



MISSION COUNCIL

5th – 7th October 2004

MINUTES

SESSION 1

TUESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2004

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Alistair Smeaton. Bible Study was led by the Moderator, the Revd Sheila Maxey.

04/60 Welcome

The Moderator welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular the Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquhar (Theological Reflector); the Revd Elizabeth Nash (Convener of the Ecumenical Committee); Mr Peter Yorke (Northern Synod, deputising for the Revd John Durell); Miss Kathleen Cross (North Western Synod); Mrs Wilma Prentice (Mersey Synod); Mrs Irene Wren (East Midlands Synod); Mr Bill Robson (West Midlands Synod); the Revd Anthony Howells (West Midlands Synod); Mrs Janet Gray (South Western Synod); the Revd Richard Pope (South Western Synod); Dr Graham Campling (Southern Synod); Miss Michelle Marcano (HR and Facilities Manager, Church House); the Revd Alistair Smeaton (Moderator's Chaplain); the Revd Kenneth Forbes (Minutes Secretary); Mr David Legge (East Midlands Synod, deputising for Mrs Barbara Turner); Mr Roderick Garthwaite (Yorkshire Synod)

04/61 Attendance

There were 62 members present with 23 staff and others in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr Ahmed Sourani (Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee); the Revd John Durell (Northern Synod); the Revd Martin Hardy (Mersey Synod); the Revd Ros Harrison (South Western Synod); Mrs Janet Gray (Synod of Wales); the Revd John Arthur, Mrs Irene Hudson, the Revd Alan Paterson (Synod of Scotland); Miss Amanda Wade (FURY); the Revd Dr John Parry, Dr Brian Woodhall, the Revd John Young (Committee Conveners); Ms Suzanne Adofo, Mrs Karen Bulley, the Revd Roy Lowes, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Ms Avis Reaney, the Revd John Steele (Assembly-appointed staff)

04/62 Additional Business

The Deputy General Secretary informed Mission Council that there were additional papers (papers D, E and F) to consider.

04/63 Minutes of Mission Council 19th-21st March

The Clerk drew Council's attention to the changes noted in paper D, 'Corrections to the Minutes of the March 2004 Mission Council', and noted that the sentence in 04/39 '*The convener undertook to remove that recommendation and its accompanying text from the report*' should be deleted from the minutes. With these amendments, Mission Council approved the minutes.

04/64 Matters Arising

Paper A: Mission Council Advisory Group

The Deputy General Secretary moved the Resolution:

Mission Council appoints the Revd Sandra Lloylangston as Secretary of the Grants and Loans Group from 1st September 2004 until General Assembly 2008.

The Resolution was carried.

The Deputy General Secretary outlined the procedure for electing a member to the Mission Council Advisory Group to replace Mrs Helen Mee.

04/65 Resource Planning Advisory Group - Paper B

The Revd Julian Macro presented the resolution:

Mission Council agrees that the work of the Resource Planning Advisory Group should be suspended, pending the submission of a paper to MCAG on the reallocation of responsibilities in RPAG's remit, which could lead to the group being disbanded.

The Resolution was carried.

04/66 Basic Stipend

The Treasurer, Mr Eric Chilton, presented the report of the Maintenance of Ministry Subcommittee. The procedure for setting stipends had been carefully reviewed, taking account of the Retail Price Index, the RPIX index and the average earnings index.

Mr Chilton moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2005 at £19,176.

The Resolution was carried.

04/67 Yardley Hastings

After reporting on the work of the Yardley Hastings Buildings Management Group, Mr Chilton moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council approves the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that process.

The Clerk proposed the following amendment:

Subject to the granting of a Charity Commissioners order, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, approves the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that process.

Seconded by the General Secretary.

Mr Chilton indicated his willingness to accept the amendment.

The Revd Terry Oakley confirmed that the East Midlands Synod was content with the proposed arrangement, and expressed his thanks to Mr Chilton for his assistance and understanding.

The Resolution as amended was carried.

The Moderator requested non-voting members of Mission Council to withdraw while the Deputy General Secretary presented Paper G. This was an interim report from the group charged with making recommendations for changes which would improve the Church's understanding and practice, as a result of the case of a particular minister which had previously been considered by Mission Council.

04/68 Synod of Scotland Moderator

The General Secretary reported on the work of the group for the appointment of a Moderator for the Synod of Scotland, and moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd John Lloyd Humphreys as Moderator of the Synod of Scotland for a period of seven years from 1st April 2005 until 31st August 2012.

The Resolution was carried, and Mission Council welcomed Mr Humphreys with applause.

04/69 Human Resources and Facilities Manager

Mrs Val Morrison moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on Behalf of General Assembly, appoints Miss Michelle Marcano to the post of Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House from 1st September 2004.

The Resolution was carried.

04/70 Nominations Committee

The Revd Principal Stephen Orchard outlined the current work of the Nominations Committee.

SESSION 2

Tuesday 5th October - 7.30pm

04/71 Ministry today and tomorrow I

Mission Council was addressed by the Revd Andrew Faley (Ecumenical Officer for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales) and the Revd Peter Dominey (Baptist Church, Southend – ‘Church from Scratch’).

Fr Faley outlined something of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales and related how this history has resulted in present patterns of ministry; he spoke of the challenges in ministry facing the Roman Catholic Church, and some of the initiatives that were being taken in provision of parish ministry.

Mr Dominey described ‘Church from Scratch’, in which he was exploring ways of being church apart from the familiar local congregation. His priorities as a Christian minister, he said, to participate in Christian community, and to build the Christian community. With these priorities, his ministry was exercised in establishing Christian community among the unchurched.

Mission Council spent time in groups discussing these perspectives on ministry.

The Session closed with worship led by the Chaplain.

SESSION 3

WEDNESDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2004 - 9.15 AM

04/72 Worship

Worship was led by the Chaplain, and Bible study by the Moderator. Worship included a welcome to Miss Michelle Marcano, newly-appointed Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House.

The Moderator welcomed the Revd Dr David Peel (Moderator-elect), and the Revd Stuart Jackson (Synod of Wales)

04/73 Palestine

The Revd Neil Thorogood (deputising for Mr Ahmed Sourani who was unable to leave Gaza), addressed Mission Council about the situation in Gaza.

He spoke of the United Reformed Church's connectedness with Palestine through *Commitment for Life*, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), personal contacts and friendships and reported on the work of the MECC in co-operation with Christian Aid, and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC).

Mr Thorogood related some of his own experiences in visiting Gaza and highlighted the dilemma of 'Security for Israel: Justice for Palestine'. He described the effects of the continuing progress of the Hafrada (separation) Wall and outlined some of the current and possible future responses of churches in the West to the situation in Israel/Palestine.

The Revd Brian Jolly reported on plans for a visit to Israel/Palestine the following week by a group from the United Reformed Church.

04/74 Racial Justice (Paper C)

The Revd Andrew Prasad (Convener, Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry) and Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary), presented Paper C, *Transformative Justice: Being Church and Overcoming Racism*.

The Revd Phillip Woods related his experience of visiting Ghana, formerly the centre of the slave trade where, in the slave castles, there was a chapel built above the dungeons with a grating where the slaves could be observed below. Mission Council was invited to sing 'Over my head, I hear singing in the air.' The riches of the West today were a testimony to that past, but there was much that pointed to it still being an issue today: women from Eastern Europe taken to Amsterdam for prostitution; African Americans in the US were living in ghettos where a whole different culture had developed.

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss the past, present and future of the Church's cross-cultural relationships and multicultural ministry. Notes of group discussions would be passed to the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry.

Returning to plenary session, each group reported on key points of its thinking, and general discussion took place on the issues raised by the groups.

SESSION 4

Wednesday 6th October 2004, 4.00pm

04/75 Time for Action (Papers A and D)

The Revd Peter Poulter reported on the *Time for Action* consultation held in July 2004 and presented 'A Charter for a Safe Church' (noting that the title may be changed before publication).

Mr Poulter responded to questions from the floor, noting that:

- the Charter was intended for use by local churches

- the Charter was intended to deal specifically with sexual harassment
- the group did not anticipate that local churches would be able to provide all necessary support, but should make efforts to discover where such help might be available

Mission Council considered the resolution:

Mission Council, on the recommendation of MCAG, appoints the Revd Peter Poulter and Mrs Sheila Brain to participate in the continuing group, which is invited to draw up a proposed charter, produce an accompanying pack, and suggest how other related work might be fed into this process.

The resolution was carried.

It was suggested that the Equal Opportunities Committee and Training Committee be involved, and relevant secular agencies consulted if appropriate. It was noted, however, that wide consultation had already taken place at the *Time for Action* consultation.

04/76 World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The Revd Elizabeth Nash reported on the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which met in Accra, Ghana, July/August 2004.

The General Council had addressed the theme, *That all may have life in fullness*, and highlighted issues of mission, spirituality, covenant, the place of women, the contribution of young people and dialogues with other Christians.

Ms Nash outlined the discernment process used to arrive at consensus decisions, and described the issues leading to the adoption of the Accra confession of faith.

In response to questions from the floor, Elizabeth Nash noted that:

- consultations in many parts of the world took place over a period of years during the process of drafting the confession, including consultation with economists; there had been reservations from some churches in Europe;
- there was no simple solution to the world's economic problems; the confession said that the neo-liberal capitalist way of looking at the world is inappropriate for reducing poverty;
- the discernment process involved the use of differently coloured cards to indicate people's feeling about a debate, the object being to arrive at a consensus.

Responding to a question from the floor, the General Secretary informed Mission Council that the Assembly Arrangements Committee was looking at the possibility of introducing a system of consensus voting for the Councils of the United Reformed Church.

04/77 Lottery Funding (PaperE)

The Revd Martin Camroux presented Paper E, and suggested that the Church and Society Committee report more fully to the January meeting of Mission Council. Mission Council agreed.

04/78 Assets for Life

Mr Steve Summers introduced the resource pack '*Assets for Life*'. Mission Council viewed the '*Assets for Life*' video.

04/79 Business or Mission?

The Moderator invited Mission Council to reflect on the issues addressed during the day.

Among points raised were:

- the challenging and inspirational material presented during the day needed to be disseminated throughout the Church;
- the changed format of Mission Council meeting took into account recent theological reflectors' encouragement that Mission Council should regard all its business in the light of the Church's mission;
- the bedrock of mission was prayer, and Mission Council should intersperse prayer throughout its meetings.

SESSION 5

Wednesday 6th October 2004, 7.30pm

04/80

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss and reflect upon ministry and to consider the thirteen recommendations of the *Equipping the Saints* report.

Reconvened in plenary session, each group was invited to highlight one or two of the recommendations that were of particular interest or concern:

Recommendation 1 was strongly supported, and felt by one group to be the key recommendation; others felt it required amplification.

Recommendation 2 was also supported; local churches should be encouraged to establish patterns of midweek worship.

Recommendation 3 was generally thought to be important. Concern was expressed that involvement of District in ordination/induction of elders may discourage some from eldership; and group suggested that work should be done on the training and equipping of elders and that the place of non-serving elders should be reviewed.

Recommendation 4 was thought to outline a valuable principle, but some groups were against the use of the word 'pastor'.

Recommendation 5 was thought to be inappropriate/irrelevant.

Recommendation 6 was seen as a good basis for further work.

Recommendation 7 was highlighted by one group, which stressed the importance of ecumenical clusters.

