

completed in Christ for the whole creation and for all mankind — the forgiveness of sins, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and newness of life in the family of God. Baptism is the sacrament of entry into the Church and its corporate ministry, and is therefore a once-for-all event in the life of any one person.*

In this sacrament the Church affirms its faith in the action of God in Jesus Christ; and takes corporate responsibility for those receiving baptism, promising to support and nourish them as it receives them into its fellowship. Those who are baptised are thereby committed to the service of Christ, and with them the Church renews its commitment to Him.

Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit at an age of responsibility, or in infancy, When baptism is administered at an age of responsibility, upon profession of faith, the baptised person at once enters upon the full privileges and responsibility of membership. When baptism is administered to an infant, upon profession of faith by his parent(s), he is placed under the nurture of the Church that he may be led by the Holy Spirit in due time to make his own profession of faith in Christ as his Saviour and Lord, and enter upon the full privileges and responsibilities of membership. Admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church shall be in accordance with paragraph 9(1)(ix) and (2)(vi) of the Structure and with Schedule A.

*The united Church will have within its membership both persons who practise infant baptism in the sincere belief that this is in harmony with the mind of the Lord, and those whose conviction it is that the sacrament can only be properly administered to a believer. They will all need to honour each other's conviction that in this sacrament the grace of God has been manifested. In any case where there is a difference of conviction as to whether the once-for-all sacrament has in fact been administered to any one person, such differences will require to be pastorally reconciled in mutual understanding and charity."

PART II: THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS IN A CHURCH UNITING THE URC AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

11. It must be our constant hope that ecumenical encounter, perhaps especially when two or more Churches are negotiating for actual and full union, may lead to more than just such adjustments as enable divergent traditions to become one. At its best the encounter should lead to new insights into fresh ways of exercising the ministry of Christ's Church to the world. The Joint Committee believes that in regard to the ministry of Word and Sacrament this may well have happened.

12. The understanding of such ministry within the United Reformed Church is set forth in the Basis of Union in paragraphs 19-26 and Schedules B, C and D.

13. The representatives of Churches of Christ have explained the understanding of such ministry within their tradition. Historically this tended to be conditioned by two factors. The first was opposition to the professionalism of clergy as experienced in Scotland at the time of the emergence of the movement that led to the Churches of Christ, and the second a determination to find apostolic authority for church patterns and practices. These negative and positive factors prompted a careful unwillingness to distinguish between the clergy and the laity, some suspicion of clericalism within the Church, and a stress rather upon a pattern of order and ministry believed to be extracted from the pages of the New Testament than on any developments down the centuries of later church history. The view which came to be accepted was that the New Testament, and especially the Pauline epistles, revealed a local ministry for each congregation of ordained elders and deacons and a universal ministry of evangelists (the latter deduced partly from the ministry of Timothy and Titus). In practical terms this meant that each congregation was expected to have a plurality of ordained elders and deacons. Evangelists were mainly concerned with the establishment of new congregations and the building up of existing congregations. They moved frequently from place to place and were maintained by the churches, unlike elders and deacons, who remained in secular employment.

14. The passage of time led to the evangelists being longer and longer in particular congregations, and their emergence as a body more similar to the ministry of Word and Sacraments as now conceived in the United Reformed Church. It must however, be stressed that their smaller number in relation to the number of churches precluded anything like the one minister/one church basis common to both traditions which united to form the URC. There came to be two recognised forms of presbyterate, the evangelists and the elders.

15. The eldership in Churches of Christ is different from that experienced by the Presbyterian churches, or the eldership as it is now in the URC. In this tradition it has been an office of rule and pastoral care, but has not included presidency at the Lord's Table. Such presidency is a recognised and constant function of the eldership in Churches of Christ. It must be stressed that the universal practice of those Churches is to gather at the Lord's Table every Sunday.

16. One representative of Churches of Christ has expressed the present situation thus:

“Normally either elders or full-time ministers preside at Communion, though others may do so if authorised by the local congregation. A full-time minister rarely preaches and presides at the same Communion service; usually he will preach with an elder presiding. Churches of Christ hold to no necessary doctrinal relationship between ordination and presidency. Because those ordained are regarded as spiritually gifted leaders in the congregation it is assumed that they normally preside, and in the absence of a full-time minister they would normally preach. They are ordained not so that they might preside, but because both God and the Church called them to be responsible for the Church’s life. Churches of Christ do not understand the full-time minister as having any exclusive function as against the functions of an elder in the local congregation. By virtue of his theological training and preparation, and his freedom to devote himself whole time to the work of the Church, the full-time minister is more privileged than his fellow elders. By virtue of his dedication to full-time ministry and the discipline of his ministry he is normally honoured for his calling and in the light of his training given a position of leadership.”

