gifted the United Reformed Church with a particular history, and therefore with particular insights, as part of the church catholic. We are a church formed of four churches whose witness was a working out of the reforming traditions of the sixteenth century. We describe ourselves as 'reformed' as well as 'catholic'. Our distinctiveness lies partly in that heritage, but also in our experience of being together in Christ, and becoming more fully the church he is calling us to be. That is a dynamic, exciting, on-going process. We deliberately live unity in over 400 (check) LEPs and through participation in ecumenical ventures wherever we are able. That is our calling, to be a sign to the entire Christian community of our Lord's Prayer that all his disciples might be one, and of the reality of reconciliation.
6. We do not need to apologise for our existence. We should rather be faithful to our calling, being church in a way that knocks walls down rather than building them, rejoicing in the presence of Christ wherever it is to be found.
7. We are not committed to unity because we believe church unity to be an end in itself. This is not the world of corporate merger. It is much more important than that. The unity of the church, those who are in Christ, 'the new creation', is a sign of God's will of shalom for the whole of the created order (the oikoumene), a prelude for the gathering up of all things into the unity of Christ. Unity is part of the fulfilment of God's will, 'on earth as it is in heaven'. That is why we are as passionately committed to the quest for justice and peace for all God's people as we are to the 'churchly' ecumenical journey. We were, and are, called 'together' to 'make a difference for Christ's sake.
8. We are fortunate in our inheritance. Our forefathers and mothers in the faith designed a church which retained and safeguarded some of the most precious insights of the profoundly different traditions of Congregationalism and the Presbyterianism and the Churches of Christ. At the heart of these reformed traditions is the belief that God gives Godself to the people of God through Jesus Christ, and that the Word of God about Jesus Christ is the supreme standard by which we order our lives. Scripture is not the property of a caste within the church, be they priests, ministers, or theologians, but of all God's people. God speaks to all, and each has an insight to bring. That is an expression of our relatedness in Christ. That is why we meet in council together. We do not do so because we enjoy each other's company (although mostly we do). We meet together in council so that we may discern the will of God both for ourselves and God's church. That is a fundamental principle of our spiritual life.
9. There was, however, a respectable degree of provisionality about the way in which the Basis of Union was drafted. What was important was the centrality of taking council together, not the number of councils that we might use to do that.
10. We have learnt a good deal over the past thirty years, and we have changed. We are no longer 'congregationalists' and 'presbyterians' and 'members of the Churches of Christ'. Through the gift of God we have grown into unity together, and become the United Reformed Church. As we plan for God's future we need to remember not only who we were, but who by his grace we are. We are still a conciliar people, but there is widespread agreement that our present pattern of councils hinders rather than

enables our wishes to seek God's will together, enjoy fellowship in Christ and express our belonging to each other.

11. There are reasons for that. A decline in numbers means that greater burdens fall on fewer people. At the same time, we know that we need to be church not only locally, but regionally and nationally, for the local church only makes theological sense as an expression of the church catholic. At present we express our local belonging through Church Meeting, our regional belonging through our district councils and synods, and our national belonging through the Assembly and its on-going work through its officers and committees.

#### 12.(a) The local church

This is the focus of discipleship and witness for the vast majority of members and adherents of the United Reformed Church. That is as it should be. We are Christians where we are, equipped saints, making a difference for Christ's sake to the communities in which we work, play and live. Our 1691 local churches should be centres of kingdom activity. In our understanding of church, it is the gathered community of saints which comes first. Ministry follows, to help equip those saints for their ministry in the world. It is our observation that we sometimes seem to have inverted that order. Our deployment policies make it seem as if churches need to be grouped together with no other reason than to make a viable job for a minister. However difficult it is in practice, we wish to affirm that theologically the church precedes ministry. We rejoice in the spiritual vibrancy and missionary engagement (both social and evangelistic) which marks many of our congregations.

13. However, we also have serious questions about local church life. Our membership has more than halved since 1972, but the number of local churches has declined by only 10%. Our financial analysis shows that at least £8m a year (and maybe more) is spent on maintenance and support of buildings. We want the church to ponder its stewardship, to ask if this is what God would have us do with our wealth for Christ's sake. England and Wales (the history is different in Scotland) still suffer from the competitive church and chapel building of the nineteenth century. We do not need the plant that we have to do what we need to do. We ask local Christian communities to question seriously whether their mission would be better accomplished by uniting with a nearby URC or an ecumenical partner.

14. We note with dismay the reports we receive from the Moderators that some ministers will do anything rather than be ministers in local pastorates. Our dismay is rooted both in what that tells us about ministry, and about what it reveals about the nature of the local church. We still hear of churches that regard a minister as their private chaplain, of churches that remain determinedly in the nineteenth century and refuse to engage with the complexities of mission in post-Christendom. Some ministers are in the difficult position of knowing that the secular institutions which they encounter and work with are much closer to the kingdom of God than the congregations to which they minister. Equally, some ministers are 'trapped' in the service of the church, bewildered by change, spiritually exhausted, yet unable to seek employment elsewhere because of the manse system. Others are strained and stretched by the complexity of living on the edge between viability and implosion on

the shifting border between Christian spirituality and post-Christian culture. In our view this is probably a greater source of stress in the ministry than the reality of multiple pastorates. There is clearly a huge agenda here in terms of discipleship, support of ministers and the development of discipleship. We begin to scratch the surface (but no more) in what we say about spirituality.

15. We believe that every level of that structure needs re-examining. The Life and Witness Committee were asked to consider the structures of the local church and to report to the 2006 Assembly. The fact that no more is said about the structure of the local church in this report does not mean that it is unimportant. Indeed, we have made it clear that we regard this entire process as an attempt to shift power and authority closer to the ground, and to enable our 1691 local churches to be centres of difference-making for Christ's sake.

16 (b) being the church regionally

Regional structures exist for two reasons. They are there to lend identity to the United Reformed Church in the affairs of the region, and in the case of our two national Synods, the nation. That is important both in addressing governmental structures and in collaborating with our ecumenical partners. They also exist to provide specialist services to local churches. Those services are varied. They presently range from specialist trust advice to youth leadership training and lay training.

17. We are church regionally in district council and synod. There has been widespread agreement since the 'Catch the vision' process began that there should be one level of council between the Assembly and the local church. Mission Council will be discussing the Structures Group report separately. We simply note here their proposal that Synods and districts should combine their functions. Should that proposal be accepted, we need to pay close attention to the working and staffing of Synods.