Recommendation 8 was deemed by one group to be too complicated, but thought by another to be worthy of further exploration.

Recommendation 9 was highlighted by one group as being important.

Recommendation 10 was universally disliked.

Recommendation 11 received no comment from any group.

Recommendation 12 was felt to be a good basis for further discussion.

Recommendation 13 received no specific comment.

During brief general discussion the Convener of the Ministries Committee, Mr John Ellis, thanked Mission Council for its consideration of the recommendations and responded to a number of the points raised.

It was noted that the points raised (above) were the opinions of the groups and should not be taken to represent the mind of Mission Council.

Evening prayer was led by the Chaplain.

SESSION 6

Thursday 7th October, 9.30am

04/81 Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper A)

The Moderator reported that there had been one nomination for a member of MCAG. Mission Council duly appointed Mrs Irene Wren.

04/82 Rural Officer/Consultant (Paper D)

The Deputy General Secretary reported that a review of the post of Rural Consultant will take place in the light of the forthcoming retirement of Mrs Jenny Carpenter.

04/83 Assembly Arrangements Committee (Paper F)

The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee, Mr Wiliam McVey, presented the report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

The Committee had been looking at possible changes which could facilitate the efficient conduct of General Assembly. Mr McVey highlighted the following points:

- the Assembly Arrangements Committee did not decide the content of General Assembly, but suggested that matters for inclusion should be considered more rigorously, and that all business of the 2005 General Assembly be directly related to *Catch the Vision*;
- there was the possibility that 'routine' matters could be dealt with *en bloc* so that, given necessary safeguards, such business could be handled more speedily;
- persons presenting reports should speak to resolutions but not to the reports, which should be taken as read;

Each point was discussed in turn. Points raised in discussion were:

- some interpretation of relevance would be necessary - who would do this?
- themed Assemblies were a good thing
- the decision would need to be made now in order that people could prepare
- there was a danger that this proposal could be used to exclude certain business
- if too much was attached to *Catch the Vision* it could damage the process
- certain business unrelated to *Catch the Vision* would have to be progressed this year
- business might take less time if preceded by 'vision' thinking
- there was general agreement that this was a good idea

- could the Assembly Arrangements Committee include wider representation of the wider church
- 'en bloc' material should come at the end of Assembly
- William McVey responded by saying that the Committee would bring proposals for 'routine business' to March Mission Council for agreement
- Elizabeth Nash described the process used by the Methodist Conference
- if people had read reports there should be no need to speak to them
- the combination of a written report and an oral presentation to highlight points would encourage good debate
- the Moderator asked for Mission Council's opinion on the suggestion that resolutions but not reports should be spoken to. The overwhelming feeling was against the proposal

Elizabeth Welch proposed that *Mission Council appoint two people to meet with the Assembly Arrangements Committee, to assist with the planning of business.* Seconded by Elizabeth Nash.

The resolution fell.

Mr McVey summed up, and thanked Mission Council for its consideration of the proposals. The Moderator reminded Mission Council that it would be looking at Assembly business in detail in March 2005.

04/84 Catch the Vision

The General Secretary talked about his experience of the WARC General Council in Ghana, and of his discovery there that the priorities of *Catch the Vision* were the priorities of churches throughout the world.

Catch the Vision was about mission and about faithfulness, and was not new. But just as abolitionists fought with their own churches, we also need to have the courage to change. After explaining the background to *Catch the Vision*, Dr Cornick suggested that uncomfortable realities needed managing lest they overcame the Church, and that churches were saying 'we are ready for change - we want to be Church differently'. However, much of the change demanded by churches and individuals assumed changes centrally and at synod level rather than locally.

Certainly change was needed in the structures and the way they were serviced, but Christ was incarnated primarily in local congregations - they were centres of Kingdom activity. This was the central thrust of Equipping the Saints.

Thus far the process had reflected on the nature of marginalisation and accepted that God was a God of the margins. The United Reformed Church was far from dead or moribund (9% were growing and 25% had seen no decline in the past 5 years).

Finance

For the first time there was a full picture of the Church's finances; the Church was not being crippled by ministry and administration costs; most of the Church's assets were held locally; the *Catch the Vision* group was in the bizarre position of offering uncomfortable good news; the Church could afford to be what it was called to be but only if people were willing to say 'what is mine is ours, and what is ours is God's; this didn't mean that all was well or that the financial shadows could be made to disappear; the *Catch the Vision* Steering Group could only hold up a mirror to the Church and say that this was the most accurate picture it could see.

Dr Cornick presented the timetable for 2005.

Catch the Vision was about holding together the local and the national/international, change and stability. There was no way in which the General Assembly could prescribe one or even ten models of local mission. There were probably as many models as there were local churches. Consultation would begin with people involved in mission as community regeneration. Ministries would continue to work on 'Equipping the Saints'.

It was hoped that the March Mission Council would be a strategy summit as it prepared for General Assembly 2005. Churches would be requested to make Pentecost a point of prayer for *Catch the Vision*.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- do we need a call to sacrifice? what resources have we got and are we using them?
- what is the ecumenical dimension, particularly as it might affect LEPs?
- the heart of the matter is sharing the gospel and knowing that God is powerful in the margins
- what effect will changes in Methodist boundaries have on the United Reformed Church?
- we have to learn to express our love for Jesus
- how has the process been shaped by local responses?

The General Secretary responded to the discussion. Mission Council thanked the General Secretary for his presentation.

04/85 Theological Reflector

The Theological Reflector spoke briefly about her impressions of the Mission Council.

The Moderator thanked those who had contributed to the meeting, especially outside speakers and laptop computer operators, the chaplain, and the Deputy General Secretary.

04/86

Closing worship was led by the Chaplain, and included the sacrament of Holy Communion.



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

1st September 2004

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council: Tuesday 5th - Thursday 7th October 2004
All Saints Pastoral Centre
London Colney, St Albans

It is my pleasure to welcome those of you who are new to Mission Council to your first meeting, and to welcome back those who are regular attenders. We shall meet in London Colney near St Albans in five weeks' time. To help us complete our arrangements, please would you supply, as soon as possible, and preferably within a week of receiving this letter, the information we need about your requirements for accommodation and meals.

Enclosed are some preliminary papers:

- directions to the All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney
- a 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 paper of background information on Mission Council
- 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.

If you are prepared to be a group leader and/or reporter during the year 2004-5, please indicate on the form provided. This should not be an onerous task if people take their turn. No one is expected to fulfil the same role (either leader or reporter) more than once in the year.

Several changes are anticipated in the timing of the agenda:

- i) We intend to start later than usual –with tea at 3.30 p.m. on Tuesday 5th. This will allow time for opening worship and preliminary business before dinner, after which we shall hear from two guest speakers from different Christian traditions (Roman Catholic and Baptist) about the challenges facing them providing ministry in changing circumstances, and the way their Tradition responds to them.

ii) Wednesday evening will be devoted to a discussion of local church, district, and synod questions and experiences arising from the Ministries Committee report to the 2004 Assembly, '*Equipping the Saints: changing ministry for the challenge of mission*' (printed as Appendix 2 on pages 121-137 in *Reports to Assembly*, which was sent to every church). The discussion will be greatly helped by members reading the main points of the report before arriving at Mission Council, and giving some thought to the issues they wish to raise on behalf of local churches, districts and synods. If it is not possible for representatives to consult others from their own synods before arriving at Mission Council, there will be some free time on Wednesday afternoon to help this happen.

iii) On Thursday, the celebration of the Lord's Supper will be the last corporate act of Mission Council before lunch and departures.

The agenda, though far from complete yet, includes the opportunity to welcome Mr Ahmed Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, Gaza) who has been invited to address Mission Council.

In the light of General Assembly's endorsement of the 'Catch the Vision' process, Mission Council will consider how General Assembly might be ordered to make this a focus in 2005.

The Council will also consider a report and recommendations arising from the consultation, which took place in July, on the CTBI report *Time for Action: sexual abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors*.

Papers about these and other agenda items will be sent out in about three weeks' time.

For future planning, it may be helpful for you to have details of Mission Council dates and venues in 2005:

Saturday 22 January	Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh
Friday 4 - Sunday 6 March	All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney
Tuesday 4 - Thursday 6 October	Ushaw College, Durham

I look forward to seeing you at London Colney.

With 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

27th September 2004

Dear Colleague,

Mission Council: Tuesday 5th–Thursday 7th October 2004
All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, St Albans

Enclosed is the second mailing for the meeting of Mission Council at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney.

May I remind you to bring all the enclosed papers with you,

- Minutes of the March 2004 Mission Council
- A copy of the Ministries Committee report to General Assembly 'Equipping the Saints: changing ministry for the challenge of mission' (printed as Appendix 2 on pages 121-137 in *Reports to Assembly*)
- A bible and other personal requisites (e.g. soap and towel)

Enclosed please find

- A copy of the Agenda
- Paper A: Report of Mission Council Advisory Group
- Paper B: Report from the Resource Planning Advisory Group
- Paper C: 'Transformative Justice: being Church and overcoming racism' - a working paper from the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural ministry

Papers D, E, F and G: items of additional business; a paper on Lottery funding and Grade II Listed Buildings; reports from the Assembly Arrangements Committee, and from the Maintenance of Ministry committee about 2005 ministerial stipends, will be issued to you on your arrival.

As indicated in the first mailing, a connecting theme through the Mission Council agenda this time will be 'Ministry today and tomorrow'. The Moderator, Sheila Maxey, has prepared some background notes for the two evening sessions on this theme:

"The purpose of these sessions is primarily to allow and encourage Mission Council members to share experience across the synods, discuss and debate an area of church life which touches almost every one; where there is a ferment of change and lots of anxiety. There is always a tension in Mission Council's agenda between the need to use the authority of Council for the work of the central church and the Assembly committees to proceed (often seen as rubber-stamping); and the other purpose of Mission Council which is to be a forum where the kind of thinking, discussion and learning from each other (which should precede such decisions) can

begin to take place. The two sessions are an attempt to ensure that the latter purpose has its due place on the agenda.

On the **Tuesday evening session**, it is hoped that Mission Council will be stimulated in its thinking by hearing from two very different partner churches – Roman Catholic and Baptist. Such 'light from the side' may either make members see similarities or clarify their thinking by being more conscious of the differences. There will be some opportunity for questions and then some time in small groups.

In the **Wednesday evening session**, most of the time will be spent in groups, two of the groups being made up of one person per synod. This session is, in the first place, for the sharing of people's experience of responding to fewer ministers of word and sacrament, new groupings, and new kinds of leadership.

The sharing does not need to be of the synod policy, it can just as well be of each member's local or district experience. Out of that will come issues, problems, fears, hopes and plans.

Towards the end of the time, groups will be invited to say which of the ways forward listed in *Equipping the Saints* report they really want taken forward in order to facilitate the plans or deal with the problems.

There will be a gathering up of the fruits of the groups in a plenary.

Equipping the Saints is important background reading and the second session may point to priorities in that report, but it is what is happening throughout churches in the synods which is the primary focus. As for outcomes – beyond the real value of sharing and learning from each other, nothing else can be assumed.

It would be very helpful if *synod groups could meet for half an hour before tea on Wednesday afternoon* to remind their members of what is going on in their area."

