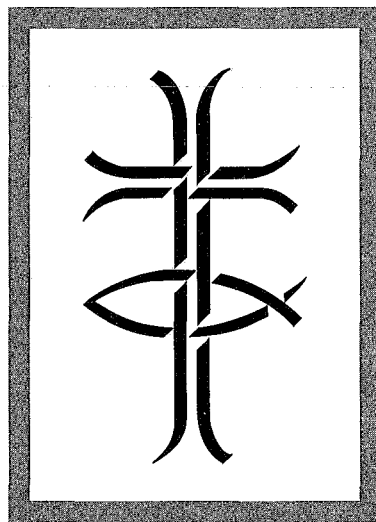


The United Reformed Church

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1999



July 5th - 9th Southport

***Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers***

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Standing Orders

General Assembly
1999

Standing Orders of the Assembly

RESOLUTION 1

Standing Orders

The General Assembly under its function (xii) adopts the Standing Orders printed in the Book of Reports 1999.

Notes

- a) These Standing Orders are amended in accordance with suggestions made by the Clerk of the Assembly under rule 12b and after discussion by the Assembly Arrangements Committee. They are subject to decision by the Assembly at its opening session in 1999.
- b) In preparation for union with the Congregational Union of Scotland, references to Provinces have been removed.
- c) Rule I has been simplified and its subparagraphs have been lettered for ease of reference. Motions proposed under rule 2 are known before the start of Assembly, and are included on the programme in the appropriate order.
- d) In Rule 2b it is proposed that notice of motions from synods should be received by the General Secretary 12 weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly. This allows time for motions taken to spring meetings of synods to be transmitted. The final sentence of the rule is unnecessary, because every synod resolution is printed in the Book of Reports with an accompanying statement.
- e) The new rule 4a reflects current practice. The remaining parts of section 4 are renumbered and the former rule 4f no longer applies.
- f) Amendments, including additions, are in bold type. It is proposed that the words in italics should be omitted.

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its Committees which include the Mission Council or by *Provincial* synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

1b. The Assembly Arrangements Committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

The motions arising from any report or section thereof shall be taken in the following order:

- (i) *motions by the relevant Committee or Synod of which due notice has been given under rule 2a or 2b.*
- (ii) *motions of which due notice has been given under rule 2c, related to the report.*
- (iii) *duly seconded motions submitted by individual members of the Assembly under rule 2d or 3b, related to the report.*

1c. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 3b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

1d. If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.

Motions under rules 2b, 2c and 2d which are not related to any report shall be taken at a point determined by the Assembly in considering the draft order of business, or on a motion from the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to amend their place in the order of business.

1e. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

2. Presentation of Business

2a. All reports of Committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be annually determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

2b. A *Provincial* synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than **six twelve** weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly. *If the motion introduces new business to the Assembly, the synod may, subject to the agreement of the General Secretary and the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee and at its own expense, circulate a statement in support.*

2c. A local church or district council wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its *Provincial* synod for consideration and, if the synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 2b above. In the case of a local church the motion must be submitted to the synod through the district council.

2d. A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a synod or a district council through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly Arrangements Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

2e. Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a Committee of the General Assembly or a *Provincial* synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all synod clerks of the proposed amendment.

3. Motions and Amendments

3a. A report presented to the Assembly by a Committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 2d of a motion to refer back to that Committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.

3b. During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

3c. No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, except that motions presented on behalf of a Committee, of which printed notice has been given, do not need to be seconded.

3d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.

3e. It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:

- (i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
- (ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
- (iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
- (iv) amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two annual meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
- (v) is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 2d.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion.

3g. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment not to the like effect may be moved.

3h. An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.

3i. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

3j. A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.

4. **Timing of Speeches and of Other Business.**

4a. Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed 5 minutes.

4b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly Committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular Committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (e.g. a Committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the

Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 5 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise: it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than 3 minutes.

4c. When a speech is made on behalf of a Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.

4d. Secretaries of Committees and full-time Executive Secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a Committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.

4e. In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matter. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.

4f. The foregoing Standing Order (4d.) (4e.) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

4f. When the Order of Business includes the presentation of reports or sections of reports concerning past work of Committees or Synods which are to be open to question, comment or discussion but without introductory speeches, the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee shall propose at the beginning of such a presentation a maximum time for the consideration of the group of reports and of any particular report (e.g. 60 minutes for the group and not more than 15 minutes for any particular report). Such a motion from the Convener shall be open to amendment or to an extension of the timings by the Moderator.

5. **Closure of Debate**

5a. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. *Sometimes described as "the previous question" or "next business"* This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the

proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

5b. In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as "the closure motion". If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

5c. During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/ or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.

5d. The motions described in Standing Orders 5a, 5b and 5c above are exceptions to Standing Order 3c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and

announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 5a, 5b and 5c is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other of them can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

6. Voting

6a. Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(l) and (2) of the Structure.

6b. Other motions before the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except

- (i) If the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- (ii) if, the show of cards indicating a very close vote, the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees that a paper ballot be the method of voting.

6c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7. Questions

7a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.

7b. A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.

7c. Questions asked under Standing Orders 7a. and 7b. shall be put and answered without discussion.

8. **Points of Order, Personal Explanations, Dissent**

8a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

8c. The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

8d. The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

9. **Admission of Public and Press**

Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

10. **Circulation of Documents**

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the *meeting place of the Assembly building in which the Assembly is meeting*.

11. **Records of the Assembly**

11a. A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly Arrangements Committee may determine.

11b. The minutes of each day's proceedings, in duplicated form, shall be circulated on the following day and normally, after any necessary correction, approved at the opening of the afternoon or evening session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.

11c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.

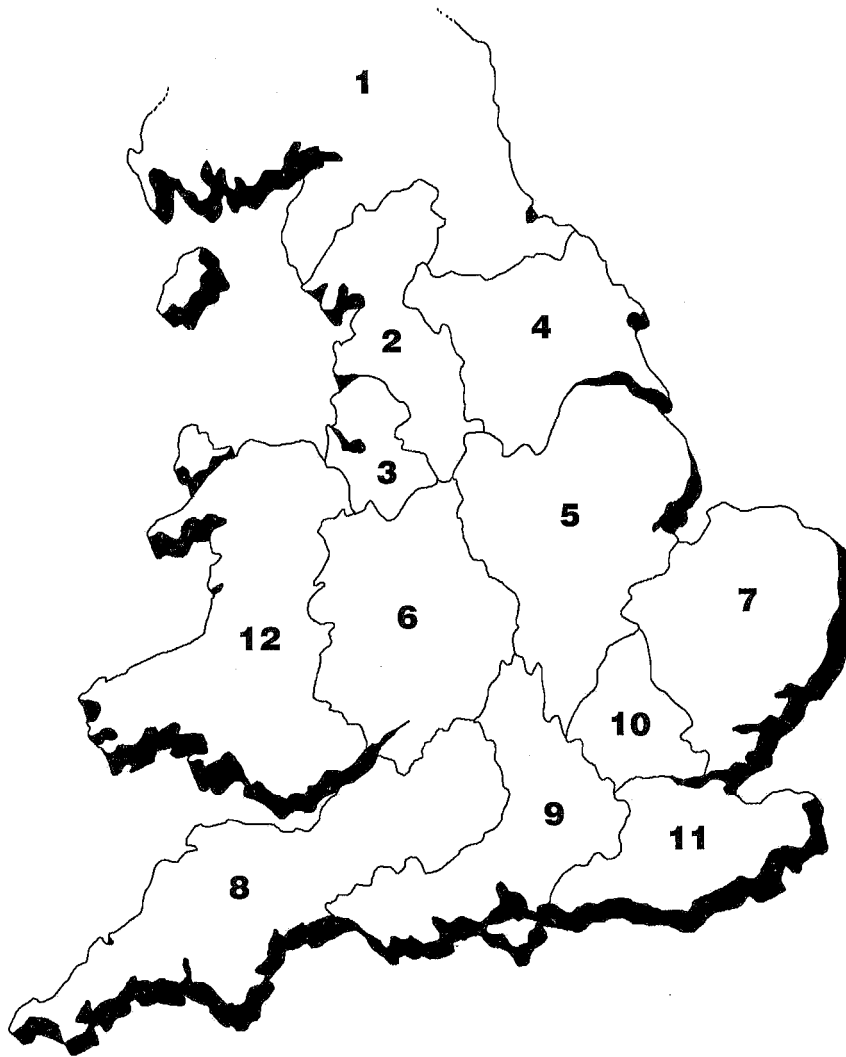
11d. As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod, district council and local church.

12. **Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders**

12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

12b. Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments to the Standing Orders, which shall be subject to decision by the Assembly.

Synods



General Assembly 1999

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| 1 Northern | 5 East Midlands | 9 Wessex |
| 2 North Western | 6 West Midlands | 10 Thames North |
| 3 Mersey | 7 Eastern | 11 Southern |
| 4 Yorkshire | 8 South Western | 12 Wales |

Northern Synod

1 Visits to Districts

1.1 This year has seen the first of the planned programme of visits whereby the Synod sends representatives to exercise the same sort of ministry of critique, care and support of the life and work of District Councils as the Councils themselves exercise for local churches.

1.2 The Northumberland and Newcastle Districts were visited - each by two persons from a neighbouring District who attended Council and committee meetings, and consulted with officers, local church representatives and ecumenical partners.

1.3 It has proved valuable in expressing a belonging and responsibility together across the province, giving an opportunity to reflect deeply on issues of the role and activity of the District Council, and exploring how the structures within which we operate could more effectively support and develop local mission.

2 Development Team

2.1 The Province continues to be challenged and excited by the work of the Team - Development Officer, Youth and Children's Work Trainer, Adult Education Officer, Communications Officer and Creativity Officer. We are currently engaged in a mid-term review of the team's work, and look forward to expanding our vision and expectations of its contribution in the light of the work and experience of the last three years.

2.2 In the course of this year the team has helped in the establishment of a Synod training strategy by which we hope to assure coherence and quality in the whole range of training activity offered through province and district initiatives.

2.3 It has also produced proposals for a programme of Artists in Residence - a scheme to employ an artist or writer on short contract to engage in a piece of work focussed on a local church or group of churches. This would have the dual purpose of heightening the local members' understanding of the contribution of the arts to exploring issues and expressing faith, and of creating an artefact for use locally or across the province.

3 Shapes and structures

3.1 We have taken a long hard look at how we work to support and develop major areas of the Church's work across the province and in the districts and local churches. A system of synod correspondents in major subject areas had proved too restricting in terms of the experience that individuals brought to broad briefs. So we have created a series of small committees largely mirroring the current names and briefs of Assembly committees.

3.2 This has in part been related to our concern in another direction. Three of our Districts have been working on plans to put themselves in better shape to do their job. Teesside and Durham Districts are on the point of making final decisions towards combining their life into one District Council, and the Cumberland District is continuing to develop regular working relations with the Solway Area Council of the Scottish Congregational Church.

4 And finally ...

4.1 In the next year we shall say good bye to the churches of the Mid-Scotland District Council. For seventeen years they have made an exciting and distinctive contribution to the life of the province. Through the process of development of the new generation of ecumenical bodies they have built up and maintained a national denominational presence and influence in Scotland out of proportion to their numerical strength. With pride and some sadness we wish them well of their new relationships in the Synod of Scotland.

4.2 This is also the end of the ministry of David Jenkins among us. David has brought his immense gifts and skills to bear upon every area of life and work of the province. His distinctive style and manner have opened folks' eyes - initially in shock and amazement - latterly to see new horizons of possibility for themselves and for the life and work of local churches and the councils of the Church.

4.3 The shape of Synod, the holding together of worship and business, the possibilities of music, ecumenical commitment, the Church's influence in secular institutions - these and many others are the areas in which David has reformed and enriched our life together. We wish him peace and good travelling.

North Western Synod

1.1 The recent meeting of Synod was held, for the second time, in a secondary school in Bury rather than on Church premises. This proved, as before, to be a positive experience. The school hall was more suitable for sessions of debate and the availability of classrooms was invaluable for workshop activities which occupied part of the morning session.

1.2 Most of the morning session was devoted to the theme 'Belonging to the World Church'. The Assembly's Secretary for International Relations, The Revd Philip Woods, gave a clear and compelling exposition of the new programme and its implications for Local Churches in a Synod which has agreed to be used in a pilot capacity for the development of the programme. This was followed by fourteen workshops, each led by a Synod member who had experience of one part of the world church. The aim was to impart a flavour of the country in each case and to point up lessons which may be learned from the life and witness of the Church in that place. It proved to be a stimulating and thought-provoking exercise which will, hopefully, bear fruit in the months and years to come.

1.3 After much discussion and consultation extending over several years, Synod has finally accepted two proposals, each designed to develop the life and mission of its Local Churches.

1.4 The first is to inaugurate a scheme for the provision of Local Church Leaders, following the proposals agreed at the 1998 Assembly. The most suitable sphere of service, we believe, is likely to be in groups of Churches where there is probably only one stipendiary minister. In such a situation, of which we have many, each Local Church within the pastorate would nominate from among its Elders a person to act as Local Leader and to work in partnership with the Minister and other Leaders as a team, sharing the ministry between them. A training scheme piloted in the Mersey Synod has been adopted. The scheme is now available for adaptation and use wherever it is felt to be desirable.

1.5 The second proposal is to provide a province-wide method of assessing the contributions Local Churches are invited to make to the Ministry and Mission Fund. In future, all the Churches will pay

on a modified per capita basis, though churches in vacancy will have a 15% reduction to allow for additional local costs during such a period. We realise that we have hitherto lagged behind other Synods in seeking to ensure that the whole of the Church pays for the whole of the Ministry the whole of the time, but in the midst of lingering Lancashire independency the acceptance of this proposal is a major triumph!

1.6 A Synod gathering is planned for Blackburn Cathedral in June at which the Christian Aid musical 'Feast of Life' will be sung by a massed choir in the presence of (we hope!) a vast congregation. Thus we hope to give one another a renewed sense of corporate belonging and, at the same time, focus on the Millennium and on the desire for justice and the remission of world debt.

1.7 During the course of the year the Synod has shared, and expressed in various ways, the depth of its grief at the death of Frances Forecast.

1.8 In the province, as throughout all of their life and ministry together, Keith and Frances have demonstrated the strength of their Christian faith, linked with a great capacity to create and sustain personal friendships based on sincere concern for the needs of others.

1.9 The loving and gracious presence of Frances within the province is greatly missed, yet we have joined to give testimony to a distinctive, caring life, deprived of the length, but not the fullness of years. Throughout the months of anxiety Keith continued to exercise his responsibility with great diligence, as was so ably evidenced at last year's General Assembly.

1.10 He would like friends in all parts of the Church to know how grateful he and his family have been for the wonderful measure of support they have received through the thoughts and prayers of hundreds of people all over the country.

Mersey Synod

1.1 I suspect that other Provinces are like ours in that there is so much going on at the present time in all kinds of directions that it's hard to keep up with it all. We have found the work of our Synod Mission Executive through its meetings in a year, of a residential weekend, a whole day and two evenings to be effective in keeping an overview of needs, opportunities, changes and challenges for our work. This last year has been no exception and some of the notable features are briefly listed:

- The introduction of the Local Church Leaders programme, successfully completed; Some are already commissioned and on the job. A second programme beginning in September, 1999, following thorough review and revision of the pilot scheme.
- The New Provincial Office and Resource Centre now through the inevitable slow process of planning and consultation and funding. The first 'bricks' have been laid for a twenty week contract and the target date is July this year (right in the middle of the General Assembly no doubt! - will someone please change the date of Assembly?). A new member of Office Staff has been appointed and will be on the job early May.
- Lively and well-attended Youth Services in some Districts have taken place under the guidance and co-ordination of the Provincial Youth and Children's Training and Development Officer and his team of Province and District helpers.
- Development of church clusters and working towards implementation of the system and deployment of ministry.
- Encouragement to re-think types and use of our buildings in planning and resourcing congregations, taking into account the "five points of mission" for growth and vision.
- More resources being made available for children's and youth work with materials advice and assistance.
- Task Groups are now maturing and producing material and ideas for use and consideration in local churches.
- Ministerial education through CEM, POET, Appraisal plus wider education of Elders.

The list is by no means comprehensive but is an indication of how crowded our agendas become.

District Boundaries

The Synod formally reports to the General Assembly, under paragraph 2(4)(ii) of the Basis and Structure, that at its meeting of Synod on 1 November 1997, it was agreed that Huyton United Reformed Church move from West Lancashire District to the Liverpool District.

Yorkshire Synod

1 A New Start

1.1 How should we prepare for the Millennium? We decided that one way of doing this would be to use the three Synods between March 1999 and March 2000 to explore the 'New Start' theme suggested by Churches Together in England: how better to prepare than by making a new start with God, working for a new start for the world's poor, and considering how best to make a new start at home, in both our personal and our national life? A memorable meeting in Harrogate, organised by our Church and Society Committee and addressed by Revd Michael Taylor, strengthened our commitment to Jubilee 2000. Several of our District Councils are carrying out searching reviews of the structures that they need to make their mission more effective. At a very practical level, the congregation of Herringthorpe URC, Rotherham, has become the first church to be awarded a Millennium Certificate by the Christian Ecology Link for its work in carrying out ten environmentally positive activities - including, for example, holding three shoe re-cycling days.

2 God and Mammon

2.1 Money is an important resource in God's service; but how can it best be used? The proposal from our Financial Resources Committee that we should mark the Millennium by re-distributing between our local churches a proportion of our financial reserves raised some fundamental

questions about our Christian priorities. Should money be equally distributed to all local churches, or just those who seemed to be involved in effective mission? Should we hold money back in order to carry out the increasingly costly repairs demanded by so many of our church buildings, especially listed buildings for which we are responsible in law? Or is such maintenance work an improper use of resources that should be devoted to mission? If so, where is the money for maintenance to come from? Even if English Heritage is prepared to provide at least some of it, has that source of funding been hopelessly contaminated by National Lottery money; or might General Assembly have worded its 1995 resolution rather differently had it been able to foresee this unwelcome development?

3 The Wider Church

3.1 The women in the Province have for some years exchanged regular visits with the Church in the Palatinate, as have individual local fellowships. Synod has agreed in principle to establish a more formal and wider provincial partnership, which we hope to see making progress in 1999. Meanwhile, the signing of the Ampleforth Covenant has brought our Provincial Moderator into a more committed working relationship with other church leaders in north east England, a relationship that has already existed for some years in West Yorkshire, through the covenant signed by church leaders within the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council.

East Midlands Synod

1 New Church

Haven, Derby is a Local Ecumenical Partnership which previously included the Church of England, the Methodist Church and Baptists. United Reformed Church has now been added as a participating denomination and Synod therefore invites General Assembly to receive this church as a local church.

2 New Church Buildings

2.1 At Carr Vale, near Chesterfield, the United Reformed Church is the one remaining church in this ex-mining community. It has recently been possible to replace temporary buildings dating from the 1920's with a purpose-built church. This commitment to the community has been received with some enthusiasm locally and we are now looking forward to a developing ministry there.

2.2 In the inner suburbs of Derby our Ashbourne Road church was burnt down some years ago and the congregation has now joined with the Methodist Church nearby and an entirely new joint church has been opened recently on the Methodist site.

2.3 For many years we have shared ministry with the Church of England and the Methodist Church in Orton Goldhay, one of the new town areas of Peterborough. With the help of the National Church Buildings Committee Synod has made a commitment to the first phase of a new building to serve this area. The parsonage house and ministry will be financed by the Church of England. An appeal is being launched for the cost of the furnishings.

3 United Church

3.1 Melton Mowbray and Freeby have united as a local church as provided for in section 1.(1) of our structure. In effect the church at Melton Mowbray has taken responsibility for the building at Freeby, a 1665 church and a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Church of England, whose parish church is unsafe for use.

4 People

4.1 Our Moderator, Revd Malcolm G Hanson nears the end of his first seven year term and a resolution appears elsewhere inviting General Assembly to re-appoint him for a further term. This is strongly supported by the Synod. The Review Group also made various helpful suggestions about the office organisation and these are being taken forward at the present time.

4.2 Revd Elizabeth J Nash has served us as Training Officer for four years now and a recent review has recommended her re-appointment for a further term of five years. Synod thanks her and John Quilter, our YCWT, for their work in ensuring that a very effective training programme operates throughout the East Midlands. The YCWT programme is largely funded by the Resource Sharing initiative and we record our appreciation of this support by other Synods.

4.3 Revd Moiseralele P Dibeela is our Synod's Mission Enabler, in the middle of his three year appointment funded by the Hong Kong Gift of Grace money. He is doing much useful work and conducting a programme of District Mission Days this year.

5 Stipends

5.1 Being aware that some of our ministers are in receipt of Family Credit, Synod is looking forward to further support especially for ministers with children. Synod passed forward from our Northants District a paper called *Paying for the Computer* and we have been assured that this has been taken into account in the new proposals.

West Midlands Synod

1 Vision for the Province

1.1 During the year work continued on the development of a vision for the Province. A further 24 hour meeting of Synod Council identified three areas of further work. These were

- defining the purpose of Synod in more detail, and seeking more ways to involve people in its deliberations by, for instance, encouraging Districts to suggest agenda items;
- encouraging local initiatives with small Provincial pump-priming grants;
- developing a training strategy based on the new Training Officer's visits to Districts and the returns of a questionnaire to local churches assessing training needs and priorities.

2 Synod

2.1 The October Synod received a presentation by the Provincial Vocations Strategy Group on stipendiary ministry aimed to encourage this area of concern to be taken up in each church in the coming year. Further presentations on non-stipendiary ministry and church related community workers will follow, but it has been pleasing to note an upsurge of interest from people in the Province, particularly in non-stipendiary ministry and church related community work. The Synod also expressed its concern at the withdrawal of a URC presence at St Andrew's Hall in Selly Oak and hoped that some kind of mission training work would be continued on this site. It heard news of a recent Provincial visit to the Evangelische Kirche in Anhalt, Germany and of the proposed two way youth exchange in Summer 1999.

2.2 In March Synod received a presentation on the World Council of Churches Assembly in Harare attended by, among others, the Moderator and Assembly Moderator, and also a discussion on Ethical Investment. Planning is going ahead for the Provincial Service in Worcester Cathedral on 9 October as part of the preparation for the Millennium and an exciting event is expected.

3 District Developments

3.1 The Province was pleased to welcome three newly ordained ministers during the year and to be able to hold a number of inductions, although the number of ministerial vacancies continues worryingly high.

All Districts are participating in a discussion on deployment in September 1999 with a view to considering whether this needs to be considered more on a Provincial basis than in the past.

3.2 The Special Category Ministry post for the Mission in the World of Work based in Coventry and shared with a church in Leamington Spa has been filled, and it is hoped that the Special Category Ministry to work in the new LEP at Winson Green, inner city Birmingham, will be filled shortly. The Mission Project at Tomkin in North Staffordshire was reviewed during the year and Synod was pleased to note progress with growing support for this small isolated chapel. The church and community project at Bloomsbury, Nechells, in inner city Birmingham, was closed after much discussion and a Mission Project established to continue the existing work of the Church Related Community Worker and to develop a worshipping community in a new way.

3.3 Most Districts have now reviewed their practice of church visitations and are developing a more affirmative process with greater input by the local church. The detailed consideration of a District Mission Strategy in the Birmingham District continues with a discussion moving to local churches with a hope that an agreed plan will emerge towards the end of the year.

4 Provincial Staff

4.1 The Moderator's heavy workload continued, particularly with her Convenorship of the Core Group associated with Assembly Resolution 18 of 1997, but she maintained her series of in-depth visits to districts which are much appreciated. As a member of the Central Council of the World Council of Churches, she attended the Assembly in Harare and is taking a well earned Sabbatical leave in the first half of 1999.

4.2 Synod agreed to renew the appointments of the Clerk and Treasurer as well as that of the Youth and Children's Work Trainer, for further periods. Under the guidance of the Trust and Property Officer a more proactive policy of supporting church buildings, reviewing the quality of manse provision and other property matters is continuing. As indicated, the Training Officer has been making his presence felt to the extent that the Province wonders how it managed to do without one for so long. The long serving Moderator's secretary, June Hemming, retires at the end of May and grateful thanks are expressed for her service under two Moderators.

Eastern Synod

1 Mission and Growth

1.1 'We're going for growth - and that's official!' So proclaimed *Eastwards*, the Province newsletter, in March last year. Growth in love, faith, maturity, and integrity as well as an expectation of growth in numbers, that is. Of course, mission and growth are not easy to promote. But whilst Mission Council has been working on mission strategy, the Province has been looking to see how it can best support local churches in mission.

1.2 Firstly, our lack of consensus on many issues has had to be faced. John Reardon addressed our October 1998 Synod on 'Living with Diversity'. He spoke of the Body of Christ as a suffering and broken body, that we are part of a community that is suffering and broken. He concluded that the way forward is to listen to each other and recognise that what we all have to offer is a gift to the Body - genuinely listening to each other and seeking to discern what Christ may be saying through others.

1.3 Secondly, we have been looking at practical ways in which ideas can be shared - the Spring 1998 Synod studied how District visitations should be changed; three of our Districts are using District Ministers, albeit in very different ways, to work with local churches.

1.4 Thirdly, the Province's Life & Business Committee has been giving more specific thought to mission and growth. This included an invitation to John Houghton from Challenge 2000 to speak about mission at the most recent Synod. We pray that the Mission Council and Synod studies will come together, to assist the work with local churches in the way forward.

2 A Roadshow and a Book

2.1 The Roadshow took place in the week commencing 20th September, with a commissioning service on the Sunday at Emmanuel URC, Cambridge. One day visits were made to five locations in the following Monday to Friday, supporting the mission of local churches at Castle Hill - Ipswich, Finchingfield, Halesworth, Stowmarket Group and Wickford. The only stipulation was that the Roadshow's contribution would be complementary to the local church's work.

2.2 Co-ordinated by Anthea Coates, the Roadshow group comprised Provincial staff, a number of Westminster College students, and the Witham bus worker. Contributions ranged from visits to local schools, including assemblies and a Christian Union meeting, to a visit to a day centre for the elderly. The Roadshow's presence in the local community was reinforced by the arrival of the bus!

2.3 *Great Eastern Journeys* was conceived as a book that would provide a snapshot of life in the URC in our Province at the end of 1998. Its twenty-three articles did not attempt to be an exhaustive catalogue, but to give the flavour of what is going on. We were fortunate to have the services of Norman Hart as editor, and Jacky March (a DTP specialist), who both gave generously of their time, and of course the willing contributors of articles and pictures.

2.4 About half the articles were about local churches. These included stories about contacts with overseas churches, new forms of mid-week worship, a Bible exhibition visited by 900 children, and a small chapel re-roofed. Other articles talked about chaplaincies, including work on the Norfolk Broads, an art ministry, a new ministry at a doctor's surgery, spiritual direction and training. Of course, Bocking and Witham, who have received attention through the pages of *Reform*, were included.

3 Changing Faces

3.1 All these initiatives and ongoing work require the goodwill of many people. 1998 was a year of many changes in personnel.

3.2 Bill Grieve decided that he had to cut short his tenure of office as Treasurer, but we were pleased to note that he has made a good recovery from a stroke in February 1998. John Woodman has replaced Bill, on an interim basis. Colin Raggett has recently retired as Trust Secretary, after many years of service to the Province. Colin's trust-related work will be taken up by Philip Wade, our Finance Officer, for whom part-time assistance is being sought.

3.3 In the office, we said goodbye to Ann Barton, who moved to Tavistock Place to work for Hilary Gunn. Sue Eason, who had been the Finance Officer's part-time PA, was appointed as Ann's full-time replacement. Susan Drane replaced Sue.

3.4 New unpaid positions have been created - John Hickmore as Advocate for Spirituality within the Province, and Deborah McVey as Provincial Advocate for Health & Healing. After many years we have a Children's Work Secretary, Hilary Littlejohns, and also a Provincial Pilots Officer, Anne Gregory. Other new appointments to existing positions have included Youth Secretary - Anthea Coates, and Provincial Lay Preachers Commissioner - John Cook.

3.5 We have been delighted to welcome five newly-ordained ministers in the last year. Implementation of ministerial self-appraisal, post-ordination training and continuing ministerial education is a high priority for the future.

South Western Synod

1 Introduction

This year's report highlights new and developing programmes within the life of the Province. All seek to be life enhancing for the Church and the communities which they serve.

2 Understanding where we are and why

2.1 One of our aims, as a Synod, is to help local churches engage in the mission of God to the world, and to have confidence to take up the opportunities which arise in their own communities, whether they are in scattered rural areas, among the many visitors to our region, in urban areas where there is a conscious engagement with economic life, or in areas of significant new housing development. This is done against the background of a decline in numbers of church members in the South West, but also a growing sense among us that the things we value about the United Reformed Church need to be affirmed and restated in the changing contexts in which we gather as God's people, and those in which we live and work every day.

2.2 During the year, in Synod, in the Ministers' Spring School, and in a special conference, the 'where we are' question was considered in different ways: Professor Leslie Francis, one of the co-authors of the book *Gone but not forgotten: Church leaving and returning*, challenged the Synod to take the necessary steps for change in order to welcome people outside the Church who are still open to its place in their lives; Dr David Cornick and the Revd Malcolm Hanson helped serving ministers understand postmodernity and its challenge to the Church; and a conference called *Understanding decline - going for growth* attracted ministers, elders and District representatives from all parts of the Province. Through sharing together the positive and negative experiences of 'where' we are, there has been greater opportunity to discern 'why', and to find indicators to the way ahead.

3 Mission Enabling : a Provincial gift of grace

Thanks to a generous legacy left to the Province, to be disbursed at the discretion of the Moderator, there has been an opportunity for all local churches to apply for grants for new and existing mission projects

with which they are involved. Help with costs towards funding youth workers, Alpha courses, buying equipment for youth and children's work, printing evangelistic and other outreach materials, setting up and maintaining ecumenically-based projects in local communities, has become possible through this 'gift of grace'. Most important is the way in which local churches have been challenged to think creatively about mission in their neighbourhoods, and take action.

4 Consultations with Districts and Areas

4.1 The consultation process, set up in 1997 by the Synod to every District and Area Council, has taken longer to complete than was originally intended. The purpose of the visits by teams to District/ Area Council meetings and their committees was to offer the same encouragement and attention to Districts/ Areas as they in turn offer to local churches. It was recognised that Districts and Areas have considerable responsibility and authority in the structure and life of the United Reformed Church, and it was important to check whether the burden of such responsibility was being borne equitably.

4.2 The consultation sought to discover areas of District/ Area life requiring further support (e.g. by providing opportunities for further training); to clarify good practice in the way Districts/ Areas relate to local churches and the Synod; to check the effectiveness of District structures and boundaries; and to improve communication at every level.

4.3 Visits to the nine District/ Area Councils have been completed. Synod is now examining the reports and will make proposals in due course.

5 Regionalisation

5.1 Regional development is key to the economic development of the European Union, and the Westminster Parliament has established Regional Development Agencies whose aim is to secure sustainable economic development for their own regions. Each Agency is answerable to a Regional Chamber consisting of representatives from local authorities, from social and economic partners, and from the voluntary sector.

5.2 In the South West, one place has been allocated for a representative of the Faith communities. In order to appoint such a person, a South West Council of Faiths is being formed. In the meantime, the Revd John Harrison, a retired Anglican priest represents all the churches and the Faith communities on the Regional Chamber, having been appointed and funded ecumenically as the Churches' Adviser for Regional Affairs. His short-term task is to liaise between the Regional Development Agency and Church leaders, and to speak for the churches as these new structures are being set up.

5.3 Apart from the counties of Gloucestershire, Dorset, and the unitary authorities of Bournemouth and South Gloucestershire, the South West Region is almost exactly co-terminus with the URC's South Western Province. Our full participation in five Churches Together Intermediate Bodies at county level has helped communications between them at this crucial early stage.

6 European Link

6.1 Until two years ago this Province had neither a European links co-ordinator, nor links with a Church in another part of Europe. Since then, Dr Richard Deutsch has helped us develop links with the Church of Lippe in North West Germany. Though, as yet, we have no formal partnership link, we have agreed to set up a series of exchanges involving different people, to be operated and evaluated by a small steering group.

6.2 In May 1998, five guests from the ecumenical committee of the Church of Lippe visited Church House, London and different parts of the South Western Province. The German Church's link with the Church of England through the Meissen Agreement, has given the exchange an ecumenical flavour from the beginning. The visitors took part in a rally organised by Somerset Churches Together on Glastonbury Tor at the launch of 'Jubilee 2000'; and Dr Ulrich Moller (the Church of Lippe's secretary for ecumenical affairs) preached at the main Eucharist in Wells Cathedral.

6.3 The group agreed with us that the joint meetings had so far opened up new perspectives, and had created real desire to continue learning together. Suggested themes for future meetings include: local ecumenical relations; being a Reformed Church today; how to build bridges between the liberal and evangelical wings of the Church; how to be a missionary Church in a postmodern age; learning how to be European; how to understand economic structures and how to witness within them.

6.4 A group of fifteen lay leaders from Lippe visited the Exeter area in May this year to study the role of Elders in the United Reformed Church. The visit took place over a weekend, so that Elders from Devon East District could share a training day with them, led by the Provincial Director of Training, the Revd Roy Lowes.

7 Young People's visit to Auschwitz

Through our well-established link with the United Church of Christ in Wisconsin, two young people and a leader from this Province joined their 'Young Ambassadors' trip to Europe last summer, visiting the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. The Wisconsin Synod has its own links with a Church in Germany, and it was their intention that young people from America and Germany should visit the painful places of history together, so that there might be better understanding among them. They were keen that there should also be representatives from our Synod, so we sent our young ambassadors, who learnt a great deal from the experience. A return visit to the United States this year will involve the group studying the history of native Americans.