17. The Churches of Christ representatives have stressed to the others serving on the Joint Committee that local customs may vary, and they would not be held to have described what is the rigid practice of all local churches. In the same way, although the Basis of Union (paragraph 7(25)) makes provision for the recognition by the District Councils of those who should preside at the Lord’s Supper in the absence of an ordained minister, the URC representatives acknowledged that there is as yet considerable variation in the degree and character of ‘pastoral necessity’ seen as requiring such provision, and on the part of some an unwillingness to see the presidency as normally reserved for the ordained ministry, and of others a fear that this period of developing practice may end in an undefined casualness. There is need therefore on both sides for the kind of clarification to which we seem to be being led.

18. Both Churches engaged in these conversations must therefore recognise that while there is a general practice within each that can be described, that practice cannot be presented as fully universal and there are variations both of doctrinal conviction as well as of habit involved. Both Churches nevertheless can be seen as holding to the basic doctrine of the ministry set out in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Basis of Union, wherein the fundamental ministry within the Church is seen as that of Jesus Christ himself, and it is recognised that the Lord gives particular gifts for particular ministries to equip his whole people for the total ministry to which all are called.

19. The place of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the life of the Church has especially been considered by the Joint Committee with reference to presidency at the Lord’s Supper. It may be helpful briefly to set out the convictions which have emerged in our thinking.
First, we believe it to be essential that every local church should have the

exclude the possibility of a service of believer’s baptism, but would bring out the importance of maintaining the integrity of the Church’s action in baptising infants and therefore of providing for some adequate public profession of faith which builds upon the baptism as an infant and does not imply a denial of its reality as baptism.)

8. As well as the difference of conviction on the practice of baptism, there is also a difference between the two Churches on the mode of baptism. In the United Reformed Church baptism has normally been by affusion (sprinkling), whilst in Churches of Christ baptism has been by immersion. The Joint Committee believes that baptism by either mode is acceptable. In the United Church it will be necessary to make both modes available, and it is the Committee’s hope that the growing together of the Churches will lead to both modes becoming more widely available.

9. The Joint Committee submits a revised version of paragraph 14 of the United Reformed Church’s Basis of Union to incorporate the foregoing points. In proposing amendments the Committee’s aim has been to keep them to a minimum, but to make all those necessary to a real union with Churches of Christ. The changes proposed are as follows:

a) The second sentence of the first paragraph is transferred to the last paragraph, because it describes the form of the rite rather than its meaning.

b) “there is made explicit” is substituted for “it makes explicit” in the second paragraph because this is God’s action as well as the Church’s action.

c) The phrase “once-for-all event” is substituted for the former conclusion of the second paragraph in order to make it clear that the issue here is not just a point of church order but the theological implications of the sacrament of entry.

d) a new third paragraph is proposed to make more specific reference to the Church’s faith in God’s action and its responsibility for those baptised. It also refers to the commitment of those baptised and the Church’s renewal of its own commitment.

e) In the last paragraph an explicit reference to profession of faith by the parent(s) of an infant being baptised has been inserted to stress that baptism always takes place in the context of faith. The profession of faith required of parents should be in a form such as that contained in the first question of Schedule A(a) or the first sentence of Schedule A(b), together with a promise to bring up the child in that faith and in the ways of the Church of God.

f) a footnote has been inserted to cover the need to reconcile differences of conviction about baptism.

10. Paragraph 7(14) of the Basis of Union as revised would read:

“The United Reformed Church observes the gospel sacrament of baptism as a gift of God to His Church and as an appointed means of grace.

When the Church observes this sacrament, there is made explicit at a particular time and place and for a particular person what God has ac-

is thus the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism signifies dying to sin and being raised to new life; it marks a union with Christ in faith; and in it is promised the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. In each baptism God's continuing work of reconciliation is proclaimed.

b) baptism also requires the response of faith in God's gracious action. It is administered by and within the Church, which is the community of faith. When a believer is baptised, he is required to make a personal confession of faith and repentance. When an infant is baptised, his parents are required to confess their faith and commitment to the vocation of Christian parenthood; and admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church depends upon a personal confession of faith at a later date. In both believer's baptism and infant baptism the Church declares its faith.

c) baptism has to be understood in the context of the Church — the Body of Christ. It is always more than an individual act; it is an act of the Church. It is the sacrament of entry into the Church and its corporate ministry, and as such it is a once-for-all event in the life of the Christian. Within the Church the baptised person is nurtured and equipped for the service of Christ: this is as true of the believer as it is of the infant, for the process continues throughout life. At each baptism the congregation renew their own commitment to Christ.