18. The increasing power of Synods has been an important feature of the United Reformed Church's history. There are good reasons for that:

- it reflects the political 'drift' towards devolution
- the decline in membership has resulted in a reduced ability to handle the complexities of legal, financial and property matters in local churches and districts and a consequent 'centralisation'
- legislation continually increases, and churches are bound to respond professionally to its demands
- under the 1972 Act old Congregational County Union funds passed to Synods, as well as the accrual of the proceeds of the sale of redundant properties

19. The shaping of the United Reformed Church Act meant that Synods would inevitably grow in power, and grow unequally because property values vary across the country. Each Synod is financially and legally autonomous. Assembly has no control over the way Synods use their resources. Most have chosen to use their resources to employ people. That has co-incided with both the development of parallel systems of training and increasing specialisation in ministry and services.

20. Training needs have changed during our history. The theological college system which we inherited in 1972 was supplemented by the emergence of regional training structures in the 1980s and, more recently, increased emphases on continuing ministerial education, lay training and TLS. Rather than consider how we might re-deploy our resources with each of these developments, we have employed more and more people to train a church which is now half the size it was in 1972.
21. We have also observed a steady growth of specialisation. First there were trainers of various hues, then mission enablers and development officers. We do not doubt that this brings benefits, but we also worry that the implied message of specialisation is that local churches and ministers are incapable of (eg) training their own elders and worship leaders.
22. We believe that the time has come for us to reconsider what resources and specialist skills should be available to local churches at regional level. The 'down-side' of the shift of power to Synods has been the unwittingly fostering of a culture of 'creeping diocesanism', which is in danger of turning us into thirteen churches rather than one. Inevitably, given the financial and property base of Synodical power, there is serious inequality between Synods. We have made encouraging progress in addressing this through Resource Sharing.
23. We believe the time has come to assert anew that we are one church in thirteen Synods and three nations. Our corporate life needs to be lived in such a way that we are accountable to each other under God for the ways in which we use our resources. We believe that each synod should enjoy the same level and quality of provision, and that each should be staffed similarly. We must therefore find ways to ensure that each Synod is resourced adequately and capable of delivering common programmes. We hope that this might also end the inequalities of payment and conditions between the employees of the various Synods. We therefore recommend that these services be co-ordinated across the church, with the proviso that the special needs of the two national synods may need to be separately addressed.
24. Whilst we accept that we are church in a very different world to 1972, we cannot but help observe that then 12 Synods were staffed by 12 Moderators with varying levels of PA support. Now our 13 Synods need 91 full and part-time employees to sustain themselves (excluding Moderators and Synod Clerks (some of whom are full-time, some part-time, some spare-time)). Running Synods currently required an expenditure budget of £4m. We seriously question the viability of that level of expenditure.

#### 25 (c) being church in the United Kingdom

The General Assembly is the prime expression of our national life in the United Kingdom. The Moderator of the General Assembly is the head of the church, and under her / his guidance and authority, Mission Council carries out the work of Assembly between Assemblies. That work is devolved to the paid staff of the Assembly who are based principally but not exclusively at Church House. Being church nationally in the United Kingdom allows us to interact with government and national institutions, and also to co-operate with ecumenical partners.

26. Already staff who work for the Assembly programmes are pondering how their work might fit into 'Catch the Vision'. We cannot predict what will come of future discussions about the way programmes are formulated and delivered, but we can signal what an example of this might mean. It could, for example, mean dividing the work at Church House into three main areas - support, church servicing (ie. All that makes the Church operate internally) and mission (ie all that the church does externally).

27. We presently employ 74 staff at Church House (including 8 ministers) and 104 in Synods (including Moderators, but excluding Synod Clerks and Treasurers); we envisage rationalisation for a more efficient and effective use of support staff. This must be addressed during 2005/6.

- A more rational use of church buildings. At present we spend £19.8m pa (similar to M&M) on utility services and maintenance. This is a huge burden. Our membership has more than halved since 1972, and the number of churches has declined by only 10%.
- Resource sharing so that each 'region' or 'synod' has the same staffing level / level of professional expertise

27. All of this needs to be achieved against the background of a falling roll of members (although with an increased body of adherents), and a waning commitment to the M&M fund. We need either to increase giving by £1m pa by 2007 - an extra 25p per member per week, or an extra 16p per week per member and adherent - or cut the budget by a similar amount.

## Finance

1. Finance should be the servant of the church, not its master. That is not the case at the moment. We have an expenditure driven budget, which divides roughly 80 / 20 between the cost of ministry and the remaining costs of the central church (ie. Its programmes, staff and administration). There is an annual struggle to meet that budget, and that struggle has been getting harder in the last two or three years as some Synods fail to meet their pledges.
2. However, we do not believe that the church is ungenerous. We are deeply impressed by the continued increase in giving to Commitment for Life, and we note from our own research that the total income of local churches in 2002 was £61.5 million per annum. That is a very considerable sum for a small church, especially as half came from giving. However, less than half the total income (45.5%) was spent on M&M and ministerial expenses. The remainder is, of course, not disposable income that can be shifted from one place to another. Our suspicion is that a good deal of it has to do with property maintenance.
3. So, we see on the one hand a generous, some might even say a wealthy, church, and on the other hand a diminishing response to the needs of the M&M Fund. We find this puzzling and it leads us to question whether local churches understand how the M&M Fund works.
4. We suspect that

- M&M contributions are widely regarded as a tax - and no one enjoys paying taxes
  - There is widespread lack of clarity about how much is needed, how it is raised, and how it is spent
  - the levying of additional Synod contributions in some Synods creates further confusion
  - churches have little idea of the true cost of ministry
  - that the relationship between generous giving and ministry and mission has been lost
5. One piece of research concerns us deeply. In 2003 42.7% of the M&M Fund (£8m out of £18.7 million) was collected from 10.6% (183) of our churches. The number of churches that contribute anything near the true cost of ministry is perilously small. Those churches are both fortunate and hugely generous. Many of them are large, successful and prosperous. We need a theology of generosity that both appreciates what they give to the whole church, and supports them in their generosity. It is a brutal statistical reality that large churches decline fastest, and yet these churches (on which the financial resourcing of our mission depends) can be deprived of ministry by deployment quotas. It is small wonder that some of them wonder if they could use their resources more effectively in other ways. We need to recall that egalitarianism is not always a moral stance.
  6. Although many are confused about the church's finances, the facts are stark and easily understood. Over 80% of our budget is spent on ministry (including training), and the vast majority of our ministers work in local pastoral charge. 86p in every £1 given to M&M re-circulates back to local churches. (Reports to Assembly 2004 p 158) The remaining 14p funds the programmes of the church, like FURY and racial justice work, or supports administration, like the Finance Office which runs the payroll and administers the Ministers' Pension scheme.
  7. We understand that many people believe that the financial problems of the church would be alleviated if Church House were to be sold and the offices re-located. We investigated this as a serious possibility, inviting Biscoe Craig Hall to value the premises and give us their professional opinion. Two valuations were made. The first included the Regent Square Church site which adjoins Church House. The opinion was that development was not possible on the united site for a variety of complex reasons. We understand that the Church are continuing to explore other possibilities and are remaining in touch with their thinking.
  8. The second valuation was of Church House itself, for £2.2m. In Biscoe Craig Hall's opinion that would not begin to cover the cost of re-location and the purchase / rent of new office space. Still less will its sale solve the church's financial problems.
  9. In the Steering Group's opinion re-location was no longer an option, and we have therefore begun discussions with the Methodist Church about the possibilities of sharing premises. Our primary aim in this is not to produce short-term savings (although it will probably produce long-term reductions in cost) but to foster ecumenical working and creativity.
  10. We have some broad observations to make.