8 In Conclusion

The Synod continues to develop resources and opportunities for people in local churches to be more fully equipped, challenged and better supported in the ministry of reconciliation to which we are all called in the fellowship of Christ.

Wessex Synod

1 Some years ago when the Revd Nelson Bainbridge was Moderator of the Synod of the Wessex Province we introduced a questionnaire for churches to consider, entitled *How do you see your future?* This was somewhat similar to the *Vision Workshops* adopted by other Synods, but was helpful in determining when resources should be given for new buildings etc. The Province is in the process of reshaping this document to help churches keep a 'rolling profile' of their life and participation in God's mission. It was reported earlier that the Province has arranged for the church buildings to be inspected and a good deal of work has been done to bring our church premises up to standard. Following that, and alongside the *How do you see your future?* document, emphasis has been placed on worship. The Province have a Resource Team comprising the Moderator, the Training Officer, the YCWT, the Mission Enabler, the Executive Officer of the Wessex Trust and the Synod Clerk and this team planned the March Synod this year incorporating the whole atmosphere of worship in all the presentations. It is hoped that bringing worship to the Synod meetings in this way will encourage us to see how worship is at the heart of our mission.

2 Considerable work has been done among the five District Councils on 'Fair Shares of Ministry', a better title we feel than 'deployment'. The Ministries and Training Committee are now looking at the whole question of local leadership in the hope that groups of churches may well be used more to the glory of God.

3 The Province has been very much involved in the work of STETS, the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme, based at Sarum College in Salisbury, through which non-stipendiary ministers receive their training. With the support of the Central Training Committee, the Province is joining with the Methodist Church and seven Anglican Dioceses in the development of a Regional Theological Network under the aegis of STETS to bring resources together and thus provide coherence and co-operation in theological education and training for the whole people of God, ordained and lay.

4 The situation concerning Mansfield College, which is also within the Province, has created considerable anxiety. There are strong feelings that Mansfield, being part of the university of Oxford, has a contribution to make and there would be sadness if ordinands in training did not have the opportunity of

studying in Oxford. Should a decision to withdraw be taken by Assembly it is hoped that the link between the College and the church would be developed in other ways.

5 The Province has already begun the Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal scheme, which seems to have been helpful to a number of ministers, and the Ministerial Discipline Panels required under the 'Section O Process' have been established. A policy document entitled *Sharing Resources Ecumenically* setting out a strategy for the URC's involvement in ecumenical ventures has been considered with our partners within the Southampton District of the Methodist Church and also in wider directions. A meeting was held with all the County Ecumenical Officers and the Revd Roger Nunn, as well as a representative from the Central Committee of the Church. It is hoped that this policy will be of help to us as we go forward into the future. A considerable amount of work has also been done in the field of Industrial Mission and this has been helped by the Revd Dick Wolff who, before becoming our Mission Enabler, was involved in Industrial Mission.

6 The Province is privileged to be involved in the 'Belonging to the World Church' programme and we are looking forward to welcoming members of other churches, through CWM, in the autumn. It has been good as well to be able to send a FURY representative to Bangladesh together with one of our church members who was a leader. The report of that visit, which was delayed because of the floods, has been presented to Synod and was received with a good deal of emotion as we contemplated how Christians work in other parts of the world.

7 Dealing with more local issues, we have been glad to celebrate the Anniversary of Isaac Watts' death, particularly with a number of services held in Southampton. The Training Officer, Stephen Thornton, organised a day for people to consider their vocation while sailing on a cruise from Southampton around the Isle of Wight. The day was entitled 'We are Sailing' and as a result it is hoped that more people will be considering their vocation either as ministers or through the TLS scheme. An Enquirers' Conference organised by the Province is being held at Sarum College in the spring and an encouraging number of people have booked for this.

8 The final comment is to say that the Synod Clerk has retired after fifteen years in this position and a new Synod Clerk, Mr Graham Rolfe, has been appointed. He will be much more involved in computers and modern information technology. The Province hope very much to be involved in web sites and in sharing the good news through all modern means of communication.

9 The Synod goes forward into the future with confidence that God will continue to be with us.

As mentioned by the Synod Clerk, the Revd George Thomas, in his report above, he has retired after fifteen years of service to the Province in this capacity. During that time, and not least in the difficult months following Peter Chesney's sudden death, George has been a pillar of strength in the life of the Province, dedicated, wise, and with a deep pastoral concern for people and churches. His gentle influence and guidance has been felt and appreciated also in the wider councils of the Church and among his colleagues in other Provinces. In all this his wife, Christine, has been a constant support to him, and we are grateful to them both. An opportunity was taken at the spring Synod to express our thanks to George with a gift contributed by the churches.

Thames North Synod

1 People

1.1 The people of Thames North Province gathered together for two special occasions during last summer. The first was in July when we said farewell to **Janet Sowerbutts**, who had served as Moderator for eight years, at a Service of Thanksgiving followed by a buffet reception in a marquee. The second was in September when we welcomed **Roberta Rominger**, as the new Moderator of Thames North Province, at a Service of Induction. Both were splendid occasions and gave us the opportunity to both express our gratitude for the past, and our hopes for the future.

1.2 At the beginning of July our new **Mission and Evangelism Enabler** - Peter Hurter - started work. Peter is a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa who has come to Britain for this five year appointment. His busy diary is evidence of the need within the churches for this type of ministry; the skills and insights which he brings to the Province are highly valued.

1.3 Also, at the beginning of December, our new **Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer** began work. Stephen Collins brings a wealth of experience with him, having served as South Wales Youth Officer for the Baptist Union, and as a youth worker/centre manager for the YMCA. We are confident that Stephen will have much to contribute, both to the life of the Province, and to the national YLTO/YCWT team.

1.4 So the **Provincial Team** - Moderator, Synod Clerk, Director of Training, Mission and Evangelism Enabler, Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer - boasts just two faces who were in post 12 months ago, and only one member who was 'raised' within the URC. We see both this injection of new blood, and the breadth of background and experience, as a very positive influence within the life of our Province. The team members are now getting to know each other, and learning to work together effectively.

1.5 We have been greatly encouraged by the numbers of people within the Province who have been accepted for **ministerial training** (currently 3 for Stipendiary and 13 for Non-stipendiary on 6 different courses), as well as the number of people enrolled upon the **Training for Learning and**

Service course. The appointment by Synod of a **Lay Preaching Commissioner** has enabled us to take a fresh look at how we support and encourage Lay Preachers.

2 Projects

2.1 We are excited by the number of projects and initiatives that continue to be hatched and nurtured within the Province.

2.2 One such project - which has a national remit, and is supported by a URC special category ministry - is **Community Action Network (CAN)**. CAN aims to identify 2000 high potential social entrepreneurs in the UK by the end of the year 2000; link these individuals and organisations in a network (electronically and face-to-face); disseminate best practice; provide information; raise the profile of social entrepreneurs and so improve work undertaken in communities. CAN has established a Community Action Centre in Cumbria, and is looking at other possibilities - to act as hubs for the Network - in Glasgow, Inverness, Edinburgh, Hartlepool, Birmingham and Nottingham. CAN has also secured a £1/2 million property in the Cotswolds (known as 'Guildhouse') which is available for hire to churches and others (tel. 01386 584357). More information can be found on the CAN web site (<http://www.can-online.org.uk>).

2.3 We have been delighted to develop a close relationship with the **Asian Christian Church (London)** - an Urdu-speaking congregation of Christians with predominantly Pakistani roots - which worships in URC premises at Walthamstow, East London. This relationship blossomed at Synod in March when the application by the church for membership of the URC was endorsed with acclaim.

3 Planning

3.1 We have welcomed recent Assembly resolutions concerning Accompanied Ministerial Self-appraisal, Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) and Post-Ordination Education and Training (POET) and are developing our existing work accordingly. In Thames North we operate a policy that wherever feasible we make common provision for lay and ministerial education and training, and this will be applied when we consider the CME opportunities made available in the Province.

4 Properties

4.1 A major piece of work undertaken during 1998/9 has been a comprehensive review of the way in which the Province manages the considerable amount of property vested in the Trust (one estimated is that it may be as much as £175 million). As a result of this review, a number of improvements to present policies and procedures have been highlighted. These proposals were approved by Synod in March.

5 Provincial Synod

5.1 The Synod Executive is currently giving serious thought to the biannual meeting of Synod; seeking to ensure that it is more than just a business meeting or an exercise in rubber-stamping - something to be endured - but a date on the calendar to which people will look forward. We want Synod to involve receiving and giving, to offer challenge and encouragement, to equip and uplift, to give genuine opportunity for people in churches to influence the wider church. There is still some way to go!

6 Postscript

6.1 Last year's report promised more information this year about 'Celebration Godspell' which - at the time of writing last Spring - was planned to take place in July in a circus tent pitched in the midst of London's Docklands. Sadly, for reasons beyond our control, the cost of staging an event on this scale escalated, and the decision to cancel was taken amidst much disappointment.

Southern Synod

1.1 Ecumenical Relations are often frustrating and difficult which is why Southern Province appointed a half-time Ecumenical Officer. The purpose is to give encouragement to those involved in local partnerships and to develop a strategy for the Province. What has been discovered is that those working at the grass roots level need much encouragement to face the reality of ecumenical involvement.

1.2 Local churches are working together in a number of places but there is a weariness of institutional bureaucracy which stifles vision. Questioning the role and relevance of a divided Church as we draw to the end of a second millennium, is uncomfortable and disturbing. Furthermore there is little or no energy to make the changes necessary and little encouragement from Church authorities to do so.

1.3 Districts are slow to recognise the ecumenical dimension and opportunity when discussing the issues of deployment and mission. Clusters, groups, ministry leadership teams are being developed too slowly. With fewer stipendiary ministers there will be, if not already, a creeping exhaustion. All denominations will need to rely on the ministry of the laity, but that requires imaginative planning. Human resources are stretched to the limit in almost every denomination yet each is determined to keep 'their own show on the road'. If serious debate and analysis were undertaken, the resulting action might be the selling and merging of church buildings and new ways of sharing ministry. Then we may find an abundance of ecumenical riches that we had not expected. All this will take time, and time is something we don't have.

1.4 There are many local Churches Together groups that are working well and some have projects that serve the community. More needs to be done to tackle community concerns together in addition to ecumenical services and Lent groups. A divided Church cannot proclaim Kingdom values upon global issues such as poverty, unemployment, education, care of the elderly, and the sick. The list is endless.

1.5 We have a duty to work towards the commitment we so willingly made in 1987 to 'Called to be one'.

2 Evangelism and Mission: Provincial Council and Provincial Finance and Property Administration Committee have agreed to a three

year project of District Evangelism and Mission Enablers (DEMEs). It is the intention that each District have a half-time DEME eventually. Interviews will take place soon to employ two DEMEs as a pilot scheme.

3 Developing: In January 1999 we said farewell to Revd Bill McCrorie who had been our half-time Training Officer for over six years. In 1998 Province had to consider the future of this post and decided that what was needed for the future was a full-time Provincial Development Officer who would enable the training of Elders and local leadership; encourage POET and Continuing Ministerial Education; nurture NS ordinands; take care of In Service Training; network with other Provinces, etc. We look forward to Mr Desmond Colechin taking up his post on 1 April 1999.

4 Communication: A constant struggle! In a final effort (we hope) to ensure that every church in Southern Province has all the relevant information deemed necessary to deal with property procedures, copyright, manse policy, car loans, etc, an A4 two ring 'Information File' was sent to each Church Secretary in December 1998. It also contains a Health and Safety Document, Finance and Property Guider and samples of all the forms we use in the Province. Some of the papers/documents have been circulated before, some were updated and some are new. Updates and new material will be sent out from time to time. No church can any longer say 'we did not know' or 'we have not seen'.

5 Sharing: Conscious of the fact that we ought to share more within the Province we have had in place since November 1996 a 'Provincial Manse Fund'. This was created after realising that there were 22 'manse funds' in the names of 22 churches! Some of these churches were in total agreement that these funds should rightly be held by Province and not individual churches, with the others we had consultations. In the end 21 of the 22 agreed and these 21 funds became the one Provincial Manse Fund. This is used to help churches throughout the Province to refurbish kitchens and bathrooms; double-glaze; build an extension and, where necessary, fund the difference between selling a manse and buying another. Manses required in the future will be bought from the Provincial Manse Fund. It is good that the whole Province can share this resource instead of a fortunate few.

Wales Synod

1.1 The letters IPRS may not be immediately recognisable to all those attending the General Assembly; they will be recognised with joy by all members of the Wales Synod, who have assiduously read, marked, learnt and inwardly digested their Synod Reports in recent years. The letters, of course, stand for Inter-Provincial Resource Sharing, which so clearly demonstrates one of our principles as a church that the strong should help the weak. In terms of finance we in Wales are weak - bottom of the league in Provincial resources - for a number of reasons that cannot be listed here. The agreement by Provinces back in 1996 to contribute a percentage of their Investment and Bank Interest and to share out the 'pool' in the reverse order of contributions has been of enormous benefit to the Province; we received over £19,000 in 1997 and nearly £34,000 in 1998, which nearly doubled our income.

1.2 These extra resources have enabled us to tackle areas of need which otherwise we could not have contemplated. Our first priority has been to establish a Province-wide Building Inspection Scheme which will be initially financed from the IPRS benefits. Grants, albeit small, are now available for local churches carrying out approved improvements or major repairs to their buildings, and when the Inspection Scheme reports are received the demand for grants will clearly rise. In addition to Building Grants we have been able to make a limited number of Grants for 'Mission Projects'.

1.3 We owe a debt of gratitude to the other Provinces for their generosity, and we will do our very best to use our extra resources to maximum effect. Diolch yn fawr.

2 Towards an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales

2.1 In 1975 a Covenant for Union was cut in Wales between the Church in Wales, the Presbyterian Church in Wales, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, and (later) several congregations of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. These Churches mutually recognised one another's faith and order, life and worship, members and ministers as all belonging to the one Church of Jesus Christ; pledged themselves to work together for visible unity; and, in particular, declared their intention 'to seek an agreed pattern of ordained ministry which will serve the gospel in unity, manifest

its continuity throughout the ages, and be accepted as far as may be by the Church throughout the world.'

2.2 To advance this search the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales was set up in 1976, and in 1979 it published *The Principles on Visible Unity in Wales*. This document began to clarify the nature of 'visible unity' and the form it might take in the area of ordained ministry. The Churches responded with general approval, yet asked for more detailed work to be done. The result was the publication in 1986 of *Ministry in a Uniting Church*. This document was not a scheme of union as such but outlines an ecclesiology for such a union, based on a reformed threefold order of ordained ministry. In the Churches' responses however, it came unstuck over the nature of episcopacy and the exercise of ministry.

2.3 With a Uniting Church now on hold, the Commission proceeded to do some work on Christian initiation, publishing the two-volume *Christian Baptism and Church Membership* (1990,1994). Meanwhile, local ecumenical partnerships were cultivated and, in some areas, notably Cardiff East, began to flourish. Frustration, however, grew that 'the nurture and development of current ecumenical partnerships between episcopal and non-episcopal traditions are being impeded (some would say damaged) by the lack of an on-the-spot pastoral figure responsible for a number of Local Ecumenical Partnerships/Projects, and able to give cohesion and direction to the work'. (*Towards the Making of an Ecumenical Bishop*, 1997).

2.4 The Commission was thus led, as a matter of pastoral urgency, to reconsider the issue of ecclesial oversight, and, in due course, to propose the introduction of an ecumenical bishop, being in continuity with the 'historic episcopate' and yet belonging to each of the Churches, a Bishop-in-Council and part of an Ecumenical Mission Team, engaging in sustaining and pioneering work in ecumenism and mission.

2.5 The Churches are now in the process of responding to proposals set out in *Towards the Making of an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales*, while a Commission working party, in hopeful anticipation, is preparing a liturgy of consecration.

RESOLUTION 2**Violence against Women**

General Assembly expresses its deep alarm at a continuing public perception that there are circumstances which permit male violence against women, and therefore publicly denounces violence of any sort against women.

Northern Synod

Proposer: Peter Clarke

Seconder: John Paul

Leaders and representatives of the Scottish Churches, engaged in a process of reflection to mark the end of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, were made aware of the existence of a continuing public perception that there are circumstances which permit male violence against women. They resolved to call on each of the member Churches of ACTS (Action of Churches

Together in Scotland) to make a clear statement - official and public - that violence against women is wrong; that women must have the right to resist abuse, and that it is God's intention for all human beings, both female and male, to live in safety, freedom, dignity and fullness. It is in the spirit of this request that Northern Synod forwards this resolution from the Mid-Scotland District Council.

RESOLUTION 3**Westminster College Centenary**

General Assembly in this centenary year of the move of Westminster College to Cambridge gratefully expresses its thanks to God for the great contribution made by the college staff and students to the churches of the area and to the wider church, and prays God's blessing on its future life.

Eastern Synod

Proposer: Revd Bill Mahood

Seconder: Dr David Thompson

Westminster College moved from London to Cambridge in 1899. Since then it has contributed greatly to the life of churches in East Anglia and particularly to those in Cambridge and the surrounding area. The Eastern Synod seeks to acknowledge its

gratitude through this resolution and to give General Assembly the opportunity to express its thankfulness for the past and continuing contribution of Westminster College to the life of the Church.

RESOLUTION 4**Genetically engineered foods and crops**

Assembly, believing that the commercialisation of genetically engineered foods and crops seems premature, urges the Government to impose a moratorium on such commercialisation whilst sufficient fundamental research is carried out into the full consequences of this technology.

South Western Synod

Proposer: Dr R Hunt

Seconder: Revd K Wilkinson

There are moral, ethical, safety and other issues raised by the preparation and use of these products. These brief notes aim to draw attention to concerns about **safety**.

Today more and more we hear about genetically engineered products which involve new gene transfers to plants, bacteria, and animals. The introduction of food containing genetically engineered ingredients has already begun to happen in the supermarket - some foods are labelled "genetically engineered" and some are not.

There are considerable divergence of opinion from specialists working in genetics, molecular biology and related fields, about the health and safety risks from these products. The main concerns arise from the fact that genetic engineering involves manipulation of genes to give radically new living materials unknown in nature and *whose behaviour, short term and especially long term, are unknown*.

The **major concerns** relating to GE foods and crops are:

1. Their safety as food has not been established
2. Their environmental safety has not been established
3. Genes released into the environment cannot be recalled

What is being claimed, by concerned groups, is that genetically engineered crops are undergoing trials **without adequate safeguards**. We also know that some genetically engineered foodstuffs have been introduced, unlabelled and without our knowledge, so that we were unaware that they contain such products - and so have no choice. The **long term effects of such foods are unknown**.

It is possible that some of the predicted risks are without foundation, but at present *it seems we do not know enough about them*.

There is reason to be concerned, and regarding foods, there are actions that individuals and church groups can take - we can for example:

- Write to major food producers - Nestle, Unilever etc, you can get addresses from your shop, demanding GE-free foods.
- Speak to your supermarket manager and ask for guarantees that the foods on sale are free of GE ingredients.
- Write to the Prime Minister, your MP and/or MEP demanding a ban on imports of foods containing GE products. Note Austria and Luxembourg have already done this.

There is a great deal of information available on this important issue, which has already had wide media coverage. It is for the reasons outlined above that the resolution, appended, is being brought to General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 5**Faithfulness, Chastity and Marriage Preparation**

General Assembly affirms the consistent teaching of the Church based on Scripture that calls us to faithfulness within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman and to chastity outside marriage, and urges Churches Together at County and local levels to explore the possibility of setting up ongoing marriage preparation courses to which all couples in their area preparing for marriage could be invited.

South Western Synod

Proposer: Revd S Newell

Seconder: Mr T Jefferies

We encourage you to support this proposal for a number of reasons

- Marriage is a vital issue in our society. We have high rates of divorce and single parent families. The lifelong commitment to marriage of woman and men is vital. We even say so in our service book: "God has given us marriage so that husband and wife, being joined together as Christ with his Church, *may be a sign of unity and mutual commitment, for the enrichment of society and the strengthening of community*
- We need to become a people of Grace and Truth. This motion is not intended to decry people who are not married. It is not intended as an attack on single parents for example. We believe the Bible speaks of God's special care for particularly children in this situation. However our pastoral concern and care for those who are not married or who are going through the pain of divorce should not lead us to forget what we believe. That is that marriage is given by God as a symbol of his

commitment. Thus faithfulness and commitment need to be affirmed in marriages and in society, rather than just personal fulfillment. It has been said, "You deserve what you tolerate." We have become a society where tolerance has become the watchword, nothing is "right" and certainly nothing is "wrong." In this situation the body of Christ, the Church has been seen by many to be simply irrelevant. We do however believe in truth and must once more proclaim this.

- This resolution began in helping a local church to speak about what she believed. The perception was that within the United Reformed Church, everything was up for grabs, even marriage. This resolution began in a local church. Ask yourself the question how will that local fellowship, or many others, understand a decision by the "powers that be" in this case you and I, to refuse this resolution?

RESOLUTION 6

Toddlers and Carers

General Assembly urges all churches to take care in the naming of “Toddler” groups/clubs, etc, noting that it is exclusive to talk of “Parent(s)/Toddlers: Mothers/Toddlers”, and that it would be more appropriate to use the term “Toddlers’ and Carers’ Club/Group”.

Southern Synod

Proposer: Mrs M Bayley

Seconder: Mr W Irving



***Church - Changes
and Synod
Moderators' Report***

***General Assembly
1999***

Churches - Changes

New Churches

RESOLUTION 7

New Churches

Assembly receives the churches and mission projects listed below as local churches and mission projects of the United Reformed Church.

Caversham Village Church, Local Ecumenical Partnership

Wessex

Caversham Village Church has been a Local Ecumenical Partnership for some years, between the Church of England, the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. There are a number of United Reformed Church members at Caversham Village Church. There has been some co-operation

between that church and St Paul's United Reformed Church in Reading. The Ecumenical Partnership does include the issues we would expect and the Synod is happy that this church should be received as a member church of the United Reformed Church.

The Walthamstow United Reformed Asian Christian Church

Thames North

This Urdu-speaking church was established more than eight years ago. In that time the fellowship has grown to include some eighty families. The congregation is gathered from a wide area and is mainly of Pakistani background and Presbyterian tradition.

As well as worship, the church is committed to a thriving programme of work amongst children and young people, to offering pastoral care and support, and to mission and evangelism within the Asian community.

The church gathers for worship in the premises of Marsh Street and Trinity United Reformed Church, Walthamstow, London E1 7.

The development over recent years of a close relationship between this church and the Roding District Council and Thames North Synod has been a cause of mutual delight and enrichment.

Haven Christian Centre, Littleover, Derby

East Midlands

The Centre is a church plant at Heatherton Village, which is on the southwest side of Derby close to the A38. Christian concern for the area has grown in recent years. About 15 years ago the city of Derby produced a development plan which included a large housing scheme. Weekly meetings for Bible study, together with occasional Sunday worship, commenced in a home with representation from Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, the Salvation Army and the URC.

small worshipping community. As a result, these Churches, together with those who were already meeting, set up a local ecumenical partnership. Since this time, discussions have taken place which allowed the inclusion of the URC in the partnership from November 1998.

About 5 years ago, the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist Churches in Littleover set up a working party to investigate the possibility of developing the existing

This work of building the new Church Centre, which will be the only focus for Christians Worship in the area, will already be under way by July 1999.

New Mission Projects

Bloomsbury, Birmingham

West Midlands

1.1 When the closure of Bloomsbury was being considered (see Church Closures), the District felt that to preserve the benefits of the continuing community project and a URC presence in the area, the appropriate way forward would be to constitute the work as a Mission Project.

1.2 This approach was endorsed by the District Council and by Synod on 10 October 1998. Currently a management committee under the convenorship of the Revd Paul Whittle is developing plans for the appropriate way forward and the District has agreed to half scope the Project for five years in the first instance. The CRCW post is to continue.

Claydon Old Chapel, Suffolk*Eastern*

In the 1980s, the life of Claydon Chapel had dwindled to a few elderly people. At the same time, the two Parishes of Claydon and Barham had been condensed to one centred on St Mary's Barham. Then, new house building began and still continues, with the present population numbering around 5,000. There is primary and secondary schooling, two sets of sheltered housing - more being built - two nursing homes, a doctor's surgery, shops, eating places and groups of industrial premises. Individual members from Christ Church and Castle Hill United Reformed Churches (Ipswich) see a responsibility to revive the Christian witness there - in a form relevant to present and coming generations.

The decision has been taken to discontinue the existing church (see under church closures), and to make a new start as a Mission Project, recognising

the opportunities presented in the new situation. The Parish Church congregation and leadership see the value in sharing in this and are working with them as are two Methodist friends.

After five years work and now having received partnership funding of £10,000 from Rural Churches in Community Service - a Millennium Commission Project - they are now in a position to carry out our building scheme for a new kitchen and toilets. This will enable the Chapel to be used more fully by groups of all ages from the Church and Community in Claydon and Barham and neighbouring areas.

The plan in hope is for a Celebration Service and Tea in June. Regular activities include a Wednesday youth drop-in and Friday Prayers.

Closure of Local Churches**RESOLUTION 8****Closure of Local Churches**

The Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed below and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness, and service throughout their history.

Bootle*Northern*

The Non-conformist cause in the West Cumbrian village of Bootle began in 1780. A chapel was built for Mr Joseph Whitridge, on behalf of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. Following the disintegration of that organisation, Bootle Church eventually joined the Congregational Union and in 1972 became a United Reformed Church.

For many years, membership figures had struggled to reach double figures and ministry was provided from the nearby town of Whitehaven. Unfortunately, Bootle was on the very edge of the Northern Province and it was sometimes felt to suffer because of this remoteness. In recent years, members began

to explore other options and in 1996 all the members resigned en masse. Many joined a new Church, set up by Rural Ministries (Datchet Evangelical Fellowship). Difficult negotiations ensued, during which the URC asserted its continuing presence in Bootle, until the eventual sale of the chapel to Rural Ministries.

The Northern Synod resolved to close Bootle United Reformed Church with effect from 21 January 1999. A continuing Non-conformist presence in the village continues in the form of Bootle Evangelical Church, which meets in the chapel purchased from the URC.

St Andrew's Wallsend, Newcastle*Northern*

St Andrew's has its roots in a community of Huguenot refugees who brought glass, alkali and chemical industries to the banks of the Tyne in the early eighteenth century. With some Scottish Presbyterians, they established a congregation that had its formal foundation in 1815.

The church developed and maintained a vibrant and effective witness through a long period of prosperity, and a caring and supportive ministry for the community when traditional industries declined and times became hard.

In recent times a small membership, burdened with a large and unmanageable building, worked imaginatively to create the basis of local ecumenical partnership in the area. This plan was sadly frustrated by the inability of two Methodist churches to talk to each other, and St Andrew's was left with no option but closure. The final service was held on 28 June 1998.

Witton, Blackburn

North Western

The church at Witton, in Blackburn, has had no more than 30 members for many years. Now having only 20, all elderly, and the premises requiring considerable maintenance, they have taken the brave decision to close in May 1999.

All the remaining members will join the Blackburn Ragged School which became a local church of the URC in 1995. The pastor of this lively church, which is close by, has been giving oversight to Witton for the past five years. The members are assured of a warm and open welcome.

Bloomsbury, Birmingham

West Midlands

1.1 Bloomsbury Church, situated in the deprived inner city area of Nechells, developed from the move of Saltley Congregational Church to the present site in 1959. Twenty years later it was joined there by some members of the previous Presbyterian Church at Longacre, Nechells, when it had a membership of about 22. Limited ministerial oversight was provided, and from 1987-89 there was quarter scoped ministry.

including an under-five's resource centre, a playgroup and toy library, a women's group, a mutual support group for those with mental health problems, and several other activities.

1.2 In 1989 a CRCW was appointed, and a half time Methodist minister provided, an arrangement that continued until 1998. The community project developed many facilities for the neighbourhood

1.3 Meanwhile the church congregation was declining with fewer than 10 active members, of whom only 2 lived locally. After discussion and reviews by the District, the remaining members agreed unanimously in April 1998 to close from 31 July 1998, and a service to mark its witness was held on 26 July 1998.

Combs, Suffolk

Eastern

Combs was a rural backwater where Dissenters met hiding from the authorities. A house church was established there in 1696. In 1719, the people of Combs helped to form the Independent Chapel, Stowmarket.

A Service of Thanksgiving for its Life and Witness was held on Sunday, 11th October 1992. Non-conformist church life continues in the village somewhat as it did in 1686 - in people's homes, with a monthly coffee morning and an occasional service and event. The former congregation, with others from the village, fully participates in the life of the Stowmarket town church.

Combs Chapel was one of seven causes under the direction of the Independent Chapel, Stowmarket with a common membership, Deacons' (then Elders') and Church Meetings. It was an extremely effective way of ministering to people living in five hundred square miles of Suffolk. The chapel was built after folk had been meeting in a local barn since 1862. The big and grand occasions were held in Stowmarket.

John Canham was a son of Combs. In 1820, aged 22, when he was a foreman to a leather-seller and shoemaker, he offered himself for service with the London Missionary Society, subsequently serving in Madagascar where he worked in the schools and also introduced the craft of tanning.

The original chapel was replaced with a prefabricated building in 1969, and when that began to deteriorate, with most people journeying the two miles to Stowmarket United Reformed Church, it was decided to cease having a separate building within the village.

Great Finborough, Suffolk

Eastern

As at Combs, Great Finborough was one of the seven causes under the direction of the Independent Chapel, Stowmarket with a common membership, Deacons' (then Elders') and Church Meetings.

was to them of not having to travel the five miles into Stowmarket, but helped him in having his servants close at hand, even in their free time!

The chapel was built in 1810 on land given by the village squire to the Dissenters of his household and tenant farmers. He emphasised the advantage it

The squire presided over the affairs of all estate families who sought his approval for everything they did, including marriages. A sign of this accord was the presence of the 'Master' as the couple left the

chapel. Riding a white stallion he would toss them a guinea, and grant the groom the privilege of being in work an hour later the next day: 6:00am!

Electricity had been recently installed, together with running water and main drains. A keyboard organ complemented the harmonium, the tortoise stove and earth closet were gone, but the style of worship and perceived mission remained unchanged. The great occasions in the church's year were those of the agricultural calendar.

Claydon Old Chapel, Suffolk

Eastern

Claydon Chapel had been founded as an outreach from Tacket Street Congregational Church, Ipswich in the 1840s. It had been active in the village, especially with children, until the 1960s. In the 1980s, the life of Claydon Chapel had dwindled to a

The remaining member regularly worshipping at Great Finborough died, and was buried from the chapel, which was her wish. The chapel's life came to a close with all giving thanks to God for all that had been, and with villagers and farm folk now preferring to worship at Stowmarket. The final service was that of a Harvest Thanksgiving on Sunday 22nd September 1996.

few elderly people. However, with the development of new housing, opportunities are apparent for a new start. The decision has therefore been taken to discontinue the existing church, and to initiate a Mission Project there.

Christian Malford

South Western

This church was situated on the edge of the village, near Chippenham. In earlier years, this church was thriving and lively with a large Sunday School. In recent years however the combination of the geographical position of the church and the relocation of many of the village people, has led to a

steep decline in membership. The few remaining members experience difficulty in continuing to maintain the witness of the church and the church building. The final service was held on 27 September 1998 and the remaining members now worship at a local Methodist Church.

West Byfleet

Wessex

On the 26th November 1903 the Pastor of Weybridge Congregational Church, supported by the Deacons and members there, resolved to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by forming a church at West Byfleet. Records held by the church give details of early baptisms and the last baptism, weddings and other information.

Co-operation extended to working with the Methodist circuit, unfortunately the current Circuit Superintendent felt that he was not able to give the attention required. One or two lay leaders kept the church congregation cared for pastorally, but eventually with the illness of some of those who held office it seemed the right thing was to close the cause.

In the 1930s there were 25 young worshippers and many of the services in those days were led by New College student pastors. Prior to the war there were hopes of building a new church on a new site, but unfortunately with the coming of the war this did not materialise.

It was not an easy decision to make, but it seemed to be the best way in the circumstances. The Revd Derek M Wales, the Moderator, conducted a final service with a full congregation of past and present members and friends on the 8th November 1998. Given another five years, the church would have celebrated its centenary.

In 1963 the Revd George Thomas became part-time minister of the church and once more there were efforts made to relocate. The church was filled to capacity on Sunday mornings and for a while two morning services were held at 9.30am and at 11.00am. Members worked hard to maintain a very small church building, they built a portable pulpit and after the Revd John French's short ministry came to an end a long succession of Interim Moderators did their best for the congregation remaining.

Stoke Abbot

Wessex

The Chapel opened for worship on the 5th October 1838, although Wood Mill, a now unidentified site on the outskirts of the village served as a place of worship from 1786.

Memories of the church go back to 1907 when the Sunday School anniversary was celebrated. "Children enjoyed sports and games in a local meadow and there was a public tea." The evening meeting seems to have been presided over by the Mayor of Bridport. The following year celebrations within the Chapel including the golden wedding anniversary of a couple who had spent many, many years in the life of the church. They were presented with a silver tea set which is still held by the family. Memories go back to Lay preachers and others who had served along with co-operation and visits to churches at Broadwindsor, Beaminster, Venn and Salwayash.

The Revd Lionel Brown served as minister from 1942 to 1965 and there are those who remember him. He actually retired and lived in the area and only died in 1992. Way back in 1971 ecumenical working was taking place in that there were joint Rogation Services when prayers were led by members of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Quakers, as well as the then Congregational church. In more recent years services have been held once a month and these have been supported by members from other Chapels which have also closed.