6. On the basis of these common convictions the Joint Committee believes that two forms of baptism can exist side by side within a united Church, each enriching the other. The acceptance of differing convictions on the practice of baptism must involve recognition that both infant baptism and believer's baptism are forms of the one baptism. There would be two routes to the full privileges and responsibilities of Church membership: one by confession of faith and baptism as a believer, and the other by baptism as an infant and confession of faith at a later date. In each case profession of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord precedes such entry.

7. The Joint Committee recognises, however, that such a dual practice in a united Church will require respect for the rights of conscience at certain points, and will only be possible if the adherents of each practice accept their common obligation to build up each other in the faith. It will be necessary to ensure that no one practice or mode of baptism will be enforced upon either ministers or people contrary to conscience. Any attempt to do so would impede real union. More difficult is the case of someone baptised in infancy who comes to believe that baptism can only properly be administered to a believer and therefore requests believer's baptism. Such cases will have to be dealt with pastorally and the depth of the issues involved will have to be taken fully into account. Because baptism is more than an individual act, in such cases the conscientious convictions of ministers and congregations are involved as well as those of the individual. It would be inappropriate in a Basis of Union to try to make detailed provision for all the cases which might arise. The Committee therefore proposes simply the addition of a footnote to the paragraph on Baptism requiring such cases to be handled pastorally. (If the union is achieved, notes must then be prepared for the guidance of ministers and others involved in such situations. Such guidance would not

fullest opportunity to celebrate the holy communion. The fact that Churches of Christ have celebrated the sacrament every Sunday obviously makes a far higher demand for ministry at this point. It may further be expected that the witness borne within any united Church to the value of a weekly celebration by former Churches of Christ may lead to its extension.

Secondly, it is highly desirable that the president at the communion should be chosen by the Church for that office and so set apart. Here the Church is understood in a more than local sense.

Thirdly, it is more important that the president at the communion should be pastorally related to the church than that a 'qualified' person should be constantly brought in from outside that fellowship. (We do not mean by this that an 'outside' minister should not preside at the communion, but that the regular displacing of, say, a local pastor, who in all else ministers to that people, detaches the eucharist from that ministry in an indefensible way.)

20. What appears to have emerged fruitfully from the ecumenical encounter of these negotiations is that we should not merely adjust two present practices to make union possible, but move resolutely towards a new shape of ministry different from either hitherto experienced yet owing a good deal to the experience of both.

21. The negotiating Churches have increasingly — like many other Churches — to face the question whether a ministry such as has been known up to now is going to be available. Numbers within the ordained ministry are shrinking; ordinands grow fewer and not a few who bring rich experience of life cannot look forward to the length of ministry of many in the past; the gravity of inflation — taken with the diminution of numbers in the churches and the fact that many are elderly — would seem to preclude the financial sustaining in reasonable conditions of the size of ministry known hitherto. There are evidences of patchwork methods of dealing with this situation which bring satisfaction neither to minister nor to churches. A far more radical solution would seem to be indicated.

22. Together with this development, much of which might be held to be depressing, there has gone a vigorous questioning of the inward-turned character of many of our churches (and the demands that this makes for a ministry too domestic in nature) when the world needs to be penetrated for Christ. There has come to be considerable stress both on the release of ministers for service other than that based on the local church* and the training of laymen not for church office but for ministry within the secular world.

23. The Joint Committee recognises that it does its work in the wider setting of the life of the Churches, and that the experiences described briefly above are common to both of them. Moreover, it has to be aware that our small union, should God bring it to fruition, must hope to advance the wider union

* For example the Methodist Church which traditionally has retained the service of its ministers for work in the circuits has recently introduced a fully recognised system of secondment whereby ministers serve in industrial chaplaincies and other areas of community involvement, while still under the care and discipline of the Conference. These specialised appointments they have called 'sector' ministries.

of the whole Church. The URC has not only declared its determination to seek that wider union; it has been privileged to be the instrument whereby there has been gathered together the most widely representative group for the discussion of the prospects of reunion ever to be assembled in England. Nothing we now propose must frustrate that wider movement nor be advanced without awareness of thought within other Churches like that represented in the recent Anglican/Roman Catholic Statement on the Ministry. We believe we are being led to offer a creative suggestion which is worthy of consideration by all the Churches and which is a development of much present thinking within them. It has some original elements in it, they are the result of thought stimulated across the poles of two different traditional positions, and a further proof that unity and renewal go together.