We particularly welcome, as our guests, the Revd Gabrielle Farquhar from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland who will act as our theological reflector; the Revd Andrew Faley (Ecumenical Officer for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales) and the Revd Peter Dominey (a Baptist Minister from Southend), who are our speakers on Tuesday evening; Mr Ahmed Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, Gaza) will speak to us on Wednesday morning before visiting United Reformed Churches throughout the U.K. involved in the *Commitment for Life* programme.

If you have any difficulties or queries about the agenda, accommodation or arrangements for travel, please contact Krystyna Bilogan (tel: 020 7916 8646; e-mail: krystyna.bilogan@urc.org.uk).

I look forward to seeing you at London Colney.

With good wishes

Yours sincerely



The Revd Raymond Adams
Deputy General Secretary



MISSION COUNCIL
5 - 7 October 2004

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

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

TUESDAY 5th

3.00 p.m. onwards *Check in*

3.30p.m. *Tea*

4.00 p.m. *Opening Worship and Bible Study*

Welcome to guests and new members

Apologies for absence

Notice of additional business

Minutes of Mission Council held 19-21 March 2004
Matters arising

Mission Council Advisory Group Report (Paper A)
Resource Planning Advisory Group (Paper B)
Treasurer's Report

6.30 p.m. *Dinner*

7.30 p.m. *Ministry today and tomorrow -1*
The challenge of ministry in present circumstances: insights from two ecumenical perspectives (Roman Catholic and Baptist)
Reaction time in buzz groups
Issues for the United Reformed Church from these presentations

9.15 p.m. *Evening Prayers*

WEDNESDAY 6th

8.30a.m. *Breakfast*

9.15a.m. *Morning Worship and Bible Study*

10.00 a.m. *Mr Ahmed Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, Gaza)*

10.30a.m. *Coffee*

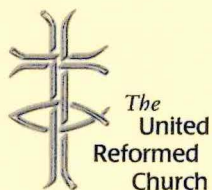
11.00a.m. *' Transformative Justice; overcoming racism' (Paper C)*

11.30 - 12.15 *Groups*

12.15 - 12.45 *First responses together*

1.00 p.m.	Lunch	
	<i>Free time; and time for synod groups to meet</i>	
3.30p.m.	Tea	
4. 00p.m.	Time for Action consultation report:	(Paper A)
	Report on World Alliance of Reformed Churches Assembly in Accra, Ghana	
	Lottery Funding for Grade II listed buildings	(Paper E)
	Introduction and video "Assets for Life"	
6.30p.m.	Dinner	
7.30p.m.	Ministry today and tomorrow - 2: The opportunity for synod representatives, primarily, to share their concerns about ministry from their own local experience, any particular synod concerns they know about, and which areas in the 'Equipping the saints' report would really make a positive difference to their own situation, if Ministries Committee brought further proposals.	
	Responses are brought to a final plenary session.	
9.15p.m.	Evening Prayers	
THURSDAY 7th		
8.30a.m.	Breakfast	
9.30a.m.	Remaining business	(Paper D)
	<u>Catching the Vision</u> – planning the next steps for Mission Council and General Assembly	
	Assembly Arrangements Committee	(Paper F)
11. ¹⁵ 30 a.m.	Coffee	
12.00 p.m.	Service of Holy Communion	
1.00 p.m.	Lunch	
	Departures	

DGS



MISSION COUNCIL
5 – 7 October 2004

AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE

Annotated Agenda for Moderator and her supporters
Timings within the sessions are suggestions only

TUESDAY 5th

4.00 p.m. Opening Worship and Bible Study

4.45 p.m. Welcome to guests and new members

The Moderator welcomes

- The Revd David Peel (Moderator –elect)
- The Revd Gabrielle Farquhar from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (theological reflector);
- The Revd Elizabeth Nash (Convener of the Ecumenical Committee)
- Mr Peter Yorke (Northern) – substituting for the Revd John Durell
- Miss Kathleen Cross (North Western)
- Mrs Wilma Prentice (Mersey)
- Mrs Irene Wren (East Midlands)
- Mr Bill Robson and the Revd Anthony Howells (West Midlands)
- Mrs Janet Gray* and the Revd Richard Pope (South Western)
- Dr Graham Campling (Southern)
- The Revd Stuart Jackson (Wales)
- Miss Michelle Marcano (HR and Facilities Manager Church House)
- The Revd Alistair Smeaton (Moderator’s chaplain)
- The Revd Kenneth Forbes (Minutes Secretary)

Apologies for absence

The DGS leads: Apologies from
 Mr Ahmed Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, Gaza) (**more info tomorrow**)
 The Revd John Durell (Northern); the Revd Martin Hardy (Mersey); the Revd Ros Harrison (South Western); Mrs Janet Gray* (Wales) – **note there are two!**
 The Revd John Arthur, Mrs Irene Hudson, the Revd Alan Paterson (Scotland);
 Miss Amanda Wade (FURY); The Revd Dr John Parry, Dr Brian Woodhall, the Revd John Young (Conveners); Ms Suzanne Adofo, Mrs Karen Bulley, the Revd Roy Lowes, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Ms Avis Reaney, the Revd John Steele (Assembly Secretaries).

Notice of additional business

The DGS leads:

- Papers D,E and F issued on arrival today
- Two sessions this evening and tomorrow – on ‘Ministry today and tomorrow’: details in letter sent with second mailing.
- 6 copies of ‘Equipping the Saints’ report available
- Copies of the recommendations of EtS available for all
- Nominations Committee report (before dinner today)

Minutes of Mission Council held 19-21 March 2004

The Clerk draws attention to notified corrections (Paper D para 1)
Moderator to ask if there are any other comments, before seeking agreement to sign minutes.

Matters arising

The DGS leads:

- None which was not taken forward at Assembly
- Any others members of MC may wish to raise?
- John Campbell's Theological Reflection was sent out with the minutes: comments have been taken account of in the setting of this Council's agenda (some copies of theological reflection available to those who are new to MC)
- Ecclesiology of URC document – having been worked on by DPW Committee – anticipate January 2005 MC for document

5.00 p.m. Mission Council Advisory Group Report **(Paper A)**
The DGS presents the report – paras 3 and 4

Resource Planning Advisory Group **(Paper B)**
Convener (Julian Macro) presents report

5.15 p.m. Treasurer's Report
Eric Chilton leads

- a) stipend for 2005 – **Paper D** para 2
- b) Yardley Hastings – **Paper D** para 3
- c) other?

5.45 p.m. Items for Mission Council reps only : invite others to withdraw
(Deputy General Secretary to explain reason for this)

1) MCAG Minute 03/17 – (May 8th 2003)

"....Clarification about whether Mission's Council was being asked formally to confirm an appointment already made, or whether Mission Council was part of the Church's discerning process..... constitutionally, Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly, (is) the appointing body.. nominations for such staff should be presented in a way in which Mission Council has the opportunity to ask questions, and be able to make a credible decision. Specifically, Assembly-appointed staff who are (potentially) colleagues should not be present; the person under consideration should not be present; and proper information about the nominee and an account of the process should be given to Mission Council by the convener (where possible) of the appointing group."

2) Matter concerning the Review Group of case of a Minister who has been in dispute with the Church.

- a) Resolution re Human Resources and Facilities Co-ordinator (Paper A para 2) – report by Val Morrison, convener of Staffing Advisory Group
Revised resolution: Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints Miss Michelle Marcano to the post of Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House from 1st September 2004.
- b) Nominations Committee resolution re appointment of Moderator of Synod of Scotland (resolution to be put by the General Secretary on behalf of the nominating group) (Paper D para 6)
- c) Paper G for information

6.30 p.m. *Dinner*

- 7.30 p.m. Ministry today and tomorrow –1: “The challenge of ministry in present circumstances: insights from two ecumenical perspectives”
- Moderator to lead Outline (as in letter issued with second mailing) the theme and purpose of the two sessions; and to introduce
- The Revd Andrew Faley (Ecumenical Officer for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales)
 - The Revd Peter Dominey (Baptist Minister from Southend – Church from Scratch),
- 8.10 p.m.** Reaction time in buzz groups – what issues arise from these two presentations which have resonance in the United Reformed Church?
- 8.45 p.m.** Time for questions, reactions and comments from United Reformed Church perspectives.
- 9.15 p.m. Evening Prayers

WEDNESDAY 6th

- 8.30a.m. *Breakfast*
- 9.15a.m. Morning Worship and Bible Study
Worship should include welcome (with prayer) to Michelle Marcano
- 10.00 a.m.
Moderator to welcome The Revd Neil Thorogood (convener of the Commitment for Life Management Group) who is standing in for Mr Ahmed Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee) – who is unable to get out of Gaza (details to be given by Neil)
(The Moderator may wish to announce that a Group from the URC will be going to Israel/ Palestine on a 10-day solidarity visit next week – Brian Jolly (present at MC) is organising the programme).
- 10.28 a.m. The DGS to give any notices, and arrangements and location for groups during the next session
- 10.30a.m. *Coffee*
- 11.00a.m. ‘Transformative Justice; overcoming racism’ **(Paper C)**
The RJ&MM Committee convener – the Revd Andrew Prasad; and the Secretary for RJ&MM (Katalina Tahaafe-Williams) to lead
- 11.30 – 12.15 Groups
- 12.15 – 12.45 Moderator to chair: First responses together (details of requirement on Paper C)
Before lunch: Moderator to remind members of MC about synod groups (details of what is required are in the letter sent out with the second mailing – in preparation for this evening’s session)
- 1.00 p.m. *Lunch*
- Free time; and time for synod groups to meet*
- 3.30p.m. *Tea*
4. 00p.m. *Time for Action* consultation report: **(Paper A)**
Peter Poulter to lead – refer to Paper A paragraph 1 (See MCAG’s proposals at end of this paragraph); and Paper D paragraph 6 (page 3)

4.25 p.m. Report on World Alliance of Reformed Churches Assembly in Accra, Ghana
Elizabeth Nash (Convener of Ecumenical Committee) to lead (Paper to be tabled)

4.50 p.m. Lottery Funding for Grade II listed buildings (Paper E to be tabled)
Martin Camroux to lead – *note that the end of the paper is not very specific. Mission Council would be better served with a definite proposal. (11th hour delivery of paper!)*

5.10 p.m. or later Introduction and video viewing of “Assets for Life”
Steve Summers to introduce briefly – *(there was the thought that those who have seen in may wish to absent themselves from this item. I think Mission Council is a different context in which to see it (again, if necessary) and may lead more fruitfully to the suggested follow-up item below)*

5.40 – 5.50 p.m.: Business or Mission? The Moderator might like to end the afternoon’s business by asking Mission Council to reflect on what the themes of the day suggest about the mission implications and priorities of the United Reformed Church.

6.30p.m. Dinner

7.30p.m. Ministry today and tomorrow - 2:
Moderator to lead (details in letter sent with second mailing)

The opportunity for synod representatives, primarily, to share their concerns about ministry from their own local experience, any particular synod concerns they know about, and which areas in the ‘Equipping the saints’ report would really make a positive difference to their own situation, if Ministries Committee brought further proposals.

8.30 p.m. Responses are brought to a final plenary session.