It is always sad when the life of a church comes to an end, but obviously the Stoke Abbott congregation has served the community faithfully for many years and the church lives on through a Communion set being used by the present minister of Bridport, the Revd Brenda Russell, who uses it on visits to residential and nursing homes. A service of Thanksgiving was held on Sunday 14th February 1999.

East End

Wessex

At a cost of £50 for the site and £150 to build, East End Chapel was established in 1810. The church ran coal and clothing clubs for the local poor, built school-rooms and organised treats to Bournemouth, and held flower festivals which brought visitors from miles around. In those times this was a busy Forest area with an iron foundry and rope factory nearby.

In the first world war the chapel was a regular sanctuary for Canadians based nearby and during the second world war the chapel was adopted by RAF and USAAF airmen, before they left to support the D Day invasion forces landing in Normandy.

A youth club with 32 young people was founded in the chapel in 1950 and the following year a Scout group was formed under the leadership of the Minister which, along with the women's Bright Hour, made the chapel a significant hub of community activity.

With a declining congregation in recent years, URC membership now standing 4 the painful decision was taken to close the church.

The closing Thanksgiving service held on Easter Sunday, April 23rd, led by Revd Jane Weedon was marked with sorrow and tears. The Moderator of Wessex Province, Revd Derek Wales told a packed congregation of 85: 'This church has been a place offering service and help to the needs of others for 188 years, proclaiming the Gospel of the Easter faith. Everyone is in need of a new beginning, things move on, and we grow in different ways.'

We give thanks to God for the life of this church.

Tabernacle, Rosemarket, Pembrokeshire

Wales

In 1748 Howell Harris, on a visit to the village, recorded that 'there was a breach made in Satan's kingdom here... and love came down indeed.' In the explosion of church growth in Pembrokeshire that followed, the present chapel was built in 1831 to house a congregation that was outgrowing its first farmhouse home. The census of 1861 recorded a total of 239 worshippers attending three services in the chapel on 30th March, while 21 people attended the single service at the village church. In 1997 a lively

ecumenical group of a dozen people continued to worship in the chapel, matched by a similar number in the village church. The closure of the chapel coincides with that of the village school and post office. As we thank God for the richness of a way of life that has ended, the question of who will earth the love of God in Rosemarket in the next century remains.

Synod Moderators' Report

"Consider your call ..."

1 Last year the Moderators' study tour to Israel/Palestine included a visit to an Arab Christian hospital in Gaza which offers medical care to everyone regardless of race or faith, but works mainly among the poor. The hospital provides eighty of the total eight hundred and sixty beds available to the Gaza strip's one million residents, and keeps open despite the security restrictions enforced by the Israeli authorities. Ambulances and urgently-needed medical supplies can be held up when the borders between Gaza and the rest of Israel are closed at a moment's notice for security reasons. Hospital staff living in Israel sometimes can't get home, and queues of workers can be seen at the checkpoints twice a day waiting for their identity papers to be examined on their way to and from work in Israel. The hospital's single laboratory and modest operating suite are used to capacity. But despite its limited resources, the quality of care for their patients is exceptional. The Director of the hospital who showed us round, was not optimistic about a political solution for the Palestinians, but was highly committed personally to her work, seeing her gifts as God-given for the elimination of suffering where possible, and helping address the needs of her people at this particular time in their history.

1.1 It was impressive to find evidence of the Christian community creating an oasis of hope among the poor, and, in a place where religious identity is so often a cause of conflict, to see the Church, small in numbers, realising its vocation in conditions which are far from ideal. Though as visitors we came away with only a snapshot of their circumstances, it was enough to raise questions about what we understand our calling as the Church to be, in our own familiar territory.

2 Where we are now: Much has been written already about the context in which the Church exists in this country today: the shift in beliefs within western society, and the ways in which they are expressed. The old certainties of the Enlightenment and science are no longer as compelling as they were. This is the age of self-expression and personal exploration, where human feelings are taken seriously and there is increasing scope for individual choice. Access to information through the media and Internet puts people in touch with the world, and

helps them seek answers to their questions without further interpretation or the judgement of outside authority. We are becoming a society with fewer core beliefs and agreed moral convictions. People are as likely to pick up ideas about religious truth from former football managers and media stars as from religious leaders. While Christian faith remains open to new expressions of humanity and diversity, it is itself sidelined as just one other "viewpoint" among many, equally valued, and equally left alone.

2.1 "Believing without belonging" is the catch phrase for the popular attitude to faith in God and the Church, though the sociologist Grace Davie argues that people rarely make this choice consciously. She maintains that people's lack of attachment to the Church implies for the great majority, a lack of spiritual motivation. There is therefore a wide tolerance of ideas about things sacred, though it does not lead to personal support.

2.2 The Church has to find its orientation and direction within such contemporary trends. Sometimes people talk as if the Church were made up exclusively of "the committed" and the world made up of "the unbelieving", or assume that people in the Church are unaffected by social attitudes. In reality the Church is made up of people who are influenced by the values and attitudes of our time, at different stages of their lives and different places in their faith development. They are a people who are nevertheless called together by God to "walk to the beat of a different drum", and therefore struggle with the tension of leading authentic Christian lives in what is often an unsupportive and sceptical environment.

3 This report seeks to look at our Christian calling as

- *missionary*
- *corporate*
- *life-long*

in the light of three things:

3.1 Last year's Assembly resolved that 1999 should be a *Year of Renewal* for the United Reformed Church in preparation for the Millennium. Churches everywhere are being challenged to consider their purpose, with the help of published

material, such as Churches Together in England's *NewStart* programme, and *Fanfare for a New Generation's* ten challenges to the churches. Mission Council has affirmed the *Five Marks of Mission*, adopted by Churches Together in England, to stimulate local churches in setting priorities:

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation to sustain and renew life of the earth.

3.2 If our churches are to be involved seriously in mission they will need resourcing. People need to be encouraged to discover new gifts, develop latent ones, and be prepared to offer them. General Assembly has increased the training budget significantly, so financial resources are in the right place. How can we further motivate "people resources"?

3.3 1999 is also designated the "International Year of Older Persons". Statistics about changing life patterns and longer life expectancy suggest a need in the Church for greater awareness of opportunities for service at different times in people's lives.

4 **God's call to mission:** The Bible shapes our understanding of the life of faith as a response to the call of God. Abraham set out from home in old age to an unknown land; Jeremiah traced his call to be a prophet back to the womb; Paul changed dramatically from being persecutor to champion of the gospel. Though the circumstances are very different, there is a clear interaction between God's call, the human response of faith, and the spiritual enabling of that faith to be transformed into effective service in the purpose of God.

4.1 The call of individual Hebrew prophets and leaders is set within the wider purpose of God for his people to be a light to the nations. In the New Testament the call of the apostles to preach and teach the gospel is to extend the servant ministry of the crucified and risen Lord. This is done through the founding of the Church, whose people are called together in each generation to "*receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (*The Manual, page A2*)

4.2 Though modern society tends to relegate Church adherence to the category of a private hobby, our calling is primarily to proclaim the universal presence of Christ in our society, even while we

struggle to understand our own place within it. The Church has been continually challenged throughout its history to remember that the sovereign territory of God is not restricted to the monastery but is also the market place, and discipleship is not only the preserve of religious professionals but that of the whole people of God in their daily life and work. This principle of broadening the horizon of people's expectation of where God is, and establishing dialogue between different areas of life, remains a challenge to the Church today as it considers new opportunities for mission.

4.3 To grasp the priority of mission at a time when there are fewer numbers of Church members, is a challenge to all. It requires a developing awareness of different kinds of leadership within Church, and the encouragement of those who are already identified as such, to develop the scope of their ministry, so that the prophets, evangelists, trainers, theologians, creative writers and good communicators are released, to raise our sights and help us make connections between church and world. There are already people within our Church involved in pioneering work interpreting the gospel in secular employment, in industry, economic life, and the community, whom we need to listen to, and learn from.

4.4 If we accept that one of the challenges for ordained ministry is to counter what Walter Brueggeman describes as the Church's '*enduring domestication of vision*', then ministers also need to be encouraged to take up the opportunities provided by the Church, in order to be better equipped for their task. The new *Continuing Ministerial Education* policy is a welcome development. "*Belonging to the World Church*", authorised by last year's General Assembly to help widen the horizons of present and future leaders with short-term experience of the church overseas, is a resource with great potential, not only for ministers but for any identified by the Church as being likely to benefit from it.

4.5 The "*Belonging to the World Church*" programme could be developed to offer more systematic exposure to the different "worlds" within the three nations served by the United Reformed Church, the "worlds" of economic life, education, health, community, as well as the multi-ethnic and multi-faith dimension of British society. It could awaken people to the possibility of a calling to different forms of service in places which are outside their previous experience. It might also encourage a freer flow of stipendiary ministers among the provinces of England and the nations of Wales and Scotland, as well as enabling more cross-fertilisation of experience from one community to another.

4.6 While recognising the diversity of people's calling in Christ and the scope of opportunities for service, it is important that we constantly anchor this in the calling of the whole Church to be a community of the Kingdom, which bears the marks of the crucified servant Jesus. The Church in its commitment to mission needs also to reflect on the witness it gives to society by being the community of Church. In the 1980's a leader of the Church in China, speaking soon after the Communist government had lifted restrictions on people meeting for worship, said: *"We must now earn the right to be heard"*. In today's social climate our need as a Church, is not so much for good communication techniques, as for integrity and authenticity in our life together.

5 **Called to live in community:** In the New Testament *"fellowship"* is not understood as a group of individuals united by a common idea or interest. Rather *"koinonia"* is created by individuals responding to the call of God in Christ, and being constituted by the Holy Spirit into a relationship with others in Christ. Paul speaks of *"the fellowship of his Son"* (1 Cor 1.9); *"the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"* (2 Cor 13.13); *"the fellowship of the gospel"* (Philippians 1.5); and *"the fellowship of faith"* (Philemon 6). At the Lord's Supper there is fellowship (communion) in the body and blood of Christ. This union/fellowship which is the work of the Spirit is prior to the experience of fellowship between disciples. The Church may look like any other human society but is constituted on a different basis.

5.1 We have a valuable message for society whose emphasis on individuality has, among other things, led to scepticism about people's ability to sustain long-term relationships. The gospel declares that it is in relationship with God and other people that sacrificial love is experienced, faith is nurtured, talents are recognised as gifts, and experienced as God's call to serve the common good. It is only as people in the fellowship of Christ that we dare believe human divisions can be overcome, and that justice and peace are the fruits of his presence. We are challenged by the task before us, to learn how to enter more fully into our corporate relationship in Christ. For John Owen, the local church was the testing ground for such principles: *"Let none pretend that they love the brethren in general, and love the people of God and love the saints, while their love is not fervently exercised towards all those that are in the same church with them."*

5.2 Many of our failures in relationship are as old as the Church itself, and cannot be laid at the door of postmodernity, but what are regarded as acceptable attitudes today often undermine and

attack the spirit of unity and reconciliation within the Church. Selfishness masquerades as self-fulfilment; diversity often comes close to disintegration. While as a Church we strongly uphold the rights of personal conviction, and honour our differences where conscience determines, there are occasions when conscience is not the issue, and the unwillingness of individuals to live with decisions made together in church meetings or councils causes anguish, as does the manipulation of individuals over whole church communities. The fact that our congregations are increasingly ecumenical gatherings with different church traditions represented (and none), can breed confusion and wrong assumptions about the way authority should be exercised and by whom.

5.3 The principles of our Church's conciliar system depend on our earnestly seeking the will of God together through the Spirit of Christ. The effectiveness of our system depends on good personal relationships, trust, and goodwill; on the discipline of recognising each other as disciples of Jesus; and on the realisation that being in the Church is a learning experience, for which secular society and business ethics do little to prepare us. Though meetings are often criticised for being *"talking shops"*, many of our problems arise when people don't meet, or when they have, there has been little genuine encounter of minds and hearts. More opportunities could be found for people at every level of church life to share their hopes and concerns with others, and for a deeper sharing of faith experience.

5.4 It is at this level that the Church fulfils its proper task as a community of discernment, finding both God's purpose for its life in the present, and seeking some vision for the future. It also has an important task in helping the Christian formation of its people, recognising and affirming people's gifts at different times in their lives, and encouraging their development.

6 **Called in the Third Age:** An increasing number of pastorate profiles of churches in ministerial vacancy describe them as *"predominantly elderly"*, yet information available in the International Year of Older Persons highlights the fact that the age balance in this country has shifted significantly towards a more elderly population. For a thousand years before this century the proportion of people over 60 was 8%. Today across Europe it is 20%. At the end of this century there are eight times more over-85 year-olds than there were at the beginning. The general improvement of public health and wealth means that many more young retired are available and resourced for voluntary work.

6.1 The Church benefits from all kinds of skills which retired people of churches freely offer in its service, including the many retired ministers who take on part time pastorates, serve as interim moderators, and conduct worship regularly, because they have the energy and wish to use their gifts in further service of the Church.

6.2 The transition from full-time work to retirement is well-handled by the vast majority of our ordained ministers, the pre-retirement course at the Windermere Centre for ministers and spouses, being greatly welcomed. Situations exist, however, where ministers have created problems for their successors by remaining too close, geographically or emotionally, to the place of their final ministry. It is not a geographical problem only, but the consequence of the particular relationship of minister and people, and the continuing influence of his/her leadership.

6.3 In Imperial Chiria it was common for there to be a new pair of shoes set in a recess of the city gate. This represented an earlier custom of the community making sure that every traveller setting out, would be equipped for the next stage of his journey with a pair of new shoes. Such customs remind us that traditional societies are often better at marking clear rites of passage from one period of life to another. On the whole, we are better at welcoming people to new tasks within the Church than preparing them for laying down their responsibilities, and preparing them for new kinds of service.

6.4 Some ministers look forward at retirement age to a change of direction, while others wish to continue serving the Church in some way. Both of these options are welcome and provided for under existing regulations, yet the fact that people's expectations of retirement have changed means more opportunities ought to exist for this active and constructive period of life for more people, including ministers, than ever before.

6.5 The Church may wish to consider how to encourage further personal development, and make advice more widely available about options for further service (e.g. short-term service overseas through the *Scottish Churches World Exchange* programme, and, in certain cases, through the *Council for World Mission*). Such possibilities need to be investigated in good time before decisions about retirement become critical.

7 **In conclusion:** This report has touched on three separate but related aspects of our Church's call to be part of the mission of God today. We often see things in terms of our own needs rather than the

purpose for which we are called and the resources which the Holy Spirit provides. It is well to remember the clear pattern of *God's call - human response - enabling* which is found in scripture repeatedly. Perhaps we need to focus on each of those in turn as we respond to the call to renewal of our common life.

7.1 Harry Emerson Fosdick (in *The meaning of Prayer*) wrote about the people of the New Hebrides who, generations ago, laughed at an early missionary for telling them to dig for water during a time of drought. They believed water came down from heaven, and therefore prayed for some supernatural intervention. They were shown, however, that water came up from their own land if they learned to dig deep enough. The very thing they needed was already within their own possession if only they were prepared to look for it. Our calling is to look at familiar territory and our needs with the ever fresh discernment of the gospel, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

8 Personalia

The Moderators' monthly meeting has been concerned, as ever, about the movements of stipendiary ministers, but has also reflected in its own membership transition from one period of service to another.

8.1 We have welcomed Roberta Rominger as new Synod Moderator of Thames North Province, and John Arthur who brings to our meetings his insights and experience of the Congregational Union of Scotland.

8.2 We have grieved with Keith Forecast at the death of his wife, Frances, and miss her lively and warm presence on the occasions Moderators and their spouses have spent time together.

8.3 We have been grateful to John Rhys, Glyn Jenkins, George Thomas and Michael Davies who have represented their Synods while their respective Moderators have taken sabbatical leave.

8.4 We are glad of continuity in a fast-changing scene, and rejoice that Malcolm Hanson, David Helyar and Keith Forecast have been re-appointed for further periods of service after review.

8.5 We say farewell to David Jenkins as he returns to more local pastoral ministry. His friendship, creativity, wisdom and unfailing good humour have been appreciated by us all. We wish him well in the ministry ahead of him, and look forward to welcoming his successor, Peter Poulter.



Mission Council

General Assembly
1999

Mission Council

The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body.

Members: *The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the Legal Advisor, the conveners of the Assembly standing committees (except the Pastoral Committee), the synod moderators, two representatives of F.U.R.Y. Council, and three representatives from each synod.*

Those representing synods in March 1999 were:

Northern	<i>Revd Peter Poulter</i>	<i>Dr Peter Clarke</i>	<i>Mrs Wilma Prentice</i>
North Western	<i>Mrs Margaretta Batchelor</i>	<i>Revd Bob Day</i>	<i>Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw</i>
Mersey	<i>Mrs Barbara Martin</i>	<i>Dr Donald South</i>	<i>Revd Gwynfor Evans</i>
Yorkshire	<i>Revd John Jenkinson</i>	<i>Mr Steve Wood</i>	<i>Mrs Val Morrison</i>
East Midlands	<i>Mrs Jill Strong</i>	<i>Revd Clifford Wilton</i>	<i>Mrs Irene Wren</i>
West Midlands	<i>Mr Simon Rowntree</i>	<i>Mrs Erica Young</i>	<i>Revd Tom Bayliss</i>
Eastern	<i>Revd Michael Burrell</i>	<i>Mr Ken Woods</i>	<i>Revd Clive Sutcliffe</i>
South Western	<i>Revd John Rees</i>	<i>Mrs Mary Eden</i>	<i>Mr Geoff Lunt</i>
Wessex	<i>Revd Julian Macro</i>	<i>Revd David Williams</i>	<i>Mrs Sue Brown</i>
Thames North	<i>Dr Jack Gow</i>	<i>Revd Rachel Poolman</i>	<i>Mr Geoffrey Duncan</i>
Southern	<i>Mrs Christine Meekison</i>	<i>Revd Lesley Charlton</i>	<i>Dr Graham Campling</i>
Wales	<i>Dr Jean Sylvan Evans</i>	<i>Mrs Delyth Rees</i>	<i>Mr Peter Devaney</i>

1. Our meetings

1.1 During the year Mission Council has met at Swanwick; the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh; and at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney. A constant theme running through all three meetings has been mission: at the third meeting the report on human sexuality took up a considerable amount of time.

1.2 The Moderator guided the meetings with a sensitive and sure hand. In this she was well supported by her chaplains, Ken and Meriel Chippindale. Of particular note was the way in which art was used to focus both worship and the study of the Bible.

1.3 The Revd Dr Finlay Macdonald, Principal Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, was the theological reflector at the October meeting. The Scottish flavour was continued by the presence of the Revd John Arthur, General Secretary of the Scottish Congregational Church, at the meetings. At the January and March meetings he was accompanied by different conveners of his Church's committees.

2. Responding to the Assembly

2.1 **Discipline of Church members.** In 1996, Assembly asked Mission Council to consider disciplinary procedures for Church members (Resolution 54, Record p23). Attempts to get existing groups to look at this subject have not met with success. Recognising the complexity of the issues involved, Mission Council has recently set up a special task group to work on this matter. The Convener of the group is the Revd Julian Macro. It is hoped that a report may be ready for the Assembly in 2000.

2.2 **Human Sexuality Pastoral Group.** This was set up by resolution 41 of the 1997 Assembly. The members of the group are: Elizabeth Caswell, Malcolm Hanson, Jim Hollyman, Glyn Jenkins, Lis Mullen and John Waller. Mission Council decided to keep it in existence until at least October 1999. The wisdom of this decision has been proved by the fact that the group has been used on one or two occasions in recent months.

2.3 **Small Churches Task Group.** The 1998 Assembly asked Mission Council to set up a task group to consider and report on the opportunities, challenges and difficulties which small churches face (Resolution 6, Record p.51). The group has been established, with the Revd Graham Robson as Convener and the Revd Stuart Scott as Secretary. A report is due in 2000.

2.4 **Continuing Ministerial Education.** In 1998 Assembly approved a policy for Continuing Ministerial Education and asked Mission Council to consider the appropriate staffing arrangements (Resolution 45, Record p.26). The result of this consideration was a decision by Mission Council to create a post of Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education for a period of five years. In preparing a job description care was taken to establish both a distinction from and a partnership with the post of Secretary for Training.

3. **Actions of behalf of the General Assembly**

3.1 **Appointment of the Moderator of the Northern Synod.** Acting on behalf of the Assembly, Mission Council appointed the Revd Peter Ivor Poulter as Moderator of the Northern synod for a period of seven years to 31 August 2006. Two further resolutions relating to this appointment appear later in this report.

3.2 **Appointments to Staff Posts.** Acting on behalf of Assembly, Mission Council made the following appointments:

Mrs Karen Bulley to be Pilots Development Officer for a period of five years to 30 September 2003.

Revd John Steele to be Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness from 16 November 1998 to 30 September 2003

Revd Jean Black to be Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education for a period of five years to 31 May 2004.

Ms Suzanne Adofo and Mr Stephen Summers to be Church Related Community Work Development Workers on a job-share basis from 14 June 1999 to 30 June 2004.

3.3 **Basic Ministerial Stipend.** Acting on behalf of Assembly, Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 1999 at £15,600.

3.4 **Promotion of Parliamentary Bill.** Acting on behalf of Assembly, Mission Council authorised the United Reformed Church Trust to promote the Parliamentary Bill referred to in the Joint Proposals Document (for union with the Congregational Union of Scotland) on behalf of the United Reformed Church.

4. **Other Actions**

4.1 **Westminster College.** Mr Andrew Armour was appointed Clerk to the Governors of the College.

4.2 **Congregational Union of Scotland/United Reformed Church Union.** Following news of the first acceptance of the union proposals by the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland, Mission Council invited the General Secretary and one other representative of the Union to attend its meetings in 1999. The Council also invited the Union to nominate a co-opted member to certain Assembly committees, those nominated being asked to serve until July 2000. These contacts have already been found to be valuable.

4.3 **Advisory Group on Faith and Order.** The Ecumenical Committee sought approval for the setting up of a group, on which it and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee would be represented, to advise on ecumenical documents and proposals on behalf of the United Reformed Church. Approval was given with a recognition that there was an important task to be done.

4.4 **St Andrew's Hall Missionary College.** Mission Council had a substantial discussion following the news that the Council of St Andrew's Hall had decided to close the college and sell the buildings and land. At its conclusion the following resolution was passed:

*"Mission Council:
receives with sadness the decision of St Andrew's Hall Missionary College to sell the buildings and the land and to close the college to new students from April 1999;*

welcomes the assurance of the Ecumenical Committee that a) the scholarship programme, and b) the provision of preparation before and reflection after service for people serving overseas, or coming from overseas to work here, will continue;

and supports our representatives on the Council as they continue to work for an outcome which will provide an ongoing resource for mission education to the United Reformed Church".

Subsequent events have been the responsibility of the Ecumenical Committee.

4.5 **Assembly Posts.** Mission Council agreed to the extension of the following posts:

Director of the Windermere Centre for a period of five years, or until the incumbent leaves if that is at an earlier date, from 1st September 1999. The postholder should be an ordained minister of the United Reformed Church or of a church in the Reformed tradition.

Financial Secretary and Chief Accountant from the retirement of the present incumbent on 30 June 2000.

Secretary for Training for a period of five years from 1st September 1999, or until the postholder relinquishes the post if that be earlier.

4.6 **Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester.** Negotiations for United Reformed Church involvement in this new partnership have been carried out by the Training Committee. However Mission Council considered and passed the following resolution, which was brought jointly by the Training and Finance Committees:

"Mission Council approves the capital investment of £200,000 in Luther King House Trust, subject to the officers of the Finance Committee being happy with the level of financial expertise available to the Trust, and to the legal structure of the organisation, and requests the General Secretary and the Treasurer to make the nomination or appointment of an appropriate person to the board of the Trust".

Satisfactory reports were later received and the Revd John Piper was appointed to the board.

4.7 **Disciplinary process: Commission Panel.** It has already been agreed that, in the event of the Secretary to the Panel temporarily being unable to act, the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee for the time being could do so. Mission Council has decided that, in the event of that office holder also not being available, the Convener of the Ministries Committee will have the authority to act as a substitute.

4.8 **The use of local church premises.** During the discussion of mission which led to the commendation of Growing Up, it was recognised that the buildings of local churches were an important

resource. However they are not always used to the greatest advantage. In some instances buildings can become a liability. This discussion led Mission Council to decide that it could be helpful to many local situations to ask a task group to make a report giving general guidance to local churches over a range of matters to do with the effective use of buildings. A group has been set up with a reporting date of March 2000, but it is recognised that the size of the remit may make it impossible to finalise the report by that time.

4.9 **The resignation of ministers and the secession of local churches.** Since the human sexuality debate has led to some requests for clarification of both these issues, some work has been done on behalf of Mission Council. However, when it became clear that the Assembly was to be asked to seek the views of all the councils of the United Reformed Church on a statement on human sexuality, Mission Council felt that applications to secede, in particular, were not appropriate at least until the Assembly has made a definitive decision. If ministers wish to resign, or local churches to seek to secede on other grounds, procedures are already in place.

4.10 **Multi-racial, multi-cultural development worker.** Marjorie Lewis-Cooper will complete the second year of her three-year appointment at the time of this year's Assembly. In the first year she carried out extended visits to each of the Provinces and detailed reports are being prepared. In the current year Marjorie has concentrated her work on the committees of the Assembly. In the third year the programme will be assessed and the Assembly of 2000 will be invited to discuss the conclusions reached, and to decide on the next steps. This pattern of work was agreed when the post was created but inevitably other things have developed which were not planned! In particular Marjorie has created a network of black ministers serving in the United Reformed Church; she has been invited to a number of discussions concerning the reception of "single-ethnic" congregations into the United Reformed Church - the first of which will be received this year; and the mid-point in this ministry was marked by a significant network gathering at Carrs Lane Church in Birmingham in February. It is hoped that this last development will have rooted the programme more deeply in the synods. Throughout her ministry, Marjorie Lewis-Cooper has been supported by a management committee. The current members are: John Waller (convener), Sandra Ackroyd, Wilfred Bahadur, Virginia Becher, Peter Brain, and Henna Desai.

4.11 **Resource Sharing task group.** During the past year, all the provinces have made a firm commitment to the ongoing inter-provincial sharing of financial resources and have offered a minimum of 5% of 1998 investment income as a contribution in 1999. This gives those provinces which are net recipients in the resource sharing process, assurance of future financial support for longer term programmes. In 1998, over £100,000 was given and distributed. The figure in 1999 is likely to approach £150,000.

The annual consultation between the provinces continued to focus on the sharing of information and, where appropriate, on the harmonisation of policy. Standards for manse accommodation and building inspections and surveys are currently being considered in this context.

Progress is slow, but sure. The principle of inter-provincial resource sharing has been established as part of the church's way of life and in that we rejoice.

4.12 **Deployment of ministers.** As part of its discussion of the mission programme, **Growing Up**, Mission Council considered both the number of stipendiary ministers which the United Reformed Church will wish to have in the coming years, and the policy which determines their deployment. The former concern is explained in **Growing Up**. On deployment Mission Council affirmed the present formula and process, which includes consultation with the synods, but agreed that in the future the allocation to synods should be submitted annually to Mission Council for approval.

4.13 **Church Related Community Work in the United Reformed Church.** A review of this programme, carried out by the Revds Graham Cook and Bob Day, was discussed by Mission Council. The major principles were incorporated into the report, **Growing Up**, and the more detailed recommendations were passed to the Ministries Committee.

Millennium Task Group

Millennium Task Group Committee Members

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Secretary: Revd Roger Whitehead

Representative membership from most Assembly committees.

1.1 It's coming. Since we entered 1999, there has been a much greater sense that the millennium is not a distant idea but a looming reality. Even after Assembly (when there will only be 171 days left of the second millennium) it will not be too late for churches to make their plans.

1.2 For those who are bored or suffering from "pre-millennium tension", it is worth pondering that there is unlikely to be another occasion during the lives of any of us when many people will be searching for the meaning of life, and wanting to make a new start. Churches might reflect around **two basic questions:** (a) what are we going to do to celebrate two thousand years of Jesus Christ?; and (b) if all that has been planned works and if enquirers come into our church in a spiritual search, what will we offer them? All the ecumenical planning in England, Scotland and Wales has been focused on helping churches to answer these two questions.

2 Resources

2.1 Our own URC devotional material, **Jesus 2000**, for use in the spring and autumn Synods and by congregations after Easter and before Christmas helps Christians think through who Jesus is, so that we are ready to share faith with enquirers. We are very grateful to Revd Bill Mahood and his team for preparing it.

2.2 The ecumenical plans for **candles** and the resolution on millennium eve are designed to highlight the awareness in the general public that the millennium takes its meaning and focus from the birth two thousand years ago of Jesus Christ who, for Christians, is still the pivotal figure in human history. The resolution provides an agenda for discussions with all our fellow citizens about the sort of society we want in the next century.

2.3 From the Churches Together in England stable there comes the **three NewStart leaflets** (*With God; At Home; and For The World's Poor*) which provide elders and church meetings with discussion starters and lists of relevant resources. ⁽¹⁾ NewStart Worship Books One and Two will furnish worship leaders with ideas and liturgy material relevant to the millennium themes and aimed at the occasional attender; these Books cover all the main

festivals up to Epiphany 2001. ⁽²⁾ NewStart Hymns provides new hymns to old and new tunes around millennium themes. ⁽³⁾

3 Getting the local church ready

3.1 '**Millennium News**' from the Churches Millennium Office ⁽⁴⁾ provides additional information about a wide range resources. Particularly helpful is '*Making Sunday Best*' (*Fanfare For a New Generation*) ⁽⁵⁾ with ideas to assist churches in making themselves really welcoming to those for whom the church building is alien territory. Most of the churches' children's work departments in England, Scotland and Wales have co-operated in *Stories for the Millennium*. These include '*Why the Fuss*' for 8-13s, and '*Stories for 2000: why the Fuss?*' for 4-7s at give-away prices for local school children whom you might invite specially to church for the millennium. ⁽⁶⁾

3.2 We expect that there will be two suggestions for ways of helping visitors to take another step in the exploration of faith. One is based on the 'Alpha' approach for those who want to meet with others; the other based on the York courses (which use audio cassettes) aimed more at the casual enquirer who is afraid of getting personally too involved. ⁽⁷⁾ In addition there is material available from Y-2000. ⁽⁸⁾

3.3 Other resources available. The Churches Millennium Office has a list of all planned publications and this is worth studying to see just how rich and varied the resources are; it also lists Revd Jack MacKelvey's book '*The Millennium and the Book of Revelation*' which is one of only a very few to look seriously at the biblical material on time and to relate it to Revelation which some Christians see as forecasting the end of time around the millennium. ⁽⁹⁾

4 The millennium is not just for a weekend

4.1 In every area of the churches' millennium work stress is being laid on the need to lay solid foundations for work which will continue through the next decade. For example, *NewStart At Home* literature challenges us to on-going new relationships with our neighbours and to make life better for the marginalized. *NewStart For The World's Poor* reminds us that the issues surrounding debt relief

and world poverty are not going to be over by the end of 2000; the URC has registered with the government's new scheme 'Millennium Gift Aid' - see report of Church and Society. The millennium material encourages congregations to make commitments over the longer term.

4.2 We are encouraged to learn how often local URC churches have the initiative to bring together all the churches in an area to plan for **Pentecost 2000**, when it is hoped that Christians will "be together in one place" for public celebration of the faith. CTE's planning for this weekend has been carefully co-ordinated with that of 'March for Jesus' who are observing Pentecost Saturday as 'Jesus Day' with an international chain of street celebrations. These two will dovetail so that there can be a weekend of Christian activity.

4.3 'JC2000' is the millennium arts festivals for schools based on the life of Jesus. Pupils are asked to devise productions looking at two questions: "If Jesus came to my town in the year 2000, what would he have to say to us and what would we want to say to him?" 'Hopes and Dreams' is a major music, dance and drama production developed by Revd Rob Frost; 'Y-2000' invites Christians to wear a simple lapel badge with the 'Y' logo device which encourages Christians to explain the true meaning of the millennium.

5 The Task Group's work

5.1 As forecast in last year's report, the main role of the Task Group has been to pass on information to churches and to district correspondents. We are grateful to the URC Treasurer for allowing the URC to make an appropriate contribution to the cost of the ecumenical literature and for the postage costs of making this material available widely.

5.2 **Two mailings** with full details of available material were sent care of district correspondents, and we are very grateful to them to undertaken to pass them on to local churches.

5.3 The Task Group will also try to provide **speakers** to Synods, Districts and local churches to help in planning and evaluating millennium suggestions throughout the millennium year.

5.4 **Disclaimer!** One feature of the Churches' national preparation for the millennium is that materials are constantly becoming available; another is that the Churches are trying to relate to national and local government plans which are not likely to be finalized until autumn 1999. The information in this report is accurate at the time of writing (March). Corrections and additions will be notified in the verbal presentation to Assembly. Those not at Assembly can get the latest information from the Churches Millennium Office: 0171-898 1435, fax: 0171-898 1432, e-mail: enquiry@millennium.churcomm.org.uk, web site: www.2000ad.org

6 Our thanks

We want to place on record our gratitude to URC district correspondents and to the ecumenical Millennium Team led by Revd Stephen Lynas which has successfully put Christianity in the centre of discussions about the millennium celebrations, the dome, and the public debate about future hopes for our nation. This has been achieved despite all the other emphases in the media and it has achieved the task which the churches set for themselves three years ago: "to forge a link in people's minds between the year 2000, the name of Jesus Christ, and the possibility of personal meaning and public hope."