24. What we briefly propose is that, while recognising that some extended period may be necessary for the implementation of such a proposal, we should resolutely move towards two basic forms of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. We have used new names to describe them, but these are tentative and given for present distinction. Better names may well emerge as the proposals are further considered.

25. One would be substantially the ministry as we have known it within the URC and, historically under the name of 'evangelists', in Churches of Christ. They would be fully trained, full-time and stipendiary, and might (for convenience) be described as the 'general ministry'. Because they are likely to be fewer in number, they may be required to be more mobile than in the past, and be called to leadership and a teaching and training ministry in regard to a number of churches.

26. The other form of ministry would be one in which the ministers were ordained to a ministry of Word and Sacraments while remaining employed in secular life. They may be designated as 'local presbyters'. They would receive a real measure of training and their ministry would be fully recognised and clearly authorised by the Church. Increasingly it would be envisaged that every church would have such 'local presbyter(s)' especially if 'general ministers' were to exercise wider or 'sector' functions. It should be made clear that the general ministry will not become detached from local churches, nor be in any way diminished in standing by these proposals. Indeed, we believe that in the long run its significance will be enhanced. Many general ministers will increasingly find themselves leading teams of local presbyters. In a society well-educated and deeply puzzled about its own nature and the nature of man, this general ministry will require a very high standard of training and the development of the local presbyterate will itself make the role of leadership of and through the local presbyters a very challenging vocation. We hope it will mean that some of the best of our young people will feel its challenge and offer themselves for this life-time service.

27. The Joint Committee is aware that in both the Episcopal Church in Scotland and the Church of North India such local presbyters are being ordained. In some English dioceses experiments of a similar character are taking place and the Queen's College, Birmingham, has designed a course

PART I: BAPTISM IN A CHURCH UNITING THE URC AND CHURCHES OF CHRIST

1. Perhaps the most obvious difference between Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church concerns baptism. The Joint Committee has approached this difference with an awareness both of the theological convictions expressed in our two traditions and of pastoral imperfections in both forms of baptismal practice: it has been particularly sensitive to the problems presented by contemporary society in this country with its uncertain boundary between church membership and a diffused Christian influence in the community.

2. The United Reformed Church practises both the baptism of infants and the baptism of believers, whilst Churches of Christ practise only believer's baptism. This difference in practice reflects underlying differences of conviction. Whilst all would agree that there is no direct evidence in the New Testament for the baptism of infants, the United Reformed Church holds that the practice is in harmony with the teaching of scripture. Infant baptism proclaims at the beginning of life that God has done something for the child in redemption — that the child is within the covenant. A child born into a Christian home can never remember a time when he did not know about Christ, and his later confession of faith is an acceptance of this inheritance. It is upon this understanding that the United Reformed Church practises infant baptism.

3. Churches of Christ, on the other hand, believe that the language used in the New Testament about baptism is inappropriate when applied to infants. They recognise the difference between children of Christian parents and those from non-Christian homes, and they seek to recognise the responsibilities of Christian parenthood by the *Service of Thanksgiving for Childbirth and the Dedication of Parents*. But for them a personal confession of faith and repentance is a prerequisite of baptism because it marks the personal response to the call of Christ.

4. The Joint Committee believes that a fully united Church will have to include both traditions. Such a united Church has already come into existence in North India and the former missionary work of both Churches is represented in that union. In making this report the Committee believes that its proposals are based upon a real theological agreement about the meaning of baptism, even though differences of conviction about practice may remain. The combination of two practices should not be seen simply as an expedient.

5. The Committee's proposals are based upon three shared convictions about baptism:*

a) baptism is first and foremost a proclamation of God's gracious act of redemption in Christ. God's action is primary. The basis for baptism

* The Committee has been assisted in this by two recent reports: *Initiation and Eucharist*, ed. N. Clark and R.C.D. Jasper (SPCK 1972), especially pp 11-14, and *The Plan for Union in New Zealand* (1971), especially pp 20-25.

Assembly to take its decision on the Scheme of Union in 1976, a decision which would require ratification in 1977. The Churches of Christ congregations would have to take individual decisions to approve the Scheme (as the former Congregational churches did) and experience of previous consultations with the congregations suggest that this process would not be completed before the Spring of 1977. The final decisions in each Church would then be expected in 1977.

Obviously this timetable is very provisional at this stage: but the Committee thinks it important that the Churches are made clearly aware of the steps which will be necessary and the time this is likely to take. The Committee naturally hopes that the Churches will give full support so that we may move resolutely towards union.

suitable for the training of such men in the midlands. Further, the New Zealand scheme of union envisages such a ministry. It would seem, therefore, that far from such a proposal being ecclesiastically eccentric it would be flowing along with a good deal of thought and action at present.