9.15p.m. Evening Prayers

THURSDAY 7th

8.30a.m. Breakfast

9.30a.m. Remaining business (Paper D para 5 for info)
Election and appointment of new member of MCAg (Paper A para 4)

9.40 a.m. Catching the Vision – planning the next steps for Mission Council and General Assembly
General Secretary to lead

10.30 a.m. Assembly Arrangements Committee (Paper F)
William McVey, Convener of Assembly Arrangements Committee to lead

11.15 a.m. Coffee

12.00 p.m. Service of Holy Communion

1.00 p.m. Lunch

Departures



MISSION COUNCIL

5 - 7 OCTOBER 2004

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 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

Ms Amanda Wade
Miss Fleur James

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 N	Revd Peter Poulter	Revd Colin Ofor, Revd John Durell, Mrs Susan Rand
2 N.W	Revd Peter Brain	Revd Chris Vermeulen, Miss Kathleen Cross, Mrs Janet Eccles
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 Glennis Massey, Revd David Bedford
10 Th.N	Revd Roberta Rominger	Revd Dr Roger Scopes, Revd Jane Wade, Vacancy
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
Life & Witness
HR & Facilities Manager
Church Related Community
Work Development Workers

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

Rural Consultant
Grants & Loans Conv.
Church & Society
Pilots Dev'tment Officer
Ecumenical Relations
Windermere Cntr Dir.
Communications
Children's Advocate
Convener RPAG
Secretary RPAG
Racial Justice
Theological Reflector

Mrs Jenny Carpenter
Dr Brian Woodhall
Dr Andrew Bradstock
Mrs Karen Bulley
Revd Richard Mortimer
Mr Lawrence Moore
Mrs Carol Rogers
Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Revd Julian Macro
Revd Bill Wright
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams
Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquhar

MISSION COUNCIL – 5 – 7 OCTOBER 2004

GROUPS

The first named person in Columns A, B & C is asked to act as group leader. "R" indicates Reporter. "TR" is Theological Reflector. In columns D, E, F & G, the first name is Leader; the second is Reporter

<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>John Humphreys Colin Offor Chris Vermeulen Donald Swift Pauline Loosemore</p> <p>R Ann Ball Melanie Frew Victor Ridgewell Roz Harrison Clive Sutcliffe Roger Scopes Graham Campling - - TR Gabrielle Farquhar</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>Jenny Carpenter Peter Yorke Kathleen Cross Martin Hardy Roderick Garthwaite Barbara Turner Anthony Howells Mick Barnes Janet Gray Glennis Massey Jane Wade Lesley Charlton</p> <p>R Stuart Jones - -</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>John Ellis Susan Rand Janet Eccles Wilma Prentice Val Morrison Irene Wren Bill Robson Joan Turner</p> <p>R Richard Pope David Bedford - David Howell Stuart Jackson -</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>Roberta Rominger Philip Woods David Cornick Peter Poulter Arnold Harrison Adrian Bulley David Lawrence Michelle Marcano Richard Mortimer Julian Macro Fleur James Janet Knott Sheila Maxey</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p>John Brown Elizabeth Welch Peter Brain Terry Oakley Ken Forbes Roy Lowes Stephen Summers Lawrence Moore Bill Wright Nigel Uden Ray Adams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <p>David Grosch-Miller Christine Craven Alasdair Pratt David Peel Howard Sharp Elizabeth Caswell Alistair Smeaton Andrew Bradstock Carol Rogers Katalina Tahaafe-Williams Peter Noble James Breslin</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>Stephen Orchard Martin Hazell Brian Jolly Martin Camroux Kathryn Price Elizabeth Nash Eric Chilton William McVey Wilf Bahadur Andrew Prasad</p>	

Mission Council Advisory Group

1. Time for Action Consultation

As a result of the discussion at Mission Council (October 2003 minute 03/78) a consultation was held at London Colney on 28 -29 July 2004.

Mission Council had invited the Life & Witness Committee to convene a meeting of relevant groups, committees and individuals to identify the areas in which Mission Council could develop a safe practice policy for the United Reformed Church in response to the CTBI *Time for Action* report; and to enable the MCAG to bring proposals to a future meeting of Mission Council.

The main proposal of the London Colney consultation was that Mission Council would be invited at a later date to recommend to General Assembly that it declares a policy for the United Reformed Church on the basis of 'A Charter For A Safe Church' (text below). This h would be delivered in the first instance by a pack, including

1. A digest of the 'Time for Action' issues.
2. An awareness raising and training package for the councils of the church, for delivery to local churches.
3. Guidelines for local churches
4. Recognised procedures (from work already done on sexual harassment.)

Other pieces of work, e.g.

- 'middle-range' disciplinary procedures for ministers (i.e. what constitutes 'appropriate ministerial behaviour' prior to the necessity of implementing Section O);
- the work of an existing review group preparing to report to Mission Council early in 2005;
- the Training and Ministries committees discussion on 'Education for Ministry' (stages 1,2 and 3) about setting up requirements in initial and ongoing ministerial training, .

suggests the need for a group to complete the immediate task and oversee the process.

- 1) The Revd Peter Poulter will report on the consultation at Mission Council.
- 2) MCAG proposes that Peter Poulter and Sheila Brain be invited to participate in the continuing group, which is invited to draw up a proposed charter, produce an accompanying pack, and suggest how other related work might be fed into this process.

It is possible that contributions from other Assembly committees or individuals be invited. Mission Council is asked to comment on the size and range of "interests" of those contributing to the next stage of this piece of work.

2. Staffing Advisory Group - the appointment of a Human Resources and Facilities Manager

Following the advertising of this post in *People Management* (the magazine of the Institute of Personnel and Development) and in *Reform*, over 50 enquiries led to 6 applications being received. The appointing panel consisting of Val Morrison (Convener), Ray Adams (Secretary), Ann Baird (representing the Methodist Church), David Marshall-Jones, and Carla

Watts short-listed three candidates. Following interviews on Tuesday 22nd June the post was offered to Michelle Marcano who duly accepted and began work on 1st September 2004.

Proposal to Mission Council – Mission Council endorses the appointment of Michelle Marcano to the post of Human Resources and Facilities Manager in the United Reformed Church House.

3. Grants and Loans Group The Revd Sandra Lloydlangston has agreed to serve as secretary to the Grants and Loans Group. Mission Council is invited to concur with this appointment.

Proposal to Mission Council – Mission Council appoints the Revd Sandra Lloydlangston as Secretary of the Grants and Loans Group from 1st September 2004 until General Assembly 2008 .

4. Membership of Mission Council Advisory Group

Mrs Helen Mee is no longer a member of Mission Council, as she has been accepted for training for ministry of the United Reformed Church. This means also that her membership of the Mission Council Advisory Group has ceased. Mission Council therefore needs a replacement member of this Group.

The remit of 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.

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

The appointment in this case will be from October 2004 until General Assembly 2008.

Mission Council is asked to make nominations to the Clerk (having sought permission from the nominee, and with names of the Proposer and Seconder), so that an appointment can be made forthwith.

FOR INFORMATION

5. Theological Reflections on Mission Council

As a result of comments from two recent theological reflectors at Mission Council, the clerk has written a paper, 'Mission Council in theory and practice'. The paper will be forwarded to the Structures Group in the 'Catching the Vision' process.

6. Communion Offering at General Assembly 2004

The Communion Offering at General Assembly raised £3340.42. Half of this has been sent to three community projects mentioned in the "Assets for Life" programme, and half to the United Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Zimbabwe.

Resource Planning Advisory Group

At its meeting on 20th September, the Resource Planning Advisory Group decided to recommend to Mission Council that the work of the Group should be suspended.

The Group has a wide remit including 'long term strategic planning' and "priorities in the use of human and material resources." As the *Catch the Vision* group is actively engaged in such matters we feel that it would be confusing, at best, for RPAG to enter this field at the moment.

The area of work with which RPAG has been most identified in recent years has been "financial planning." This has largely been concerned with the budget process. The new pattern introduced by the Treasurer and the Financial Secretary of there being earlier and more detailed discussions with budget holders is a considerable improvement on previous practices but supersedes the role previously undertaken by RPAG, which by virtue of the infrequency of its meetings has never been in a position to make informed comment on operational issues. There may be a need to increase the membership of the Finance Committee to enable it to undertake strategic planning.

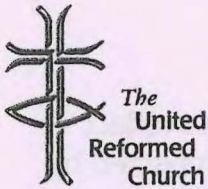
The Group also feels that other areas of work within its remit can properly be undertaken by others without the need for RPAG to be either a filter or post-box.

The RPAG intends to provide a fuller, detailed paper for MCAG with suggestions both for the continuation of the work undertaken by the Group and regarding specific areas of work, which might otherwise be overlooked. However, the Group sees no need for RPAG to continue in its present form, and hopes that it is setting a good example to the whole church in suggesting that it can be disbanded.

Julian Macro
Convener

Proposal:

Mission Council agrees that the work of the Resource Planning Advisory Group should be suspended, pending the submission of a paper to MCAG on the reallocation of responsibilities in RPAG's remit, which could lead to the Group being disbanded.



MISSION COUNCIL
5 – 7 October 2004

C

Committee for Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry

Working Paper on:

'Transformative Justice: Being Church & Overcoming Racism'¹

(A World Council of Churches call for Churches to overcome racism today)

Brief Background

The 2001 UN World Conference against Racism (Durban, South Africa) emphasized the fact that the consequences of past wrongs continue to impact millions of lives today. The Conference called on the world to act to rid our nations of racism through reconciliation processes that honour the memory of past victims and promote the healing of relationships.

In response the **World Council of Churches** (WCC) has developed the concept of **Transformative Justice** to help Churches move forward with this challenge. Transformative Justice is a vision for building truly inclusive and just communities. It is rooted in the belief that faithfulness to God and the gospel of Jesus Christ demands transformation that touch peoples' hearts, minds and spirits with healing, wholeness and justice. It requires *metanoia/repentance*, and a reorientation of our perceptions, our thinking, and our way of living - a paradigm shift that will allow structures, culture, and defining values to be transformed.

Transformative Justice evolved from the criminal justice concept of *restorative justice* but it recognizes that what has been erased during centuries of racism – in terms of lives, cultures, languages, lifestyles, and spirituality – cannot be reinstated. It is a process of healing and reconciliation that considers both the past and the present in order to restore dignity, self-respect and worth, and the re-establishment of right relationships. It emphasizes that the process of transformation is both personal and communal.

Transformative Justice encourages Churches to be more intentional in addressing their relationships with peoples discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic and national origins. It recognizes the urgent need for action to build truly multicultural communities that safeguard diversity, enable cross-cultural interaction, and where the rights and responsibilities of all are respected in love and fellowship. Transformative Justice is offered as both tool for and fruit of overcoming racism. It strives to uphold justice, peace and the integrity of creation together.

¹ A WCC Resource Guide on Transformative Justice is now available. Details from the Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Office.

In preparation for its Ninth Assembly in 2006, WCC is calling on Churches to reflect critically and prayerfully on the history of their relationships with peoples impacted by their mission. Churches are asked to reflect on what their mission meant in the past and what it should mean today for the nature of the church and in relationship to the goal of overcoming racism and fulfilling the vision of the multicultural church. It is an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be churches transformed by the love of Jesus Christ – i.e. to be churches of 'transformative justice'. *Churches' reflections and responses will be presented to the WCC 2006 Assembly in Brazil.*

Task for Mission Council

The URC Committee for Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry (RJ&MM) believes that 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. 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. We believe that the motive force behind the vision of the multicultural church is none other than the very Spirit of God. The Committee welcomes transformative justice as a process by which God creates/fulfils the vision of a truly multicultural church. We affirm the need for our church to do the work in each stage and ask Mission Council to consider the following:

1. **Past:** *We reflect on our history and mission to understand and learn from our actions, apologising and repenting for past hurts so that we can be fully open to the future God is building for/with us;*
2. **Present:** *We reflect on our mission and current practices and structures to see if they perpetuate racial division and discrimination, and commit to change;*
3. **Future:** *We reflect on how to move forward in the vision, creating the multicultural church – i.e. a church of transformative justice.*

Small Group Work

Each group is asked to designate a recorder to take note of the discussion and to present at the plenary. The notes will be collected and collated to form our response to WCC.