To God be the glory as we approach the Year of our Lord 2000!

Resources:

- 1 Available from Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
- 2 Book One @ £8; Book Two @ £12; published by CTE and available from the URC Bookshop.
- 3 This publication (title not known at time of going to press) is published by Kevin Mayhew Ltd Will be available from the URC Bookshop.
- 4 Millennium Office, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ
- 5 Fanfare for a New Generation 0171-450 9070
- 6 Price around £1 for quantities; published late summer 1999. Details from Ro Willoughby, Scripture Union, 207 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2EB 01908 856111
- 7 York Courses, St Barnabas' Vicarage, Jubilee Terrace, York, YO26 4YZ
- 8 A leaflet giving details of all that is available from the CTE Group for Evangelisation: Revd Roger Whitehead, The Manse, High Street, Harrold, Bedford, MK43 7BJ
- 9 This is published by Lutterworth Press @ £9.99 available from the URC Bookshop.

RESOLUTION 9**Amendment of Structure 2(3) and 2(4)**

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1998 to amend a function of district council and to add categories to the membership of district council and synod as follows:

amend 2(3)(iv) by deleting the words: "from among its members".

Add 2(3)(j): An elder appointed by the district council as an interim moderator who shall be a full member of the district council for the period of the appointment.

Add 2(4)(k): An elder appointed by the district council as an interim moderator who shall be a full member of the synod for the period of the appointment.

No objections have been raised to this decision, which allows elders who are acting as interim moderators to be members of district council during their period of service.

RESOLUTION 10**Amendment of Structure 3(1)**

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1998 to amend the Structure in paragraph 3(1)(f) by adding the following words:

In its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, before voting upon such a motion the General Assembly shall invite a representative of any synod from which the General Secretary has duly received notification under 3(1)(e) to present the main reasons for its objection.

No objections have been raised to this decision, which allows synods which object to resolutions sent to them the opportunity to state the reasons for their objection to the Assembly.

RESOLUTION 11**Changes to Structure**

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1998 to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

- a) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(a) by adding the words: 'and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that district.'
- b) Amend the existing category at Paragraph 2(4)(h) to read: 'All retired ministers not covered by clause 2.4.a or clause 2.4.g residing within the province or nation served by the synod, who shall be associate members of the synod having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the synod.'
- c) In the existing category at paragraph 2(5)(c) delete the words: 'departments and'.

- d) In the third sentence of the concluding section of Paragraph 2(5) delete the words: 'set up departments and'.
- e) In the fifth sentence of the concluding section of Paragraph 2(5) delete the words: 'department or'.
- f) In the existing category at Paragraph 2(5)(ii) delete the words 'departments and'.
- g) Amend the existing Paragraph 3(1)(f) to read: ' If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting. Such a motion shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass'.

No objections have been received to this decision, which makes a number of changes to the structure of the Church.

RESOLUTION 12

Disciplinary procedures

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1998 to amend paragraph 3.5 of Part 1 (Substantive Provisions) of the Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline (Section O Process) as follows:

Delete "twenty-five (25)" and replace with "a maximum of fifty (50)".

No objections have been raised to this decision, which allows the Commission Panel established under the ministerial discipline procedures to have its membership increased from 25 people to a maximum of 50 people.

RESOLUTION 13

Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1998 to give approval to the Proposals for Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland (document dated March 1998) including the Amendments to the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom listed in Appendix C of the document.

The proposals for union were given first approval by the Assembly of 1998 without dissent. They were also given first approval by the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland. The proposals were sent to district councils and synods, and no objections have been raised. Assembly is asked to consider this resolution in the light of these points.

If Assembly passes the resolution, and if final approval is given by the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland, a Unifying Assembly will be held in Glasgow on Saturday, 1 April 2000.

RESOLUTION 14

Growing Up

General Assembly accepts the mission programme outlined in the report "Growing Up" and strongly commends it to local churches, district councils and synods.

RESOLUTION 15

Growing Up

General Assembly instructs the Mission Council to oversee the planning of the mission programme.

RESOLUTION 16

Growing Up

General Assembly submits the mission programme of the United Reformed Church to the Council for World Mission

RESOLUTION 17

Growing Up

General Assembly enlarges the remit, adjusts the structure and changes the name of the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee, as set out in Annex D of the report "Growing Up".

The supporting text for these resolutions is to be found in "Growing Up", which appears as Appendix 1 in this Book of Reports.

RESOLUTION 18

Mansfield College inspection report

General Assembly welcomes the report of the Training Committee on the positive response of Mansfield College to the inspection report of 1997, and commends the staff and governing body on the imaginative work that has been done.

Last year the discussion on the review of colleges became confused with the report of the inspectors who visited Mansfield College. This was particularly unfortunate because the college had not had time to make a full response to the report by the date of last year's Assembly. As is normal practice, the Training

Committee considered the response once it had been prepared. Mission Council was glad to hear that the response had been so positive, and Assembly is invited to endorse the Council's view.

RESOLUTION 19**Use of colleges review**

Assembly, having heard the basis on which it was formed, accepts the advice of Mission Council that the United Reformed Church should cease to use one of the present colleges for initial ministerial training.

Since 1994 Mission Council has been made aware on a number of occasions that the number of students training for the stipendiary ministry had fallen to a level which made it impossible to make effective use of the four colleges which were recognised by the Church - Mansfield College, Oxford; Northern College, Manchester; the Queen's College, Birmingham; and Westminster College, Cambridge. The criteria for this judgement were partly educational - the need to have student groups in each year large enough to benefit from each other's insights - and partly financial. The colleges, with the exception of Queen's, depend on fee income and therefore the number of students each receives is critical for financial viability.

An independent review group was set up in the autumn of 1997 in an attempt to resolve a question that was causing continual anxiety in all the colleges and inhibiting their future planning. The group reported to Mission Council in March 1998. Its advice was that the United Reformed Church should focus its training on two colleges, with a small number of students being sent to the Queen's College. This judgement was based on present numbers and the colleges' ability to cope with an increase of up to 50%.

Mission Council found itself unable to make a decision on this advice, partly because the discussion got confused with the matter of the Mansfield inspection report (see resolution 18 above) and partly because it was felt that there had been

insufficient consultation. However, in order to relieve some of the uncertainty, a resolution was brought to the 1998 Assembly (by chance also resolution 18!) recommending the use of Northern, the Queen's and Westminster Colleges for the foreseeable future. That resolution was passed.

The Revds Elizabeth Caswell, David Jenkins and John Waller were appointed to carry out a wider consultation. This they did in December 1998. They reported to Mission Council in January 1999 the strong arguments that had been advanced for the continued use of Mansfield College, but they commented that the conclusion reached by the earlier review group was compelling if the numerical and financial information on which it was based was correct.

The Training Committee undertook to carry out the necessary checks, which it did in time for the March 1999 Mission Council. Particular attention was paid to the fact that Assembly had resolved to make 1999 a year of recruitment to ministry, and to the projections of the number of ministers contained in the "Growing Up" paper. It was nonetheless felt that, despite the difficulty it would cause, Assembly should be advised to accept the conclusion of the independent review group.

(Members of Assembly who would like copies of the reports referred to in this summary should apply before Assembly to the Deputy General Secretary's office).

RESOLUTION 20**Initial ministerial training at Mansfield College**

Assembly resolves not to use Mansfield College for initial ministerial training for the foreseeable future and asks the Training Committee to make careful and sensitive arrangements to phase out its current use for this purpose.

The independent review group advised last year that Mansfield should be the college which the Church should cease to use for initial ministerial education. This was not because of any real or perceived inadequacy in the training given by the College but because this was felt to be the least damaging of the

options following a decision on the number of colleges. The review group paid tribute to the work of all four colleges, in the past and in the present.

Assembly is asked to resolve to accept the advice.

RESOLUTION 21

The future use of Mansfield College

General Assembly supports the conversations that have begun between Mansfield College, the Congregational Federation and the Training Committee concerning the continued use of the theological and training resource of the College for purposes other than initial ministerial training.

The Congregational Federation uses Mansfield College for the training of a very small number of ministers and it intends to continue to do so. The statutes of the College require the chaplain to be a minister of the United Reformed Church or a non-uniting church, and the director of ministerial training

to be a U.R.C. minister. These and other links make it clear that every effort needs to be made to continue our Church's involvement with a very significant theological and training resource. Talks have already been going on for some time. This is not an easy option: Assembly is being invited to support it.

RESOLUTION 22

Thanks and prayers

General Assembly gives thanks to God for the work of Mansfield College, Oxford, in the training of ministers for the Congregational and United Reformed Church ministry since 1886; offers prayers for those who have borne the brunt of the uncertainty of the past two years; and seeks the blessing of God's grace on staff, students and governing body as they plan for the future.

This resolution allows the Assembly to express in its prayers some of the feelings that will accompany the discussion of the previous four resolutions.

RESOLUTION 23

Special Committee to nominate the General Secretary

General Assembly appoints a special committee to nominate the next General Secretary, consisting of those named on page 48-49 of the 1999 Book of Reports.

The present General Secretary, the Revd Anthony Burnham, will retire on 31 July 2001. Assembly needs to appoint the special committee in order that his successor may be nominated to the Assembly in 2000.

The rules of procedure (4(2)) provide that the special committee shall consist of two representatives of each synod, the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Convener of the Nominations Committee, and nine persons selected by the Mission Council, five of whom shall be conveners of the Assembly standing committee.

Those nominated by the Synods are:

Northern	Peter Clark	Jane Tomlin
North Western	Ruth Wollaston	John Bradbury
Mersey	Angus Duncan	Helen Brown
Yorkshire	Arnold Harrison	Pat Evans
East Midlands	Jill Strong	Malcolm Hanson
West Midlands	Ken Chippindale	Simon Rowntree
Eastern	Elizabeth Caswell	Tony Coates
South Western	Ray Adams	Geoff Lunt
Wessex	Julian Macro	Dorothy Spencer
Thames North	Adrian Bulley	Fiona Smith
Southern	Lesley Charlton	John Ellis
Wales	Eileen McIlveen	David Marshall-Jones
Scotland	(see resolution 24)	

Those nominated by the Mission Council are:

Conveners:

**Derek Lindfield
Graham Long
Alasdair Pratt
Graham Stacy**

Others:

**Margaret Carrick Smith
Bill Mahood
Neil Platt
Rosemary Simmons**

The name of one more Convener will be offered at Assembly.

Mission Council has agreed that the Deputy General Secretary should act as secretary to the special committee.

**RESOLUTION 24 Scottish representatives on the special committee
to nominate the General Secretary**

General Assembly agrees, in the light of the imminent union, to invite the Congregational Union of Scotland to appoint two representatives to be members of the special committee to nominate the next General Secretary, with a view to the Synod of Scotland, at its first meeting, confirming them as members of the committee under rules of procedure 4(2). (In the event of union not proceeding, this invitation would be withdrawn).

This resolution is intended to enable the present Congregational Union of Scotland to play a part in nominating the next General Secretary, in view of the fact that (if union proceeds) it will be part of the Assembly that makes the appointment in July 2000.

**RESOLUTION 25 To extend the period of service of the
Moderator of the Northern synod**

General Assembly, acting in accordance with paragraph 2(5)(A)(xii) of the Structure, resolves to suspend Rule 7(2)(i) only in order to extend the appointment of the Revd Peter Poulter as Moderator of the Northern Synod.

**RESOLUTION 26 To extend the period of service of the
Moderator of the Northern synod**

General Assembly extends the appointment of the Revd Peter Poulter as Moderator of the Northern Synod until 31 December 2006.

The rules of procedure allow the Assembly to appoint a moderator of a synod for a term not exceeding seven years. Acting on behalf of the Assembly, Mission Council has appointed the Revd Peter Poulter for a period of seven years to 31 August

2006. Four months later he will have reached retirement age. The Assembly is being asked to suspend its rules only in order to extend this appointment to the point of retirement.

RESOLUTION 27**The Section O process - ministerial discipline**

Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Section O process (See the procedure for constitutional amendment set out in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.):

Paragraphs 3.2 and 3.9

Delete Provincial

Paragraph 3.13

Insert a new Paragraph as follows:-

References to district councils shall be understood to include area councils in Scotland, such area councils being in every respect identical with district councils and wherever the words "district council" or "district" appear they shall, as regards Scotland, be read as meaning "area council" or "area".

Paragraph 4.2

Delete the final sentence.

Paragraph 5.1

Delete Provincial

Paragraph 7.1.1

Insert a new paragraph as follows:

No person shall be a member of the Commission Panel or of any Appeals Commission and at the same time also be a member of any Synod Panel or Mandated Group as defined in the Rules of Procedure.

Paragraph 7.1.2

The existing Paragraph 7.1 will become 7.1.2.

Also delete Provincial.

Paragraph 10.2

Delete the existing Paragraph 10.2 and add the following Paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3.

10.2 If the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission considers that there has been some conduct, statement, act or omission on the part of the Minister which, although not sufficiently serious to justify deletion is nevertheless of sufficient concern to justify lesser disciplinary action against the Minister it may, whilst allowing the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll, take either or both of the following steps, the first being part of its decision and the second being by way of recommendation:-

10.2.1 It may issue a written warning to the Minister that any continuance or repetition of any of the disciplinary matters complained of might be considered a cause for deletion by a future Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission.

10.2.2 It may append recommendations to its decision in accordance with Paragraph 16.1.3.

10.3 If the decision of the Appeals Commission is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll, it will in recording its decision also consider Paragraph 16.1.4.

Paragraphs 11.1, 14.2, 14.3 and 14.6

Delete Paragraph 10.2 and substitute Paragraph 10.2.1.

Paragraph 16.1

Delete and substitute the following:

16.1 In recording its decision the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be shall comply with the following:

- 16.1.1 *It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.*
- 16.1.2 *It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.*
- 16.1.3 *In the event that the decision is not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll it may in its written statement append such recommendations as it considers will be helpful to moderators of synod, district councils, local churches and others within the Church in relation to the future ministry of the Minister.*
- 16.1.4 *If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers it is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance to assist moderators of synod, district councils, local churches and others within the Church concerning any restrictions which might be placed upon any church-related activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion.*
- 16.1.5 *In addition to its power to make recommendations or to offer guidance under Paragraph 16.1.3 or Paragraph 16.1.4 respectively, the Appeals Commission may if it sees fit endorse, overrule, vary or modify in any way any recommendation made or guidance offered by the Assembly Commission in the case in question.*

Paragraph 21

*In the first and second sentences, **delete** Provincial Moderator and **substitute** moderator of the synod.*

*In the last sentence **delete** Province and province and **substitute** synod each time.*

It was agreed that a review should be carried out in time for the March 1999 Mission Council. These proposed changes are the result of that review. They reflect the anticipated union with the Congregational Union of Scotland and the limited experience of the

process so far. In particular they increase the options open to the Commission in less serious cases, and also set out good practice in more detail.

A further review will be necessary in due course.

RESOLUTION 28**Changes to the Structure**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church (see the procedure for constitutional amendment set out in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure):

- a) Amend the existing paragraph 1(2)(a) by inserting the following sentence after the existing second sentence: "The expression "Provincial Synod" when used in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 shall in relation to property in Wales be read as referring to the national Synod of Wales."
- b) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(a) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church-related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that district, and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that district".
- c) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(b) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "Such other ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers as shall from time to time be appointed by the synod as hereinafter provided".
- d) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(4)(a) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church-related community workers who are for the time being members of district councils within the province or nation.
- e) Delete the present category 2(4)(xiv).
- f) Renumber the existing categories 2(4)(xv) - 2(4)(xvii) as 2(4)(xiv) - 2(4)(xvi)

1. Members of Assembly should note that paragraph 2(3)(a) was amended by Resolution 11 of 1998 and that paragraphs 1(2)(a), 2(3)(a), 2(3)(b), 2(4)(a) and 2(4) (xiv) were amended by acceptance of the proposals for union with the Congregational Union of Scotland. The Assembly will be invited to ratify all these changes before this resolution is taken.

2. The first change is necessary because the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 refer to "Provincial Synods" which would exclude the Synod of Wales.

3. There are now no serving deaconesses or registered local pastors (though there are registered pastors in Scotland). The proposals at b), c) and d) would remove the redundant references to them in the categories of membership of district councils and synods.

4. The synod function 2(4)(xiv) has now been replaced by synod function 2(4)(xvi), which allows the district council to make recommendations to the synod for appointment to service on district council of persons in four categories (see the district council function 2(3)(xix)).

RESOLUTION 29**Changes to the Rules of Procedure**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Rules of Procedure for Conduct of the United Reformed Church:

- a) In the last line of paragraph 1(3) delete “provincial”.
- b) In the second line of paragraph 1(5) after “province” insert “or nation”.
- c) In the fourth line of paragraph 2(4) delete “provincial”.
- d) In the second line of paragraph 4(2) delete “provincial”.
- e) Delete the existing paragraph 6(1) and replace with: “In Wales and Scotland there shall in each case be a single synod. The area of the church in England shall be divided into such number of synods as the Assembly on the recommendation of the Mission Council may from time to time determine”.
- f) Delete the first sentence of paragraph 6(2), and in the second sentence delete “provincial”.
- g) In the first line of paragraph 6(3) replace “province” with “synod” and insert after “districts”: “(or areas in Scotland)”. In the second line delete “provincial”.
- h) Change the heading to section 7 to “MODERATORS OF THE SYNOD”.
- i) In the first line of paragraph 7(1) delete “provincial”.
- j) In the first line of paragraph 7(4) replace “provincial moderator” with: “moderator of synod”, and in the third line delete “provincial”.
- k) In the first line of paragraph 7(5) delete “provincial”.
- l) In the second line of the note to section 7 replace “provincial moderators” with: “moderators of synod”.
- m) In the second line of paragraph 8(9) delete “provincial”.

1. These proposed changes to the Rules of Procedure all relate to the union with the Congregational Union of Scotland, and will be presented after the ratifying vote is taken on the

constitutional changes. They will make exactly the same changes to terminology which were made to the Basis of Union and the Structure at last year’s Assembly.

RESOLUTION 30**Budget for the year 2000****Assembly accepts the budget for the year 2000 set out in Appendix 2 to the Book of Reports.**

A deficit budget The most significant feature of the year 2000 budget is the fact that it shows a deficit of £660,000. This is not a mistake or unavoidable crisis. It represents a major change of policy aimed at rectifying a problem which has been growing over recent years.

A balanced budget, which has been our policy in the past, requires budgeted expenditure to be covered by anticipated income. When the budget is prepared it is not possible to anticipate all sources of income, in particular legacies and gains in the value of investments. This means that in most years actual income exceeds the anticipated income and, therefore, the budgeted expenditure. In addition, since the natural tendency is to budget prudently, actual results tend to be better than budget producing further surpluses. In the four years 1995 to 1998 we have added some £5.7 million to our general reserves as result of this process. We have transferred £3.5 million from reserves to strengthen the Pension Fund and Retired Ministers Fund but this still leaves us with £2.2 million of additional funds unspent. If we continue the policy of adopting balanced budgets this surplus will continue to grow.

By adopting a budget with a deficit we are less likely to end up each year with an increase in unspent funds and may, in some years, draw on past surpluses. Determining what is a reasonable level of deficit is not a precise calculation. In concluding that £660,000 is acceptable for the year 2000 budget, Mission Council has taken account of a number of items of income which may turn out better than budget and of expenditures which may be reduced, together with a prudent view of the amount that could be drawn from past surpluses. The appropriate level of deficit in subsequent years will continue to require careful judgement in the light of the circumstances at the time.

Cost of Ministry The largest item of expenditure in our budget is the cost of stipendiary ministry. This cost is determined by the number of stipendiary ministers and the level of stipend.

The number of stipendiary ministers that the URC should aim for has been the subject of serious debate in Mission Council during the past year. It was aware of the cry from all parts of the Church for more stipendiary ministry but had to balance this

against the need to exercise proper stewardship of our financial resources. In a paper to Mission Council three options were offered:

1. Holding minister numbers constant for a defined period of, say, five years.
2. Aiming for minister numbers to track membership numbers at half the rate of change.
3. Aiming to keep minister numbers in a fixed ratio to members so that any change in members would be reflected in a similar proportionate change in the number of ministers.

Mission Council decided that we should adopt the second option which is, broadly, what has been happening over recent years.

As regards the level of stipend, the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee appointed a group to review all aspects of ministerial remuneration which reported back in July 1998. The recommendations arising from this review are reported elsewhere but the main recommendations affecting the budget are that in future stipends should be increased in line with the changes in the National Average Earnings index up to 30 September in the preceding year and that we should reintroduce children's allowances. For year 2000 budget purposes the increase in stipends has been taken at 4%. The cost of children's allowances is difficult to calculate but has been estimated at approximately 1% of the total cost of stipends.

Ministry and Mission contributions The total of Ministry and Mission (M&M) contributions has been unchanged for three years. This has been made possible mainly by absorbing the surplus of income over expenditure which existed at the beginning of that period. For the future we have to expect that increases in the cost of ministry will have to be matched by increases in M&M contributions. For the year 2000, stipends are budgeted to increase by 4% but this increase will be offset by an estimated reduction of 1½% in minister numbers which gives a net cost of 2½%. However, there is in addition the cost of introducing children's allowances. It is proposed that the impact of this increase should be spread over two years so that for the year 2000 there is an additional ½% to be taken up. This results in an increase in the target for M&M contributions of 3%.

Mission Council is aware that, if the number of members continues to decline, the average cost of M&M contributions per member increases by more than the increase in the above target amount. Also, if some churches have to reduce their contribution, this puts a greater burden on others. However, if we are to meet the cost of stipendiary ministry, increases at this level are inevitable.

The outlook over the next five years It is felt that a detailed projection of estimated income and expenditure for the next five years would not add to our understanding of the U.R.C.'s finances. Future trends can be expressed in very simple terms. With such a large part of our expenditure going to pay stipends and related costs, whatever happens to this part of our expenditure has to be matched by similar

increases in M&M contributions. Thus, if the National Average Earnings index increases by 4% and minister numbers decline by about 1½% we have to look to an annual increase of 2½% in the total of M&M contributions. If the index or minister numbers change by a different percentage, then the M&M target will have to vary accordingly. This simple logic does not require computers or need to be proved by detailed five-year plans.

There is, of course, the matter of our remaining income and expenditure. Mission Council considers that we should be able to manage this area of our finances, making appropriate use of deficit budgeting, without resorting to significant changes in M&M contributions.

RESOLUTION 31

Human Sexuality - Affirmations

General Assembly commends to the church the affirmations set out in section 7 of the Human Sexuality Report 1999.

RESOLUTION 32

Human Sexuality - Challenges

General Assembly sets before the church the challenges set out in section 8.1 of the Human Sexuality Report 1999.

RESOLUTION 33

Human Sexuality - Diversity of Views

General Assembly, taking into consideration the variety of views held within the United Reformed Church on the matter of human sexuality, urges all members, congregations and councils to continue in love together, respecting this diversity of views, supporting each other through the pain and tension of our divisions, seeking the mind of Christ and working together to fulfil the purposes of God in the world.

RESOLUTION 34

Human Sexuality - Statement

In order to test the mind of the church regarding homosexuality, General Assembly asks the councils of the church to consider the Human Sexuality Report 1999 and to come to a view on the following statement:

In the context of the affirmations commended to the church in Resolution 31, the United Reformed Church affirms and welcomes people of homosexual orientation within the life of the church and society, but does not believe that there is a sufficiently clear mind within the church at this time to affirm the acceptability of homosexual practice.

RESOLUTION 35

Human Sexuality - Refers to Council

General Assembly:

- (i) invites local churches, district councils and synods to discuss the statement contained in Resolution 34;
- (ii) agrees that if any local church, district council or synod passes a resolution that *the statement be not accepted* by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such a body, notice of such a resolution must reach the General Secretary by 14th March 2000;
- (iii) agrees that if by 14th March 2000 such notice has been received from more than one third of local churches or more than one third of district councils or more than one third of synods, then the Assembly in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to accept the statement;
- (iv) agrees that if by 14th March 2000 such notice has not been received, a motion to accept the statement shall be put to the Annual Meeting of the Assembly in 2000, such motion requiring a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass.

RESOLUTION 36

Human Sexuality - Section O Process

General Assembly declares that the adoption of the statement contained in Resolution 34 would not of itself justify bringing a case under the Section O Process against a minister in a homosexual relationship (Basis, Schedule E, para. 2).

RESOLUTION 37

Human Sexuality - Further Work

General Assembly asks Mission Council to do further work on the consequences (as indicated in section 8.7 of the Human Sexuality Report 1999) of accepting the statement in Resolution 34 and to report to the next Annual Meeting of the Assembly.

RESOLUTION 38

Human Sexuality - 1997 Resolution 19

General Assembly deems that, with the reception of the reports requested under the terms of Resolution 18 of 1997, the process of further reflection and discussion set out in that resolution is complete, and therefore agrees that Resolution 19 of 1997 no longer applies.

RESOLUTION 39**Human Sexuality - Working Groups****General Assembly:**

- (i) commends to the church the report of the Working Group on the Nature of Biblical Authority for the life of the Church, and encourages local churches to deepen their studies of the Scriptures in an atmosphere of open listening in order for the study of Scripture to come more alive throughout the church;
- (ii) requests the Mission Council to consider the recommendations of the Working Group on the Authority of the General Assembly and Other Councils and to report to a future Assembly;
- (iii) commends to the church the report of the Working Group on Ordination and Human Sexuality as an aid to study in the continuing discussions;
- (iv) offers to the church the report of the Working Group on Wider Issues of Human Sexuality to assist in further reflection.

RESOLUTION 40**Human Sexuality - Thanks and Commendation**

General Assembly thanks the Core Group and Working Groups for their work, and commends to the United Reformed Church the Human Sexuality Report 1999.

The supporting text for these resolutions is to be found in the separate book circulated to all Assembly members under the title "Human Sexuality Report 1999".



***Committees
and
Task Groups***

***General Assembly
1999***

Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd D Alasdair Pratt* **Secretary:** *Mr Hilary Gunn*
Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly,
Convener of Local Arrangements Committee for the relevant year.

1 **The work of the committee**

The committee meets in the early autumn to review the Assembly just completed. At the year end general consideration is given to the forthcoming Assembly, particularly local arrangements. (A local representative is a member of the committee for the relevant period). In the spring detailed planning goes into the programme, the order of business, special presentations, other meetings, and arrangements for distinguished visitors.

2 **Forthcoming Assemblies**

At the Nottingham Assembly in 1998, it was agreed that for the years 2000-2002 the annual Assemblies should be residential. The decision to meet at Queen Mary and Westfield Colleges in the University of London, 1 - 4 July 2000 was confirmed at that time. This year we bring a resolution that in 2001, Assembly should meet in York from Monday, 16 July to Thursday, 19 July. Enquiries are being made about the possibility of meeting in Scotland in 2002.

3 **Patterns of Assembly beyond 2002**

The Nottingham Assembly also asked us to consider alternative arrangements for future meetings. It was not difficult to conclude that in the years since residential Assemblies have been held, representatives have found them to have considerable advantages over those in which many people have had to travel every day.

In most cases, cost has not been significantly different, while the convenience of being on one site has been to everyone's advantage. We therefore

propose that residential Assemblies should become the norm and that they be held over a long weekend. This proposal will have to be amended at a future date if the frequency and/or form of Assembly were to change. (See next paragraph).

4 There are related issues which will require wider discussion. These include whether or not Assembly continues to be held annually and, if so, in what form. If Assembly was not annual various practical considerations would arise including e.g. what to do about constitutional changes or what arrangements would be needed for the election and induction of Assembly Moderators. The size and representation also needs to be considered. Papers setting out the fuller implications of these and related matters have been sent to committees, synods and district councils for discussion. We plan to present a completed report in 2000.

5 **Voting Procedure for Moderator of Assembly**

Voting for Moderator of Assembly is conducted on the principle of the single transferable vote. It has been realised that a situation might arise in which, though the number of candidates is reduced to two, neither has actually achieved 50% or more of the total votes originally cast.

Resolution 43 proposes an addition to Rule 3(6) in Section C of The Manual in order to remove any uncertainty.

RESOLUTION 41

General Assembly 2001

Assembly agrees that General Assembly in 2001 will be held from 16 - 19 July at the University of York.

RESOLUTION 42

Residential Assemblies

Assembly agrees that from 2002 annual meetings of the General Assembly will be held residentially, over a long weekend.

RESOLUTION 43

Rules of Procedure

Assembly agrees to add the following sentence at the end of Rule 3(6) Rules of Procedure:

“If the process continues until only two names remain, the person who then has the larger number of votes shall be elected”.

Church and Society

This committee seeks to serve local churches, district councils and synods, ecumenical and appropriate secular bodies, in raising awareness, sharing information and encouraging reflection and action on matters of justice and peace, healing and reconciliation. It seeks to represent the concern of the church for such matters to government and others with power over the life of people in these islands, acting ecumenically wherever possible. It is responsible for *Commitment for Life* (including the 1% appeal) and will promote such other programmes as will help the above aims.

Committee Members

Convener: Ms Gabrielle Cox **Secretary:** Revd Peter Brain
Revd Hazel Barkham, Mr George Morton, Revd Michael Powell, Dr Sue Brisley (two vacancies).
attending by invitation: Mrs Sandra Ackroyd (Churches Commission for Racial Justice),
Revd Dr David Pickering (Environmental Issues Adviser), Revd Justine Wyatt (Consultant on AIDS/HIV).

1 Introduction

1.1 Sometimes the apostle Paul speaks very directly across the centuries to us in our very different world. Thus, to the Corinthians:

"Of course we all have 'knowledge', as you say. But knowledge gives self-importance - it is love that builds up a person. A person may imagine they have some kind of knowledge but still not understand anything, in the true sense of knowing." ¹

That was written about eating meat offered to idols - the Church and Society agenda in the first century! Yet it remains a valid commentary on contemporary human aspirations to technological achievement. Paul puts the same argument more sharply to the Romans: "Those of us who are strong must ... not just please ourselves but ... build up the common life." ²

1.2 The stakes are high and being raised all the time in the game of progress, which may turn out to be the endgame for humanity. In conversations and in our committee discussions during the year we have considered the complex debates over genetically modified foods and the cloning of living things, over rationing health care (postponing pain and death) by price or by merit, over the flexing of military muscle and the imposition of economic sanctions by the UN or the US, over the persistent threat of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, over opening shops round the clock and over the future of the family as the 'building block' of society. These and other potential crises, great and small, have kept us engaged. When offering comment, we have tried to keep in mind Paul's criterion of "what builds up the common life" as the indicator of that which is good.

1.3 Power, like money, is only a means to an end. The fact that something can be done has never been a justification for doing it - still less for saying that it should be done. This sense of danger is rising at the threshold of the new decade, century or millennium. The possibilities are multiplying and with them the hard choices. Christian comment on public life looks with Paul beyond the power of knowledge to the power of love, to the strength which does not coerce or grasp but serves.

1.4 This spirit of service with a vision of justice is still acknowledged in public life. We can appeal to it when making representations to governments and others. We do not "know better" than the experts, but we can point out where knowledge falls short of what is actually required for human life if the application of that knowledge does not promote justice and peace for everyone. We seek to strengthen Christians and others to love and share and serve in a world where these values face their strongest challenge ever.

1.5 *Personalia*

The committee has welcomed a new Convener, Gabrielle Cox, who directs the Low Pay Unit in Manchester, recently served on the Churches Commission on Unemployment and the Future of Work and is a regular on R4 Thought for the Day. We said farewell to Malcolm Johnson, convener, and Val Morrison, deputy convener, both of whom are still linked with items of our work. We have lost David Fraser through ill health, Janine Lawley whose period of service ended and Paul Franklin who moved on. We await a nominee from the Youth and Children's Work Committee.

1. I Corinthians 8, 1 - 2

2. Romans 15, 1 ff

2 New published work

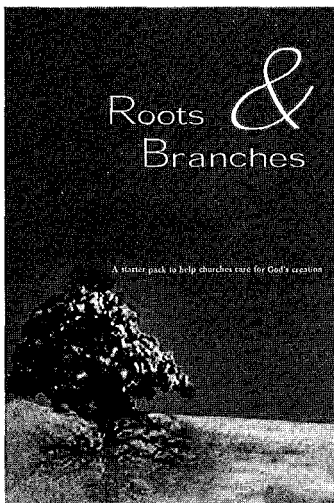
This year has seen two major programmes of work come to fruition in tangible form.

2.1 on Greening the Church

2.1.1 **'Roots and Branches'** was published at the turn of the year and widely welcomed within and beyond the church. As was made clear at last year's Assembly, this is intended to be a very user-friendly pack. There are sections for work with children and with young people, for finance and fabric folk as well as for shoppers and caterers, for worship and Bible study leaders. These are the 'branches' to bear fruit in the church over two or three years. The 'menu' style presentation makes this suitable for smaller as well as larger churches; everyone can try some of it. The 'branches' are complemented by the 'roots', sections of information and anthology with statistics entertainingly presented.

Our special thanks to Lynn Yeo, a temporary designer providing maternity cover, for the splendid cover image.

Charles Secrett, Director of 'Friends of the Earth' writes on the cover of the pack: *"It is all too easy to feel helpless ... Don't worry! There are many opportunities to change our world for the better ... it gives me much pleasure to introduce and commend the ... pack which is a tremendous resource."*



2.1.2 The compiler of *Roots and Branches*, David Pickering, has taken up an important ecumenical appointment with **'Going for Green'**, the government-backed body on environmental education and action, based at Wigan Pier. He will be their Churches Link Officer and also has in his job description responsibility to service the CCBI Environmental Issues Network.