28. It is envisaged that those now known in the URC as local pastors will become part of the local presbyterate. Some of the present elders in Churches of Christ will also move naturally into the local presbyterate as now proposed. If these proposals are generally acceptable, more detailed arrangements will be proposed for those who will become local presbyters at the outset.

29. The eldership in the form now exercised in the URC (see Basis of Union, paragraph 22) as an office of counsel and pastoral care would remain. Elders in Churches of Christ who did not become local presbyters would become elders in the URC sense. Since the functions of deacons in Churches of Christ are similar to those exercised by elders in the URC, it is proposed that serving deacons in Churches of Christ should serve on the Elders' meeting for such period as shall be determined by the Church Meeting.

30. Since the new element in these proposals is the 'local presbyterate' it is proper that we should consider it in detail:

a) The 'general ministry' has been recruited from those who have themselves professed a sense of call. In the case of the eldership such a personal offer of service has been regarded as out of place. The representative character of the eldership made this right. The local presbyterate occupies a place between these two positions. Vocation to such a ministry could be discerned by that sense of inward call or it could be recognised by other members of the local church who would encourage its growth and expression. In either case it would require to be tested by the local church and verified by consultation between the District Council and the local church. The local church and the District Council would have to be satisfied that the candidate displayed qualities and potentialities of spiritual insight and leadership, and the capacity so to benefit from the proposed course of training as to exercise an effective ministry.

b) when such a call had received the confirmation of the District Council the 'ordinand' would be required to undertake a course of training appropriate to his need but of a thorough character securing an equipment greater than that now required of lay preachers but falling short of that for which the Roll of Ministers examinations in the URC make provision.* It should extend over a period of perhaps two years and include attendance at some centre of training where that was geographically possible. Standards of training would be determined by the General Assembly and applied by the District Councils.

c) having satisfactorily completed this training, the local presbyter would be ordained by the District Council within the local church which

*The subjects examined in these courses are Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Elementary Theology, Preaching and the Conduct of Worship. The Overdale College Correspondence Courses, which if taken for three years, lead to a Diploma, provide similar courses within Churches of Christ.

has called him to its service.

d) the local presbyter, while appointed and inducted to serve in a particular local church or group of churches, would be free to give ministerial service elsewhere when his services were sought.

e) when such a local presbyter moved to a new area, he would be available for appointment there.

f) the local presbyter would in all cases be a member of and share in the responsibilities of the elders' meeting of the local church and would carry out his duties in consultation with that body. He would not of right be a member of the District Council or Synod. Where it is desired that he should so serve, special care will need to be exercised to see that the present balance of ministerial and lay representation in the Councils of the Church is not disturbed.

g) should a local presbyter desire at some stage to transfer to the general ministry, he would be subject to all processes in District Council, Synod and Assessment Conference that are normal: and his further training would be under the care of the Training of the Ministry Committee. On completion and call to the general ministry, he would be commissioned to it but the commissioning would not be such as to constitute a new ordination. His authority to minister would then be extended but would not be of a new character.

h) general ministers whose place and form of service becomes dependent upon their employment by a secular agency would be released from the responsibilities of the general ministry. They would retain their standing in the ministry as local presbyters, and in that capacity would be available for such service as in their circumstances may be desirable.

i) in the changing situation of both Church and society in-service training for all ministers will be increasingly important.

31. These proposals will require alterations to the Scheme of Union at various points and the revision of paragraph 7(21), together with paragraph 7(22), is set out below. The other changes are points of detail which will be listed if the general response to the proposals is favourable. We realise that such a pattern of ministry would take time to develop but we trust that the Churches will commit themselves to move steadily towards its establishment as the normal pattern. The Joint Committee believes that we are called to make the very considerable adjustments involved and commends the proposal as both sound in conception and appropriate to the future needs and the financial and personal resources likely to be available.

32. Paragraphs 7(21) and 7(22) of the Basis of Union as revised would read:
**"21 Some are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. After approved preparation and training, on receiving a call they are ordained and inducted to their office. They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world.
Within this ministerial calling some offer themselves for a general ministry at such places and under such conditions of service as are**

sideration to the present Basis and Structure of the URC (although some discussion of it took place when they were invited to support the opening of conversations): the Basis and Structure of the URC therefore appears as an Appendix in copies of this report intended for Churches of Christ so that any necessary comments may be made. Finally, a list of the Provinces and Districts of the URC is included so that Churches of Christ congregations may see where they would be placed.