Discussion Questions:

(Members are invited to share their stories or stories they have heard)

Past

The history of our relationships with peoples impacted by our mission:

- a. How did the church relate to those cultures to which we sent missionaries in the 18th – 20th centuries?
- b. What did we think our mission was?
- c. How was our missionary activity related to British political activity, i.e. of colonisation?
- d. As peoples migrated from colonized lands to Britain, how were they received in churches?
- e. Has our understanding of mission changed?

Present

Our current mission and practices:

- a. How are minority ethnic people involved in the URC today?
- b. Are there obstacles to the full participation of minority ethnic people? If so, what are they?
- c. Do our litanies, publications, practices and structures reflect their presence?
- d. Is minority ethnic leadership nurtured and supported?

Future

Moving forward with the vision of the multicultural church:

- a. What are the marks of a mission that strengthens identities and builds communities where racial-ethnic justice prevails?
- b. What are some of the possible fruits of transformative justice in your local church/community, district council, synod, in your own lives?
- c. What are the steps needed in each council of the church to bring the vision of a multicultural church to fulfilment – i.e. to grow the fruits of transformative justice?

Plenary

Recorders present synopses of the small group discussions. Notes to be given to the RJ&MM Committee Convener and Secretary to use as part of our response to WCC.

Closing with our Lord's Prayer.

Additional Business

1. Corrections to the Minutes of the March 2004 Mission Council

04/26 Attendance : Apologies

Paragraph 2, line 3: Dr Andrew Bradstock (Secretary for Church and Society),

Paragraph 2, line 7: Mr Stephen Summers (CRCW Development Worker)

04/37 Assembly Arrangements Committee

Line 8 : Insert: *Mission Council was invited to show its preference between various options being considered for reducing the District and Area representation. Votes taken showed that the Council favoured a reduction in representation, but was evenly divided between a basis of one place per twelve churches and one place per fifteen churches. (delete: Mission Council was invited to show its views on the removal of 3 representatives from each synod, in order to give some form of guidance to the review group. A vote took place and the outcome was 30 in favour and 30 against).*

2. Ministries: Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee: Stipend level for 2005

The Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee has reviewed the latest available inflation indices and has also considered the levels and rates of increase of stipends in the other major denominations in the United Kingdom.

In August 2004, the RPI was 3.2% (this was 3.0% in July) and the RPIX (excluding mortgage interest) was 2.2% (the same as in July). The sub-committee considers the RPIX to be the more relevant index in relation to stipend levels. For the four months to July 2004, the average earnings index was 4.2%.

The various denominations review their stipends at different times in the year. The highest recent agreed increase by other Churches is 3.1%. The basic stipend paid by the United Reformed Church is higher than the current basic stipends of the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist Churches.

The basic stipend in 2004 is £18,576. Taking all the above factors into consideration, the recommendation is that this should be increased by 3.2% (rounded up) to £19,176 in 2005. Although the sub-committee is not persuaded to rely on a single index or formula, it notes that 3.2% is the average of the latest RPIX and average earnings index.

The Church's budget for 2005 has not been used in arriving at this recommendation. Financial constraints in the Church might affect the number of ministers that the Church could afford to pay but it should not affect what is paid to individual ministers. The 2005 budget assumes a 3.5% increase in the stipend level.

Resolution: Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2005 at £19,176.

3. Yardley Hastings

The Building Management Group (YHBMG) appointed by Mission Council in October 2003 has now met four times. Three possible uses for the future use of the buildings have been considered. The most promising was an initiative by the Milton Keynes Christian Foundation (MKCF) and this is being actively pursued. To allow the project to be developed a licence for the use of the premises for six months was granted to MKCF in June.

In the meantime, the longer term arrangements have been considered. A surveyor's report was commissioned to establish the potential rental for a fully repairing lease and the value of the Centre on the open market. As the resulting report did not meet with general acceptance at the subsequent meeting of YHBMG, it was suggested that the Synod sought its own advice; this in an endeavour to establish an agreed rental figure for a lease. We have now reconciled the conflicting advice given in these reports.

The URC Trust held a special meeting in July and after a full discussion, passed the following resolution:

"The Trust is prepared to consider a lease provided it is acceptable to the Charity Commissioners, because of the change of use, and at a commercial rent."

The URC Trust at its meeting on 28th September agreed to a full repairing lease to the East Midlands Synod at a rent of £10,000 per annum. It is understood this is accepted by the Synod.

As there is a change of use of the Centre, it is felt prudent to inform the Charity Commissioners to gain their acceptance. Accordingly Mission Council is asked to pass the following resolution:

Resolution: Mission Council approves the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that purpose.

Eric Chilton
Convener of Buildings Management Group

4. Nominations Committee Report

1. Appointment of Moderator of the Synod of Scotland

Resolution: Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd John Lloyd Humphreys as Moderator of the Synod of Scotland for a period of seven years from 1st April 2005 until 31st August 2012.

5. Rural Officer/Consultant (for information)

The United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church jointly appoint to the full-time post of Rural Officer/ Consultant, to resource and support the mission and ministry of rural churches of both denominations. It is currently the only ecumenical post we share in this way. The post is located at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, which was established in 1972 at the National Agricultural Centre as a joint venture by the churches, the Royal Agricultural Society of England and the Rank Foundation.

The present post-holder, Jenny Carpenter, is due to retire in July 2005, and a group drawn from both denominations is being set up to review the post and determine its future. Mission Council's Staffing Advisory Group together with the Life & Witness Committee is co-ordinating our representation on the group.

The group is expected to complete its work in the next few weeks, and decisions about the post brought to the respective church councils early next year.

(Life and Witness Committee)

6. **DRAFT 1 for information** – to accompany presentation of PAPER A , paragraph 1

'A Charter for A Safe Church'

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.

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.

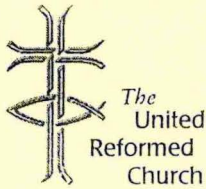
We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place. This means that:

- 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 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.



MISSION COUNCIL
5 – 7 October 2004

E

Church and Society Committee

The National Lottery and Grade II listed buildings

General Assembly passed the following resolution in **1995**

National Lottery

Assembly urges the members and councils of the church to disassociate themselves from the Lottery:

- a) by refusing to buy tickets; and
- b) by declining to apply for Lottery-generated funds for church purposes.

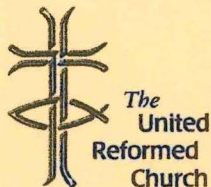
The following paragraph was included in the Church and Society Report to General Assembly in **1997** and was unchallenged. This was therefore regarded as the de facto interpretation of the current situation:

Since the 1995 resolution, several local churches have become involved in applications for Lottery funding. Church and Society was asked by some to interpret the Assembly resolution (or to give absolution!). Our provisional response has been that, where the application is more broadly based than from a single church and where it seeks funding for projects to benefit the whole community and not merely or primarily the church and its organisations, this does not breach the spirit of what Assembly determined.

On 24 June this year Moderators received a letter from the Assembly Listed Buildings Advisory Committee with an enclosure from English Heritage headed 'Repair grants for places of worship'. This enclosure included a comment to the effect that, as the funding for Grade II comes entirely from the Heritage Lottery Fund, applicants will need to be content to receive Lottery funds.

English Heritage's position, as outlined in this document, would appear to be forcing a change to the Assembly ruling about receipt of Lottery funding in the case of churches meeting in Grade II listed buildings who seek funding which would benefit 'primarily the church and its organisations'.

Mission Council now needs to consider either changing the guidelines under which the Church has hitherto operated or authorise a protest to English Heritage (or maybe both).



MISSION COUNCIL
5 – 7 October 2004

F

Assembly Arrangements Committee

General Assembly

The content of General Assembly

From time to time the Assembly Arrangements Committee is the recipient of criticism about the content of General Assembly and its timetabling. Critical comments - and sometimes compliments - are also received about the content and quality of the debates. A vociferous lobby has grown too, around the special interest meetings. We welcome all of this.

As has been pointed out before to Mission Council, the Assembly Arrangements Committee simply arranges all that the church gathers in to General Assembly each year. The Committee does not select which committees should report - procedures for that have been relatively recently revised (e.g. alternate year reporting for some committees) - and it is required to accept all valid resolutions submitted. As a consequence, the work of Assembly appears to some people to be the consideration of a collection of disparate activities with only a tenuous thread connecting them. For many people though, this is the demonstrable strength of a church actively involved in meeting the many challenges of life and witness today.

The Assembly Arrangements Committee is called upon to exercise some judgement about priorities when notified that "urgent business" has been identified by a committee that is not due to report to that year's Assembly. The Committee takes advice from the General Secretary, the Moderator and Moderator-Elect, and the Clerk. The Committee may also discuss the matter with an appropriate staff member and/or the convener of the relevant committee. Ultimately, the Committee may seek *guidance* from Mission Council as to whether the business should be heard at the General Assembly.

Who should set the agenda of General Assembly?

The Assembly Arrangements Committee would like to test the view that the inclusion of matters for discussion at General Assembly should be considered more rigorously.

The Assembly Arrangements Committee does not have the authority or responsibility for this task. But it is "the purpose of Mission Council to enable the Church, in its General Assembly to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, [and] to decide more carefully about priorities ..." [Manual. Committees of the General Assembly. Section G1].

A proposal for the agenda of General Assembly 2005

The Assembly Arrangements Committee would contend that it is the responsibility of Mission Council to provide the components for a coherent programme of discussions at General Assembly. At this stage in the discussions surrounding and flowing from "Catch the Vision", the Committee suggests that **no matter should be brought to General Assembly 2005 unless it is directly relevant to "Catch the Vision"**.

There would inevitably be exceptions - including the statutory requirements to approve the accounts and re-appoint the auditors, the obligation to nominate and appoint committee members, etc. - and these are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

The swift despatch of routine matters - and quality v quantity

General Assembly 2004 was asked to consider 44 resolutions; by comparison, General Assembly 2003 was presented with 33 resolutions. Of course, the number of resolutions matters less than their content, complexity or the volume of debate that they stimulate. But the increase in time spent proposing and speaking to these additional pieces of business (33% more) is considerable.

As identified earlier in this paper, some of these resolutions are to fulfil the statutory requirements to approve the accounts and re-appoint the auditors, the obligation to nominate and appoint committee members, etc. Other resolutions are to make amendments to the rules and procedures of the church - some of which are technical changes that provoke or require no further discussion.

A proposal to deal with routine matters

Subject to advice from the Clerk to Assembly, the Assembly Arrangements Committee intends to propose a similar procedure to that used by the Methodist Church for dealing with such matters [Methodist Conference. Standing Orders Book III, p381, para 113(17)(f)]. **Essentially this groups together all routine matters for which it is anticipated that there will be no debate necessary, and takes them all together on one vote.**

The safeguard

Before, or at General Assembly, any member of Assembly would be entitled to pull any item out of the proposed "en bloc" business (printed in the Book of Reports or otherwise notified) by giving notice to the Clerk of a question on that particular proposal. This safeguard would demonstrate that there is no question of stifling any debate that members of Assembly believe is necessary.