2.1.3 The proposal accepted at the 1998 Assembly for an **energy audit** for local churches coincided with similar moves within the Methodist Church. This is now being taken forward together.

2.2 on Economics and Money

2.2.1 **For a Rainy Day** is the title of our exciting new video pack. The video is a 35 minute drama about real - rather 'ordinary' - people facing the impact of financial circumstances in their lives and relationships.



2.2.2 The accompanying booklets offer lots more ideas for events and different groups than will ever be used by a single church. This pack can be used in so many existing training events, such as spring schools, away days for elders and members, Windermere and Yardley events, youth weekends, autumn or Lent courses, etc. We have declared our aim to be "liberating people from their inhibitions about making the connections between money and faith". Well, maybe! This is a fine start, a brilliantly written, well acted and shrewdly edited piece of drama, with diverse and relevant supporting material.

2.2.3 We want to record our warm appreciation to the Laurence Wareing and production team at Pathway (Church of Scotland), to focus groups in Nottingham and Tonbridge, to the task group who agonised over the story line and characterisations and above all to Jan Natanson the writer.

2.2.4 The committee, after very careful discussion has decided to **stick with the economics theme** for our next major piece of work with paid advisers. A proposal is being worked up which will focus on a number of current economic and political topics. We shall begin by reviewing what work has recently been done or is currently being done on these issues in other churches and bodies.

One might go on to speculate whether resisting the dominant economic and political system is somewhat futile and that the churches, if we moved beyond negative comment towards offering alternatives, might find ourselves in the business of establishing oases or cells of opposition. Such an analysis and prognosis would be hotly debated on theological as well as economic grounds!

3.1 **Support:** It is good to be able to report a further increase in the **number of churches** actively participating in the programme, more than 460.

During the year we have been in touch with many local churches whose first instinct and practice is to support **Christian Aid**. The new Director, Daleep Mukarji, is proving a good friend of *Commitment for Life*, visiting our annual Advocates training day and spelling out in *REFORM* that *Commitment for Life* is the way for local URCs to support Christian Aid. It is a partnership. We depend on Christian Aid for several aspects of the programme as the principal ecumenical agency, notably to do with links to the overseas partners. Both Christian Aid and Church and Society still urge local churches to join *Commitment for Life*.

3.2 **Advocacy:** The work of the national Co-ordinator of Commitment for Life, Anne Martin, has kept our nation-wide **team of advocates** above 40 and ensured that they are backed up with regular briefings. Anne meets them in Synod groups for briefing and training. Advocates are encouraged to attend the annual ecumenical Swanwick consultation in May, which Clare Short will be attending in 1999.

Each participating church received four **mailings** in the year, with news of their partner body and campaign updates. The advocates visit participating and interested churches - and would be pleased to visit you!

3.3 **Campaigning:** The primary campaigning issue for *Commitment for Life* during the year has again been Jubilee 2000. (See 4.3 below)

We were pleased that the protests over the proposed **Multilateral Agreement on Investment** (MAI) have been successful, if only in the short term. Our campaigning partner, World Development Movement, has waged a fierce struggle against this MAI and warns that it has not gone away. We do need international regulation but not an agreement which represents the final triumph of multi-national business over vulnerable national governments.

3.4 **Materials:** Only a few new items are being produced in 1999, compared with 1998 and 2000. We have produced a new general poster and a handbook on what participating in *Commitment for Life* means for a local church, plus leaflets on debt, New Start, etc. and regular updates and newsletters.

3.5 **Partners:** Around two-thirds of participating churches have chosen to link with one of the four overseas partners. The *Commitment for Life* materials are all based on these links. Partnership of this kind is meant to help a church identify with those working for development in a very different context without slipping into a patronising attitude towards them, which sadly characterises some twinning schemes. In 1998 we ceased our direct connection with the Deccan Development Society in India, one of the original partners. We now have links with *Olodum* in Brazil, with *Silveira House* in Zimbabwe, with *PARC*, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, and with *CCDB*, the Christian Commission on Development, Bangladesh.

These links have been strengthened during the year by **personal visits** to Zimbabwe, Palestine and Bangladesh by URC representatives. These were reported to participating churches and in *REFORM*.

It is important that our four partner bodies are to be included in the exchange visits under the strategic 'Belonging to the World Church' programme.

3.6 **Review:** We anticipate bringing an encouraging resolution to Assembly in 2000 when we are due to seek a fresh mandate for *Commitment for Life* and consider any changes to the programme. To assist this process we have appointed Sara Burns, a freelance specialist, to conduct a **minor review** of Commitment for Life during 1999.

The *Commitment for Life* sub-committee, chaired by David Batchelor, monitors progress on behalf of Church and Society and will be responsible for drafting any proposals for modifications.

3.7 **Funds:** 1998 income for *Commitment for Life* came to over £340k, a **significant increase** on £310k in 1997. An outline of how this money was disbursed was sent to participating churches in January. A more detailed paper is available. We kept the WDM grant at 10% of the income and were able to find £5k for Jubilee 2000 as well as nearly £9k for One World Week. We registered as the United Reformed Church to handle **Millennium Gift Aid** and sent details to participating churches. As income rises, we keep advocacy costs down, releasing more for campaigning and educational bodies. Core administration of the programme by Church and Society is **not** charged against *Commitment for Life*.

4 Collaborating for the Kingdom

Each year Church and Society reports on work done by joint action in which we play a full part.

4.1 *Working with bodies linked with the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.*

4.1.1 Commitment for Life would not run at all without the essential link with **Christian Aid** (see above). The General Secretary has been appointed to the Christian Aid Board, replacing Revd Sandra Dears; this should mean even closer links in future.

4.1.2 The **Churches Human Rights Forum** has latterly begun work, jointly with another body which we support, **CCADD (Christian Approaches to Defence and Disarmament)**, looking again at the morality of sanctions especially against Iraq and extending this to consider the parameters of coercion that are possible and appropriate for the international community in such cases. We thank Alan Hart for his period of service on CHURF.

4.1.3 The **Churches Peace Forum** held a meeting in Belfast during the year; Malcolm Compston reported to the committee on this and related matters, not least the growing concern at the progress of the 'peace process' in the Middle East; this is raised in a separate resolution.

An initial meeting of what may become a URC Peace Fellowship was held on March 4 in response to an invitation in *REFORM*. There will be an event for all interested, probably in the autumn.

4.1.4 The **Environmental Issues Network** will take on a new lease of life with David Pickering able to assist in his new post (see above). EIN has circulated papers from its members, including two from Donald Bruce (Society, Religion and Technology project of the Church of Scotland) on cloning and genetic engineering. Donald's book on these topics (*'Engineering Genesis'*) will be the standard Christian commentary for some years.

4.1.5 The URC representative on the **Churches Commission for Racial Justice**, currently Sandra Ackroyd, attends our committee and brings news of their work. We are bringing a resolution to encourage greater awareness of racial justice issues within the churches.

4.2 The **Free Churches' Council Education Committee** continues to provide the essential forum on education policy. During the year responses have been made to government on several issues, including school exclusions, which the committee discussed with Graham Hanscomb our representative on the FCC Education Executive.

4.3 We have continued to promote the **Jubilee 2000 coalition campaign** which at time of writing was busy planning for the Cologne G8 summit in a

fairly hopeful mood. A verbal report will be made to Assembly. *REFORM* offers updates on the campaign as, gratifyingly, does the mainstream media.

4.4 *Working with other Assembly committees.*

4.4.1 **Churches Together for Families** (established by Churches Together in England) has been active. Our representative is Stephen Lewis. Through its network the government Consultation Document 'Supporting Families' has been discussed. Church and Society responded to this Document. We share the responsibility for linking with CTF with Youth and Children's Work Committee.

CTF arranged a consultation on corporal punishment (see separate resolution).

4.4.2 Attendance at the **International Affairs Liaison Group** of CCBI is shared between this Committee's secretary and the Secretary for International Relations on behalf of the Ecumenical Committee. The IALG agenda is comprehensive(!) but the meetings are usually self-disciplined.

The IALG held a consultation in Belfast and met with several representatives of the Irish churches.

Inevitably we give priority to areas of the world where we have a direct link as URC. But we are inevitably and properly drawn in to discussion of other areas where links are not so strong, such as the Balkans, Sudan or central America.

4.4.3 Linking with and funding the group of URC **Industrial Missioners** is shared between this committee and Ministries. Our presence in the field, through some 'special category' ministers and part-time IM staff, is probably more effective than that of other denominations. Each year a lively report is prepared for widespread distribution; in 1998 this took the form of a worship resource which was sent to every minister and lay preacher. In these ways the authenticity of IM as necessary Christian ministry for our time is affirmed.

4.4.4 The **work on ageing and the elderly** is shared between this committee and Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness (see also their report). A booklet of worship material on this theme for 1999, the UN *International Year for Older Persons*, was compiled by Basil Bridge and distributed to all URC worship leaders. The take-up of the 'Debate of the Age' which featured at the 1998 Assembly has been rather slow, though the churches' paper has been widely distributed and used. The other provisions of the 1998 Assembly resolution are in hand.

4.5 Our continuing working group on **HIV and AIDS**, chaired by John Humphreys, has met for discussion, e.g. of end-of-life issues, and to support Justine Wyatt who acts as our consultant in this field on a day-a-week basis. Material is available to help churches mark World AIDS Day.

RESOLUTION 44**Children Are Unbeatable**

Assembly, noting the statement of aims of the 'Children are Unbeatable' Alliance, agrees that the United Reformed Church become a member of the Alliance.

1 Current law tolerates what are in effect assaults on children by allowing the common law defence of "reasonable chastisement". This permits violence which would be illegal if directed at an adult. Challenging routine violence to children is as important as the challenge to routine violence against women was in improving women's status.

2 In a series of recent cases the courts have acquitted parents who admitted hitting their children with sticks, belts and other implements, causing bruising and injury and who used the defence of "reasonable chastisement". Recent research, commissioned by the Department of Health, involving interviews with over 500 families, found that 15% of the mothers reported using "severe" physical punishment and almost a quarter of 7 year olds had experienced severe punishment. A fifth of the children had been hit with an implement.

3 In September 1998 the European Court of Human Rights found that the repeated beating of a young English boy by his stepfather constituted illegal "inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". The stepfather had been acquitted in a UK court, using the "reasonable chastisement" defence. In response to this case a new Alliance was formed with the aims set out below. Their basic point is that full legal reform is needed to meet the UK's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments.

4 Among organisations and professions which work most closely with children there is almost unanimity of opposition to all forms of physical abuse and punishment. Over 200 have joined the new Alliance. But legal reform against corporal punishment is not yet the popular view. The opposition, led by the Family Education Trust, speaks of 'criminalising parents' who smack. In an article in the Catholic Herald, their spokesperson Lynette Burrows wrote of "the insufferably patronising

argument used by the activists ... that parents are too stupid to change their ideas in the light of experience". However, the Catholic Children's Society has been leading the campaign for legal reform and the Alliance argues that "trivial assaults between adults never reach the courts and nor would trivial assaults on children".

The statement of the aims of the Alliance.

"The organisations listed below welcome the Government's intention to clarify the law on parental discipline. The traditional defence of "reasonable chastisement" works against the aims which we and the Government share: the encouragement of positive parental discipline in all families and assurance of effective child protection in the few cases where it is needed.

We believe that it is wrong and impracticable to seek to define acceptable forms of corporal punishment of children. Such an exercise is unjust. Hitting children is a lesson in bad behaviour.

Removing the defence of "reasonable chastisement" and thus giving children in their homes and in all other settings the equal protection under the law on assault is the only just, moral and safe way to clarify the law.

While technically this would criminalise any assault on a child, trivial assaults, like trivial assaults between adults, would not be prosecuted. It would on the other hand ease prosecution in serious cases. It would eliminate the current dangerous confusion over what is acceptable and provide a clear basis for child protection.

There is ample evidence from other countries to show that full legal reform, coupled with the promotion of effective means of positive discipline, works rapidly to reduce reliance on corporal punishment and reduces the need for prosecutions and other formal interventions in families. Using positive forms of discipline reduces stress and improves relationships between children, their parents and other carers."

RESOLUTION 45**The Middle East**

Assembly, noting the continuing military action around the Gulf and the lack of progress within the Israeli - Palestinian negotiations, and in renewing its concern for the region:

- a) affirms that Jerusalem, a thrice-holy city, should be accessible to the adherents of the three monotheistic faiths and believes that any settlement of the territorial claims of Palestinians and Israelis should honour the holiness and wholeness of the city as a shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship;**
- b) looks for a fresh start to meaningful negotiations following the General Election in Israel and developments around May 4, and invites the British government to press with its EU partners for a clear role under the auspices of the United Nations in the peace process;**
- c) deplores the systematic confiscation of identification cards (and consequent loss of right of residency) from increasing numbers of Palestinian Jerusalemites, and continuing human rights abuses both by Israeli and Palestinian security forces and the evidence of corruption and political infighting within the Palestinian leadership;**
- d) questions the assumptions on which British forces are engaged in bombing targets in Iraq and urges the British government and its EU partners, through the United Nations, to apply a more coherent and comprehensive foreign and defence policy vis-à-vis the Middle East;**
- e) supports the calls being made for a fundamental revision of the sanctions currently in force against Iraq and regrets the leading involvement of British companies in the construction of the Ilusu dam in Turkey;**
- f) welcomes the trend for pilgrimage groups to the Holy Land, including the representative URC group travelling next winter as part of the Pilgrim 2000 programme to make time for deliberate encounters with indigenous Christians; AND**
- g) authorises the Assembly officers to send Christian greetings, together with a copy of this resolution, to the church leaders in Jerusalem, assuring them of the prayers of the United Reformed Church for them individually and collectively, especially during this period of the millennium.**

1 In bringing this lengthy and composite resolution, we are inviting Assembly to echo what our ecumenical partners have been saying about the continuing troubles in this region during the past year, at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in the Middle East Council of Churches and at a succession of meetings under the auspices of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. This resolution takes forward the statement of the General Assembly in Resolution 18 of 1995.

2.1 Clauses a) - c) address Palestinian - Israeli relations. The words of clause a) are derived from the WCC agreed four-page statement inviting all Christians with the Psalmist to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem", the focus of three faiths and two nations. It also echoes the unequivocal statement of the Roman Catholic bishops' Symposium held in Jerusalem last October, adopted by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

2.2 On clause b), at the time of writing it was not clear what any new Israeli government might be mandated to do nor whether President Arafat would declare a state on May 4, the date indicated in the Oslo Accords. Whatever transpires we must pray for some movement forward towards a just peace. However we

note that, because the USA is so closely allied with the state of Israel, it cannot alone act as peace-maker; this leaves space for the UN and the EU to raise their involvement.

2.3 The specific matter of residents' permits was raised in a joint letter from Jerusalem church leaders last October. They wrote: "Hard-working and peace-seeking Christians are being forced out of the city." Clause c) acknowledges breaches of human rights all round and pleads for less violence and abuse of power and privilege.

3.1 Clauses d) and e) offer comment on Iraq, on the bombing and the sanctions. Bishop Riah (Anglican) in Jerusalem expressed outrage at the bombing known as 'Desert Fox', which he called "a senseless violation of human rights ... and an embarrassment among fellow Christians" during Advent and in the run-up to Ramadan. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox and Free Church leaders have all protested, as have the ecumenical bodies to which the URC belongs. No clear statement of military or political objectives has ever been publicly given for Desert Fox, still less for the continuing strikes on military and quasi-military targets. They are far from ensuring the return and effective work of UNSCOM, the original cease-fire condition. We

believe that it is not in British interests nor in the interest of long-term stability in the region to follow the American lead so closely and to describe such action as "putting Saddam back in his cage" even though his regime is so cruel. Perceived inconsistency in the application of UN resolutions about Iraq and Israel has generated considerable resentment and has already been indirectly responsible for some reprisals.

3.2 As to economic sanctions against Iraq, intended to reinforce the 1991 cease-fire, we listen to a plea from the Middle East Council of Churches: "Even as we continue to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Iraq we must ask ourselves and the global community, 'when will this end?'" UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, while noting that mandatory sanctions enable the UN "to bring pressure upon the target without recourse to military force", has acknowledged "the need to address the negative effects of such sanctions on vulnerable civilian populations" and for nations to "search for ways to render sanctions a less blunt and more effective instrument". We therefore call not for the simple lifting of sanctions but for radical changes in their application.

3.3 It is worth noting the economic, environmental and political risks involved in the building, 40 miles from the Turkish / Iraqi / Syrian border a £1 bn dam which will, among other effects, displace 20,000 Kurdish people and aggravate their plight still further. The World Bank, no less, refused to back this project, not least

because it violates UN rules aimed at preventing border disputes between states that share water resources. The dam will also flood a key archaeological site. But a British-led consortium is, at time of writing, seeking financial underwriting from the British government (Export Credit Guarantee Department) for their involvement. Environmentalists are most vocal in opposition, but all who seek the stability and peace of the Middle East will be alarmed at this development.

4.1 In clause f) we renew the call for those visiting the holy land to do more than view the 'dead stones' but to meet some of the 'living stones' also. This encounter is what can transform tourism into pilgrimage. It is encouraging that a growing number of meetings are now arranged for visiting groups with representatives of the indigenous Christian community. The programme 'Pilgrim 2000' is an ecumenical response to the invitation from Bishop Riah of Jerusalem primarily to his fellow-Anglicans. The URC group, comprising over 100 people from every Synod, including young people, will have much to share on their return next March.

4.2 Finally, it seems right to offer our greetings to the church leaders of the Holy Land who have so much to bear, not least the legacy of centuries of division which slowly they are beginning to address. Faced with the peculiar impact of millions of extra visitors because of the millennium, they and their people deserve our sympathy and need our prayers.

RESOLUTION 46

Racial Justice

Assembly, noting the findings of the Enquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence:

- a) urges every local congregation to mark Racial Justice Sunday (in 1999 September 12) as agreed by the Church Representatives' Meeting of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and draws attention to the material for that Sunday published by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice;**
- b) acknowledging that racism exists within the church, urges the officers of local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods to give appropriate opportunity for discussion of these matters during 1999 / 2000;**
- c) urges local churches to consider issues of racial justice arising in the communities in which they are situated and to offer support to those striving for racial justice in local situations.**

1 The Report of the Enquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence has prompted us to seek three commitments from the Assembly on behalf of the United Reformed Church. They have to do with what is sometimes called 'institutional racism'. In his Report, Sir William Macpherson defines it as *"the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people"*.

2 To describe an institution as racist is not to describe all those who belong to it as racists. Let the police service examine and reform itself with the help of civil society; it is time to press the long-standing arguments for greater public accountability. But we should look to the "beam in our own eye". To describe the church as racist is not to impugn the sincerity of the majority of Christians who as individuals do try to avoid prejudice in their attitudes and actions, even though there may well be some who feel that they have personal cause to repent.

3 But, and there is a necessary 'but', such a Report does not leave the church, including the United Reformed Church, unchallenged. It means that our institution, too, must face Sir William's definition in the light of the gospel and reflect on it as honestly as we can. We should then ask ourselves why so few black and ethnic minority church members become elders, attend Synods, Mission

Council and Assembly, hold responsible leadership positions as Synod or Assembly officers or conveners, serve as counsellors or trainers or trustees etc. And then we should ask ourselves a second time whether the answers so often given to those questions are the best we can do.

4 It will be time in 2000 for the major report arising from the ministry among us of Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper to be brought to Assembly with practical proposals. But in the meantime we can resolve to respond as churches to the Macpherson Enquiry. First we should pray together, especially at the time appointed by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, using the material prepared by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice. Second, we should allow time in meetings at local, District or Synod level to meet with one or two of the Provincial racial justice advocates who are being recruited and trained by Marjorie during these years; they will come not with a message of guilt but of grace, not to brow-beat but to open a few eyes and a few doors to what is and what might be.

5 We include the third clause, without being self-righteous and remaining open to criticism, so that we can also resolve to associate ourselves in each locality with those who are victims of racism and those who are struggling to tackle it. The actions that might follow upon this resolution cannot be predicted nor imposed from outside. But a loving Christian church will get alongside those who are suffering, support them in their troubles and join them in their campaigning.

Communications and Editorial

This committee is responsible for the setting and maintenance of standards of all publications. It acts as the Editorial and Management Board of REFORM, and is responsible for media relations.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Christopher Wright **Secretary:** Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd David Coleman, Mrs Pat Stannard, Revd Peter Moth, Ms Kirsty Thorpe, Mr John East,
Mr Richard Lathaen, Revd Michael Forster, Revd Paul Brewerton and Revd Roger Hall

1 Publications Board

1.1 The Publications Board meets bimonthly to advise on all matters concerning publications of the General Assembly and its committees, and oversees all matters relating to publishing and to help all committees procedural guidelines have been produced.

1.2 In addition to the annual publications (Year Book, Diary and Prayer Handbook) seven new books and 8 new leaflets have been published since the last General Assembly. The booklet *Refreshing the Elders Meeting* has now been reprinted.

1.3 It is hoped to have several new titles published in time of the General Assembly 1999, among these are *Wholly Worship*, the all age worship resource being launched by the Youth and Children's Work Committee; *Night Watches* by Jennifer Martin, intended for those leading and taking part in quiet days and retreats; *The Love that Heals* by David Dale; P T Forsyth - *Theologian for a New Millennium* - the papers given at a consultation at the Windermere Centre and edited by Professor Alan Sell, together with the first of a series of reprints of the major works of P T Forsyth.

1.4 Future publications planned are an anthology of selected material from Prayer Handbooks 1986-1996 and a new compilation of Prayers for use in the Vestry, Elders and Church Meetings and similar occasions. It is intended that these titles will be published in time for General Assembly 2000.

1.5 Sales of the annual publications continue to be high.

1.6 A new catalogue was published in January 1999 and sent to all ministers, church secretaries, lay preachers and students.

2 URC Bookshop and Distribution

2.1 The relocated bookshop has been well received and enables a much more effective display.

2.2 The bookshop continues to provide material for Province Days, Synods and other special events, including the General Assembly where, in 1998, record sales were achieved.

2.3 The URC again provided the bookstall at the Assembly of the Scottish Congregational Church in St Andrews.

2.4 The discount scheme for ministers and students has now been extended to include nationally accredited lay preachers. The task of finding the more obscure titles requested presents a challenge which is generally met successfully.

2.5 The range of material and number of titles stocked continues to grow. A link has been established with a distribution centre in the USA which has most proved to be very effective and resulted in a speedy response to orders which have, in the past, caused difficulties.

2.6 The freewill offering envelope scheme operated in conjunction with John Thomlinson of Glasgow continues despite some difficulties with the manufacturer's machinery.

2.7 The target of turning all orders around in 48 hours is generally being met.

2.8 The Bookshop and distribution operation operates with a minimum of staff. Customers are asked to take this into consideration when placing orders and co-operate with the 'cash with order system' whenever possible.

3 Design and In House Printing

The production of well-designed material is being maintained, and systems are being consistently revised and upgraded.

4 Reform

4.1 *Reform* continues to act as the most widely accessible forum for the exchange of views and information within the Church. Its readership as a proportion of its potential audience continues to exceed that of similar publications within other denominations and the gradual process of redesign during the past year has been well received. Inevitably, the divisions over the issue of Resolution 19 have had their impact on *Reform*. The Editor's decision not to truncate discussion on the issue of human sexuality in advance of the discussion at this year's Assembly has been welcomed by some, just as it has been distressing or distasteful to others.

4.2 After three years in which circulation has been maintained in the face of a decline in the overall membership of the Church, preliminary indications are that this year will see a small fall in sales, though it may be anticipated that should the union of the United Reformed Church with the Scottish Congregational Church go ahead, new readers will be added north of the border.

4.3 It is a matter of continuing concern to the Committee that sales at the local level depend so heavily on the enthusiasm of individual ministers, elders and, most particularly, *Reform* distributors. Huge variations in the level of orders between churches of similar social profile and theological outlook suggest that with proper advocacy considerable extra sales could be achieved, with the attendant possibility of improving the magazine further.

5 Articles of the Reformed Faith

The introduction in 1997 of *Articles* (edited by Graham Cook) has been well received and has gained a wide readership. New subscribers are always welcome and sample copies will be available at Assembly.

6 URC Web Site

6.1 The URC Web site is now under more active development with the provision of a relatively small allocation of staffing. While maintaining a healthy realism over the importance of the site in the current

situation, when regular Internet access is still a privilege of the minority, the Committee is determined to ensure that the Church is not left behind as the medium increases in importance.

6.2 The three strategic goals of the site are:

- To act as an introduction to the life and work of the Church for those who are unfamiliar to the URC;
- To increase the flow of communication within the Church, in particular the ability of Assembly Committees to advocate their work to members and local churches;
- To act as a repository for authoritative up-to-date versions of documents which are required by ministers, officers and members at the local level.

7 Press and PR

7.1 Realism requires the recognition that, for a combination of reasons, the national media shows seasoned indifference to the affairs of a denomination the size of the URC. Press releases seldom find a place in the national media though they are often taken up in the religious press. The Committee continues, however, to place issues before the media and to search for ways in which to attract positive attention, including co-operation with programme-makers on the provision of appropriate spokespersons on a variety of themes.

7.2 A recent consultation on communication within the church and with the wider society resulted in a variety of proposals which are being actively pursued.

7.3 One service which is very much valued, though necessarily less publicised, is advice to those who find themselves in situations in which media coverage might reflect badly on the Church. The Press Officer is always available in such circumstances to advise on procedures, the best response to press enquiries and, if necessary, to help draft appropriate press releases. The Committee would encourage those who find themselves - or suspect that they *may* find themselves - in such a situation to consult with the Press Officer at Church House at the earliest possible opportunity. Professional training in dealing with the media is also offered to office holders such as Moderators of Synods and continues to be valued by its recipients.

8 Copyright

The number of local congregations participating in the URC/Christian Copyright Licensing Scheme is now close to 1100. The scheme allows a discount of 20% on a 'words only' licence. A significant number of churches have extended their licence to cover music as well. The CCL are now hoping to be able to offer a further service by enlarging the scheme to cover performing rights. The Communications and Editorial Office is still approached several times each week for help in clearing permission and general information.

9 Christian Resources Exhibition

The URC stand at the 1998 exhibitions at Esher and Birmingham was much appreciated. The theme for the 1999 exhibitions at Esher and Glasgow will be *Better Together*.

10 Ecumenical Links

10.1 Churches Advertising Network

Following the resolution to General Assembly 1998 the URC continues to play a major part in the Churches Advertising Network.

10.2 Churches Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting

The Revd Peter Moth continues to represent the URC at meeting of the Council. At the CACLB Conference held at Swanwick in June 1998 there were 8 URC representatives and a number of people have expressed an interest in attending 1999.

10.3 Media Awareness Project

The Secretary continues as a member of the project.

10.4 Church Publishing Network

The network continues to meet biannually and the Secretary will become Convener of the group in June 1999.

11 Staff

The autumn of 1998 saw several staff changes particularly in the bookshop and *Reform* areas.

12 Convener

Chris Wright has served the Communications and Editorial Committee since 1987, first as member and from 1990 as Convener. He has used his considerable knowledge and skill to help the committee to find new ways forward. We are grateful to him for his service to the United Reformed Church and also for the many ways in which he has helped and supported the staff working in the Communications Office.

RESOLUTION 47**Communication Strategy**

Assembly notes the action strategy being developed by the Communications and Editorial Committee for a five year programme as printed in the Book of Reports and commends it for implementation at every level of the Church.

The Committee noting that :

- a) communication needs to be between members and churches and every level of structure of the Church and
- b) there is a need to raise the profile of the United Reformed Church nationally, and in the local community and to attract people into the faith.

adopts the following strategy:

- 1.1 To encourage all local churches to see communication as the heart of their life in proclaiming the faith, and to strive for high standards at all times, whether it be in reporting to church meeting, writing for the church magazine or using local media as a tool for mission.
- 1.2 To offer each local church the opportunity to join in a new strategy for communication being developed through a five-year rolling programme, providing resources that will be regularly updated and expanded.
- 1.3 To assist all committees of the United Reformed Church, synod and district to communicate their work effectively.
- 1.4 To encourage every local congregation to undertake an audit of its communication techniques.
- 1.5 To provide a training programme aimed at training new communication trainers and drawing on the expertise already available in other training programmes.
- 1.6 To offer each local church a well designed corporate logo, to be available free of charge, for use on stationary, notice boards, publications etc.
- 1.7 To continue to develop relationships with partner churches and to support and learn from each other.

Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

The purpose of the Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness Committee is:
to enable the local church to capture the vision of God's mission for itself and to plan its life accordingly
to encourage growth in faith among people of all ages
to support the work of elders and the work of district council in its oversight of the local church
to encourage the local church to share the gospel and to participate ecumenically in evangelism
to challenge members in their stewardship and witness
to stimulate district councils and synods in the development of their own strategies for mission
to support the work of the Windermere Centre and the Rural Consultant

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Elizabeth Caswell* **Secretary:** *Revd John Steele*

Convener of Stewardship Sub-committee: *Revd Julian Macro*

Mrs Jean Antcliffe, Mrs Tina Rook, Mr David Williams, Revds Bob Day, David Tatem and Peter Ball.

1 The Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee concludes at this Assembly the first four years of its life. During that time it has changed its remit, and is in process of changing it again; it has also changed staff secretary twice.

1.1 We said farewell in March to **Bill Wright**, whose ten years as an advocate for stewardship has led many local churches to a growing vision of their mission and of the resources available to the task. His hard work and passion, particularly in the introduction of TRIO, GEM and Vision workshops, has enabled many churches and individual members to respond more fully to God's generosity to us in Christ. We thank him, and wish him well in the pastorate, which he will now serve.

1.2 It is a delight to welcome as his successor **John Steele**. John begins his new ministry at a time of considerable change. We pray for him as he helps to shape the mission agenda of the Church, and assure him of our support.

1.3 At this Assembly, we bid farewell to **Elizabeth Caswell** and **David Tatem**, the last of the original committee members, and to our Youth & Children's Work representative, **Jean Antcliffe**. We thank them all for the contributions they have made. In particular, our special thanks to **Elizabeth**, whose term of service as Convener comes to an end. She has found time in the busy life of a provincial moderator to exercise robust leadership of the committee, and we have benefited from her wisdom and clear thinking.

1.4 It has been good to welcome **Peter Ball** and **David Williams** as new committee members, and we look forward to welcoming **Frank Beattie** from Sheffield as our new Convener from this Assembly.

2 We hope it will be the case that the General Assembly will re-name the committee. Its cumbersome title has not been helpful, and the heading **Life and Witness** we believe expresses the dynamic of the committee's purpose more adequately.

2.1 In 1998 the committee commended to the church its work on **Evangelism**, and was encouraged by the warm reception that this report received. But passing resolutions is the easy part: engaging with the ideas and suggestions for action is an ongoing task that we urge the churches to embrace.

2.1.1 One particular emphasis of the report was on the need for each of us to have confidence in the gospel, and a readiness to bear witness. The reluctance, or inability, of Christians to speak simply to other people about their faith in Jesus Christ needs to be addressed. The committee accepts the task of encouraging the enabling of evangelism, but recognises that it is in the local context that the effective work on this will happen. We therefore continue to encourage synods to provide mission/evangelism enablers to work alongside ministers and congregations.

2.1.2 The staff secretary is preparing resources to help local churches to apply for funding for **mission projects**. Churches may be hindered from seeking help by not knowing what is available, or by not knowing what information is required by those who make grants. We hope to rectify this situation.

2.2 John Steele recently attended ecumenical discussions about a College of Evangelists.

2.2.1 Our ecumenical partners in the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist churches are clearly further on in their thinking than we are, but much in these continuing discussions will be of future relevance to us. The URC's interest in Anglican proposals for the setting up of a national College of Evangelists may have been somewhat premature, but it is interesting to note that a fellowship is envisaged rather than a place, akin in some ways to the College of Preachers. The Baptist Union accredits evangelists and is talking about the recognition of ministers and evangelists as distinct ministries in their own right. The numbers of 'serving evangelists' at local, circuit or district levels in Methodism have grown, and, like ourselves, District Mission or Evangelism Enablers are being introduced.

2.2.2 Again like ourselves, Methodism is developing local church leadership (see 4.1) with discussions on gifts and callings, appropriate training and recognition. Within this flexibility of ministry, those with specific gifts as 'evangelists' might be more easily identified. Like the 'meter-reading evangelist' we heard of, shining more than his torch into the dark corners of people's lives! There is need for vision and imagination when thinking about what it means to be an evangelist. We need to guard against the danger of our notions being 'church focussed' rather than 'world focussed'.

2.2.3 It was agreed that as our churches discover together about the role and place of evangelists, it is important for there to be a core of principles of good practice. These include the testing of a sense of call, training, definition of the role, accountability, and recognition by the church. As the URC's local leadership discussions continue, it is vital that such principles guide our thinking, and that evangelists find their acknowledged place in the life of our church.

3 **Witness** embraces not only the communication of the good news in words, but also the church's engagement with its local community in life-affirming action. This may be through the work of individuals in their daily lives, or through the shared commitment of a congregation as it responds to the world of which it is part.

3.1 We are delighted that significant funding will be available through CWM (if current mission proposals before Assembly are agreed) for community projects. John Steele will again be the first point of contact for churches wishing to apply for financial help for work in the local community.

3.2 The committee will work hard to keep before the Church this dual understanding of witness as **word** and **action**, and to channel the resources of training and finance to those places which would benefit from help from the wider church.

3.2.1 It would be of benefit to others if churches involved in effective schemes of outreach would share their experience: the committee's Web-site would be one way of doing this. We thank **Gillian Bobbett** for the time she has given to setting this up.