There are various matters which the Committee has considered, but is not yet in a position to report on. One of these concerns the position of Churches of Christ in Scotland and Ireland. At present the United Reformed Church only exists in England and Wales, whereas Churches of Christ have fourteen congregations in Scotland and one in Belfast as well as their English and Welsh congregations. It will be necessary to decide whether provision should be made for these congregations outside England and Wales to join the United Church, and if not what form of association with the United Church could be provided so as not to sever the fellowship existing between Churches of Christ in various parts of the United Kingdom. In any case the Scottish and Irish congregations of Churches of Christ will have to be involved in the decision-making within Churches of Christ about any union scheme that may be proposed.

No proposals are yet made either on the legal or financial aspects of union. Experience in the Congregational-Presbyterian Joint Committee has shown the importance of not delaying the consideration of these matters, and so preliminary work has begun: but as the legal side of union entails considerable expense the Committee needs to know how much support exists in the two Churches for its theological proposals before authorising the preparation of draft legislation.

Some steps have already been taken to provide for cross-representation on various national committees, and local co-operation is already happening in several districts. It is the Committee's hope that this will lead to a repetition of the fruitful encounter between the two traditions which it has already experienced in its own work. As always it is upon this local growing together that real union depends.

This report is submitted to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and the Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland for their support and comment. The Joint Committee hopes that the General Assembly will send it to Provincial Synods and District Councils of the URC and that the Annual Conference will ask for it to be considered by special District meetings within Churches of Christ. The Joint Committee would also welcome comments from any local congregation that wishes to make them, and from other groups within either of the two Churches which might be affected by the proposals (e.g. ministers' fraternals, national committees etc.) All comments should be sent to the Secretary of the Joint Committee, Dr D. M. Thompson, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, CB3 0DG, to reach him by 31 December 1974 at the latest.

The Committee will seek the authority of the assemblies of 1975 for leave to submit a Scheme of Union to the Synods and Districts of the URC and the congregations of Churches of Christ. It might then be possible for the URC

When that resolution was passed at the Edinburgh Conference, the series of consultations with local congregations of Churches of Christ was not yet complete: eventually 74 congregations out of 95 supported the opening of conversations, and those 74 represented 88% of the membership.

Behind these decisions lies a period of contact going back six years. In 1966 there was a meeting between representatives of Churches of Christ and representatives of the Congregational-Presbyterian Joint Committee. Churches of Christ were seeking to follow up the impetus to church union given by the Nottingham Faith and Order Conference of 1964, and the Congregational-Presbyterian Joint Committee was interested in an 'open-ended' union. As a result of the meeting the Joint Committee welcomed three Churches of Christ observers to its discussions from 1967 and these observers were able to share fully in the making of the United Reformed Church. It had been suggested that Churches of Christ might like to become full negotiators, but this course of action was rejected for two reasons: firstly, the Churches of Christ representatives did not feel that they had sufficient authority from their Churches at that stage to go so far; and secondly, they did not wish to delay the Congregational-Presbyterian union by introducing new issues. What the observers tried to do was to ensure that the Scheme of Union, as it took shape, contained nothing which was completely unacceptable to Churches of Christ. They always made it clear, however, that they would wish to clarify and expand the Scheme of Union at certain points if they came to negotiate for union themselves. When the present Joint Committee was set up, therefore, it was on these topics that discussions concentrated. They form the substance of this report. It is important to realise, however, that the present conversations do in a very real sense follow and build upon the discussions of the former Congregational-Presbyterian Joint Committee; and this has shown itself not least in the warm and friendly atmosphere in which our meetings have been conducted and in the deep Christian fellowship that we have experienced together.

Seven members from the two sides were appointed to conduct the negotiations and at the first meeting of the Joint Committee on 16th February 1973 the Revd Dr N. Goodall of the United Reformed Church was elected chairman and Dr D.M. Thompson of the Churches of Christ was elected secretary. The Committee has met seven times: four of these have been day meetings at the United Reformed Church House in London, and three have been two-day residential meetings at Overdale College, the Churches of Christ theological college in Birmingham.

Most of the Committee's time has been spent in discussion of baptism and the local ministry. In the two main sections of this report the Committee's thinking on these two topics is explained and draft amendments to the United Reformed Church's Basis of Union are suggested. This method of procedure was chosen because the Churches of Christ representatives already accepted so much of the URC's Basis and Structure. But Churches of Christ congregations have obviously never been asked to give formal con-

decided under the oversight of the councils of the United Reformed Church: they may be called to be ministers of local churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry.