- a) We do not believe that the central costs of the church can be driven down much further without a dramatic reduction in the programmes of the church. Budget holders have pruned their budgets drastically in the past two years. We have stated from the start of 'Catch the Vision' that we would be addressing the programmes and staffing of the church in 2005/6, and we intend to keep to that timetable. However, we are putting the church on notice now, that unless giving increases considerably, programmes will have to be discontinued for further savings to be made. Hard choices are inevitable.
- b) We believe that the church needs to get real about stewardship ( which the rest of the world calls fund raising). During 2005/6 we will be exploring the possibilities of appointing a professional lay Director of Fundraising for a five year period.
- c) We need to move to an income driven budget. That will mean a major shift in self-perception, identifying projects and work that we believe we are called to do, and then raising the income to enable us to do so.

## Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

1. We believe this to be the heart of the Catch the Vision process, and one which must now take priority in our agendas. Many studies now exist about the context in which we find ourselves. Commentators call our age 'post-modern', 'post-Constantinian', 'post-Christian' or 'post-Christendom'. It is spoken of as 'an age of transition' and one recent ecumenical document speaks of these being 'unstable times' for the churches. All those descriptions attempt to explain a momentous change in Western European culture.
2. Stuart Murray begins his study of post-Christendom with two stories. The first is of a teenager in a London school who hears the Christmas story for the first time. He is amazed and captivated by it, and at the end of the lesson asked his teacher, 'Why did they give the baby a swear word for his name?' The second is of a man visiting a church in Oxford one Sunday to collect some something for his partner who runs at art work-shop in the multi-use building during the week. He arrives as the congregation is leaving and says to the minister, 'What are all these people doing? I didn't know churches were open on Sundays.' (Stuart Murray Post-Christendom Carlisle Pasternoster 2004 p 1)
3. Large parts of our society no longer have even a residual memory of the Christian story or of the role of church in community. I remember as a teenager a conversation with an uncle who was a naval CPO. He asked me what I wanted to do, and I told him I was feeling a call to ministry. 'People will always respect that' he said. In a recent book Clive Marsh, a theologian married to a Methodist minister, related a story of some parents of a friend of his ten year old son who were anxious about him going to a church youth club, 'given what you read in the papers about the clergy being

paedophiles and all that'. ( Clive Marsh Christianity in a post-atheist age London SCM 2002 p 87)

4. Being Christian, being the church twenty years ago still brought with it a patina of respectability and maybe a patient smile. To-day it is a marginalised activity which people regard with a mixture of suspicion and incomprehension. This is a temporary 'phase', and it is hard to predict what the next generation will experience. On the one hand there is little doubt that the number of those who have no contact with the church and no knowledge of the Christian story will continue to increase. On the other, the intellectual tides are turning, and we may indeed be living in what Alister McGrath calls 'the twilight of atheism'.
5. For the moment though our experience is not so much of exile as wilderness, and our task is to live faithfully in the wilderness. This is uncomfortable territory. Not since the early centuries has the western church been so close to the experience of the early church. We are a tiny minority in a alien land. But there is a crucial difference. We tell a story which is old, not new, which is enshrined on the walls of our art galleries and in the musical corpus of Europe. Those who have little conception of Christianity or present knowledge of the church have absorbed the legacy of the misuse of the gospel by nearly two thousand years of our ancestors in the faith - the crusades, genocide, slavery, autocracy, violence, cruelty - all in the name of Christ.
6. It is little surprise that stress and uncertainty have become characteristics of church life. This is context for the discussion we need to have about spirituality, a conversation which could be headed 'How to survive in the wilderness'.
7. As a Steering Group we have barely dipped our toes in this water, although we have had an interesting conversation about spirituality and community regeneration, and have begun to plan a small consultation on mission, spirituality and evangelism for the autumn.
8. We are convinced that the exploration of the spiritual resources available to us as we seek to be church in the strange and perturbing landscape of 'post-Christendom' is central to our future discipleship. That is why we believe that the United Reformed Church should embark on a reflective process which will help it articulate its understandings of spirituality (we believe that there will be more than one!), because this will provide the basis for renewal and rededication.
9. For this Mission Council (and maybe our report to Assembly) we wish first to draw attention to some resources which already exist which can form an agreed framework for that reflection, and then we wish to pose some questions.

## Resources

Over the past five years the General Assembly has made three significant statements about policy and direction.



## 1. The five marks of mission

In 1999 we adopted the five marks of mission as a summary of our missionary intent. The 'marks' have an interesting ecumenical history. They were first agreed by the Lambeth Conference and then endorsed by CTE in 1997. They therefore represent 'common ground' with our ecumenical partners:

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

## 2. The three ecumenical principles

In 2001 three ecumenical principles received the blessing of Assembly. They set out our understanding of what it means to be ecumenically committed:

- ◆ The United Reformed Church will seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community.
- ◆ The United Reformed Church will seek to proclaim more clearly, in word and deed, that in Christ we are one world church family living in a world which God loves. It will, therefore seek to celebrate the rich diversity of cultures, languages, and church traditions within each local community and world-wide and seek, as appropriate, to work with members of other faith communities for the promotion of Biblical values of love, peace and justice.
- ◆ The United Reformed Church will seek to persevere in the search for the visible and organic unity of the Church through church-to-church conversations on matters of faith and church order so that sinful, and sometimes death-dealing, divisions may be healed and the Christian message of reconciliation be proclaimed with integrity.

## 3. The Catch the vision prayer

In 2004 Assembly endorsed the prayer which was inspired by the broad vision statement which appeared at the start of the CTV process

...we seek to be Christ's people,  
transformed by the gospel  
announcing good news to the poor  
proclaiming freedom for those in prisons of wealth, poverty, disease and disorder  
committed to making a difference  
to the world's kingdoms  
as we live Christ's kingdom.