The vote

Any business not pulled out would be taken at a relatively early stage in the Assembly agenda. General Assembly would then take a single vote to approve the "en bloc" business without individual items being spoken to or debated. That vote would have the same authority as if each resolution had been proposed, debated and voted upon individually.

The standing order ("the legal bit")

General Assembly may on a single motion deal en bloc with more than one resolution attached to a report, or with the resolutions to more than one report, but whenever:

- (i) an amendment is proposed to any such resolution; or
- (ii) there is a procedural motion which in its original form or by a proposed amendment relates to less than all of the en bloc matters before Assembly;

any matters which require to be put separately shall be so put.

You may have noticed that we have already tried the idea

A slight move in this direction was made at General Assembly 2004. On the first evening of Assembly – the Saturday evening – the agenda included the presentation and adoption of the accounts, the re-appointment of the auditors, a resolution about giving to the Ministry & Mission Fund, a technical resolution on Charity Trusts, the Nominations Committee report, and two resolutions ratifying changes to Section O.

This was deliberately arranged to dispose of some routine matters that did not necessarily require the utmost concentration by members of Assembly – some of whom might be weary after considerable travelling that day. The evening's agenda ended on a celebratory note with the reception of new churches, before closing worship.

A further proposal to free more time for debate by members of Assembly

The Assembly Arrangements Committee is also considering making the following proposal:
Any person presenting reports may speak to the resolutions in them and may give information on any development of major importance which has arisen since publication. Otherwise reports circulated in the agenda or otherwise, shall be presented without introductory speeches.

William M McVey
Convener of Assembly Arrangements Committee



MISSION COUNCIL
5 – 7 October 2004

G

CONFIDENTIAL TO MEMBERS OF MISSION COUNCIL

REVIEW GROUP Interim Report to URC Mission Council

Background

In March 2003, Mission Council instructed the Advisory Group to establish terms of reference for a Review Group to consider the issues arising from the case of Minister A, to evaluate the policies, practices and processes which have shaped the URC's response to that case (and in similar situations), and to make recommendations for changes to improve the Church's understanding and practice in relation to sexual harassment, abuse and violence in URC contexts.

The Terms of Reference were established and agreed by the Advisory Group on September 4 2003.

Review Group membership

It was recommended that the group should have three members (two women and one man) and if possible that the convener should be from another denomination. They would have expertise in relevant areas of concern, awareness of URC procedures, and access to specialist advice as deemed necessary or appropriate. The group comprises:

- Dr Lesley Orr (convener – Church of Scotland/Glasgow University)
- Revd Carla Grosch-Miller (minister, educationalist and lawyer)
- Revd Peter Poulter (Moderator of Northern Synod)

Meetings and Timetable

The group had an initial briefing meeting with Revd Ray Adams, Deputy General Secretary, and was given access to relevant reports and material for information and orientation. A timeline was drawn up, with a view to presenting the Review Group Report to the Mission Council meeting in March 2005:

March 29 2004	Initial meeting (Edinburgh)
June 25	Phone conference
June 29	Group meeting (Newcastle)
September 9	Group meeting (Edinburgh)
November	Consultations with key individuals and representatives (including Minister A and others who have experienced abuse in church contexts)
January 11-13 2005	Preparation of RG Report (Taunton)
Mid-February	Deadline for circulation of Report prior to Mission Council meeting
March 4 -6	Mission Council

Progress

The Review Group, working individually and collectively, has thus far engaged in extensive information gathering, reading, meeting and reflection. We have consulted widely with ministers and officials at various levels of URC life, education and structures. In the autumn, we will listen carefully to Minister A, other survivors, and others with personal/professional experience and stories which must be heard (including those involved as counsellors, advocates, and in affected congregations). We are aware of other processes and initiatives (Time for Action, Section O Advisory Group et al) which provide an ongoing context for our task, and with whom we are seeking to work in active and constructive partnership. We are drawing on the resources and expertise of the wider church in Britain and elsewhere. And we are aware that on questions of professional conduct, ethical behaviour and maintenance of appropriate boundaries, the Christian church (of all traditions) has lagged behind many other institutions and agencies in society. Our concern is not simply to consider how the church deals with 'problem situations', but to address the vital need for education, training, prevention, and the deeper questions of power, authority and abuse as they challenge our theology and understanding of what it means to be the church.

However, the purpose of this short interim report is not to outline the substance or character of potential conclusions or recommendations, but simply to indicate our process and our commitment to this important and timely task. We hope to assure the Mission Council of our diligence, and welcome any comments or contributions which might aid the progress of our review.

Lesley Orr
Convener
September 24 2004

Recommendations from the "Equipping the Saints" Report to the 2004 Assembly

1. (after paragraph 4.4.3) 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. (after paragraph 4.5.2) 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. (after paragraph 5.3.7) The appointment and ordination of Elders should involve a commitment to continuing development, including appropriate local 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. (after paragraph 5.4.3) 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. (after paragraph 5.5.3) The United Reformed Church should adopt the title 'local preacher' in place of 'lay preacher'.
6. (after paragraph 5.7.12) 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. (after paragraph 5.8.5) 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. (after paragraph 5.9.4) 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. (after paragraph 5.9.5) 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. (after paragraph 5.9.8) 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. (after paragraph 5.10.2) 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. (after paragraph 5.11.13) 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. (after paragraph 6.1.3) Formal discussions about the recommendations in this report should be arranged with representatives of the Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners.

Catch the vision steering group

<u>Suggested time-table for 2004-5</u>	
July 04	Structures group begin work
Sept 04	Ecumenical c'ttee begin shaping response to resolution 41
	Life and Witness consider resolution 42 (work to be completed by 06 Assembly)
Nov 04	Small consultation between Steering Group and practitioners of mission as community regeneration.
Dec 04	Ministries to begin evaluating responses to Equipping the Saints.
	Structures Group begin to outline their thinking to the Steering Group
Jan 05 (if possible the 10 th)	Steering Group to meet with Conveners of Training, Ministries and Ecumenical committees
Jan / Feb	Begin conversations on spirituality and styles of mission
Feb 05	Steering Group to meet with Moderators
March 05	Mission Council 'summit' in preparation for Assembly
June 05	Pentecost to be a day of prayer for CTV
July 05	Assembly
Oct 05	Use <u>Reform</u> to present strategy to the churches

Where has the Catholic Church in England and Wales come from?

19th Century onwards...

The Fortress Parish



- ◆ Typical in England after 1850 and Catholic Emancipation
- ◆ Flourished during the first half of the 20th century

The Fortress Parish



Tightly organised enclosing community within which virtually every aspect of life took place
-birth, baptism, education, marriage, family & social life, religious life, sickness, death

Or, as Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor put it ...

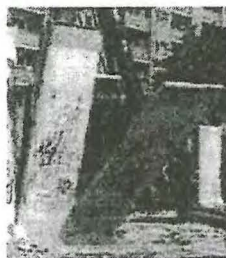
'From 1850 onwards we have for the most part been trying to look after our own. ...remaining on the periphery of church and social life...'

Briefing, vol. 31, issue 10, 10 October 2001



Two Broad Areas of Change

- ◆ Rapid change in society after World War 2
- ◆ Change within the Catholic community that broke down the 'fortress'



Decline in

- ↓ Mass attendance
- ↓ Number of priests and religious
- ↓ Membership of sodalities



Increase in



- ↑ Parishes
- ↑ Masses
- ↑ Eucharistic Ministers
- ↑ Readers
- ↑ Catechists
- ↑ Pastoral Assistants and Lay Chaplains

Wide Variety of Situations



- Priest taking over the neighbouring parish
- Team ministries
- Long-established twinned or clustered parishes
- Families living in parishes, with no priest
- Voluntary or employed pastoral assistants caring for parishes
- Parish council running a parish - a neighbouring priest providing Mass and pastoral care

Priests' Immediate Concerns

- Finances
- Time & number of services
- Administration
- Training for new roles
- Maintain the separate identity of each parish?
- 'Clustering': a permanent solution, or a temporary measure?



Priests' Deeper Questions

- ⇒ Short term v. the future?
- ⇒ Sadness and hurt
- ⇒ Changing congregations: different understandings of church
- ⇒ How do we consult and communicate about the future?

Peoples' Immediate Concerns

- ◆ What is the role and identity of the parish?
- ◆ Communities need a figurehead - if not a priest, then who?
- ◆ Is Mass the only form of prayer?
- ◆ Creative funding for training
- ◆ Break away from ghetto image



Peoples' Deeper Questions

- ◆ Developing lay ministry
- ◆ Consultation
- ◆ Participation
- ◆ Problems of isolation for clergy and laity
- ◆ The role of the parish to preach the Gospel by living it, praying it, celebrating it, believing it

Some Central Questions

- ◆ How do changes in society/culture affect us as the Church?
- ◆ What is a parish? What is its mission?
- ◆ What is the place of the Eucharist in the life of the parish?
- ◆ What is the purpose of the priesthood for today?
- ◆ What is the relationship between priest and people?

What is a Parish?



- ◆ a community whose pastoral care, under the authority of the bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest.

(Code of Canon Law, 515)

The Mission of the Parish

- ◆ The parish is the Church placed in the neighbourhood of humanity.
- ◆ It lives and is at work through being deeply inserted in human society and bound up with its aspirations and its dramatic events.

Christifideles Laici, 26, 27

The Mission of the Parish

- ◆ When society is shaken and torn, when people are lost and disoriented, there still remains in the human heart the desire for caring relationships.



Christifideles Laici, 27

The Mission of the Parish



- ◆ The parish can respond to this desire when it carries out its fundamental task. It is to be a house of welcome to all and a place of service to all, or, as Pope John XXIII was fond of saying, to be the 'village fountain' to which all would have recourse in their thirst.

Christifideles Laici, 27

Turning the Parish Inside-out

- ◆ The vision of Vatican II is that the life and mission of the church happens not in the parish buildings but in the homes and lives of the parishioners.

Bill Huebsch, 1999



The Eucharist in the Life of a Christian Community

- ◆ Summit and source (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10)
- ◆ No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the Eucharist (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6)
- ◆ 'Unthinkable' in the early Church that a community could not celebrate the Eucharist because no bishop or presbyter present (*Edward Schillebeeckx*)

Portsmouth Diocese

- ◆ The Mass is the heartbeat of the Church, and Sunday Mass is the visible expression of the communion that we share. It also creates and nurtures that communion.
- ◆ "The Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church." It is for this reason that participating in the Mass is the heart of Sunday for every baptised Catholic.
(Novo Millennio Ineunte 36)

Communities without the Eucharist

Ecclesia de Eucharistia 32

- ◆ **"..how distressing and irregular is the situation of a Christian community which, despite having sufficient numbers and variety of faithful to form a parish, does not have a priest to lead it."**

Temporary Solutions

Ecclesia de Eucharistia 33

- ◆ When a community lacks a priest, attempts are rightly made somehow to remedy the situation so that it can continue its Sunday celebrations...
- ◆ But such solutions must be considered merely temporary, while the community awaits a priest.

What do we do when we can't have Sunday Mass?