4 Guidelines published last year to help **Interim Moderators** and **Elders Meetings** have been well received; we are hoping that a similar piece of work aimed at encouraging **Church Meetings** will be available in due course.

4.1 A newer ministry among us is that of **Local Leadership**. John Steele shared with Christine Craven (Ministries) and Lesley Husselbee (Training) in organising a two-day consultation with representatives from the synods to explore the consequences of last year's Assembly decisions. The programme adopted in Mersey Province was looked at in detail. There is ongoing work between the committees that will lead to a more detailed outworking of the agreed guidelines.

5 There has also been continuing co-operation with the Church and Society Committee on the subject of **ageing**. In this **International Year of the Older Person** we are pleased to offer the church suggestions for worship materials. The leaflet, compiled by Basil Bridge and called 'Celebrating the Gift of Years', was made available to all ministers and lay preachers, and we thank him for his work. There will be a theological colloquy on the spiritual aspects of ageing at Windermere this autumn, to be chaired by **Raymond Clarke**, whom we thank for initiating the thinking on this subject within the United Reformed Church.

6 The work of the **Windermere Centre** has continued to flourish:

6.1.1 The Windermere Centre continues to grow in volume, diversity, facilities and influence. The 1997 internal review of the organisation and staffing of the Centre has continued to benefit the Centre and its users. Our foresight in appointing a Locum Director will pay off as the Centre Director assumes his office as Moderator of General Assembly. We congratulate Peter on his reappointment as Centre Director and look forward to his re-invigorated return to us!

6.1.2 Occupancy has once again increased, with over 2000 people travelling to us last year, and confirming that Windermere is the place to be! Financial targets were again met. Further rooms were converted to provide en-suite facilities, and more improved facilities are provided for the physically disadvantaged. Office accommodation has been expanded without losing any guest rooms.

6.1.3 The earlier work by the Director and the Advisory Group on a Development Plan for the Centre's second decade is leading to some exciting possibilities. These are now being followed up in some detail in close co-operation with our Windermere United Reformed Church. The Centre is committed to helping to equip congregations and their members to minister effectively to and with our rapidly changing communities and society, and to provide a place for reflection, retreat, and recreation. This is the context in which new ways of expressing mission locally and nationally are being explored against the background of theological reflection and personal ministry, which are also part of the Centre programme.

6.1.4 We need to say 'thank you' to many people - our staff, our Contact people, our leaders and visitors, our advisers, those who so generously provide donations to the Hannah Fund to assist some visitors in coming to the Centre. We do so warmly - more warmly than we can express in words.

6.2 The committee wishes **Peter McIntosh** well during this demanding year as Assembly Moderator.

7 Forum continues to make a valuable contribution to our life:

7.1 Another successful conference was held in August 1998, with the theme of 'Taking the Strain'. The theme leader, Janet Wootton, ably led the conference by showing how the bible fits in with the stresses and strains of everyday life. Almost 220 people enjoyed a week which included serious discussion as well as time to relax - sport and walks, disco and folk dancing, quiz, Songs of Praise and the time to sit and chat to friends old and new. This year's conference (21-27 August) is celebrating 50 years since the founding of Forum as well as looking towards the Millennium, and has the theme 'Going for Go(l)d', led by Rev Murdoch MacKenzie. Bookings are already high, and it is possible that a waiting list will have to be put into effect. (Contact Jen Sturtridge, The Parsonage, Parsonage Street, Dursley, GL11 4BJ for more details.)

8 At the end of this year we shall bid farewell to the **Revd Michael Cruchley**. Michael has served both the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church as **Rural Consultant**, building up considerable knowledge and expertise. He has been an energetic and committed colleague, and we pray for him as he moves to a new sphere of ministry. He writes:

8.1 Ecumenical The work of the Churches Rural Group, a co-ordinating group of Churches Together in England but which has members from Scotland and Wales as well, continues to develop. At the beginning of 1999 the group made a submission to the Government as it started to prepare yet another White Paper on the Countryside. The group has also welcomed the principle of the Food Standards Agency and will watch its development with great interest. The group has also shared the response of the Arthur Rank Centre to the appeal for a day of prayer for the farming community. This will have taken place by the time of Assembly, but Rogation Sunday each year is an important opportunity for all of us to think of, and pray for those who are involved in agriculture and horticulture world-wide as they provide of our food.

8.2 Farming The past year has been a very difficult one for those involved in farming, with very severe decline in real income for most of them. The need for careful pastoral care for all those who are affected by the crisis has seldom been greater,

8.3 International In my report last year I mentioned the Conference to be held in August concerning Rural Culture and Spirituality. We were delighted to have a visit at the Conference from our Moderator, Mrs Wilma Frew. Over 100 participants shared in the Conference and there is a report available (at the cost of £6.50) from the Arthur Rank Centre. The Conference also launched the International Rural Church Ecumenical Association (yes, we are working on a different name!) to enable the sharing of insights and expertise across the World. I have been appointed as its first Secretary, and my visit on behalf of the U R C. to the C.W.M. Education in Mission School on engaging the church in mission in a rural context has been most helpful in extending this network.

8.4 Briefing As in recent years, it is my intention to produce a briefing paper on the prospects for Harvest 1999. It will be available in late August - it cannot be produced earlier because I depend on knowing how the harvest actually is rather than what it is thought it might be! Several people have asked for earlier publication, but that is impossible if the facts are to be taken into account! District Secretaries will be sent copies.

8.5 Mission As I come to the end of my time as Rural Consultant I reflect that there are those within our churches who grasp the concept of mission to smaller, and usually definable, communities. Such mission does make demands of time and energy, but is rewarding to those who do it and those who receive care. I thank God for them. However, there are some who have, it seems, failed to grasp this and see that because our rural churches are often small, they are less significant. This has sapped the confidence of rural churches and I hope that my successor will try, as I have, to encourage them in their very local mission. The rural church has a vital role to play in our rural communities who frequently turn to the churches for support and encouragement. We must not fail these congregations, but encourage them to be creative in their work- within their host communities. It will take energy and time from our leaders, but I believe that effort will be richly rewarded.

8.6 The Revd John Clarke In 1981, John Clarke became our Rural Consultant and worked as a Methodist Minister in a pioneering ministry amongst us. His appointment was a shared one between our two denominations, as mine has been. This year, John retires after 11 years as Director of the Arthur Rank Centre and the United Reformed Church thanks him for his service to the rural church over many years, and wishes him every blessing in his retirement.

9 Whether in small churches or large, inner city, rural village or suburb, we share one mission as we serve one Lord. The committee is ready to respond to the mission priorities of the church, encouraging confidence in the gospel, a readiness to articulate what we believe in a way that can be understood, and a willingness to engage with the community in an authentically Christian way.

Stewardship Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Julian Macro* **Secretary:** *Revd John Steele*
Members: *Mrs Sue Wilkinson, Miss Janet Turner, Revd David Netherwood, Messrs Tom Hamilton, Geoff Wood and Keith Webster*

1 Vision Workshops

We have been glad to learn of the increased number of Vision Workshops (by whatever name) that has been arranged by Synod Officers for local churches and Districts. There have been many reports of a clearer focus in Church life and renewed commitment and enthusiasm.

2 GEM (Giving Enables Mission)

This is a full Stewardship programme for churches that have carried out a Vision Workshop, or comparable programme. It has already made a significant difference in a number of local situations. The programme is available from URC Supplies at £25 - which includes copies of the necessary literature and acetates for presentation.

3 TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours)

This programme and the TRIO Follow Up continue to help local churches in their stewardship: these are issues that need to be addressed regularly and we look out for new ways of presenting the challenge of stewardship. The Sub-Committee has started work on an eventual successor to TRIO and will welcome help from any who have produced or found relevant new materials. Please contact John Steele.

4 Covenants

We have worked on the text of an updated leaflet on Deeds of Covenant noting the substantial financial benefits available to the Church through Covenants and Gift Aid.

5 Bill Wright

For ten years Bill Wright has served the Church as Staff Secretary for Advocacy and Stewardship: the job title has changed over the years but Bill's dedication to raising the profile of all aspects of Stewardship has not changed. The effects of his work are to be seen throughout the United Reformed Church not only in financial terms but also in heightened Christian commitment in our local churches. We all owe him more than any one person could discover. We wish him well in his future ministry.

Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

The purpose of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is:

- a) to lead the Church in its continual study of theology, enabling it to reflect upon and express the doctrines of the United Reformed Church;
- b) to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on the doctrinal matters;
- c) to advise the Assembly, its officers and committees on questions of doctrine;
- d) to listen to the concerns of local churches, district councils and provincial synods about public worship and personal devotion;
- e) to develop programmes and material which will encourage the growth in faith and spiritual experience of those involved in the life of the Church;
- f) to encourage by such means as may be appropriate at national level the greater participation of all ages and both sexes in the worship, prayer and work of the Church as it serves the mission of God;
- g) to respond to requests for national materials and consultations;
- h) to share ideas for the prayer and worship life of local congregations with and from the national and world Church and to develop ecumenical collaboration in the area of faith and order, and spirituality;
- i) to publish regular and occasional worship materials for the use of the Church, including the Prayer Handbook, Orders of Service for Public Worship and Hymnody;
- j) to oversee the network for Silence and Retreats.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Dr Colin Thompson

Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks

Staff Secretary: Revd John Waller

Revd Jean Black, Revd Stephen Brown, Mr Colin Ferguson, Revd John Hall,

Revd Fleur Houston, Revd William Mahood, Revd Dr Donald Norwood,

Revd Philip Nevard, Revd Michael Playdon, Ms Kirsty Thorpe and Revd Janet Tollington.

1 Introduction

The Committee held two residential meetings in the year: one in July at Damascus House, Mill Hill and one in January at Felden Lodge, Hemel Hempstead. At present much of the Committee's work is in process, rather than soon to be completed.

2 Developing the way the Committee works

2.1 Group Work. There have been major developments this year in the way the Committee works. Given the variety and quantity of work before the Committee, it was thought useful at the January meeting to separate into two groups. One gave more detailed consideration of liturgical texts and the other discussed Church membership and eldership issues. This pattern is likely to be repeated at future meetings.

2.2 Advisory Group. Another development in the way the Committee will be working in the future is the formation of the Advisory Group on Faith and Order, a proposal agreed at Mission Council, with the full support of our Committee and the Ecumenical Committee. This is an advisory group to the Ecumenical Committee, but is also closely linked with the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. It

will lessen some of the workload of our full Committee and allow a more effective and rapid response to the increasing number of ecumenical and international discussions and reports.

2.3 Representation. For some years the Committee has had a representative from the Methodist Church. We were glad to welcome Dr Peter Doble to our Committee in July 1998 to represent the Methodist Faith and Order Committee. The Committee also felt it important to have Anglican representation and was delighted that the Church of England Faith and Order Advisory Group responded positively to our invitation to send a representative to our meetings. We were pleased to welcome Joy Tetley as the Group's representative and to receive her input into our discussions and reports of the Group's work.

3 Theological discussions

3.1 Church Membership. The Committee continues to reflect on the nature of Church Membership, and has discussed a number of papers produced by committee members. Donald Norwood produced a short paper entitled '*Ten positive Points on Church membership*' and John Hall wrote a paper on '*Models of Church membership*'. The 1998 Methodist

discussion paper *'What should Membership mean?'* offered a more radical approach and was found to be stimulating to our discussion. Underlining our discussion have been the convictions that membership involves baptism, a growing into faith and being part of the faith community. It has also been noted that the conciliar nature of our Church means that a concept of Church Membership is important in our view of the nature of the Church. A further paper is planned to gather together the work done by the committee on this subject.

3.2 Eldership. The Committee continues to explore the nature of the eldership and in particular the theological justification of the ordination of elders. A paper is being prepared drawing together our discussion of the arguments for and against the practice of ordination in relation to elders. The Committee has gathered material from a number of sources and discussed this issue in some detail.

3.3 Diaconate. The Committee has contributed to discussions on the nature of diaconal ministries, in response to correspondence from CCBI on this subject. It will also be contributing to an inter-committee working group to look further at the diaconate and local leadership.

3.4 Accountability of Ministries. Mission Council asked the Committee to explore the accountability and responsibilities of the various ministries of the United Reformed Church, including ordained and non ordained, stipendiary and non stipendiary, elders and lay preachers, forms of diaconal ministry and local leaders. A small working group has been set up to focus on the question of accountability. It has taken as its starting point the conviction that baptism and Christian commitment involves mutual accountability within the body of Christ.

3.5 Creeds in the United Reformed Church. During 1997 and 1998 the Committee considered the World Council of Churches report *Confessing the One Faith*, which encourages all the churches to explore again the Nicene Creed. As a result the Committee has continued to discuss the place of the Creeds within the life and worship of our Church. A discussion paper on this subject has been written and work continues to be done on this subject.

4 Resources for Worship

4.1 Isaac Watts 250th Anniversary. The Committee was pleased to note that the Anniversary of the death of Isaac Watts was marked in a variety of ways by local churches across the country. The Competition received a sizeable number of entries and we hope stimulated many in their hymn writing.

4.2 Prayer Handbook. The Prayer Handbook remains a valued resource for personal prayer and in corporate worship. As in the previous year, the 1998-99 book *Gateways of Grace* used the Revised Common Lectionary readings. The Handbook for 1999-2000 is being prepared by a group of young writers and that for 2000-2001 is to be written by three people involved in Church and industry. The Committee records its thanks to Wendy Baskett who convened the Prayer Handbook Group for a number of years and its good wishes to Nicola Furley-Smith as she takes on this role.

4.3 Rededication Sunday. The 1997 Assembly asked local churches to observe the first Sunday in October (or other convenient date) each year as a rededication Sunday in the United Reformed Church. Following a similar pattern to last year the Committee has been preparing material for use in the churches this autumn. This year the material will relate to 'Jesus 2000', which reflects on the life of Jesus and renewing our faith.

5 New Service Book.

5.1 The Committee continues to make preparations for a new service book and has begun to consider drafts of the major services. Work has focussed in particular on the Eucharist or Lord's Supper and a service of Baptism. There has also been some work done on non-eucharistic forms of worship. The Committee hopes to be able circulate drafts of some of the major services next year.

5.2 As well as the major services, the Committee has also had some discussion of more experimental worship and in particular mid-week or 'Seeker' services. It will be considering this element of the Church's worship further in the coming year.

5.3 The Committee is grateful to all who have corresponded in relation to the new service book, its contents and format. All such correspondence has been collected and is being referred to in the preparation of the book. We continue to welcome such correspondence and input as the service book begins to take shape.

6 Ecumenical Issues

6.1 Theological Consultation with the Church of the Pfalz. The Theological Consultation with the Church of the Pfalz has been an established part of the Church's life for many years. It now involves the joint support of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Ecumenical Committee. Last year's consultation took as its title 'The Authority of the Bible' and it is hoped that the consultation in this country in 2000 will develop on that theme.

6.2 Ecumenical Conversations. The Committee continues to be represented at discussions nationally and internationally. Revd Dr Donald Norwood is its representative on discussions arising from the Leunberg Fellowship of Churches. Revd Fleur Houston is its representative on conversations between the British and Irish Anglican and French Lutheran and Reformed Churches. It receives reports of a number of national discussions, in particular '*Commitment to Mission and Unity*', '*Towards the making of an ecumenical bishop in Wales*' and the Scottish Initiative for Union. It is represented on the Theology and Unity Group by Revd Dr Donald Norwood and on the Joint Liturgical group by Fleur Houston. Two representatives from the Committee also attended an ecumenical consultation at St George's House, Windsor on 'Church Leadership in ecumenical perspective: Episcopate and Episcopacy' which took place September 1998. A further consultation on this subject is planned for September 1999.

7 Spirituality

7.1 Silence and Retreats Group. The Silence and Retreats Group continues to be represented on the Committee by Michael Playdon. It has been good to hear of the continued progress in sustaining and developing the work of this Group.

7.2 Churches Together in England Spirituality Co-ordinating Group. Fiona Gow continues to be the Committee's representative on the Group and sends regular reports to the Committee of the Group's work. The Group has recently produced a leaflet entitled '*Sharing our Spiritual Treasures*' which is a useful resource in discussions among Christians of varying traditions. The Group is also seeking to strengthen links with black Christians and to hear more about spirituality in the black-led churches.

8 Membership of the Committee

8.1 This year the Committee says farewell to Jean Black, Stephen Brown, Fleur Houston and Donald Norwood. The commitment and expertise they have brought has been invaluable. We thank them for their contribution to the work of our Committee and wish them well in their continued service of the Church.

Ecumenical

The role of the Ecumenical Committee is to foster ecumenical development in the life of the United Reformed Church:

a) in response to the Basis of Union (para.8)

The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.

b) in relation to other churches and the wider community - in these islands, across Europe, and throughout the world.

The committee will seek to ensure that wherever the United Reformed Church meets, locally or nationally, in worship, council or committee, it is working in partnership with Christians in the locality, the World Church and the whole human family.

TASKS

Among the tasks of this committee is listening to those with experience of the World Church, including other Christian traditions in Britain and Ireland, and to those with experience of current affairs and of other faiths.

The Committee will maintain official United Reformed Church links with overseas churches and world and regional ecumenical organisations, in particular the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European Churches. It will guide the United Reformed Church's participation in the Council for World Mission.

Through it official contact will be made with British and Irish ecumenical bodies.

It is responsible for the United Reformed Church's involvement in St Andrew's Hall.

The work of selecting, training and caring for missionaries and overseeing exchange of personnel will be undertaken by the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Bob Andrews

Secretaries: Revd Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations)

Revd Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations)

Ms Lesley-Anne Morgan (International Relations Programme Administrator)

Members: Revd Dr Peter Arthur, Revd Mary Buchanan, Ms Bethan Galliers,

Revd Phillip Jones, Mrs Jackie Marsh, Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd Elizabeth Nash,

Revd Ivor Rees, Revd John Rees, Revd Barrie Scopes (Convener of the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee)

Representatives of other committees: Revd Peter Brain, Revd Jonathan Dean, Dr Iain Frew,

Revd Fleur Houston, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Revd Tony Ruffell, Revd David Tatem

Representatives of other churches: Venerable David Goldie (Church of England),

Revd Keith Reed (the Methodist Church), Revd Gabrielle Ellis (Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

1 Introduction

1.1 The Ecumenical Committee has the deliberately broad remit of holding together and promoting all the United Reformed Church's relationships in Britain and Ireland, in mainland Europe and in the World Church. It does so through personnel exchange, through bi-lateral and multi-lateral church partnerships and conversations about closer union, and through our active and committed membership of many ecumenical bodies. In order to fulfil its remit the committee has, from the start, been enlarged by representation from seven other Assembly committees in addition to its core membership. More recently it has been agreed that the representatives from Scotland and Wales should be additional to the core membership.

1.2 The two over-arching challenges currently before the committee and which it seeks to put before the church are:

- a) How to express our commitment to visible unity in an ecumenical landscape which has changed and is changing so much since our unions of 1972 and 1981.
- b) How to express our commitment to the Council for World Mission model of partnership in mission in new and effective ways.

The changing ecumenical landscape in the ecumenical bodies

2 The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland

2.1 The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland held its **Assembly** in February under the title *Serving the Nations in Partnership*. The United Reformed Church sent twelve representatives and offered leadership in the theme groups and the workshops. Ruth Clarke, a former Moderator of the General Assembly, and Geoffrey Roper, General Secretary of the Free Churches' Council and a United Reformed Church minister were elected to the Steering Group.

2.2 As a consequence of a long review process, CCBI has now passed the responsibility for youth and women's work and some social responsibility work to the national ecumenical instruments. That decision has implications for staffing, for the redistribution of money and for the style of working. In future, CCBI will be called **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**. The Ecumenical Committee, on behalf of the United Reformed Church, approved the necessary constitutional changes.

2.3 Revd John Reardon has been succeeded by Dr David Goodbourn, a Baptist layman, as **General Secretary**. The Ecumenical Committee would like to acknowledge, with some denominational pride, the pioneering work John Reardon has done as the first General Secretary of CCBI.

3 Churches Together in England

3.1 Churches Together in England is eager to **embrace the broader agenda** it now has as a result of the CCBI review. It will have a full-time youth officer, building on the good work done by Pat Madden, a Roman Catholic, through the Joint Churches Youth Service. The United Reformed Church will be the channel for applying for the government grant which will partly fund this post.

3.2 The preparations for the English churches' celebration of the **Millennium** in a challenging and a sensitive way have absorbed much CTE staff time. The resources, under the *New Start* banner, are going out to our local churches through both the Church and Society Committee and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee. Revd Roger Whitehead, a United Reformed Church minister and also part-time secretary for the CTE Group for Evangelisation, is heavily involved in the preparations. The United Reformed Church has committed money and the Methodists, the Church of England and the Salvation Army have seconded staff.

3.3 CTE staff are also helping the churches to co-operate in responding to the government's **regionalisation** plans for England. The development, over past years, of effective ecumenical bodies at county and metropolitan level have provided some basis for this broader geographical co-operation.

3.4 **The Group for Local Unity of CTE** continues to care for Local Ecumenical Partnerships. It has produced new, helpful *Guidelines for the Review of LEPs*. However, the old questions about baptism, confirmation, membership and admission to communion, about authorised worship in LEPs, about the relationship of the LEP to the wider church and, ultimately, the ecclesiology of LEPs – what do we mean by church? - become more and not less difficult. LEPs are still at the sharp end.

3.5 **The Revd Tony Burnham**, by virtue of his position as Moderator of the Free Churches' Council is now a **president of Churches Together in England**. The others are the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and Dr. Rowena Loverance of the Society of Friends.

4 Wales

4.1 **Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)** has a new General Secretary, Revd Gethin Abraham-Williams, a Baptist, and hopes to appoint an officer for local ecumenism who will also be the liaison officer between the churches and the new Welsh Assembly.

4.2 The United Reformed Church, along with the other member churches of **ENFYS (the Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales)** is carefully considering its response to the proposals *Towards the Making of an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales*. Meanwhile, an ecumenical group is preparing the service for the induction of such a person and thus working through many of the theological and ecclesiological implications.

4.3 The Methodist Church has now joined the United Reformed Church as observer-participant rather than member of the talks which seek to form a **United Free Church** in Wales. Both are, of course, members of the Free Church Council of Wales.

5 Scotland

5.1 **Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)** has a new General Secretary, Revd Dr Kevin Franz, an Episcopalian.

5.2 The Ecumenical Committee, on behalf of the United Reformed Church and advised by the Northern Province, has given support to the Interim

Report of the **Scottish Churches' Initiative for Union (SCIFU)**. Further work is being done on the role of the bishop in council and on where authority and oversight will lie in a united church. SCIFU's approach to unity has laid considerable emphasis on structures for common life and mission.

6 The Free Churches' Council

6.1 The Free Churches' Council has not only a **new name** but a **new policy** which encourages its local councils to become part of the local Churches Together

6.2 On 10 March at Kensington United Reformed Church, Revd Tony Burnham was inducted as **Moderator**. His election and his willingness to serve in this way bring honour to the United Reformed Church.

6.3 Revd Michael Davies, former moderator of the Thames North Province, has been elected **treasurer** of the FCC.

6.4 The FCC has called a meeting of representatives of the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church, with a Church of England observer, to consider the matter of '**extended membership**' in LEPs. Revd Terry Hinks, Secretary of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee represented us.

7 The World Council of Churches

7.1 In December 1998 the **World Council of Churches Assembly** was held in Harare, Zimbabwe. In addition to our official representatives (Wilma Frew, Tony Burnham and Jenny Hale), the United Reformed Church was represented by a further 20 plus people attending in other capacities ranging from co-opted staff to visitors.

7.2 During the Assembly **Jenny Hale was elected to the Central Committee**, following on from Elizabeth Welch who had served on the previous Central Committee. For a small church (which the URC is in WCC terms) this is an impressive achievement, as it is the third successive time we have been represented on the WCC Central Committee.

7.3 The theme of the Assembly, **Turn to God – Rejoice in Hope**, belied the context, an unprecedented struggle between Orthodox churches and other member churches over the nature of the organisation. Careful management of the Assembly agenda (which led many to feel that the Assembly was disenfranchised) staved off the worst of this.

7.4 The Assembly agreed to a mixed theological commission comprising equal numbers of Orthodox and Protestant churches to work on the agenda of Orthodox concerns over the ecumenical movement. It also agreed to proposals to create a new ecumenical forum to bring together WCC member churches, the Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal churches and others outside WCC membership.

7.5 Like all such assemblies many other statements and programme proposals were also agreed. Supporting this the programme guidelines committee offered a **framework for future ecumenical work** at all levels from the local to the international:

- How do we as churches engage together in mission and evangelism in the midst of a highly pluralistic world?
- How do we understand baptism as a foundation for the life in community to which we are called to share together?
- How do we offer together our resources, witness and action for the sake of the world's very future?
- How do we walk together on the path towards visible unity?

8 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches

8.1 WARC are currently involved in the search for a new General Secretary who will succeed Milan Opocensky who retires next year. Chair of the search committee is Elizabeth Nash, who was elected as one of the non-executive officers of WARC at the General Council in Debrecen in 1997.

8.2 In January, Dorothy Spence was a member of a WARC delegation to visit Rwanda and assess the process of reconciliation and reconstruction which the churches and state are engaged in.

8.3 Recognising that Reformed churches are notorious for schism and division, the newly-elected Executive committee of WARC at its first meeting commissioned a programme to explore further this tendency and assess what, if anything, WARC could do to counteract it.

8.4 The Executive have also launched a programme to address the continuing problem of economic injustice as a part of it's General Council decision to commence a *process confessionis* exploring whether economic justice should be a confessional issue (i.e. at the heart of the Christian faith).

9 The Conference of European Churches

9.1 In January the union of CEC and the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and

Society (EECCS) was completed with the launch of the **CEC Church and Society Commission**. The new commission will build on the existing work of EECCS and the church and society work previously undertaken by CEC.

9.2 In September 1998 the EECCS Assembly and the CEC Central Committee held a joint session to agree the work programme for the new Commission. Amongst the topics agreed were European integration, peace building with security, human rights, bioethics, and sustainable development.

9.3 In March the Dialogue Commission met to consider a European statement on mission. In October, along with the CWM European Region and the European Evangelical Alliance, CEC are sponsoring a **European Mission Consultation** with the Netherlands Missionary Council to explore how we might work together on God's mission in our respective European contexts.

The changing ecumenical landscape and our close partner churches

10 The Scottish Congregational Church

10.1 **The prospects of union between the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Union of Scotland** now seem very good (see the report from Mission Council). During the process, there has been helpful consultation with the Wales Synod. National identity has played a much larger role than in the 1988 uniting process.

10.2 **The Scottish Congregational Church/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee** has continued to seek to build relations and share resources in preparation for full union.

11 The Church of England, the Moravian Church and the Methodist Church.

11.1 The Church of England celebrated its **Fetter Lane Agreement with the Moravian Church** last November in Manchester Cathedral. The Agreement includes a common calling to full, visible unity, a common statement of faith, a mutual acknowledgement of one another's churches and ministries, and a commitment to take practical steps towards that full, visible unity. Although the Church of England has signed similar agreements abroad – the Meissen Agreement in Germany and (if the Autumn General Synod agrees) the Reuilly Common Statement in France – this was the first in England. Revd Eric Allen, former Moderator of the Mersey Province, represents us on the Contact Group set up to implement the Fetter Lane Agreement locally.

11.2 **The 1998 Methodist Conference** overwhelmingly supported the proposal to begin **formal conversations** with the Church of England. The agreed remit for those conversations suggests a similar approach to that of the Meissen, Fetter Lane and Reuilly agreements. The United Reformed Church is represented on those formal conversations by Dr David Thompson, former Moderator of the General Assembly, and Revd Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations. The Roman Catholic Church, the Baptist Union and the Moravian Church are also represented.

11.3 The 1998 Methodist Conference also supported the proposal made by the Church of England General Synod in November 1997 that **tri-lateral informal conversations** be set up with the United Reformed Church. Their agenda is the two topics raised by the United Reformed Church – the place of the eldership and the place of the councils of the church in any discussion of apostolicity and of episcopacy. The United Reformed Church is represented on the informal talks by Revd Bob Andrews, Convenor of the Ecumenical Committee, Revd Elizabeth Welch, Moderator of the West Midlands Province, Revd John Waller, Deputy General Secretary and Revd Sheila Maxey, acting as secretary.

11.4 Both the Anglican and Methodist Churches have held **British and Irish meetings** in order to seek a consistency in their ecumenical relationships in the different nations.

12 The Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

12.1 The Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee now has both a Moderator of Synod and a Methodist District Chairman in its membership, as well as United Reformed Church synod and Methodist district ecumenical officers and representatives of two United Areas.

12.2 The Liaison Committee has produced a pack of advice for joint churches entitled *How to Make it Work* (£2.95 plus p&p) and another edition of the annual broadsheet *Quickstep*. It has circulated a formula for joint church finance which has worked in one province, although the variety of United Reformed Church practice not only between provinces but even between districts means there is no universal solution to this recurring problem. Comparing ecclesiologies and taking a positive approach to vacancies are also on the agenda.

Getting our bearings in the changing ecumenical landscape

13 Mission Council in October supported the resolution from the Ecumenical Committee that it set up an **Advisory Group on Faith and Order** which would do detailed work on ecumenical documents both for the Ecumenical Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee.

14 **A small informal inter-committee group** from the Ecumenical Committee, the Ministries Committee, the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has met to share documents and committee work on diaconal ministry and local leadership, with some reference to eldership, in order to ensure some consistency especially in our ecumenical responses.

15 The Ecumenical Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee each sent two people to an **ecumenical consultation on *Episkope and Episcopacy*** sponsored by the Centre for the Study of the Christian Faith.

16 The **network of synod ecumenical officers** now meets annually instead of bi-annually. At their April meeting they discussed the respective roles of synod and district ecumenical officers and how to induct and resource those new to office.

17 The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations attended the 18th Plenary of the **Consultation on Church Union** in St. Louis, Missouri in January. She also consulted with the Presbyterian Church (USA) on how their non-English speaking congregations – from Pakistan, Sudan, Ghana, Korea – are brought into the life of the whole church and are enabled to play a full part.

18 Revd Gabrielle Ellis, the representative of the **Presbyterian Church in Ireland** on the Ecumenical Committee, has kept the committee informed of developments in the political scene, the ecumenical scene and in her church's life. We are very grateful for her insights, which help us to support our brothers and sisters in Christ in our thoughts and prayers during these difficult but hopeful times.

19 The committee also benefits from the presence of **a representative of the Church of England**, the Venerable David Goldie, and **of the Methodist Church**, Revd Keith Reed. The committee receives reports from those who represent the United Reformed Church on the committees and Assemblies of our partner churches and these also help in the mapping of the changing landscape.

Partnership in mission

20 Council for World Mission

20.1 In June 1999 the **CWM Council** will meet in Samoa. The theme of the meeting, looking ahead to the new millennium, is *What does the Lord require of us?*

20.2 This theme is picked up in the 1999 **Window on the World** conference organised by the CWM European Region at Swanwick in August. It will be an excellent opportunity to explore this challenge further and to meet representatives of some of our partners in the CWM family.

20.3 The **CWM European Region** held its biennial consultation in Abergavenny, Wales, in November. Employing a half-time Mission Enabler, the region is now promoting much needed reflection on what it means to be engaged in God's mission here and how we might support each other in this.

21 Myanmar

21.1 The Ecumenical Committee for a variety of historical reasons has at its disposal a number of funds for the support of God's mission in particular locations around the world. One of these, the Rangoon Ministers' Pension Fund, is used for the support of the work of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (Burma).

21.2 After a period of discussions with the church and a visit in 1998 by Aubrey Curry and the Secretary for International Relations, it was decided to use a substantial part of the fund to assist the church to open an Assembly office in Yangon (Rangoon), the capital of Myanmar.

21.3 In March the Secretary for International Relations visited the new office and met with representatives of the church and the Myanmar Council of Churches to review the current situation in Myanmar. The visit reiterated the need to maintain contact with the church and to continue to work and pray with them.

23 *The Belonging to the World Church programmes*

23.1 At the 1998 General Assembly the Ecumenical Committee was asked to implement a series of programmes to strengthen our sense of belonging to and partnership with the world church. Since then the committee have taken the following actions:

23.2 Appointed Lesley-Anne Morgan as International Relations Programme Administrator to oversee the development and execution of the programmes in conjunction with the Secretary for International Relations.

Resolution 48

23.3 Established a working group to develop the international training opportunities for those entering the URC ministry as clergy or CRCWs.

23.4 Worked with Wessex and North-Western synods to develop pilot programmes for visiting speakers for autumn 1999.

23.5 Agreed a pilot research fellowship with Northern College and North-Western synod.

23.6 Entered into discussions with CWM over other aspects of the proposals, including lay-training programmes.

23.7 Have supported the creation of a FURY International Reference group to develop opportunities for international learning for young people.

23.8 Have actively promoted World Exchange and the World Convention of the Churches of Christ in Brisbane in 2000 as opportunities for church members to share in the life of partner churches outside these islands.

24 Other Partnerships

24.1 In March the annual **synod European Link Co-ordinators consultation** involved, for the first time, representatives of some of our European partner churches to explore more fully the idea of European partnerships.

24.2 In the last year the committee has taken over the task, previously done by the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans, of overseeing the United Reformed Church's **central grants to ecumenical bodies**.

25 Partnerships in Work

25.1 At the end of another very full and busy year we record our thanks to those who have shared in our work in recent years, and whose term of service comes to an end at this Assembly: Peter Arthur, David Tatem, Fleur Houston, and Ivor Rees. They have all served the committee well, with thoughtful insights and contributions from their own spheres of work and interest. This year we also say farewell to Barrie Scopes who has given very freely and considerably of his time and energy as convenor of the Overseas Exchange sub-committee, a partnership which has been much appreciated by both the Secretaries for Ecumenical and International Relations.