As the Catch the vision process deepens, those three statements can be the foundations for a continuing conversation about mission and spirituality. They speak about the kind of people and the sort of church that we know we are called to be.

## Questions and comments

a) What does it mean to be ecumenically committed?

Unity and mission are indivisible realities, because ecumenism is about the oikoumene, the whole created world, which is God's gift of a home (an oikos) to humanity. To be ecumenically committed is to be committed to a particular style of spirituality:

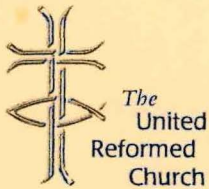
- Appreciative of the diversity of cultures that make up God's work
- Committed to that world, and therefore to its sustenance and care; concern (eg) about the environment, world hunger and social justice are not 'add ons' but expressions of our ecumenical vision
- Committed to conversation and understanding between all peoples of faith, for the sake of the world's future
- Committed to seeking partners in Civic Society to further kingdom values wherever possible
- Committed to relatedness in Christ as the fundamental reality of our doctrine of the church, and therefore committed to each other, even when in basic disagreement.

What this might mean in one area of our life, being a culturally inclusive church, is spelt out in the paper from the Racial Justice Committee, which will be incorporated into the CTV Assembly report. Similarly, considerable resources are available to us from the world church. Encountering Christians (for example) from Asia who have centuries of experience in being church in a majority Hindu or Buddhist culture, or of African Christians who have no fear of growth, can energise and renew us. What might all of these mean as we develop our life over the next decade or so?

b) What does it mean to be committed to 'making a difference' for Christ's sake?

- Would we derive encouragement from something that is measurable?
- Does Commitment for Life offer us a model? Should we limit our commitment to the CforL projects, or should we identify three or four 'home' projects that we can identify with and support?
- How do we provide support and encouragement to all those who seek 'to make a difference' in their daily lives and professions?

c) How can we prepare ourselves to engage in mission in 'post-Christendom'?



## MISSION COUNCIL 4-6 March 2005

# H

### Additional items and corrections to existing papers

#### **1. Report of Ecumenical Committee in response to Resolution 41**

##### ***Introduction***

1) The United Reformed Church can rejoice that the questions posed by the Catch the Vision Process led many to reaffirm their commitment to taking *further steps towards the unity of all God's people*.<sup>1</sup> During her travels as Moderator of General Assembly Sheila Maxey has noted that people are responding to this renewed commitment by choosing to pursue whatever ecumenical link makes most sense locally.

2) This resonates with the first of the Three Ecumenical Principles, adopted by the United Reformed Church at the 2001 General Assembly, *To expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community*. Currently it is still the case that the greatest ecumenical opportunities exist at the local level. In the words of the poster printed by the German equivalent of Christian Aid, lots of little people in lots of little places doing lots of little things can change the face of the world!

##### ***Responding to Resolution 41***

3) So, in response to Resolution 41, Ecumenical Committee proposes that all United Reformed Church congregations be asked to look again for local ecumenical possibilities. We encourage members of local churches to think who their ecumenical partners might be and to broaden their horizons beyond the usual and the immediate. We ask them to consider both traditional and non-traditional Local Ecumenical Partnerships and affirm more flexible pieces of work which are clearly in the same spirit but which do not fall within existing classifications. We ask Districts, Areas and Synods or whatever structure emerges from the Catch the Vision Process to offer encouragement, help and training to local churches in discerning *what God is doing to make us one*<sup>2</sup> in their midst, to evaluate the ecumenical activity of local churches and to facilitate the development of new Local Ecumenical Partnerships of a variety of kinds. We also encourage the extension of Local Covenants which include Roman Catholics and the inclusion of Ecumenical Clusters which may resolve questions of deployment.

**General Assembly asks all congregations to look again for more local ecumenical possibilities and encourages an increase in the percentage of local churches involved in formally recognised ecumenical situations.**

**General Assembly asks whatever Councils now and in the future represent the structure between local church and General Assembly to plan a coherent strategy for local ecumenism appropriate for each place.**

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 8 of the Basis of Union

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 8 of the Basis of Union

## ***Wider Ecumenism***

4) Currently the time is not ripe for the opening of negotiations towards organic union with any of our ecumenical partners. Ecumenical convergence is found in the encouragement of mission in local contexts, in the affirmation of energy at the edge and in the exploration of mutuality.

5) As a stirrer for the imagination we offer the idea of an alliance as used by the world of business, most popularly seen in airlines. These give some of the benefits of a single operation to both their customers and the participating airlines whilst at the same time keeping individual airline identities, features, modes of operation, etc. and even competition between them within the alliance. In the church this would bring some of the benefits of organic unity whilst at the same time retaining the diversity embodied in separate denominational identities. Beginning with the things we already have in common with our closest partners (recognition of baptism and membership) could we create a "Church of churches" which would have a common identity (enabling outreach) whilst maintaining separate identities and unique characteristics? In this model all the members of the participating churches would be members of both the body and their own denomination, but able to undertake some common initiatives (e.g. advertising) and to seek economies of scale in administrative matters and even possibly programme areas where possible, to release resources for a common outreach, and over time to grow together.

**General Assembly affirms further explorations of the idea outlined in Paragraph 5 and informal conversations between the Ecumenical Committee and our ecumenical partners.**

6) The United Reformed Church's commitment to being a Church in three nations results in variation according to wider ecumenical and national situations. Throughout, however, Ecumenical Committee believes that we should be exploring planned co-operation and the sharing of resources with close partner churches, especially the Methodist Church. In 2003 General Assembly noted the commitment of the two churches to work together more closely in discovering an appropriate pastoral strategy, which would allow a more efficient sharing of resources in mission and the joint exploration of creative ways of being an effective Christian presence. Against this background we suggest a review of the Methodist / United Reformed Church Liaison Committee would be timely and helpful. We would particularly encourage better working relationships among Synod Moderators and District Chairs and the development, both in number and effectiveness, of United Areas, asking for further thought on advocating United Areas, Circuits and Churches among those thinking about renewing structures.

7) As structures are reviewed as part of Catch the Vision, boundaries will change. Ecumenical Committee recommends that in drawing up new boundaries working with those of our ecumenical partners wherever possible should be one of the core considerations.