- ◆ Three Values:
 - Sunday
 - Eucharist
 - Community
- ◆ In each solution, which values are upheld and which lost?

Geoffrey Steele, The Liturgy Planner Advent 2003

'The Priest Problem'

- ◆ The Ostrich Solution
- ◆ Stretch the Survivors
- ◆ The Will of God
- ◆ Lift the Ban
- ◆ Ship Some Over

Willard Jabusch

Possible Scenarios

Kerkhofs and Zulehner

- ◆ Redistribution of available priests
- ◆ Shared responsibility of the laity
- ◆ Increase in number of deacons
- ◆ Regrouping of parishes into larger units
- ◆ Splitting priesthood into ordained tasks
- ◆ Ordination of 'viri probati'
- ◆ Ordination of women
- ◆ Renewal of communities

The Role of the Priest

Los Angeles Pastoral Letter

- ◆ To call forth and serve the priesthood of the whole church
- ◆ Preside over the Eucharist
- ◆ Co-worker with the Bishop in teaching, sanctifying, guiding
- ◆ Preside over life and prayer of community
- ◆ Draw all baptised together in communion and mutual service

Our Challenge

- ◆ Crisis of faith
- ◆ Parishes which are not active communities
- ◆ Mass the sum total
- ◆ Re-organisation is not enough
- ◆ We need renewal

The Cardinal's view



We are at the beginning of a new era and singing a new song. It is a good time for our mission

We must go out and build evangelising communities that will be an echo and sign of the new kingdom

Tablet, 15 September 2001, p.1341

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

- ◆ <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/>
- ◆ *Click on Diocese and follow the links, for example:*
 - Arundel and Brighton, East Anglia, Hallam, Hexham and Newcastle, Leeds, Middlesbrough, Nottingham, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Salford and Westminster
- ◆ Contact your local Catholic parish



MISSION COUNCIL

5th – 7th October 2004

MINUTES

SESSION 1

TUESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2004

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Alistair Smeaton. Bible Study was led by the Moderator, the Revd Sheila Maxey.

04/60 Welcome

The Moderator welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning in particular the Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquhar (Theological Reflector); the Revd Elizabeth Nash (Convener of the Ecumenical Committee); Mr Peter Yorke (Northern Synod, deputising for the Revd John Durell); Miss Kathleen Cross (North Western Synod); Mrs Wilma Prentice (Mersey Synod); Mrs Irene Wren (East Midlands Synod); Mr Bill Robson (West Midlands Synod); the Revd Anthony Howells (West Midlands Synod); Mrs Janet Gray (South Western Synod); the Revd Richard Pope (South Western Synod); Dr Graham Campling (Southern Synod); Miss Michelle Marcano (HR and Facilities Manager, Church House); the Revd Alistair Smeaton (Moderator's Chaplain); the Revd Kenneth Forbes (Minutes Secretary); Mr David Legge (East Midlands Synod, deputising for Mrs Barbara Turner); Mr Roderick Garthwaite (Yorkshire Synod)

04/61 Attendance

There were 62 members present with 23 staff and others in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Mr Ahmed Sourani (Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee); the Revd John Durell (Northern Synod); the Revd Martin Hardy (Mersey Synod); the Revd Ros Harrison (South Western Synod); Mrs Janet Gray (Synod of Wales); the Revd John Arthur, Mrs Irene Hudson, the Revd Alan Paterson (Synod of Scotland); Miss Amanda Wade (FURY); the Revd Dr John Parry, Dr Brian Woodhall, the Revd John Young (Committee Conveners); Ms Suzanne Adofo, Mrs Karen Bulley, the Revd Roy Lowes, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Ms Avis Reaney, the Revd John Steele (Assembly-appointed staff)

04/62 Additional Business

The Deputy General Secretary informed Mission Council that there were additional papers (papers D, E and F) to consider.

04/63 Minutes of Mission Council 19th-21st March

The Clerk drew Council's attention to the changes noted in paper D, 'Corrections to the Minutes of the March 2004 Mission Council', and noted that the sentence in 04/39 '*The convener undertook to remove that recommendation and its accompanying text from the report*' should be deleted from the minutes. With these amendments, Mission Council approved the minutes.

04/64 Matters Arising

Paper A: Mission Council Advisory Group

The Deputy General Secretary moved the Resolution:

Mission Council appoints the Revd Sandra Lloylangston as Secretary of the Grants and Loans Group from 1st September 2004 until General Assembly 2008.

The Resolution was carried.

The Deputy General Secretary outlined the procedure for electing a member to the Mission Council Advisory Group to replace Mrs Helen Mee.

04/65 Resource Planning Advisory Group - Paper B

The Revd Julian Macro presented the resolution:

Mission Council agrees that the work of the Resource Planning Advisory Group should be suspended, pending the submission of a paper to MCAG on the reallocation of responsibilities in RPAG's remit, which could lead to the group being disbanded.

The Resolution was carried.

04/66 Basic Stipend

The Treasurer, Mr Eric Chilton, presented the report of the Maintenance of Ministry Subcommittee. The procedure for setting stipends had been carefully reviewed, taking account of the Retail Price Index, the RPIX index and the average earnings index.

Mr Chilton moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2005 at £19,176.

The Resolution was carried.

04/67 Yardley Hastings

After reporting on the work of the Yardley Hastings Buildings Management Group, Mr Chilton moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council approves the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that process.

The Clerk proposed the following amendment:

Subject to the granting of a Charity Commissioners order, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, approves the change of use of the Yardley Hastings Centre and the executing of a lease by the URC Trust to the East Midlands Synod Trust for that process.

Seconded by the General Secretary.

Mr Chilton indicated his willingness to accept the amendment.

The Revd Terry Oakley confirmed that the East Midlands Synod was content with the proposed arrangement, and expressed his thanks to Mr Chilton for his assistance and understanding.

The Resolution as amended was carried.

The Moderator requested non-voting members of Mission Council to withdraw while the Deputy General Secretary presented Paper G. This was an interim report from the group charged with making recommendations for changes which would improve the Church's understanding and practice, as a result of the case of a particular minister which had previously been considered by Mission Council.

04/68 Synod of Scotland Moderator

The General Secretary reported on the work of the group for the appointment of a Moderator for the Synod of Scotland, and moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd John Lloyd Humphreys as Moderator of the Synod of Scotland for a period of seven years from 1st April 2005 until 31st August 2012.

The Resolution was carried, and Mission Council welcomed Mr Humphreys with applause.

04/69 Human Resources and Facilities Manager

Mrs Val Morrison moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on Behalf of General Assembly, appoints Miss Michelle Marcano to the post of Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House from 1st September 2004.

The Resolution was carried.

04/70 Nominations Committee

The Revd Principal Stephen Orchard outlined the current work of the Nominations Committee.

SESSION 2

Tuesday 5th October - 7.30pm

04/71 Ministry today and tomorrow I

Mission Council was addressed by the Revd Andrew Faley (Ecumenical Officer for the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales) and the Revd Peter Dominey (Baptist Church, Southend – ‘Church from Scratch’).

Fr Faley outlined something of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales and related how this history has resulted in present patterns of ministry; he spoke of the challenges in ministry facing the Roman Catholic Church, and some of the initiatives that were being taken in provision of parish ministry.

Mr Dominey described ‘Church from Scratch’, in which he was exploring ways of being church apart from the familiar local congregation. His priorities as a Christian minister, he said, to participate in Christian community, and to build the Christian community. With these priorities, his ministry was exercised in establishing Christian community among the unchurched.

Mission Council spent time in groups discussing these perspectives on ministry.

The Session closed with worship led by the Chaplain.

SESSION 3

WEDNESDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2004 - 9.15 AM

04/72 Worship

Worship was led by the Chaplain, and Bible study by the Moderator. Worship included a welcome to Miss Michelle Marcano, newly-appointed Human Resources and Facilities Manager at Church House.

The Moderator welcomed the Revd Dr David Peel (Moderator-elect), and the Revd Stuart Jackson (Synod of Wales)

04/73 Palestine

The Revd Neil Thorogood (deputising for Mr Ahmed Sourani who was unable to leave Gaza), addressed Mission Council about the situation in Gaza.

He spoke of the United Reformed Church's connectedness with Palestine through *Commitment for Life*, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), the Ecumenical Accompaniers Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), personal contacts and friendships and reported on the work of the MECC in co-operation with Christian Aid, and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC).

Mr Thorogood related some of his own experiences in visiting Gaza and highlighted the dilemma of 'Security for Israel: Justice for Palestine'. He described the effects of the continuing progress of the Hafrada (separation) Wall and outlined some of the current and possible future responses of churches in the West to the situation in Israel/Palestine.

The Revd Brian Jolly reported on plans for a visit to Israel/Palestine the following week by a group from the United Reformed Church.

04/74 Racial Justice (Paper C)

The Revd Andrew Prasad (Convener, Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry) and Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Secretary), presented Paper C, *Transformative Justice: Being Church and Overcoming Racism*.

The Revd Phillip Woods related his experience of visiting Ghana, formerly the centre of the slave trade where, in the slave castles, there was a chapel built above the dungeons with a grating where the slaves could be observed below. Mission Council was invited to sing 'Over my head, I hear singing in the air.' The riches of the West today were a testimony to that past, but there was much that pointed to it still being an issue today: women from Eastern Europe taken to Amsterdam for prostitution; African Americans in the US were living in ghettos where a whole different culture had developed.

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss the past, present and future of the Church's cross-cultural relationships and multicultural ministry. Notes of group discussions would be passed to the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry.

Returning to plenary session, each group reported on key points of its thinking, and general discussion took place on the issues raised by the groups.

SESSION 4

Wednesday 6th October 2004, 4.00pm

04/75 Time for Action (Papers A and D)

The Revd Peter Poulter reported on the *Time for Action* consultation held in July 2004 and presented 'A Charter for a Safe Church' (noting that the title may be changed before publication).

Mr Poulter responded to questions from the floor, noting that:

- the Charter was intended for use by local churches

- the Charter was intended to deal specifically with sexual harassment
- the group did not anticipate that local churches would be able to provide all necessary support, but should make efforts to discover where such help might be available

Mission Council considered the resolution:

Mission Council, on the recommendation of MCAG, appoints the Revd Peter Poulter and Mrs Sheila Brain to participate in the continuing group, which is invited to draw up a proposed charter, produce an accompanying pack, and suggest how other related work might be fed into this process.

The resolution was carried.

It was suggested that the Equal Opportunities Committee and Training Committee be involved, and relevant secular agencies consulted if appropriate. It was noted, however, that wide consultation had already taken place at the *Time for Action* consultation.

04/76 World Alliance of Reformed Churches

The Revd Elizabeth Nash reported on the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which met in Accra, Ghana, July/August 2004.

The General Council had addressed the theme, *That all may have life in fullness*, and highlighted issues of mission, spirituality, covenant, the place of women, the contribution of young people and dialogues with other Christians.

Ms Nash outlined the discernment process used to arrive at consensus decisions, and described the issues leading to the adoption of the Accra confession of faith.

In response to questions from the floor, Elizabeth Nash noted that:

- consultations in many parts of the world took place over a period of years during the process of drafting the confession, including consultation with economists; there had been reservations from some churches in Europe;
- there was no simple solution to the world's economic problems; the confession said that the neo-liberal capitalist way of looking at the world is inappropriate for reducing poverty;
- the discernment process involved the use of differently coloured cards to indicate people's feeling about a debate, the object being to arrive at a consensus.