RESOLUTION 48

Belonging to the World Church – Membership of General Assembly

Assembly agrees to amend paragraph 2(5)(e) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church so that it reads: "Up to twelve representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland or such other number as the Assembly shall from time to time determine;"

1.1 As part of the implementation of the *Belonging to the World Church* proposals endorsed at the 1998 General Assembly, the Ecumenical Committee brings this resolution to give effect to the proposals relating to international visitors at the General Assembly (section 13 and in particular para. 13.3 of the *Belonging to the World Church* report, 1998 Assembly Book of Reports).

1.2 Currently this clause in the Basis and Structure makes provision for up to "twelve missionaries of the United Reformed Church on furlough" to be members of the General Assembly. In the formation of the United Reformed Church it was no doubt felt that through these places our sense of belonging to the world church and participation in God's global mission would be given effect in the General Assembly. Given our understanding today

of being partners in God's mission with other churches around the world, it makes more sense that these places be filled by representatives of our partner churches. Thus, these places might be filled by people appointed by such churches, by their missionaries working here, or by people from the United Reformed Church working with them.

1.3 As it is based on an existing provision this proposal will neither increase the size, or the cost of General Assembly. However, through this more flexible approach we will be able to ensure that world church representatives will be full partners in our discussions in the General Assembly (as we have sought to bring in our ecumenical partners in this country) and so be more true to our understanding of what belonging to the world church means for us today.

RESOLUTION 49**St Andrew's Hall Missionary College**

The Assembly, having received the report on the decision by the College's Council to close St Andrew's Hall Missionary College,

- a) gives thanks for the service offered to the church in this country and overseas by the college and for the witness to the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" it has promoted;**
- b) calls upon the Ecumenical Committee to ensure that the resources released to the United Reformed Church from the sale of the college are used for the requirements of the United Reformed Church in mission education and training in a world church context.**

2.1 In September 1998 at a specially convened meeting of the Council of St Andrew's Hall, it was agreed to close the college and to sell the buildings and site and thereby wind up the independent Association which had been formed by the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the Women's Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1954 for the purpose of training people to serve the church throughout the world.

2.2 Since the union in 1972, the United Reformed Church has been one of these three sponsoring bodies, appointing four of the twenty-five Council members, having taken on the rights and responsibilities of the English Presbyterian Women's Missionary Association. We have been well served by the college and many people from the United Reformed Church and our partner churches overseas owe much to its ministry of education and training in mission.

2.3 Since the 1980's we have increasingly been filling our places at the college with scholarship holders from overseas partner churches. With the bulk of the college's funding coming from the three sponsoring bodies by way of block grants, and our share of this being two-fifths, it was a sensible move when we could no longer fill the places ourselves as fewer and fewer people offered for overseas service.

2.4 This situation was not peculiar to us and was not the only change that was afoot. The London Missionary Society had become the Council for World Mission and placed much greater emphasis on contextual training within the regions it served. The Baptist Missionary Society found that its needs and requirements were increasingly divergent to the other two sponsors.

2.5 Thus when the Baptist Missionary Society announced the freezing of its block grant in 1996, and in 1997 the Council for World Mission gave notice of the withdrawal of its funding, it became

clear that the block grant system had to be replaced and so we followed suite, giving notice that our block grant, but not our funding, would also end.

2.6 The college was between Principals and the Association made a brave attempt to salvage the situation by appointing a new team to devise a rescue plan. However, despite considerable interest amongst those from the United Reformed Church who saw their proposals, it did not meet with universal favour. Besides by the time the Council met to consider what to do in September 1998 a new factor had entered into the discussion. By virtue of a 1920 Trust Deed relating to the college's premises it appeared that the Baptist Missionary Society had a pre-emptive right of purchase and it became clear that they wished to exercise this right. Thus the decision was taken by the Association to close the college and to proceed with the sale of the land and the buildings to the Baptist Missionary Society.

2.7 There is much talk in some circles about who is to blame for the closure of the college. The Ecumenical committee, supported by the Overseas Exchange sub-committee and the Training committee, all of whom have followed every move in this saga, believe that it is wholly wrong and inappropriate to look at events this way. In a very real sense all three sponsors and the St Andrew's Hall Missionary College Association have all contributed to this situation, but that is only part of it. The world, the church and our understanding of God's mission have all changed considerably since 1954. We should give thanks for how St Andrew's Hall has served us during this time and contributed to our fresh understanding of what it means to be partners in mission today. The challenge now is to move on, forming new partnerships where we can and continue the work which St Andrew's Hall accomplished so ably in its time.

2.8 The work of the scholarship programme for overseas partner churches will continue. An intensive English language course will be offered

through World Exchange at its base in St Colm's College, Edinburgh. Like St Andrew's Hall it will be offered in an international, ecumenical context and will build considerably on the experience and feedback we have received on the existing programme. Similarly we will offer scholarships in mission studies at Westminster College, Cambridge.

2.9 More significant will be how we meet our new needs in mission education and training, particularly in support of the *Belonging to the World Church* and continuing ministerial education programmes. Recognising that Great Britain is the primary context for our engagement in God's mission we are working with our European partners in the Council for World Mission to discover what, if anything, we might do together to better equip ourselves for mission here. At the same time we are reviewing together how we prepare people for service overseas. What comes of this will only be known later this year.

2.10 Alongside all this there is considerable ferment in the Selly Oak Federation as it undergoes a major re-organisation. This will directly impact the mission colleges, prompting negotiations about the future shape of the mission education and training that they undertake. The United Reformed Church and the CWM European Region are both represented in these discussions.

2.11 Whatever is the outcome of all this we (and our European partners in CWM) are clear that any money that is released from the sale of St Andrew's Hall, should be dedicated to the continuing work of mission education and training.

Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee

The Overseas Exchange Sub Committee is responsible for the selection, training and caring of mission partners for service here and overseas, and for overseeing the exchange of personnel, including the World Exchange volunteers programme.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes

Secretary: Revd Philip Woods

Revd Bob Andrews (Convener, Ecumenical Committee), Mrs Virginia Becher,

Mr Peter Bryant, Revd Keith Riglin, Revd Kenneth Graham,

Revd Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations), and Revd Keith Forecast.

1 The Overseas Exchange Sub Committee oversees and cares for people who go from and come to the United Reformed Church.

2 Mission partners serving in the UK

2.1 Revd Dr Samuel Ponnusamy will complete three years of teaching at Northern College in July. He has brought much-appreciated insights to his Biblical teaching and relating of the Bible to issues in the contemporary world. Revd Emmanuel Frimpong completes his term this year as the Ghanaian Chaplain; he has brought to this responsibility immense energy and commitment.

2.2 Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper as the United Reformed Church's Multi-racial/Multi-cultural Development Worker has visited widely within all twelve provinces and is challenging the United Reformed Church with regard to issues of racism and justice within its life.

2.3 Revd Moiseraele Prince Dibeela has begun his work as Mission Enabler for the East Midlands province and is beginning to make a helpful impact there.

2.4 A review has been carried out of the Ghanaian Chaplaincy in consultation with the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana. The next person to be appointed in mid-1999 will be called *The Ghanaian Minister to the United Reformed Church in London* and will work under the Thames North and Southern provinces and with the Ghanaian community. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana has appointed Revd Francis Amenu to this post.

2.5 The committee has agreed to seek an Overseas Special Category Minister through CWM for a post as a theological educator for the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS) based in Salisbury.

Scholarship holders

3.1 During the year the following have been provided with scholarships by the United Reformed Church:

Ms Gabriele Bindemann	<i>English Studies</i>
Evangelische Kirche Der Union	
Revd Tadeas Staniek	<i>English Studies</i>
Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren	
Revd Valente Tomas Tseco	<i>Mission Studies</i>
Presbyterian Church of Mozambique	
Ms Boglarka Toth	<i>English and Mission</i>
Reformed Church in Hungary	
Revd Ho-Geon Lee	<i>English and Mission</i>
Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea	
Ms Beatriz Bunga	<i>English and Administration</i>
Evangelical Reformed Church in Angola	
Revd Martin Sendagi	<i>Church Management</i>
Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda	

3.2 In spite of the closing of St Andrew's Hall in the summer the scholarship programme will be continued with people being placed in Edinburgh, Cambridge and Birmingham.

World Exchange

4.1 This Committee and the Ecumenical Committee which oversees the United Reformed Church's participation in the Scottish Churches World Exchange Trust have affirmed that the United Reformed Church wishes to be a constituent member of World Exchange, the body that is continuing the work which has been undertaken by the Scottish Churches World Exchange Trust.

4.2 Ms Lesley-Anne Morgan, the newly appointed International Relations Programme Administrator, is actively publicising within the United Reformed Church the opportunities for volunteers to be appointed through World Exchange. This is an important part of the *Belonging to the World Church* programme.

Short-term volunteers in Britain

5.1 The following volunteer from abroad has been serving the United Reformed Church during the year:

Mr Mamy Herilanto Ranaivoarijaona *Penrhys*
Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

5.2 A full evaluation is to be undertaken this year of the link between Penrhys and the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) which has sent a succession of volunteers to Penrhys.

Mission Partners from the United Reformed Church serving overseas

6.1 After a gap of two or three years a new mission partner couple, Revd Neil and Mrs Jenny Thorogood, have been accepted for service overseas. It is hoped that their appointment will commence before the end of 1999.

6.2 Martin and Ta'ara Vickerman are on leave. He is hoping to undertake postgraduate studies in education in New Zealand to equip him for further service in the Pacific Region.

Thanks

7.1 The committee wishes to place on record its appreciation of the service offered by Barrie Scopes, who ends his term as convener this Assembly. Barrie has been actively involved in all aspects of the committee's work, sharing generously of his experience and time as the committee has developed and refined many aspects of its work of sharing people in mission.

Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Committee was formed in 1994 to:-

- a) develop detailed equal opportunities policies
- b) have oversight of training programmes in equal opportunities
- c) monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy
- d) report annually to the General Assembly on the implementation of the policy.

Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand **Secretary:** Revd Simon Walkling
Revd Wilf Bahadur, Mrs Daphne Beale, Mr Hilary Gunn (staff link), Revd Nanette Head,
Revd Derek Hopkins, Ms Lucille King, Ms Georgette Margett, Ms Stella Salmon and ex-officio members.

1 In 1994 the URC committed itself to behave as an 'equal opportunities organisation' and as a start formed the Equal Opportunities Committee with the above brief. To show that the church is serious about being an equal opportunities organisation it needs to set a number of things in place. These include:

- an equal opportunities policy which has strong visible support of those in authority;
- detailed guidelines showing how the policy operates, who is responsible and what happens if the policy is ignored;
- equal opportunities training for all;
- monitoring to establish the position at any particular time and to identify possible areas of discrimination;
- clear policy objectives to avoid discrimination;
- further monitoring to establish effects of any policy changes;

It is clear that this is an issue for the whole church and needs the full support and co-operation throughout the URC.

2 We have identified areas where some sort of monitoring would be constructive. They are too numerous to mention covering councils of the national and local church, those candidating for the ministry and those looking for a pastorate. Effective monitoring and interpreting data collected are specialist and time consuming tasks outside the resources of the Equal Opportunities Committee. We also expect that the work of the Multi racial, Multi cultural Development Worker will identify further areas that need to be investigated and where training is needed.

3 Equal opportunities is a discipline which covers many areas, and touches many campaigning issues. At its heart is the search for fair minded people who do not let their prejudices lead to

behaviour which discriminates unfairly, and the development of fair systems and structures which provide equal opportunities.

4.1 So often, conversations about equal opportunities degenerate into jokes about political correctness or preferential treatment. The Committee sometimes feels that the basics of equal opportunities are not understood. We offer the following pointers, which undergird our work:

4.2 Equal Opportunities is about:

- **Valuing individuals**
Not making assumptions about people because of the group they belong to, but looking at their own skills and gifts.
- **Getting the right person for the job**
Which means being clear about what the job is, what attributes are necessary, and how to discover whether candidates possess them. Then prejudice has less room to take hold. This is true whether the job is paid or voluntary.
- **Being the Body of Christ**
Feeling the hurt of those affected by discrimination is part of bearing each other's burdens. So is doing something about it. This is true, whether it is "a problem" where you are or not.
- **An inclusive vision**
We believe that God calls everyone to be part of the Kingdom. We believe that God does not call people by quotas from particular groups for particular roles in the church. Somehow the church should be a foretaste of the rich diversity of the Kingdom.

5.1 Members of 1999 General Assembly will find that they have a monitoring sheet amongst their papers. We would be very grateful if these could be completed and placed in the box provided during the Assembly. If possible some feed back will be given during Assembly and certainly will be afterwards. This monitoring form is important as it will give us a base line on which to judge the makeup of future assemblies and will also show where there is under representation.

5.2 The Committee believes that God calls all, irrespective of background, race, age, gender and disability and that it is up to us as God's servants on earth to encourage others to respond. One way to see if we are effective is by monitoring. We do not consciously exclude people from our churches and committees but as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has shown, institutions fail to provide equality of opportunity. As part of the Body of Christ, we should feel the pain of those who experience prejudice and discrimination, and seek healing and justice.

6 The Disability Discrimination Act is slowly coming into effect. Churches are not exempt from this Act. It applies over a large range of concerns including employment practices and access to buildings and participation in church activities. The Committee is in conversations with Church Action On Disability (CHAD) to explore the possibility of using their expertise as a resource for the URC, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel. It is too early to bring any proposals to this General Assembly.

7 We have often been asked - 'But what can we in the local church do?'

Here are a number of discussion questions which could be used at a church meeting to explore attitudes:

- A visitor arrives for church in a wheel chair. Can they get in? Can they take a full part in the service?
- Names have been asked for Elders election. Someone has suggested a 19 year old. How do you feel about that? How will others react?

- What are you doing in your church to encourage young people and women to be part of the life of the church, especially in this year of recruitment to the ministry?
- Your church is in vacancy. How will you feel if the name suggested is a woman?
- Would your reaction to the previous question be any different were the person to be black or have an obvious disability?

8 Over the past 5 years the committee has done many things, including:-

- carried out a monitoring exercise for local churches with over 60% response rate;
- published guidelines for local churches on good employment practices;
- fought for the appointment of the Multi racial, Multi cultural Development Worker;
- facilitated the first meeting in 1998 as a step towards developing a multi racial network - further work on this is being done by Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper;
- responding to requests for information;
- commenting on documents.

However, we are a small committee, with limited resources. We will try to respond to the new areas of work suggested by the 1998 General Assembly (age issues and learning disability), as well as to requests from church members around the country. But if we don't respond immediately, please bear with us.

Thanks. As this is the last Annual Report that I shall write as convener I would like to publicly express my appreciation for all the work done and support given by members of the committee since it was formed in 1994. In particular I would like to thank Simon Walkling, who also comes to the end of his term at this Assembly, for all the support he has given to me and to the committee.

Finance

The Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving financial advice to other councils of the church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Graham Stacy (Hon. Treasurer) **Secretary:** Mr Clem Frank (Financial Secretary)
 Mr Alan Duncan, Mr Bill Grieve, Mrs Edwina Rockey, Miss Catriona Waterson,
 Revd Richard Wiggins, Dr Brian Woodhall (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust)
 Mr Tegid Peregrine, (Church Buildings Secretary)

1 1998 Accounts

The 1998 accounts are set out in Appendix 2 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31st December 1998.

2 The giving of the members of the Church to central funds.

The operation of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, which, it is believed, is one of the success stories of the URC, and the operation of the central office could not happen if each Church Treasurer did not make very great efforts to ensure that the money required for this part of the work is in the local bank account on 20th of each month, for collection by direct debit. That this system runs very smoothly is evidence of much hard and devoted work, and in thanking the Church for the response to the appeal for Ministry and Mission, which once again has been met with a 100% result, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

3 The millennium and electronic equipment

The potential problems which may arise on 1st January 2000 continue to be the subject of much press and other comment.

Most of the computer equipment and programmes used in the Church Offices have been acquired since the millennium problem has been recognised. Tests are being carried out in the finance office to confirm that there will be no problems at the turn of the year.

4 Church Buildings Fund

This fund continues to be used mainly for the provision of housing for centrally appointed ministers, and for the provision of building loans of up to £75,000, being up to 50% of the cost of major works in local churches or the provision of new manse accommodation. The emphasis on obtaining proper professional advice continues, and approval has been given for a number of feasibility study grants and professional fees loans. The demand for disabled facilities grants continues, and up to the end of February 1999, 96 applications have been approved, and 56 paid at a cost of some £240,000.

The Committee was also able to give a grant of £100,000 towards the cost of the new church at Manselton in the Synod of Wales, and proposals for other grants are being considered. Guidelines on the conditions for assistance may be obtained from the Finance Office.

RESOLUTION 50

Accounts

Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31st December 1998.

RESOLUTION 51

Ministry and Mission Fund

Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 1998 to the Ministry & Mission Fund.

Methodist/URC Health and Healing Development Group

Committee Members

*Revd Jim Needham (Convener) Revd Jim Hollyman (Secretary) Mrs Jackie Ballard, Dr Ivan Cox,
Revd Ward Jones, Dr Margaret Moore, Revd Brenda Russell, Revd Malcolm White, Dr Janet Wigley.*

1 Developing links

The House of Bishops of the Church of England has set up a working party on healing and wholeness, chaired by Bishop John Perry. It is due to report in January 2000 on the understanding and experience of the ministry of healing in the Church of England. The report will include information on the healing ministry from other denominations as well as from other churches in the world-wide Anglican communion. The Development group was very glad to welcome a representative from the Working Party to its January meeting and has written to Bishop Perry to express our encouragement of the project. It is hoped that further links in working with the Church of England will develop.

2 Churches Council for Health and Healing

The past year has been a traumatic one for CCHH, not least with the sad death of the previous Director, Prof Rachel Rosser. The Executive has reformed under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Chelmsford and is now exploring the future format of the organisation. The key ongoing piece of work begun last year was the preparation of a Position Paper on Health and Healing. Because of the work being done in the Anglican Church on their own understanding of the Church's ministry of Health and Healing, the CCHH position Paper has been put on hold.

3 Open Learning Centre Study Course

Due to the previous Methodist Secretary for Health and Healing (who is writing the course) being appointed to a District Chairmanship, the date for the course's availability has been revised to Easter 2000.

4 FURY and Mental Health

The Fellowship of United Reformed Youth and the Health and Healing Development Group formed a working group to follow up the resolutions on mental health issues passed at last year's FURY Assembly and General Assembly. The group has promoted leaflets about "positive steps" for mental health through FURY National, at FURY Assembly and at TGIFURY. participants which explored stress, unhappiness and depression. Currently the working group is exploring ways in which it can work with the National Youth Resource Centre to further the awareness of mental health issues amongst young people and centre users. The working group wishes to centre its work around the experiences of people who live with mental illness and their carers. It has been inviting people to share with the group the stories of their experience. From this it is hoped to learn how the church currently supports people with mental illness and their carers, and how it might better do so.

5 Willersley Castle Conference

A successful conference on Health, Healing and Worship was held in November 1998, with over 40 participants. The next conference, on a theme to be decided, will be held at the same venue from 6th - 10th November 2000.

6 Membership

During the year we have welcomed Dr Ivan Cox, Revd Brenda Russell and Revd Dr Malcolm White as new members of the group. Revd Jim Hollyman retires from the group this July after serving as secretary to the previous URC committee for six years and the joint group since its inception.

Inter-Faith Relations

The task of the committee is -

- to encourage and assist churches in inter-faith situations
- to affirm and support individuals involved in inter-faith dialogue on behalf of the church
- to engage in direct contact with people of other faiths, particularly through our consultants in Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and New Religious Movements
- to develop theological understanding of inter faith dialogue and mission
- to keep abreast with what is happening in the teaching about other faiths in schools and colleges.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Bill Mahood* **Secretary:** *Revd Brenda Willis*

Mrs Linda Hopley, Miss Sarah King, Revd Jonathan Dean, Revd David Taylor

Consultants: *Revd Dr David Bowen (Hinduism and Islam), Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism),
Revd Ron Lewis (Judaism), Revd Elizabeth Brown (New Religious Movements)*

1 Living in a Multi-Faith Society

1.1 It is important for us to be able to convey clearly that the concerns of inter-faith relations are not just those of a small group of enthusiasts but of every member of the church. We all live in a multi-faith, multi-cultural society. We can fear it or we can be enriched by it.

1.2 Some of our congregations are involved in particular projects and the committee wants to be able to help, encourage and advise them. There is often a sense of precariousness about local inter-faith activity due to lack of money, lack of time and lack of energy. Often our help can be very practical. We do have access to some funding. While this is not large it can be particularly useful at an early stage. It can make possible the sort of exploratory work that must be done, when conversations are leading to tentative plans. More often our help can be in advising, putting people in touch, helping them to draw on the experiences and expertise of other situations. Recently we have been involved with a new inter-faith project in Nelson, Lancashire and with Q.21 in Bradford, Yorkshire. We have been excited by the new church and inter-faith centre in Kilburn. We are very aware of the difficulties faced in translating a vision into a deep commitment on the part of small local congregations who may already feel threatened. It may be difficult but it is important that local congregations catch the vision and inter-faith work is rooted among them.

2 Inter-Faith Dialogue

2.1 We continue our work of fostering dialogue through consultations. In 1999 it is a Reform/Reformed Dialogue and involves members of the Reform Synagogues and of the United Reformed Church.

3 Millennium

3.1 We continue to be involved in planning the URC's preparation for the Millennium. We are very aware of the need for sensitivity within the church and society as we approach and celebrate the Millennium. We recognise the need to try to temper the worst excesses of Church and State. In celebrating 2000 years of the influence of Jesus we can do this without triumphalism. Equally we can do it with a sincerity that wins the respect and approval of those of different faiths.

4 Islam and the Media

4.1 We are concerned about the continuing negative attitude to Islam that is evident in large sections of the media. The newspapers in particular seem to concentrate only on the more sensational aspects of Islam. It is possible to get a very unbalanced view of Islam if there is an over-concentration on places such as Iraq. We see the need for the church to be able to give advice and interpretation of the events in Iraq. We recognise the difficulties that are faced by anyone wanting to give a fuller picture of those events and a more balanced interpretation of Islam.

5 Theology of Inter-Faith Relations

5.1 Finally, we want to foster within the URC a greater recognition that there is not a single Christian position concerning other faiths and our relationships with people from those faiths. This is true of the members of our committee. We believe that there is a legitimate diversity of views and we are enriched by sharing and exploring our differing understandings of the means and purposes of inter-faith relations and dialogue. We hope that through the debates and discussions within the committee we can stimulate debate within the United Reformed Church.

Ministries

The Committee is responsible for the ministry of word and sacraments, church related community work and lay preaching. It is concerned with central care and conditions of service, chaplaincies in industry, higher and further education and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry. It has concern for the pastoral support of ministers, church related community workers and lay preachers, including supervision, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling. It oversees the work of the National Assessment Board. It is assisted by five sub-committees.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Maintaining the roll of ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment.

Church Related Community Work Central Management Committee

It is responsible for managing the Church Related Community Work Programme under the terms agreed in the Church Related Community Work Covenant.

Lay Preaching Support Committee

It is responsible for the advocacy of lay preaching and support of lay preachers in the United Reformed Church.

Maintenance of the Ministry

Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' conditions of service through the Plan for Partnership. It is also concerned for pensions through its associated Pensions Sub-Committee.

Retired Ministers Housing

Works in Association with the United Reformed Church Ministers Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Graham Long* **Secretary:** *Revd Christine Craven*

Members: *Mrs Sally Abbott, Mr John Ellis, Mr Brian Evans, Revd Brian Jolly, Revd Sandra Lloydlangston, Revd Martha McInnes, Revd Tony Ruffell and Revd Graham Sweeney.*

1 Personalia

1.1 At the 1998 General Assembly the Committee took leave of the Revd David Hannen who had convened the Retired Ministers Housing Sub Committee, the Revd Vaughan Jones who had convened the Church Related Community Work Central Management Committee, the Revd Hazel Martell who had been secretary to the Accreditation Sub Committee and the Revd Christopher Baker who had been Secretary to the Ministries Committee. Shortly after Assembly we also took leave of our Church Related Community Work Development Officer Mr Graham Ghaleb. Changes also occurred in the office with Mrs Grace Ntiamoah moving to work in the book shop and Mrs Sandy Hurter coming in as personal assistant to the Revd Christine Craven. In line with the policy of termed service on central committees a number of other changes also took place. The Committee is immensely grateful to all who have served on its committees and within its administration.

1.2 **Michael Harrison.** It was in 1990 that the MoM Committee, then one of the Committees in the Finance Department, reported that Michael Harrison had been asked to convene a sub-committee to look at future stipend policy. It was in 1990 also that Michael was appointed to the Committee as the representative for the East Midlands Province, and in 1993 Assembly appointed Michael as Convener of the Committee.

In July 1990, the basic stipend paid to ministers was £7704 pa. Largely due to the guidance of the sub-committee set up in 1990, under Michael's convenership, the MoM Committee set about raising stipends and setting in train the processes which means that the MoM (now) Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee are recommending that the stipend for budgetary purposes in 2000 shall be £16,224. Michael retires at Assembly after a stint of duty that has lasted, in one way or another, for nearly 10 years.

We are glad to thank Michael for this long period of distinguished service to this Committee.

2 Special Category Ministry

2.1 The report to the Assembly last year indicated that in the near future it would be necessary to prioritise applications because of the increasing number being received. That time is almost upon us. At the time of this report going to press there are 28 full-time equivalent posts approved compared with a maximum of 30 and with no reviews due in 1999 there will be not be any posts leaving the list in the year 2000.

2.2 From the response to last year's report on this matter, it seems clear that the Provinces believe the management of Special Category Ministries is a task for an Assembly Committee. The Ministries Committee has therefore considered the situation and has agreed to work to the following general principles and procedures for the foreseeable future.

2.3 General principles on the nature of Special Category Ministry

2.3.1 Special Category Ministry posts were never intended to be a way of supplementing deployment figures, nor of dealing with difficult situations that sometimes arise. Their function was clearly set out in the original Assembly report. "Such ministries are those to which ministers are appointed by the District or Synod, as distinct from those to which ministers are called by the local church. Such special ministries include industrial and educational chaplains, ministers to new towns and special mission situations. Some 'special' ministries may be half scope the other half being taken up by the oversight of a small church or by secular employment."

2.3.2 The Committee upholds certain other principles set out in the last review of Special Category Ministry undertaken in 1993.

- Special Category Ministry should remain allocated to, (a) Higher Education Chaplaincy, (b) Industrial Mission, (c) New areas and mission posts, and (d) innovative ministry in unique situations in roughly equal proportions.
- Each application must be judged on its own merits.
- New areas and mission posts are set up with the intention that, once established, they will become part of normal deployment. We uphold the principle that such posts may be renewed for a second term making a maximum of ten years. In the second term part of the remit should be a movement towards inclusion within the standard deployment for the District.

- It is recognised that chaplaincy posts in education or industrial mission are unlikely to move into normal deployment.

2.4 General principles on procedure for approving Special Category Ministry posts

2.4.1 Applications will continue to be submitted, assessed and approved as at present.

2.4.2 If, after 18 months from the time of approval, a post has not been filled, there needs to be a re-examination of the post. If it seems likely to remain unfilled then it will be removed from the list of special category posts. This will provide vacancies for new applications. This is not a new proposal but until now it has not been necessary to adhere strictly to this part of the special category process. A Synod may make future applications in respect of the post so removed.

2.4.3 Vacancies will also be created as new area special categories become part of standard deployment.

2.4.4 The approval of new special category ministry posts is a time consuming exercise and so the committee does not believe the application process for any new post, which involves a visit or visits on behalf of the Ministries Committee, should begin if all the posts have been allocated.

2.4.5 Enquiries will be placed on a waiting list in order of enquiry. As soon as there is a vacancy on the list the first enquiry will be invited to make a formal application. This process implies good channels of communications between the local situations considering special category posts, Synod offices and the Assembly Ministries Committee. We propose to send regular updates of the Special Category Ministry list to all Synod offices.

2.4.6 If more than one potential application comes from any one Synod when the waiting list is in operation, the Synod will be asked to prioritise these applications.

3 The Ministry in Retirement

3.1 The Committee has received the report of the working party into the Ministry in Retirement. This now needs to be integrated with other areas of concern around this subject not within the remit of the working party. The completed report will be brought to General Assembly in 2000. In the meantime the Committee is grateful to the Revd Nelson Bainbridge and his colleagues for their work.

4 Year of Recruitment

4.1 Following the decision of last year's General Assembly to make 1999 a year of recruitment to ministry, the Committee has continued its concern to present a much sharper challenge to the churches. In January all churches received a summons to consider both how ministry is raised up amongst us and to assist in under girding the whole process of ministry formation through prayer. At the time this report is being written there has been little response to this but what we have received has been largely positive. The Committee would emphasise its view that recruitment to ministry in all its expressions will only occur when far more of our churches accept responsibility for fostering the overall gift of ministry and identifying and encouraging individuals with personal ministry gifts which should be exercised more widely.

4.2 With the co-operation of the Provinces an extra Enquirers' Conference is being arranged. An additional Conference centred at Yardley Hastings will heighten the challenge to ministry to those in the younger age groups.

5 Deployment

5.1 The Committee is working closely with the Resource Advisory Planning Group, and in association with the Moderators, to produce an agreed basis for deployment. This is a continuing task of which more is said elsewhere in the Reports to General Assembly.

6 Review of Non-Stipendiary Ministry

6.1 The Committee has embarked on a major review of the Non-Stipendiary Ministry. There was a very good response to the working party's invitation to all non-stipendiary ministers, Districts and Synods to submit evidence and an initial report has been prepared. This has indicated a number of areas that require substantial further work to be done. Arrangements are now in hand for this to be undertaken with the intention of presenting a full report to a future General Assembly.

7 United Board - Chaplains to the Forces

7.1 The number of United Reformed chaplains in place has dropped to two with the completion of her service by the Revd Jackie Petrie (RAF). The Revd Steven Whiting (Army) is serving in Northern Ireland and the Revd Michael Meachin is chaplain to the 1st Submarine Squadron based in Scotland. United Board Chaplains, of course, minister to all the Free Church Denominations. We are grateful to the chaplains from the other denominations that minister to those of our own tradition in the Forces. Once again the annual reports of the chaplains are available at the Ministries stand and your prayerful support for their ministry is requested.

7.2 The Committee would draw attention to the opportunities for local ministers to develop honouree chaplaincy links with Cadet Corps and part-time posts.

8 General

8.1 Through its Secretary the Committee has been involved in discussions with ecumenical partners on the subject of diaconal ministry. It has also shared with other Committees in matters covering training and local church leadership, and has been much involved in the discussions leading to the new mission programme '*Growing Up*'.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Robert Way* **Secretary:** *Revd Christine Craven*
Members: *Mrs Frances Caldwell, Mrs Julie McLaren,*
Mr Bert Worrall, Revds John Humphreys and Graham Robson.

1 The Committee met on three occasions during 1998.

1.1 The Sub-Committee maintains the lists of Ministers, Church Related Community Workers, and Lay Preachers. It is concerned to record additions or deletions, to consider the requests of those who seek to transfer between the stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry and the requests of ministers who wish to continue in full-time stipendiary service beyond the age of 65 years. It considers the applications of ministers and of ministers in training of other churches to be considered as ministers (or as ministers in training) of the United Reformed Church.

1.2 Experience has shown that the criteria used by the URC in these matters sometimes touch uneasily upon the expectations and assumptions of the persons concerned. They may also lie uncomfortably with the practice or vision of the denominations from which they come or the local churches, which they wish to serve. For the sake of the coherence of our church's practice, and hence of the security of those who serve her, patient discussion aimed at resolving difficulties has sometimes been necessary. The experience of this past year has persuaded us that careful thought upon matters concerning the eligibility of ministers from other churches, and especially as they are reflected in the provisions of the Manual, needs to be undertaken.

1.3 Ministers from other churches who seek accreditation to the Roll of Ministers of the URC are required to submit their application in the form of a schedule of questions to which they have provided answers. The sub-Committee has felt during the course of 1998 that this method, at least as it is executed at present, has not always brought to light all the necessary information. It is the Committee's intention to consider this matter as soon as it is able to do so.

2 Admissions to the Roll (from 1st April 1998 to 1st March 1999)

2.1 **By Ordination - Stipendiary:**
Samuel Ansa-Addo, Barbara Bennett, Georgina Brotherton, Mary Burgess, Philip Burroughs, James Dagleish, Clare Downing, Barbara Exley, Steven Faber, Jacqueline Gavin, Anthony Haws, Robert

Heathcote, Anthony Howells, Karen Knight, Owiny Laber, Timothy Lowe, Craig Muir, Christopher Parker, Pauline Parkin, Michael Perrott, Robert Pickering, Richard Pope, Michael Shrubsole, Kathryn Taylor, Nigel Watson

2.2 **By Ordination - Non-Stipendiary:**
Mair Bradley, Martyn Evans, John Hayton, Brian Hesketh, Deborah McVey, Jay Phelps, Sally-Anne Phelps, Alan Poolton, Peter Sharp, Elaine Sutherland, Glenys Wilkinson

2.3 **By Transfer from other Churches:**
Kathleen Bennett (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Gerald England (Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa), Birgit Ewald (Protestant Church of the Rhineland), David Jack (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand) Noble Samuel (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan)

3 Deletions from the Roll (from 1st April 1998 to 1st March 1999)

3.1 **By Resignation and/or Transfer to other Churches:**
Linden de Bie (to USA), Mary Davies (to Baptist Union of Wales), John Forrest (Resignation), Blair Kirkby (to Canada),

4 Changes within the Roll (from 1st April 1998 to 1st March 1999)

4.1 **Non-Stipendiary to Stipendiary:**
Hugh Graham, Anne Sardeson, Anne Stokes

5 Lay Preachers

The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been Nationally Accredited.