8) Ecumenical Committee invites the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Advisory Group on Faith and Order to explore the following;

a) God's Reign and Our Unity. We propose that we consult with our Anglican partners in our three nations about how best to revisit and build on this report, in particular regarding the issue of episcopate.

b) A cross-committee piece of work on Eldership bringing together Doctrine, Prayer and Worship's own work on models within the Reformed tradition with the unresolved

questions from Conversations on the Way to Unity and the work of Life and Witness about the structures of the local church.

c) { A Reformed perspective on the theme of Covenant. The Anglican – Methodist Covenant Joint Implementation Commission has made a considerable investment in fresh thinking on the idea of Covenant as a means of taking forward their commitment to full visible unity. We wish to express a willingness to share in this exploration from our Reformed background. We hope that this may include in due course other Reformed Churches in Britain and Ireland}. In brackets because the Methodist Church may ask ecumenical partners to comment in which case it is superfluous.

**General Assembly agrees to increase the planned co-operation and sharing of resources with close partner churches, with particular reference to paragraphs 6, 7 and 8.**

### ***Internal Ecumenism***

9) Within our own denomination, we recognise the challenge of two desperately needed forms of “internal ecumenism”. One is between evangelicals and liberals who sometimes struggle to live and work together. The other is between those within every congregation who are at very different stages on their journey of faith. May they lovingly make room for all so that what jars with one may still be allowed to enable the other’s formation. The Ecumenical Committee encourages all councils of the church to consider their own internal ecumenism alongside their commitment to partners of other denominations.

### ***Conclusion***

10) Together we face the exciting challenges of ecumenical mission. How can we present a Christianity attractive to our culture which can at the same time voice a critical alternative? How can we affirm “fresh expressions of church/emerging church”? How can we identify and support new networks and respond to changing patterns of commitment? We urge the exploring of the new and the different. These three stories provide some examples.

a) In Derbyshire, the Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics and URC have been running an ecumenical programme for lay training for several years. When the training officers in Yorkshire heard about this, they were so encouraged that they planned their own ecumenical programme, which is even bigger and better! Now, encouraged by Yorkshire, those who have worked together in Derbyshire would like to set up a programme across the East Midlands.

b) In December 2001, seven of the eight denominations present in the Granton area in North Edinburgh agreed to an ecumenical Christian presence within the new Granton Waterfront Development, an area of regeneration of post industrial land including housing, leisure, retail and business facilities. Traditional church methods were considered inappropriate so Granton Waterfront Churches Centre, a company limited by guarantee with charitable status, was created.

By the late summer of 2004 funding had been secured from the Church of Scotland Parish Development Fund and in partnership with ToCH the search began for premises and a worker to make links and contacts with institutions, businesses and people as they moved into the area. This story is an important one in Scottish ecumenism as it has brought together a wide diversity of denominations who have committed themselves to working together in this area of regeneration and it has challenged the

churches to think how best to use the opportunities for mission that the redevelopment offers.

c) Arising from the Ghanaian ministry which we have supported with our Ghanaian partners since 1961, Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana (EPC) congregations have been established in London. Now the PCG and the EPC are looking to the United Reformed Church to continue to develop this work in partnership with them as an ecumenical collaboration further extending our ministry amongst the Ghanaian community. In an era of globalisation other opportunities exist for a cross-cultural ecumenism which is both international and local drawing together the resources of churches around the world focussed on the needs of particular local communities.

## **2. Ecumenical Committee (for information)**

The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Assembly met in Swanwick from the 22nd to the 25th of February. It was presented with the thinking emerging from the process considering Ecumenical Architecture, informed of the proposed timetable for the remainder of the process (in which the key elements would be the April Church Representatives Meeting and a one day Assembly in November ) , and asked to feed into the process its own reflections and any fresh thinking and good new ideas.

Three creative pieces of thinking worthy of further exploration duly emerged. As a result, David Cornick, speaking in his capacity as Trustee, indicated that at the April Church Representatives Meeting he would request more time to cost and consider these, with the corollary that all parties maintain their current funding of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for up to another two years to enable this to take place. This idea appeared to commend itself.

In the light of what happens at the April Church Representatives Meeting Ecumenical Committee will report appropriately to General Assembly.

## **3. Equal Opportunities Committee**

The Equal Opportunities Committee seeks Mission Council's agreement to undertake the following:

1. To update the current Equal Opportunities Policy statement, Section I in The Manual to include current legislation in the areas of age, race, gender and disability. A full consultation will be carried out with the Synod Moderators.
2. In response to current and new legislation to consider the implications for the United Reformed Church as an Equal Opportunities Employer and to bring to Mission Council and General Assembly such resolutions to extend the remit of the policy to include all current legal requirements for an employer.
3. To include in the policy statement all employees of the United Reformed Church at Church House, Synods, Districts and the local Church.
4. To rewrite the Equal Opportunities Policy, to include any changes following the acceptance of any resolutions proposed by the Committee and Mission Council and agreed by General Assembly.

The Committee members understand that these tasks will be carried out over the next two or three years but believe that we should give Mission Council notice and get its agreement to undertake these tasks on its behalf. Any recommendations will be fully discussed and approved by the Church's legal advisors.

The Committee members further believe that any changes to the remit and responsibilities of the Committee should be initiated by the Committee and Mission Council and not left to Resolutions from individual members or groups within the Church.

Since 1994, there have been a number of detailed amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976. Some of the more significant changes impose on public bodies a duty to work for better human relations. The scope of discrimination law has been increased by legislation since 1995 and include such areas as Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment and Religion and Belief. There will be, in addition, further ~~relations~~ *regulations* to implement European Union Directives.

As an Equal Opportunities Employer, the United Reformed Church has a duty to ensure that it has policies or is developing policies to meet current legislation. Failure to do so may result in the Church being summoned to appear before an Employment Tribunal.

It is essential therefore that Mission Council puts in motion the revision of the Equal Opportunities Policy and agrees to re-examine its objectives, needs and priorities as an Equal Opportunities Employer and Church.

W.M. Bahadur  
Convener

#### **4. Ministries Committee (for information)**

##### **III-Health Pensions**

The Ministries Committee intends to bring to Assembly a Resolution to amend the Ministers' Pension Fund rules to guarantee the enhancement of the pensions of certain ministers who retire early on ill-health grounds. The relevant enhancements had become a custom paid for from a Restricted Fund which is now unable to take on new commitments. The change of Rules will provide the same level of support to ministers but funded from the main Pension Fund.