Responding to a question from the floor, the General Secretary informed Mission Council that the Assembly Arrangements Committee was looking at the possibility of introducing a system of consensus voting for the Councils of the United Reformed Church.

04/77 Lottery Funding (PaperE)

The Revd Martin Camroux presented Paper E, and suggested that the Church and Society Committee report more fully to the January meeting of Mission Council. Mission Council agreed.

04/78 Assets for Life

Mr Steve Summers introduced the resource pack '*Assets for Life*'. Mission Council viewed the '*Assets for Life*' video.

04/79 Business or Mission?

The Moderator invited Mission Council to reflect on the issues addressed during the day.

Among points raised were:

- the challenging and inspirational material presented during the day needed to be disseminated throughout the Church;
- the changed format of Mission Council meeting took into account recent theological reflectors' encouragement that Mission Council should regard all its business in the light of the Church's mission;
- the bedrock of mission was prayer, and Mission Council should intersperse prayer throughout its meetings.

SESSION 5

Wednesday 6th October 2004, 7.30pm

04/80

Mission Council divided into groups to discuss and reflect upon ministry and to consider the thirteen recommendations of the *Equipping the Saints* report.

Reconvened in plenary session, each group was invited to highlight one or two of the recommendations that were of particular interest or concern:

Recommendation 1 was strongly supported, and felt by one group to be the key recommendation; others felt it required amplification.

Recommendation 2 was also supported; local churches should be encouraged to establish patterns of midweek worship.

Recommendation 3 was generally thought to be important. Concern was expressed that involvement of District in ordination/induction of elders may discourage some from eldership; and group suggested that work should be done on the training and equipping of elders and that the place of non-serving elders should be reviewed.

Recommendation 4 was thought to outline a valuable principle, but some groups were against the use of the word 'pastor'.

Recommendation 5 was thought to be inappropriate/irrelevant.

Recommendation 6 was seen as a good basis for further work.

Recommendation 7 was highlighted by one group, which stressed the importance of ecumenical clusters.

Recommendation 8 was deemed by one group to be too complicated, but thought by another to be worthy of further exploration.

Recommendation 9 was highlighted by one group as being important.

Recommendation 10 was universally disliked.

Recommendation 11 received no comment from any group.

Recommendation 12 was felt to be a good basis for further discussion.

Recommendation 13 received no specific comment.

During brief general discussion the Convener of the Ministries Committee, Mr John Ellis, thanked Mission Council for its consideration of the recommendations and responded to a number of the points raised.

It was noted that the points raised (above) were the opinions of the groups and should not be taken to represent the mind of Mission Council.

Evening prayer was led by the Chaplain.

SESSION 6

Thursday 7th October, 9.30am

04/81 Mission Council Advisory Group (Paper A)

The Moderator reported that there had been one nomination for a member of MCAG. Mission Council duly appointed Mrs Irene Wren.

04/82 Rural Officer/Consultant (Paper D)

The Deputy General Secretary reported that a review of the post of Rural Consultant will take place in the light of the forthcoming retirement of Mrs Jenny Carpenter.

04/83 Assembly Arrangements Committee (Paper F)

The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee, Mr Wiliam McVey, presented the report of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

The Committee had been looking at possible changes which could facilitate the efficient conduct of General Assembly. Mr McVey highlighted the following points:

- the Assembly Arrangements Committee did not decide the content of General Assembly, but suggested that matters for inclusion should be considered more rigorously, and that all business of the 2005 General Assembly be directly related to *Catch the Vision*;
- there was the possibility that 'routine' matters could be dealt with *en bloc* so that, given necessary safeguards, such business could be handled more speedily;
- persons presenting reports should speak to resolutions but not to the reports, which should be taken as read;

Each point was discussed in turn. Points raised in discussion were:

- some interpretation of relevance would be necessary - who would do this?
- themed Assemblies were a good thing
- the decision would need to be made now in order that people could prepare
- there was a danger that this proposal could be used to exclude certain business
- if too much was attached to *Catch the Vision* it could damage the process
- certain business unrelated to *Catch the Vision* would have to be progressed this year
- business might take less time if preceded by 'vision' thinking
- there was general agreement that this was a good idea

- could the Assembly Arrangements Committee include wider representation of the wider church
- 'en bloc' material should come at the end of Assembly
- William McVey responded by saying that the Committee would bring proposals for 'routine business' to March Mission Council for agreement
- Elizabeth Nash described the process used by the Methodist Conference
- if people had read reports there should be no need to speak to them
- the combination of a written report and an oral presentation to highlight points would encourage good debate
- the Moderator asked for Mission Council's opinion on the suggestion that resolutions but not reports should be spoken to. The overwhelming feeling was against the proposal

Elizabeth Welch proposed that *Mission Council appoint two people to meet with the Assembly Arrangements Committee, to assist with the planning of business.* Seconded by Elizabeth Nash.

The resolution fell.

Mr McVey summed up, and thanked Mission Council for its consideration of the proposals. The Moderator reminded Mission Council that it would be looking at Assembly business in detail in March 2005.

04/84 Catch the Vision

The General Secretary talked about his experience of the WARC General Council in Ghana, and of his discovery there that the priorities of *Catch the Vision* were the priorities of churches throughout the world.

Catch the Vision was about mission and about faithfulness, and was not new. But just as abolitionists fought with their own churches, we also need to have the courage to change. After explaining the background to *Catch the Vision*, Dr Cornick suggested that uncomfortable realities needed managing lest they overcame the Church, and that churches were saying 'we are ready for change - we want to be Church differently'. However, much of the change demanded by churches and individuals assumed changes centrally and at synod level rather than locally.

Certainly change was needed in the structures and the way they were serviced, but Christ was incarnated primarily in local congregations - they were centres of Kingdom activity. This was the central thrust of Equipping the Saints.

Thus far the process had reflected on the nature of marginalisation and accepted that God was a God of the margins. The United Reformed Church was far from dead or moribund (9% were growing and 25% had seen no decline in the past 5 years).

Finance

For the first time there was a full picture of the Church's finances; the Church was not being crippled by ministry and administration costs; most of the Church's assets were held locally; the *Catch the Vision* group was in the bizarre position of offering uncomfortable good news; the Church could afford to be what it was called to be but only if people were willing to say 'what is mine is ours, and what is ours is God's'; this didn't mean that all was well or that the financial shadows could be made to disappear; the *Catch the Vision* Steering Group could only hold up a mirror to the Church and say that this was the most accurate picture it could see.

Dr Cornick presented the timetable for 2005.

Catch the Vision was about holding together the local and the national/international, change and stability. There was no way in which the General Assembly could prescribe one or even ten models of local mission. There were probably as many models as there were local churches. Consultation would begin with people involved in mission as community regeneration. Ministries would continue to work on 'Equipping the Saints'.

It was hoped that the March Mission Council would be a strategy summit as it prepared for General Assembly 2005. Churches would be requested to make Pentecost a point of prayer for *Catch the Vision*.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- do we need a call to sacrifice? what resources have we got and are we using them?
- what is the ecumenical dimension, particularly as it might affect LEPs?
- the heart of the matter is sharing the gospel and knowing that God is powerful in the margins
- what effect will changes in Methodist boundaries have on the United Reformed Church?
- we have to learn to express our love for Jesus
- how has the process been shaped by local responses?

The General Secretary responded to the discussion. Mission Council thanked the General Secretary for his presentation.

04/85 Theological Reflector

The Theological Reflector spoke briefly about her impressions of the Mission Council.

The Moderator thanked those who had contributed to the meeting, especially outside speakers and laptop computer operators, the chaplain, and the Deputy General Secretary.

04/86

Closing worship was led by the Chaplain, and included the sacrament of Holy Communion.

A Theological Reflection on Mission Council

5th – 7th October 2004

Rev. Gabrielle Farquhar, Presbyterian Church in Ireland

My contact with the United Reformed Church goes back to 1996 when I represented the PCI on the Ecumenical Committee for three years. The willingness of your Church to open itself to the thoughts and views of others outside the URC is something that I have come to respect and admire and see as a great strength and expression of maturity. So often we, as the institutional Church, are afraid to expose ourselves to our sister churches for fear of negative criticism. Your willingness to be transparent and desire to seek God's will in all you do as a part of 'His' Church universal is further reflected in you asking a member from a sister church to reflect on the meeting of Mission Council. I thank you for the invitation and for the learning experience it has been for me.

DECLINE and GROWTH

The Church at the beginning of the 21st century is a Church in the process of coping with change. The apparent catalyst for this change is something that began 40 years ago and it is not unique to the URC. Society has changed dramatically over these years as has the place of the Church within it and within the lives of individuals. The Church is no longer seen as essential to the make-up and survival of society. The result for the Church is reflected in declining numbers, lack of resources – financial and personnel – and in a different attitude towards its authority. This process of change has not come about by choice but by necessity causing some to see it as reactionary rather than a desire for genuine change in the way we proclaim the gospel and 'do Church'. The report of the 'Catch the Vision' Steering group to the General Assembly 2004 rightly says in response to criticism about 'managing decline rather than encouraging growth', that decline must be managed – and so it must. I felt Mission Council showed a genuine desire to both manage and encourage. They are very aware of the issues and know that changes have to come at both local level and within the structures of the Church and are well on the way to putting those changes in place. The reports 'Catch the Vision' and 'Equipping the Saints' are evidence of this.

The video 'Assets for Life' shows that the mandate given to us by Jesus in Luke 4 is being exercised in churches that have caught the vision and are opening their doors to those so often left on the outside – the asylum seeker, drug addict, unemployed, abused..... However, the mandate given to the Church in Luke 4 does not only mean that we should reach out to the lost, imprisoned, hungry, poor in society, but that we should also reach out to the spiritually lost, imprisoned, hungry and poor.

What I would like to have heard from Mission Council was how the Church was planning to reach those thousands who are wealthy, middle class, employed, aged between 20-40 who see the Church, but not God, as irrelevant to their lives. These are the people making decisions in society and influencing it. In his article 'Church 2020 - what will it be like?' Michael Moynagh gives the result of a research describing a 'list of people to be trusted' in British society today: local doctor; Kelloggs; Cadbury; Heinz; Nescafe; Rowntree; Bank; Coca Cola; CHURCH; Police; MP. Church is way down the list for these people. These

are the people who look for a voice from the Church when there is a tragedy or crisis in society but do not wish to belong. They are the people who like now and again to sit in a beautiful Cathedral and feel the presence of God but do not wish to worship 'Him' on a Sunday. These are the people who need us to 'do Church' in a different way and we need them to want to belong. The Gospel needs to be proclaimed in a way that is meaningful to their lives with a platform and opportunity for questioning rather than simply being told from the pulpit. Perhaps it would be useful to hear the voices of these people at Mission Council.

MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL

The membership, like that of councils from sister churches, appeared balanced towards those who are white, middle class and available to attend meetings during the working week. For somebody who is limited to a certain number of days annual leave it is a big commitment to attend Mission Council when it is held during the week. Perhaps an incentive could be given in monetary terms to encourage them to attend. It would also let them know their voice is valued.

Finally, I encourage you to continue seeking God's will for you as a Church of Jesus Christ in today's world. Your openness will encourage and lead others. Risks will have to be taken as you change but when they are taken under the Spirit's guidance fruits will be seen and God's Kingdom be brought a little closer to fulfilment.