Others serve as local presbyters, also under oversight but continuing in other occupations, earning their livelihood within them, and sharing in all the circumstances of a 'secular' calling.

The preparation and training for the general ministry shall be of a more extended and developed nature than that for the local presbyterate. Local presbyters shall normally serve under the leadership of the general ministry. If local presbyters offer themselves for the general ministry and are recognised as candidates for it, they shall undertake such further preparation and training as is required under rules decided by the General Assembly. General ministers whose place and form of service become dependent upon their employment by a secular agency become, for such time as this is the case, local presbyters.

Those who are registered local pastors may continue to serve as such but shall have the opportunity of entering the local presbyterate after any further preparation or training decided upon by the Synod in accordance with the general provisions for the training of local presbyters.*

"22. Some are called to be elders. They share with ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local churches, taking counsel together in the Elders' Meeting for the whole Church and having each a group of members particularly entrusted to his pastoral care. They shall be associated with ministers in all the Councils of the Church. Elders, elected by the Church Meeting, are ordained to their office and are inducted to serve for such limited period as the Church which elects them shall determine".**

* Full-time ministers of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland (as listed in the Churches of Christ Year Book) at the time of union with the United Reformed Church shall continue in the general ministry without further training or commissioning.

** Elders elected for the first time after the formation of the United Reformed Church shall be ordained and inducted to that office. Serving deacons of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and serving elders of the Presbyterian Church of England shall continue to serve on the Elders' Meeting of the local church for such period as shall be determined by the Church Meeting. Subsequently, all elders shall be eligible for re-election, and those elected shall enter on their office by induction. Those not previously ordained may, if they so desire, be ordained before induction.

Elders of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland at the time of union with the United Reformed Church may choose either to be inducted as local presbyters as described in para. 7(21) or to serve as elders as described in para. 7(22). Those choosing to serve as local presbyters shall be offered opportunity of suitable further training. Since the ordained deacons in Churches of Christ already serve their local church in the way described in para. 7(22), they shall, if they so desire, continue to serve from the time of union with the United Reformed Church on the Elders' Meeting of their local church for such period as shall be determined by the Church Meeting.

Elders of the United Reformed Church, or serving deacons of the Congregational Church in England and Wales at the time of union, on removing to another local church are eligible for election by that church to the Elders' Meeting, and if elected are then inducted.

The ordination and/or induction of elders shall be carried out in the course of public worship by the minister (or during a pastoral vacancy, the interim moderator) acting with the serving elders of the local church (see Schedule B)."

**PART III:
PROVINCES AND DISTRICTS OF THE URC,
SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

Province and District	Churches of Christ
1. <i>Northern Province</i>	
Northumberland District	Bedlington Broomhill
Newcastle District	Gateshead
Durham District	none
Teesside and North Riding District	none
Cumberland District	Workington
2. <i>North Western Province</i>	
Lancaster District	Barrow in Furness Dalton in Furness Kirkby in Furness Ulverston Urswick
Fylde District	none
Blackburn District	Burnley Nelson
N.W. Manchester District	none
N.E. Manchester District	none
S.E. Manchester District	Burnage
S.W. Manchester District	none
3. <i>Mersey Province</i>	
Cheshire District	Chester Saltney Saughall
Liverpool North District	Earlestown Hindley Wigan (3 churches)
Liverpool South District	Liverpool (Aigburth Vale)
Wirral District	Birkenhead Wallasey
4. <i>Yorkshire Province</i>	
York and East Riding District	none
Sheffield District	Sheffield
Leeds District	Leeds
Bradford District	Liversedge Mapplewell Wakefield
Huddersfield and Halifax District	none

INTRODUCTION

It is with a great sense of privilege that the Joint Committee presents its first full report to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and the Annual Conference of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland. There is much more work to be done before the task is completed, but there lies behind this report an experience within the Committee for which all its members give thanks. In its meetings the Committee has felt a renewed sense of the richness of Christ's Church, as the insights and traditions of the two negotiating Churches have been shared. The Committee therefore makes its proposals in the hope that they will enable the Church to serve its Lord more faithfully, and to embody more of the diversity of gifts which he bestows. It is moreover our hope that when the steps which the Committee now proposes have been thoroughly considered by the Churches, they may indeed prove to be a contribution to that fuller unity of Christ's people to which both the negotiating Churches are committed.