#### **5. Correction to Paper A5: Ethical Investments Advisory Group**

##### Corrected paragraph 16

16. In the light of this advice from EIAG, Mission Council proposes that the Church's formal policy statement be revised to read as follows:

It is the policy of the United Reformed Church to recommend that trustees and all those with investment responsibilities connected with the Church should avoid any investment in:

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

*Resolution to go with report - embody in MC Report to G.A.*

*G.A.*

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

**This policy can only be advisory as the responsibility for specific investment decisions remains with each body of trustees.**

## **6. Windermere Centre**

### **Joint statement from Brian Jolly and David Cornick:**

'A meeting between representatives of the Interim Joint Council of the Windermere Centre, the Treasurer and the General Secretary was held at Hinsley Hall on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005. Those present agreed that the Windermere Appeal should not come to the 2005 assembly, but rather be considered as part of the 'Catch the Vision' review of the church's resources and opportunities in 2006; and undertook to seek a way to resolve various Trust matters during the months ahead.'

## **7. Nomination Committee Report**

- **Thames North Synod Moderator's Review Panel** meeting on Monday, February 28 (Convener) Revd Lesley Charlton recommends the re-appointment of Revd Roberta Rominger to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod from 1 September 2005 to 31 August 2010.
- **Treasurer.** The current treasurer's four year appointment requires us to look for a successor for January 2007. It was agreed to set up a group to review the task of the Treasurer in the light of recent experience; to devise proposals for how it should be handled in the future; and to make a first report back to Nominations Committee in time for the September meeting.
- **Convener elect: Assembly Arrangements:** Exceptionally it was agreed to extend Mr William McVey's service for a further two years to 2008
- **CWM Assembly 2006** to be held in June in Jamaica - Secretary for International Relations, Revd David Coleman, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith and Mrs Ann Shillaker.
- **Community of Protestant Churches in Europe General Assembly, 12-18 September 2006** in Budapest – Revd Fleur Houston and Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

## **8. Nominations and equal opportunities - Possible alternatives to the Racial Justice and Multi-Cultural Ministry Committee Proposals (The Clerk/Stephen Orchard)**

**1. General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor appointments to Assembly committees in order to further its Equal Opportunities objectives and sets the following targets for the overall list of nominations to Assembly committees presented in the annual report to Assembly:**



- (a) An equal number of men and women.
- (b) At least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.
- (c) At least 10% to be under 25 years of age at the time of appointment.
- (d) Not more than 50% representation from those employed by the United Reformed Church.

**2. General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to monitor appointments to the Assessment Board, the Commission Panel for the Disciplinary Process and the Panel for the appointment and review of Synod Moderators in order to further its Equal Opportunities objectives and sets the following targets for the lists of nominations to each of these bodies presented in the annual report to Assembly:**

- (a) An equal number of men and women.
- (b) At least 10% representation from minority ethnic groups.

Background:

Assembly committees are often quite small. There are 9 committees where we nominate six or less people. It is impossible to include automatic representation of particular interests or minorities unless we substantially increase committee numbers, without commensurate benefits. Some 185 people are nominated to serve on committees. The minimal targets set for ethnic minority and youth representation are therefore achievable and could be exceeded. Monitoring is essential once targets are set.

The panels and boards are dealt with separately because none of them have small memberships. Because of the level of expertise required it is not appropriate to set a target for youth representation, though people in their early twenties will be considered for membership on the same basis as others. On balance it is similarly undesirable to set targets for the lay/ordained, employed/not employed by the Church proportions on the board panels. We do regard it as essential that the boards and panels are able to call on equal numbers of men and women and on a larger number of representatives of minority ethnic communities than at present in order to fulfil their brief.

The resolutions attempt to give substance to the good intentions we have expressed in the past. It may be necessary to strengthen the administrative support given to the Nominations Committee to carry out the monitoring.



MISSION COUNCIL  
4-6 March 2005

ASS

Notification of Assembly 2005 Resolutions

**1. Ecumenical Committee**

The report of the Ecumenical Committee to this year's General Assembly will include resolutions about the future structure of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, in the light of the proposals about "Ecumenical Architecture" which are currently being debated. The Ecumenical Committee can formulate proposals only after initial decisions are made by the 'Church Representatives Meeting' which will take place in April 2005. This timetable does not permit the Assembly resolutions to be laid before Mission Council first.

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**2. Ministries Committee**

Church-Related Community Work (CRCW) as a Non-Stipendiary Ministry

**Resolution A**

General Assembly agrees to extend the principles of Non-Stipendiary Ministry to CRCW ministry. The Assembly resolves that:

- (i) non-stipendiary CRCW candidates would be expected to follow the same training path as for stipendiary CRCWs;
- (ii) the minimum age for commencement of training for non-stipendiary CRCW candidates shall be 21 years of age.

**Resolution B**

General Assembly resolves to amend the Basis of Union and Structure of the United Reformed Church as follows (*with additions and amendments shown in italics*):

- a) Add to the end of paragraph 22 of the Basis of Union (as agreed by General Assembly in July 2003):  
*"Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a District or area Council and in a context it has approved."*
- b) Amend paragraph B2(3)(A)(iii) on page B6 (July 2000 edition of The Manual) to read:

"To appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers *and church related community workers* to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals;"

(and these, or others to be put later, if Resolution A & B agreed in July 2004 & resolution B ratified in July 2005)

### Resolution C

**General Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to its policies as set out in the Manual:**

a) Amend the paragraph entitled 'The Ministry of Word and Sacraments' on page K3 (July 2000 edition of the Manual) to read:

"Ministers serve in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity and may work as one minister of Word & Sacraments alongside the Elders or in a team with other stipendiary or non-stipendiary colleagues. A team may also involve *stipendiary or non-stipendiary church related community workers*. It may be ecumenical."

b) Amend the paragraph entitled 'There are three models of non-stipendiary ministry' on page K4 (July 2000) to read:

"Model III—ministers *and church related community workers* in secular employment *and church related community workers working for the URC or other Christian organisations or denominations*. Service set apart to be a focus for mission in the place of work or leisure. It is related to a local church or District or area Council."

c) Add before the paragraph on Accreditation on page K13 (July 2000):

***Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Work.***

***The minimum level of qualifications and achievement of the stated core competencies to become an accredited stipendiary CRCW would also be applicable for accredited Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers.***

***Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Work candidates would be expected to follow the same training path as for stipendiary Church Related Community Workers by training at Northern College on the 'Faith in Living' programme.***

*The normal minimum age for the commencement of training for the non-stipendiary ministry of church-related community work shall be 21 years of age.*

*Otherwise, the same regulations apply to the age of entry to the non-stipendiary ministry of church related community work as those pertaining to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.*

*The procedures and decisions required to transfer between stipendiary and non-stipendiary service for ministers of Word and Sacraments also apply for the transfer between stipendiary and non-stipendiary church related community work."*

d) Amend section L 18 (July 2000) to read:

**“Stipendiary Ministers and Church Related Community Workers**

The United Reformed Church will meet the normal training costs (fees and maintenance) of all ordinands *and CRCWs-in-training* and their dependants from central funds. We nevertheless encourage ordinands *and CRCWs-in-training* to first seek funding from grant awarding bodies, where possible.  
<Rest of paragraph unaltered>

**“Non-stipendiary Ministers and Church Related Community Workers”**

<Rest of paragraph unaltered>

e) Amend the penultimate sentence of section L 21.1 (July 2000) to read:  
“For non-stipendiary ministers *and church related community workers* who, because of other work cannot attend a mid-week course, a ‘week’ means two weekends each lasting from Friday evening until Sunday teatime.”

**Resolution D**

**General Assembly resolves to make the following changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration agreed at the 2003 General Assembly:**

a) Amend section ‘5.4 Exclusions:- 5.4.3 Non-stipendiary ministers’ to read:  
“Non-stipendiary ministers *and Non-stipendiary CRCWs*”

b) Amend section ‘9.2.1 to read:  
“An interest free loan is available to ordinands for the stipendiary ministry, former non-stipendiary ministers *and non-stipendiary CRCWs* at the time they take up stipendiary ministry, and to CRCWs upon commissioning (see Appendix A).”

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**3. Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Committee**

The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee seeks the advice and wisdom of Mission Council on the following resolutions the Committee wishes to bring to General Assembly in July 2005. The Committee asks that Mission Council may assist with issues of clarity and coherence. Further, the Committee appreciates the proactive moves already made within relevant Committees to implement some of these resolutions, and the ongoing collaboration and co-operation between the Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and colleagues in Church House. However, the Committee would still wish to seek Mission Council’s wisdom and advice on how best to move forward in terms of making these resolutions official policies of the Church subject to Assembly’s approval.

*The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee calls on General Assembly to act boldly to further the United Reformed Church’s commitment to becoming a multicultural church and to the Lord’s work of healing the divisions in the human family by adopting and implementing the following resolutions:*

- A. General Assembly requires that racism and cross-cultural awareness training be included in the induction of future Assembly staff, employees and committee members, and that current Assembly staff, employees and committee members undertake such training as a matter of priority with the assistance of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee and the Church House Personnel department.
- B. Recognising the principles set out in the Equal Opportunities Policy and acknowledging the difficulty for minority ethnic communities to get involved, Assembly urges the Nominations Committee, assisted by the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee, to ensure that all Assembly Committees have at least two minority ethnic members as a matter of priority, and encourages all other structures of the church to do the same.
- C. Assembly authorises the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to conduct a formal and professional audit of all Church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to full participation of minority ethnic people, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than March 2006.
- D. Assembly instructs the Secretaries for Training, Ministry, and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to evaluate the system of candidacy and training for ministers, lay preachers and lay leaders for its accessibility to minority ethnic people and to bring a joint report to Mission Council October 2006 with recommendations for leadership training and for affirmative actions to increase the pool of minority ethnic candidates.
- E. Assembly affirms the Racial Justice Advocacy Network and requires each synod or region to appoint a Racial Justice Advocate Co-ordinator, and urges congregations to support the advocacy by encouraging members to join the network.

*The Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee  
Convener: The Rev Andrew Prasad  
Secretary for RJ & MM: Katalina Tahaafe-Williams*

## CLERGY WORKING CONDITIONS – STATEMENT OF GOOD PRACTICE

### Preface

The content of this statement represents good practice standards, which parties to this agreement should aim to achieve.

The expectation of the DTI is that parties shall ensure that this statement is disseminated at all levels within their organisations to ensure awareness of the terms of the statement.

### Terms and conditions of work

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

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

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

### Development and personnel support

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

Such activities might include the following:

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

### Information & Consultation

**Aim: Churches should aim to ensure that clergy are kept informed of and consulted about changes affecting them.**

## DRAFT

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

### **Resolving disputes**

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

These procedures could include the following:

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



Miss Council  
March 05  
Papers.

**Rt Hon Michael Howard QC**

Leader of the Conservative Party

14 APR 2005

Revd. Raymond Adams  
The United Reformed Church  
86 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9RT.

April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Dear Mr. Adams.

I am writing on behalf of Michael Howard to thank you for your letter of April 7<sup>th</sup> in which you convey the resolution passed at a recent meeting of The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church.

I quite take the points you make and will, of course, ensure that they are passed on. In the meantime, I thank you for taking the trouble to write.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Hellewell  
Private Secretary



March 05  
MC papers

## Ray Adams

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**From:** Avis Reaney  
**Sent:** 02 February 2005 18:25  
**To:** Ray Adams  
**Cc:** Eric Chilton (Hon. Treasurer) Chilton  
**Subject:** RE: March Mission Council

Dear Ray

MoM s/c will have resolutions concerning the URC Ministers' Pension Fund but because we need confirmations/advice from the actuaries and pension Solicitors we are unlikely to meet your deadline. John Ellis and Christine are aware of this.

There will also be a report following the DTI consultation on clergy working rights. But where this report comes from and if there will be any resolutions will depend upon what the Ministries Committee decides at its meeting on 21 February, again after your deadline.

Finance Committee meets on 16th March and will be bringing resolutions regarding adoption of account, auditor appointment and M&M Fund. Again because of the timing the exact words will not be available for Mission Council.

RPAG used to bring the budget resolution through the Mission Council Report. It would seem more sensible for this to be Finance Committee now, but some decisions on the 2006 budget may be required from the Finance Committee meeting on 16th March so the exact wording of the resolutions and supporting narrative is unlikely to be ready for your deadline.

I am aware in the past that MoM has presented a report to March Mission Council giving an indication of the resolutions to be brought to GA but because of the nature of the wording and the technical content it has not been necessary for the resolutions to be scrutinised by Mission Council.

Let me know if you need anything further from me.

Avis

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**From:** Ray Adams  
**Sent:** 31 January 2005 09:41  
**To:** Team; hazel martell (hazel martell); Hopkins61@aol.com; jean potter  
**Subject:** March Mission Council

Dear Colleague

I am sorry to remind you so soon after January Mission Council that **March Mission Council papers are due here with me** (prior to printing and circulation) **by Friday 17th February**. Any problems with this deadline should be notified to me immediately.

This assumes that you have business for General Assembly about which

(a) you seek Mission Council's advice or decision

(b) you have resolutions to bring to Assembly - and which are normally scrutinised by Mission

03/02/2005

## Theological Reflection on the March 2005 Mission Council

The task to be a reflector at Mission Council is not an easy one. Many told me at the beginning of the meeting that they did not envy my task. As it was I enjoyed myself and thank you for your kind invitation.