Since the Committee began its work discussions have also been taking place between most of the major Churches in England (at the invitation of the United Reformed Church) with a view to making proposals for a multi-lateral approach to the realisation of visible unity. Both the negotiating Churches have been represented in this wider discussion and the Committee hopes that the proposal for a multilateral Commission on Church Unity will be widely taken up. It is nevertheless clear that actual negotiations for union on a multilateral basis are not likely to begin within the next three years and the outcome cannot be foreseen. The Committee believes that a union between Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church would be a step in that direction; and because both the negotiating Churches are already committed to the goal of organic union the Committee believes that, if its proposals prove to be acceptable, nothing would be gained by delaying a union between the two Churches until a multilateral agreement is reached. There is no thought in the Committee's mind that this union would be an alternative to a wider union.

It will be recalled that at the inaugural General Assembly of the United Reformed Church on 5th October 1972 the following resolution was passed:

"19. The Assembly rejoices in the interest shown in the formation of the United Reformed Church by the Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland and instructs the Department of World Church and Mission to respond to the approach with a view to conversations made by the Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland at their Annual Conference on August 7th 1972."

The Churches of Christ resolution referred to read as follows:

"21. That in view of the response of the churches in the meetings arranged so far as a result of resolution 8 of Conference 1971, this Conference authorises Central Council to approach the United Reformed Church with a view to initiating discussions which we hope may lead to our union with them in one Church, a majority of the churches representing more than 60 per cent of the membership having indicated their support to the General Secretary."

MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Churches of Christ

The Revd Dr W. G. Baker
 The Revd T. C. Cheesbrough
 The Revd J. E. Francis
 Mr Wilfred Georgeson
 Mr James Gray
 The Revd Philip Morgan
 Dr D. M. Thompson (Secretary)

United Reformed Church

The Revd M. H. Cressey
 The Revd Dr Norman Goodall (Chairman)
 The Revd Dorothy Havergal Shaw
 The Revd Dr John Huxtable
 The Revd A. L. Macarthur
 The Revd B. M. Pratt
 The Revd Dr Kenneth Slack

5.	<i>East Midland Province</i>	
	Notts and Derby District	Derby Kirkby in Ashfield Langley Mansfield Netherfield Nottingham (2 churches) Riddings Selston Underwood
	Leics and Rutland District	Hinckley Leicester (6 churches) South Wigston none none
	Lincolnshire District	
	Northants etc District	
6.	<i>West Midland Province</i>	
	Staffordshire District	Burslem Newcastle under Lyme none
	Shropshire District	none
	Worcester & Hereford District	none
	Gloucester District	Gloucester
	Birmingham District	Birmingham (5 churches)
	Coventry District	Coventry
7.	<i>Eastern Province</i>	none
8.	<i>South West Province</i>	
	Cornwall & Plymouth District	none
	Torbay District	none
	Devon, North & East District	none
	Taunton District	none
	Bath District	Swindon
	Bristol District	Bedminster
9.	<i>Wessex Province</i>	
	Dorset & W. Hampshire District	Bournemouth
	Southampton District	none
	Portsmouth District	none
	Guildford District	Knaphill
	Reading & Oxford District	none
10.	<i>Thames North Province</i>	
	Central London District	Harringay United Church Wandsworth Bridge Road, Fulham
	West London District	none
	North West District	none
	Barnet District	none
	Enfield-Hertford District	none
	East District	Ilford

11. <i>Southern Province</i>	
Wimbledon District	none
Croydon District	none
Bromley District	Avery Hill
Medway District	Tunbridge Wells
Canterbury District	none
Sussex East District	none
Sussex West District	Brighton
12. <i>Welsh Province</i>	
North Wales District	Cam-yr-Alyn Rhosllanerchrugog Wrexham
East Wales District	none
South Wales District	Aberfan Merthyr Tydfil Treharris
West Wales District	none
Churches of Christ outside England and Wales	
Edinburgh	East Kilbride
Musselburgh	Falkirk
Coaltown (Fife)	Glasgow (3 churches)
Cowdenbeath	Buckie
Dundee	Portknockie
Dunfermline	
Kirkcaldy	Belfast

**JOINT COMMITTEE
FOR NEGOTIATIONS
BETWEEN
CHURCHES OF CHRIST
AND THE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

REPORT FOR 1974

This is a report to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church (6-9 May 1974) and the Annual Conference of Churches of Christ (27 July - 1 August 1974). Until the Assembly and Conference have taken action on it, it has only the authority of those by whom it has been prepared.

**PART IV:
RESOLUTION**

The Assembly/Conference receives the report of the Joint Committee for negotiations between Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church for 1974; commends it for consideration to Provincial Synods and District Councils/District Meetings; and invites comments by 31 December 1974 at the latest.

**JOINT COMMITTEE
FOR NEGOTIATIONS
BETWEEN
CHURCHES OF CHRIST
AND THE
UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**

REPORT FOR 1974