I tried to look at matters with this question in mind: ***“What is perceived of God moving or challenging us in our meeting and among the issues we are wrestling with?”*** It is very difficult to discern God, if we can do so at all. So it is with caution that I approach this task.

This was a unique meeting. The results of two years of hard work at all levels of the church were coming together. Your dreams were being turned into reality, to paraphrase the General Secretary. It was the kind of meeting for which it seems the Mission Council was created.

The atmosphere was impressive: contributions from the floor were knowledgeable and constructive; facilitation of the plenary sessions was expert and done with good humour; worship and Bible Studies were relevant and inspired the proceedings throughout. This was a Mission Council willing to wrestle with the big, difficult issues (e.g. ethical investment, abuse in the church, how to be an inclusive church) and with quite a bit of detail too.

### **Catch the Vision**

So how is God moving and challenging us? I would like to point at three areas. They relate to the vision, to how we see the world and to how we see ourselves.

#### **1. To clarify the vision.**

For a few years now you have engaged with the Catch the Vision Process. The first challenge is to clarify (and communicate!) the vision. But before doing so perhaps we should ask ourselves if we have a vision at all. There is a danger that Catch the Vision is becoming a catch phrase for what in reality is managing decline. Our decline is a sad fact and managing it a necessity, but if that is what we are doing then let us just say so and get on with the job.

Calling this process Catch the Vision, however, raises expectations – as was demonstrated by regular expressions of disappointment from the floor that proposals were not radical enough – and it suggests that the process is about more than merely managing decline. If that is the case, then what is the vision and what or who is it for?

#### **To clarify what the vision is. Is it a vision of the church?**

In his interim report to Mission Council the General Secretary described the vision as “a path to God’s future which leads...

- Towards new ways of being church
- Towards deeper engagement in mission
- Towards a new spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Towards a slimmer, more rigorous organisation
- Towards renewed ecumenical engagement”.

This suggests some ambivalence in the URC's mind as to what the vision is about. Is it a vision about the church or is it one about God's future? The order of the proceedings seemed to suggest the first: we started with a vision of the church and this led us to discussing finance, structures, training, ministries, and spirituality – in that order. The Catch the Vision logo (with the URC logo in the middle) and prayer further seem to suggest that the church is both subject and object of the process.

However, the vision is also described as a "path to God's future". It is a vision of God's reign, which embraces the whole world, the whole oikoumene. If the vision is about God's future, then perhaps our starting point for discussion and action is different. The starting point would be God's world, its needs and how we respond to them. Then, what kind of church is required for that? It is a church shaped by the rapidly changing needs of the world it lives in and by its ability to respond to those; a church with a different kind of leadership, trained in a different way.

Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive. A vision of God's future will include a vision of the church. However, the two parts of the vision need to be held in creative tension. Ultimately, it is a vision of God's reign for the world, for all creation; and the Catch the Vision process should be about no less than that.

## **2. To clarify our relationship with the world**

The challenge to clarify our vision will require us to decide how we view the world. It seemed quite appropriate that we studied passages from the Gospel according to John, whose view of the world is ambivalent at best. It is for the world that Jesus came, but at the same time it is the world that does not understand, that hates the followers of Jesus and so on. This view has deeply influenced our Christian tradition, as was clear in our discussions about spirituality and about the culture we live in.

However, does catching a vision of God's future not require a view of the world that is more embracing? With boundaries between church and world that are more fluid? Instead of looking at John's Gospel perhaps we should look at the writings of Paul. For Paul, the church is "the world in obedience to God" (Bosch, 1992: 167). The church is that community of people who are involved in creating new relationships among themselves and in society at large and, in doing this, bearing witness to Christ. The church is the church in and for the world. It is not to be other-worldly.

So, even though we are living in a culture in crisis - a crisis that extends to the church and to our faith - we need to engage with the world that we live in. That is where God calls us to be. The General Secretary called us a tiny minority in an alien land. We are in the wilderness, in the desert, as Dutch theologian Bernard Rootmensen (1988) argues, where life is hard and sometimes God is hidden. But the desert is also a place full of life and beauty; and moreover, it is a place of encounter with God and of preparation for a new way of being.

## **3. To clarify what kind of church we will be.**

Lastly, we may be challenged to determine what kind of church we will be. Coming into the Mission Council for the first time, and dealing with a number of major papers all proposing significant changes, it all felt rather frenzied. (I am aware that someone who has been involved in the Catch the Vision process in the last two years would probably say the opposite.) And it raises the question about what church we hope to be and what our mission is about. Is it about being or doing? Views in the reports and discussions seemed at times conflicting. The Ministries report spoke about making people more active members of the Church focused outwards into the world, moving them from disciples to apostles. The Training paper noted that the aim of education and training is to equip the church, so that it can better continue the ministry of our

Lord Jesus Christ in and for the world. There is an image of an active church, responding to rapidly changing social trends. The Catch the Vision paper's theology of relatedness emphasised being rather than doing. The church is before it is for anything. The doing flows out of the being. The Racial Justice paper emphasised both. So what kind of church will the URC aim to be?

Again the writings of Paul may be helpful. According to Paul the believers should be "missionary" rather than "missionising". They should practice a missionary lifestyle, one that is attractive and winsome, one that gives credibility to the missionary outreach in which Paul and his fellow-workers are involved. The primary responsibility of "ordinary" Christians is not to go out and preach, but to support the mission project through their appealing conduct and by making "outsiders" feel welcome in their midst.

So the life and witness of the church involve both being and doing. It is not an either-or. The church's identity sustains its relevance and involvement (Moltmann, 1975). The church is both a sign and an instrument of God's kingdom. But we are challenged to hold both in creative tension as we seek new ways of being church. The story of Princess Street URC in Norwich provided a good illustration. When it decided it should *do more* to make more of its mission context it decided to *be more*, offering presence, welcome and hospitality.

#### **Do you want to be made well?**

"Do you want to be made well?" Jesus asked the man at the well in John 5. It was this question the Moderator posed to the URC in her first Bible Study. This Mission Council was a clear sign that there is a deep desire to be made well. How this will happen and how long it will take is hard to discern at this stage. I am in no doubt, however, that the Catch the Vision process will be crucial, even if much visioning and communication of the vision still need to be done. The process may take longer than we think. There are no quick fixes or easy solutions. What is important to remember, however, is that we are called to be faithful, not to be successful. In John 5, 17 Jesus says, "My Father still goes on working and I am at work too". May you draw strength from that as you continue to catch the vision.

Francis Brienen  
CWM Europe Mission Enabler  
March/April 2005

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