Northern Province:- Dorothy Harris, Richard Harris
North Western Province:- Joyce Daggars, Allan Dawes, Kathryn Lonsdale

Yorkshire Province:- Rodney Morrison
East Midlands Province:- Geoffrey Burton, Kathryn Cumming, Louise Gee, Eileen Williams, Mary Wray

West Midlands Province:- Robert Ash, Mary Whittle, Martin Withers

Eastern Province:- Andrew Berry, Connie Bonner, Sue Brisley, Pamela Cressey, Richard Eastman, Susan Helman, Patricia Lithgow,
South Western Province:- Jutta Cullis, Vivien Henderson, Patricia Lowans, Ruth McGregor, Leslie Phillips, Joyce Pipet, Ronald Pugh, Gordon Todhunter
Wessex Province:- Christine Chalstrey, Nicola Gilbert, Timothy Meachin, Mary Nance, David Poulton, Margaret Shearman, Barry Welch
Thames North Province:- Reginald Cockerell, Dorothy Courtis, John Douglas, Beryl McGowan, Kathleen Warne, Ann Woodhurst
Southern Province:- Eric Bland, Maureen Burnham, Anne Catherall, John Cornelius, Avril Hiscock, Deborah Hoddinott, Stuart Hoddinott, Joan Lello, Keith Lower, C Leslie Mather, Gillian Trew, Duncan Warmington
Wales Province:- John Bowen

6 Overseas Recruitment

The group reviewing the Overseas Recruitment Scheme has produced an interim report for the Committee. From this it is clear that personal contacts with the overseas churches already in the scheme need to be refreshed. The churches currently within the scheme are the

United Church of Christ in the USA
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the USA
Presbyterian Church of United States
United Church of Canada and
Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz (Evangelical Church of the Palatinate) in Germany.

In addition there is need for wider conversations to see whether the scheme should be broadened to include sister churches in Southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

National Assessment Board

Convener: Mr Brian Evans

Secretary: Revd Christine Craven

Members: Mrs Jean Barraclough, Miss Margaret Compton, Mrs Janine Lawley, Mrs Shirley Moss, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Ms Elaine Gentles, Mr David Coaker, Mr Monty Helmn, Mr Alan Small, Dr Chris Whitehead, Revd Alison Davies, Revd Denise Megson, Revd Lythan Nevard, Revd Elizabeth Scopes, Revd Graham Cook, Revd Ivor Rees, Revd Reginald Rooke, Revd Howard Starr and Revd Derek Wales.

1 Four Assessment Conferences were held in the year September 1997 to July 1998. An Assessment Conference was held in December 1998.

2 The figures below show the numbers of candidates and the number accepted for training for this period with comparative figures for 96/97.

1997/98

Stipendiary service:

21 candidates 20 accepted for training

Non-stipendiary service:

19 candidates 17 accepted for training

1996/97

Stipendiary service:

25 candidates 22 accepted for training

Non-stipendiary service:

18 candidates 13 accepted for training

3 The number of candidates coming for assessment at present is smaller than it has been for a number of years. However it is encouraging that the proportion of candidates recommended for training is higher, perhaps because of the more thorough pre-Assessment procedures that are now being operated. The figures for 93/94 and 94/95 are offered for comparison.

1993/94

Stipendiary service:

32 candidates 23 accepted for training

Non-stipendiary service:

15 candidates 12 accepted for training

1994/95

Stipendiary service:

27 candidates 20 accepted for training

Non-stipendiary service:

18 candidates 9 accepted for training

4 The numbers of candidates accepted for training has remained fairly constant over the last few years but that level will not produce the number of ordinations we require to achieve the future pattern of ministerial numbers proposed by Mission Council. Resolution 49 from General Assembly 1998, making 1999 a year of recruitment, was certainly timely; please pray that it may bear fruit and that the commitment to recruitment will continue in our churches.

5 At the Board's Annual Meeting in September, we had a valuable session on Equal Opportunities. This is a particularly difficult and important area for the Board. Many would feel, for example, that the view of a candidate's partner is relevant to our assessment process in a way that it would not be in secular employment. At the same meeting, additional guidelines were agreed on the writing of the reflective reports (on church meetings, District Councils and Synods) which now accompany the application of each candidate.

6 The annual November consultation at Windermere once again provided valuable training both for new Board members and for members of provincial Ministries Committees; as well as helping to promote mutual understanding between assessors at national and at provincial level.

7 In consultation with the Provinces and the colleges, the Board is looking at a revision of our annual schedule of Assessment. There are good reasons for arguing that the candidates' training interviews would be better held outside the framework of an Assessment Conference, in a single Training Conference, to be held at the end of April, and attended only by those candidates who had been accepted for training. This possibility is the subject of discussions between the Board and the Training Committee.

Church Related Community Workers Management Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Susan Flynn* **Secretary:** *Mr John Boddy*

Members: *Mr Simon Loveitt, Revd Peter Crutchley Jones,
Revd Alison Hall and Revd Clifford Wilton.*

1 There has been a delay in making an appointment to the Church Related Community Work Development Worker post and in the meantime the committee is grateful to Daphne Beale, a Church Related Community Worker, and Revd Ernest Crutchley for undertaking the support and maintenance of the work on a part-time temporary arrangement.

2 The report to Mission Council on the Church Related Community Work programme conducted by the Revd Graham Cook and Bob Day has strongly affirmed the ministry of our Church Related Community Workers.

2.1 The review recognised three of the five marks of mission in the ministry of Church Related Community Workers and made a series of recommendations. Two indicate significant changes in the Church Related Community Worker programme:-

- (i) the number of Church Related Community Workers should increase to 30. Because the expansion involves recruitment, training and funding, the Committee anticipates that it will be several years before all 30 are in place and the full benefits of this expansion of the programme begin to be widely felt.
- (ii) The management of the Church Related Community Worker programme should be devolved to the Synods within the immediate future.

3 Another important developmental aspect of the Church Related Community Worker programme is in regard to the training of students. Responsibility for the Church Related Community Workers training organised in conjunction with the Faith in Living course at Luther King House, Manchester is currently being clarified, as is the need to support other more local training opportunities. Church Related Community Worker support for the 5 students is being provided by members of the committee.

4 As part of the response to the need to recruit more Church Related Community Workers, community workers from other denominations may now apply for certificates of eligibility to transfer to the list of United Reformed Church accredited Church Related Community Workers. Thus far two Church of Scotland deaconesses have applied and been given certificates of eligibility.

5 It has not been an easy time for the Church Related Community Work programme in a year of so much change and potential change. Thanks are due to all who have worked hard to see these changes through, particularly the Secretary John Boddy.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Simon Swalles **Secretary:** Mr Clive C Willis

Members: Mrs Margaret Waller, Mrs Sheila Woodcock,
Revd Graham Cook, Revd John Pugh, Mr Graham Stacy

1 This committee continues to be responsible for policy in matters of the provision of retirement housing for ministers and their spouses. It uses the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited as its agent for the implementation of policy and the practical steps associated with the provision of housing.

2 Activity was high during 1998, with 14 retiring ministers being housed and one widow of a minister who died in service. In addition, 5 existing tenants were re-housed into properties more suitable to their changed circumstances. Sales of property reached a figure of 18 and our total stock of properties owned or managed rose by 3.

Number of Properties

As at 1st January 1998	312
Purchased in 1998	19
Received as a legacy	2
	333
LESS Properties sold in 1998	18
Number of properties as at 31st Dec. 1998	315
Of which:	
Unoccupied	NIL
For Sale	6
Occupied by - Retired Ministers	198
- Widows	105
- non-URC tenants	4
Freehold Ground Rents	2
	315

At the year end 2 properties were in the process of purchase and 3 applicants were seeking a property for purchase.

3 Properties are purchased in the name of either URC Trust or the Society but in all cases are managed by the officers of the Society. Where tenants have a financial stake in the property this is recognised by means of a Declaration of Trust.

4 The maximum contributions made by the Society or the Trust are determined annually on a county-by-county basis by reference to average

prices for semi-detached houses during the preceding year. More detailed information about these maximum amounts is available from the Secretary. It should be noted that:-

4.1 Where applicants have the financial resources to do so, they may put in their own funds so as to permit the county maximum amounts to be exceeded by up to 50%. This is known as the joint ceiling figure.

4.2 Applicants wishing to have a retirement property costing in excess of the joint ceiling figure should consult with the Secretary.

4.3 These figures relate to total purchase cost, which includes not only the agreed purchase price, but also the cost of any repairs or improvements identified as being necessary at the time when the property is surveyed.

4.4 The maximum amount of contribution is not provided as of right to each applicant; the determining factor in deciding the amount is how much capital is owned by the applicant and spouse.

5.1 In 1998 the standard rent was £65 per calendar month. This sum is the rent payable by those who are provided with the maximum contribution when acquiring their property. If less than the maximum contribution is provided, the rent payable is reduced proportionately.

5.2 For 1999 the standard rent has been set at £67 per calendar month.

6 Rental income for 1998 was £222,000 (as compared with £198,000 for 1997). This sum was credited to Property Management Account, from which all costs relating to maintenance, repair, insurance and administration are taken. In 1998 these costs totalled £259,000, thus giving a shortfall for the year of £37,000 on Property Management Account. However, General Revenue Account, which includes grants, donations, legacies and

profits on sale of properties, showed a surplus of £926,000, thus enabling our Reserves to increase by £889,000 from these sources.

7 The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year. These amounted to £786,000.

8	£	1997 £
During the year we spent on 20 new properties (1997 - 15)	1,216,000	891,000
We sold 18 properties (1997 - 15) for	759,000	640,000
Thus net investment in property was	<u>457,000</u>	<u>251,000</u>
We received cash legacies, donations, net rents etc. of	509,000	620,000
and thus were able to reduce borrowings by	<u>52,000</u>	<u>369,000</u>

9 It is anticipated that during 1999 assistance will be required for 12 retiring ministers. After allowing for possible need for widows or for rehousing it would be prudent to expect up to 18 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to

£1.25 million and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.

10 During 1998 visits were made by the officers of the Society to approximately 32 applicants, tenants or other properties.

11 We continue to rely heavily upon, and are grateful for, the commitment of those members of local congregations who generously give oversight to our retirement properties and who assist those who live in them. We would like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to volunteer their assistance in this respect.

12 Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre under the auspices of Ministries. In 1998 three courses were run - in May, October and November and three more are planned for this year. The housing sessions are designed to be of benefit to all, regardless of whether or not financial assistance with housing will be needed. In addition, private discussions on individual needs are provided.

Lay Preaching Support Committee

Convener: *Revd Sandy Maller (National Lay Preaching Commissioner)*

Secretary: *Mrs Judith Johnson*

Members: *Dr Berta Doodson, Dr Robert Pettigrew,
Mr Hugh Barlow, Mr Les Phillips*

1 The committee has met twice since the appointment of Revd Sandy Maller as National Lay Preaching Commissioner. The main item of business has been preparation of the 1999 residential consultation for District and Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners.

2 The planned future work programme includes job descriptions for Commissioners, preparing recruitment material, guidelines for District recognition, consideration of accompanied self-appraisal and in-service training.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Michael A B Harrison

Secretary: Revd Peter Grimshaw

Miss Margaret Atkinson, Mr Victor Hughff (Convener, Pensions Executive),

Mrs Barbara Martin, Mr Graham Stacy, Revd Tony J Wilkinson.

1.1 Review of Ministerial Remuneration. In April 1997 the Sub-Committee appointed a Review Group to consider "every aspect of ministerial remuneration for ministers both in service and retired." The members of the Review Group were:

Mr Howard Bridge (Convener)

Mrs Althea Duncan

Mr William McLaughlin

Mrs Jill Strong

Revd Simon Thomas

Revd Tony Wilkinson

1.2 The Group sought information from a wide range of people and organisations and, in particular, sent a questionnaire to all serving ministers. The questionnaire asked for information about manse, car, other benefits and additional earnings and also invited comments. 465 questionnaires were returned (over 50% of those sent out).

1.3 The convener of the Review Group presented its report to the MoM Sub-Committee in October 1998, with a number of recommendations and suggestions for further study.

1.4 As a result of its initial discussion of the report the Sub-Committee decided to finalise at its meeting in January 1999 its own report, recommendations about ministerial remuneration and the consequent resolutions for consideration by General Assembly. In December 1998, the Resource Planning Advisory Group asked a number of committees (including the MoM Sub-Committee) to reconsider planned expenditure for the year 2000, by the same time new evidence about the comparability of stipends had come to light. These factors led the MoM Sub-Committee Officers to confer afresh with the Review Group about the basic stipend level; agreement was reached.

1.5 The events mentioned in 1.4 above prompted afresh the suggestion that, as the MoM Sub-Committee plays a major role in determining how some 80% of the URC's national budget is spent, the work of both the Sub-Committee and the Resource Planning Advisory Group would be facilitated if the Convener of the MoM Sub-

Committee attended RPAG meetings; the present Convener hopes that the current handicap of second-hand contact and indirect representation on RPAG will be removed for his successor.

1.6 The main change, recommended by the Review Group and accepted by the Sub-Committee, is the re-introduction of children's allowances where a minister's total **family** income is not more than £2,000 above the level of stipend set by General Assembly. This and other features of the Review Group's report and the Sub-Committee's conclusions appear below.

1.7 The Sub-Committee wishes to place on record its appreciation of the work carried out by the Review Group.

2 Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

2.1 In order to implement the payment of children's allowances the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration will need to be amended. Resolution 53 does this.

3 Stipends

3.1 In accordance with the principles set out in the Annex below, it will be recommended that for budgetary purposes the stipend level for the year 2000 should be £16,224.

4 Pensions

4.1 1998 was a quiet year for the Pension Fund. Investment values fluctuated significantly, but ended up some 10% higher than at the beginning of the year.

4.2 Of more significance than the events of the year were the changes in prospect.

4.3 While not affecting our fund directly, murmurings about the discontinuance of SERPS concern us. Like all schemes that involve level contributions irrespective of age, SERPS is very

good value for those in higher age groups, which are subsidised by the young, and the average age of our ministers is over 50. Should SERPS contributions be ended the Pensions Executive will seek the best alternative route into pensions for the money saved.

4.4 There are proposals in the Annex for increases in fringe benefits from the Pension Fund.

4.2.1 The increase in the lump sum payable on death in service is shown as provided only where there is a spouse or dependent children. The current provision of twice salary has to be paid, whether or not the minister leaves a spouse or family, and this sometimes leads to the Fund's resources going to a beneficiary in no way affected financially by the minister's death.

4.2.2 Dependent children's benefits are already provided for in the Pension Fund rules, at the rate of some £300 p.a. per child, when a minister dies. This is not means tested. If the recommendations in this report are adopted this amount will change to £800 p.a. for the first and £400 for each of the other dependent children. The Pensions Executive would like to see a further extension of this benefit to include dependent children of ministers who die in retirement.

4.3 The Pensions Executive will prepare the necessary changes to the rules to be made at the Assembly in 2000, together with alterations to cover part-time service on a fully proportionate basis. In the interim discretionary funds can be used.

4.4 It has already been agreed that of the 50 ministers in the Congregational Church of Scotland, those who are eligible and wish to join the fund will be welcomed sometime soon, at the same rate of contribution from the MoM Fund as existing members. The financial impact will depend on their ages, and has not yet been calculated, but it is not expected to be great.

5 Officers

5.1 The work of the Officers has continued as outlined in last year's report, although the volume of business has been smaller.

6 Membership of the Sub-Committee and Personalia

6.1 The Sub-Committee is a small committee. At General Assembly 1999 three of its members, including both its Convener and its Secretary, will come to the end of their periods of service. When future appointments are made, periods of service need to be adjusted to ensure the smoothest possible change of personnel.

6.2 Finally, a special word of appreciation for another leaver, a non-member but regular attender and contributor: the Revd Bill Wright has been guiding (and goading!) the Sub-Committee and its predecessor for more than twenty years; his vision; encouragement and friendly cheerfulness will be much missed.

RESOLUTION 52

Maintenance of the Ministry

Assembly receives the report of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, set out on page 106 of the Book of Reports, and endorses the programme.

RESOLUTION 53**Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration**

Assembly amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the addition of the following paragraph:

6.1.5 Children's allowances: Where a minister has one or more financially dependent children below the age of 24 years, an annual non-pensionable allowance of £800 in respect of the first dependent child and £400 in respect of each additional dependent child will be paid, provided that the minister certifies (on a form provided) that the total annual income of the family (excluding state children's benefits) is expected to be less than £2,000 in excess of the basic stipend;

6.1.5.1 Any casual earnings of, or educational grants for, dependent children, or housing or fixed car allowances paid by the Church, may be disregarded as family income;

6.1.5.2 The allowance will be paid in accordance with the circumstances pertaining at the date that the certificate is signed. Any subsequent change, e.g. when the family income changes, will be disregarded in the current year; pro-rata grants may be claimed in the year of the birth of a baby, and in the year in which a child ceases to be dependent, or attains the age of 24;

6.1.5.3 The first year in which this allowance will be paid is 2000. The sums of £800, £400 and £2,000 in para 6.1.5 will be reviewed by the MoM committee for each subsequent year;

6.1.5.4 It is envisaged that forms will be issued in February of each year, and grants will be paid through the first available payroll run after the form is received in the MoM office.

ANNEX 1**Report on Ministerial Remuneration****1 Introduction**

1.1 This report summarises the outcome of a review of ministerial remuneration carried out by a group under the chairmanship of Mr Howard Bridge ("the Review Group"). It also reflects the conclusions of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee ("the Sub-Committee") and sets out the Sub-Committee's recommendations to General Assembly for action.

1.2 The report is set out under the following headings:

- Stipends
- Ministers' housing
- Pensions and retirement housing
- Other matters

2 Stipends

2.1 It recommended that

2.1.1 with effect from 1 January 2000, children's allowances be introduced at the rate of £800 for one dependent child and £400 for each additional dependent child where total family income is not expected to be more than the ministerial stipend plus £2,000,

2.1.2 future increases in stipend should be calculated by reference to increases in the Index of National Average Earnings, and

2.1.3 the stipend for the year 2000 should be £15,600 plus the increase in the index of National Average Earnings for the 12 months ended 30 September 1999.

General principles

2.2 The Review Group discussed at some length the idea of "stipend" compared with the conventional concept of "salary" and "rate for the job". It came to the conclusion that the view of stipend as relief from undue financial worry as opposed to a salary as payment for services rendered is still relevant today. Consideration of remuneration was therefore focused on the level of income which would enable a minister to follow his or her call without imposing a high degree of financial worry and how this level may vary with circumstances and time. The remuneration structure was discussed and alternatives, including linking pay to a traditional hierarchical organisation structure, were considered. The Review Group concluded that the present structure should be retained.

2.3 The Sub-Committee agrees with these conclusions.

Children's allowances

2.4 The Review Group considered a number of possible categories which might justify variations to basic stipend; these included location, age, experience, dependent relatives or disability. It also consulted the moderators with regard to financial hardship experienced by serving ministers. The only issue raised by moderators was the difficulties encountered by ministers with children, especially where the stipend is the sole source of family income.

2.5 Having considered all the different claims for variations in the basic stipend the Review Group was of the view that none should be recognised, with the single exception of the financial strain of bringing up a family with the stipend as the sole income. It therefore recommended that children's allowances should be reintroduced, at the rate of £800 per annum for one dependent child and £400 per annum for each additional dependent child, for families where the only significant family income was the ministerial stipend. For this purpose other income below £2,000 would be considered insignificant. The Sub-Committee supports the Review Group's conclusion. It anticipates that the allowance would be paid annually based on a claim to be submitted by the minister.

2.6 It is difficult to estimate accurately the cost of introducing children's allowances without sending a detailed questionnaire to every minister. However, based on estimates obtained from Provincial Moderators, the Review Group calculated an annual cost of approximately £150,000 (including the cost of employer's National Insurance contribution).

Annual increases in stipend

2.7 For many years, annual increases in stipends were based upon the changes in the Retail Prices Index ("RPI") with infrequent additional increases to recognise the fact that in the country as a whole wages and salaries increased at a higher rate than the RPI. Since 1997 stipends have been increased by the increase in the RPI plus 11/2% with a view to keeping more in line with national earnings. The Review Group recommended that increases in stipends should in future be based on the increase in the index of National Average Earnings ("NAE"). This would mean that, by and large, ministers would be in a similar situation to their church members. The comparison is not exact because the NAE index includes a wide spread of different types of employment in a range of industries whereas a church congregation may be heavily weighted towards those living on pensions or social security benefits. Nevertheless, the Review Group and the

Sub-Committee consider that the NAE index is the most appropriate index to use if we are to avoid falling out of line with remuneration levels in the country as a whole.

Stipend level

2.8 The stipend for the year 1999 has already been set at £15,600. In order to arrive at a conclusion as to whether this was the right base figure from which to calculate the stipend for year 2000 and subsequently, the Review Group considered the following factors:

2.8.1 the change in level of stipends since the last major review compared with movements in the NAE index;

2.8.2 the level of stipends for ministers in other churches particularly Methodist, Baptist and Anglican; and

2.8.3 the level of remuneration in other "caring" professions such as teachers, social workers and nurses

2.9 If stipends had been increased by reference to increases in the NAE index since the last major review in 1991, the stipend for 1999 would have amounted to approximately £16,000, some £400 higher than the actual level. However, in the 1991 review children's allowances were deemed to be covered by the basic stipend whereas in the Review Group's current proposals they are additional.

2.10 Comparisons with Methodist, Baptist and Anglican stipends are not straightforward because pension arrangements differ. It is understood that in the Baptist Church, local stipend supplements are more common, and Anglican ministers do not retain all additional earnings. However, making broad allowances for these differences, a URC stipend of £15,600 for 1999 appears to be higher than Methodist and Baptist stipends for that year and not significantly out of line with Anglican stipends.

2.11 Comparisons with remuneration in other "caring" professions are more difficult because of the fact that most URC ministers are provided with a manse. The Review Group took a calculation used by the Anglican Church in arriving at £7,100 as the salary equivalent of housing provision and obtained details of the salary scales of teachers, nurses and social workers for 1997. They compared this information with the 1997 URC stipend of £14,232 plus £7000 and based on this comparison concluded that the 1997 URC stipend compared reasonably well with remuneration in the "caring" professions. Increases in stipend since 1997 have been broadly similar to the increase in the NAE index.

2.12 In the light of the above, and after discussions between the Review Group and the Sub-Committee, it was concluded that £15,600 was a reasonable base figure to which to apply the increase in the NAE index for the purpose of calculating the stipend for year 2000.

Additional earnings

2.13 The questionnaire circulated to all serving ministers included questions about additional earnings. The questions did not seek information about spouses' earnings and distinguished between full-time and part-time ministers since the latter might be expected to have significant earnings from other activities. The responses showed additional earnings of full-time ministers varying from zero to £8,000 per annum. Despite the Assembly resolution urging churches not to pay supplements a significant number of ministers still receive additional earnings from this source.

2.14 About 20% of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they pay between 10% and 100% of their additional earnings to the local church. It is understood that Anglican ministers do not retain all additional earnings.

2.15 Views on additional earnings vary considerably. Comments in response to the questionnaire ranged from:

"I do not see how other monies can be received (e.g from weddings) if the basic stipend is for "full time" ministry (ie weddings must by definition come within that ministry)" to
"Any attempt to make wedding fees etc. go towards stipend would be vigorously resisted. I would probably refuse to do them".

2.16 The Review Group recognised that no proposal regarding additional earnings would be acceptable to everyone. However, it concluded that it was appropriate to propose changes which would even out anomalies and which would also enable those with high additional earnings to contribute to the cost of introducing children's allowances. It therefore recommended that full time ministers should be asked to pay to central funds all their additional earnings over £2,000 per annum. The Sub-Committee, whilst recognising the concerns of the Review Group, concluded that the introduction of this proposal would be too contentious to gain widespread acceptance and would also be very complex to operate in practice. Accordingly, it does not support the Review group's recommendation. However, it draws attention to Section 7 in the Plan

for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration which refers to additional paid work and includes the following:

"Where this work, in the view of the District Council and Provincial Moderator, can be performed without detriment to the pastoral care of church, congregation and local church witness, the additional remuneration may be retained by the minister or CRCW involved, provided that the work does not exceed the equivalent of one working day per week. Where more than one day per week is involved, the MoM Committee may reduce the stipend by an appropriate amount after consultation with the District Council and Provincial Moderator."

2.17 The Sub-Committee believes that District Councils should endeavour to apply the above provisions more consistently in future.

3 Ministers' housing

3.1 The Review Group recommended that:

3.1.1 the Manse system should continue; and

3.1.2 District Councils should be reminded of their duty to ensure that Terms of Settlement, including housing provision, are agreed with reference to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration before concurrence is given to the call of a minister; and that the Council has responsibility to ensure that such provision is maintained throughout the period of the pastorate.

3.2 A considerable aspect of ministerial remuneration is the provision of housing. A report to the 1991 General Assembly envisaged a time when the stipend would be increased significantly in exchange for ministers taking responsibility for their own housing provision. The difficulties identified in such a change resulted in the proposals not being put to the Assembly except for information. Nevertheless, the report stated "It is important to ensure that a scheme which addresses ministers' expectations over housing is not deferred indefinitely and appropriate arrangements are fully discussed by the church and implemented as soon as practicable."

3.3 A number of respondents to the Review Group's questionnaire expressed concern at aspects of the existing manse system. In particular, the prospect of leaving a manse on retirement and worries associated with having no accommodation to go to, together with reservations about the retired ministers' housing scheme. There were also concerns about the management of manses during their occupancy by serving ministers.

3.4 The Review Group considered this issue again at some length and discussed, in outline only, some significant additions or modifications to the present manse system. The Group reported that it is unclear whether the desire for a change is sufficiently strong to justify the work involved in developing a workable system which addresses the many difficulties that would arise. It concluded that the manse system should continue, but that improvements should be made.

3.5 The Group did, however, recommend that the Church should be given an opportunity of expressing its mind on the matter. The Sub-Committee considers that it needs to undertake more work before bringing the issue to General Assembly for debate.

3.6 The Review Group sought information from provinces about their policies for manse provision. The responses showed a wide variation. The Group concluded that it would benefit both ministers and those responsible for providing manses if there were clear, nationally agreed, guidelines based on current best practice and recommended a list of benefits that should be included in such guidelines. The Sub-Committee accepts this proposal and will be consulting with provinces with a view to agreeing the terms of a statement on national manse guidelines.

3.7 An analysis of responses to the Review Group's questionnaire revealed that in only 75% of cases were accommodation arrangements perceived by ministers to be satisfactory and in line with Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration guidelines. It seems from this that some local churches are failing to fulfil their agreed obligations and that District Councils are failing to perform their function of monitoring and applying the arrangements of the Plan. The second recommendation set out above, in paragraph 3.1.2, is intended to encourage District Councils to be more involved in manse arrangements so that the level of satisfaction can be improved.

4 Pensions and retirement housing

4.1 The Review Group carried out a very thorough review of the URC pension scheme making comparisons with both occupational pension schemes in general and with other denominational pension schemes.

4.2 The URC scheme provides for a pension calculated by reference to the basic stipend at time of retirement and may be compared with "final salary" schemes. The initial comparison suggested that the

terms of the URC scheme are generally similar to occupational final salary schemes and appear to meet the minimum levels advocated by independent advisers. However, the Review Group has pointed out that there is a major flaw in this comparison because stipends are not the same as salaries in that they do not include any element to provide for housing.

4.3 Before retirement the basic remuneration of a minister consists of two elements - stipend and the provision of housing (either actual accommodation plus certain housing expenses paid on the minister's behalf or a housing allowance in lieu). After retirement the URC provisions consist of a pension (related to the level of basic stipend), plus assistance with retirement housing for those ministers who do not have the financial resources (including their spouse's resources) to provide themselves with adequate housing. Also, after retirement pensioners have to fund those house running and maintenance costs which were previously met by local churches.

4.4 From replies to the Review Group's questionnaire it was evident that, among serving ministers, there are two major sources of anxiety about retirement housing. The first is that the provision is "means tested" and the second is that because housing assistance is not available until age 65, long serving ministers are hindered from taking early retirement.

4.5 The issue, identified by the Review Group, of the impact of the manse system on the financial provision for ministers in retirement is a very profound one. The Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee has commenced a strategic review of the arrangements for retired ministers' housing. When it has been completed the Sub-Committee hopes to conduct, in conjunction with the Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee, a thorough review of all aspects of the provision of retirement benefits through pensions and housing assistance. This review will be the subject of a further report to General Assembly in due course.

4.6 Apart from the above major matter, the Review Group pointed out a number of items where existing pension provisions could be improved to bring them more into line with current practice. The Sub-Committee agrees with these proposals which are summarised below:

4.6.1 Increase the lump sum death in service benefit, where the member leaves a spouse or dependent children, from two times stipend to three times stipend.

4.6.2 Normal retirement to be available at 65 years of age or 40 years service whichever is earlier.

4.6.3 Increase the annual payment in respect of any children following death in service to the level of children's allowances which are payable to ministers in service (section 2 above).

4.6.4 Improve the pensions payable to ex-Congregational and Churches of Christ ministers in respect of their years of service prior to Union.

4.7 The cost of the first three proposals is difficult to estimate with accuracy but on the basis of past experience is not considered to be significant in the context of the URC's overall financial situation.

4.8 The substance of the fourth matter above was largely addressed in proposals, reported to the 1998 General Assembly, which increased these pensions to 95% of the ex-Presbyterian level. The Sub-Committee hopes to be able to deal with the final 5% gap in the near future when the actuarial implications have been researched and costed.

5 Other matters

Health checks

5.1 The Review Group considered a suggestion that, in view of the strain placed on their health by the demands of the job, Moderators should undergo regular medical checks. The Group recognised this as a concern for all ministers, not just Moderators.

The cost of introducing a comprehensive scheme of regular medical checks, similar to those operated by many commercial companies, would be prohibitive. The Review Group suggested that all ministers should be encouraged to use the "well man/woman" clinic services offered by GPs. The Sub-Committee agrees with this suggestion.

Taxation advice

5.2 The Review Group recommended that the Church should appoint an independent tax adviser to ensure that full advantage is taken of any arrangements to minimise the tax payable by ministers.

5.3 The Sub-Committee agrees with this suggestion and is taking steps to make an appropriate appointment. The terms of reference for the adviser will be to give advice to the denomination as a whole and will specifically exclude giving advice to individual ministers.

Nominations

This committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of URC representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for provincial moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Glyn Jenkins

Secretary: Mr Desmond Curry

Provincial Representatives:

I Miss Janet Turner	VII Revd Elizabeth Caswell
II Revd Geoff Tolley	VIII Revd Ray Adams
III Revd Angus Duncan	IX Revd George Thomas
IV Mr Brian Evans	X Revd Adrian Bulley
V Revd Christopher White	XI Mrs Christine Meekison
VI Mr Simon Rowntree	XII Mrs Barbara Willis

with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary

1 ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 The Review Group for the East Midlands - Synod Moderator was convened by Mrs Ruth Clarke and recommended that the appointment of Revd Malcolm Hanson be extended until 30 Sept 2003.

1.2 The Review Group for the Southern - Synod Moderator was convened by Revd Sandra Lloydlangston and recommended that the appointment of Revd David Helyar be extended until 31 Aug 2001.

1.3 The Review Group for the Secretary for Training, convened by Revd David Helyar recommended that the appointment of Revd Dr Lesley Husslebee be extended until 31 Aug 2002.

1.4 The Review Group for the Director of the Windermere Centre, convened by Revd Dr Jack McKelvey recommended that the appointment of Revd Peter McIntosh be extended until 30 June 2003.

1.5 The following appointment group has been convened:

1.5.1 Church Related Community Work Development Officer - convened by Revd Graham Cook

1.5.2 Pilots Development Officer - convened by Revd Chris Baker

1.5.3 Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education - convened by Revd Glyn Jenkins

1.5.4 North Western Synod Moderator - convened by Angus Duncan.

2 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES and Sub-COMMITTEES

Notes:

- 1 The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
- 2 Officers and members appointed since Assembly 1998 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 1999 is invited to appoint for the first time. (#) indicates a representative of the Scottish Congregational Church who is being co-opted until General Assembly 2000.
- 3 The date in brackets following the names indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
- 4 Many committees have cross-representation [e.g the Ecumenical Committee has representatives from Doctrine, Prayer & Worship, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work etc.] These are internal appointments and are not listed here.

2.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt [2001]
Secretary: Office & Personnel Manager
Provincial Representative for forthcoming Assembly
Provincial Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting
by Provincial Representative for Assembly two years hence.
Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

2.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Ms Gabrielle Cox [2002]
Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society
Revd David Fraser [2000] Mr George Morton [2001] Dr Sue Brisley [2002]
Revd Ken Cox [2003]** Revd Raymond Singh [2003]** Mrs Helen Warmington [2003]**
Mrs Marva Ward [2003]** Miss Catriona Waterson [2003]** Revd Alan Patterson #

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Graham Cook [2003]**
Secretary: Secretary for Communications
Mrs Pat Stannard [2000] Revd David Coleman [2000] Revd Paul Brewerton [2001]
Mr Richard Lathaen [2001] Ms Kirsty Thorpe [2001] Revd Michael Forster [2001]
Mr John East [2001] Revd Peter Moth [2001] Revd Roger Hall [2001]

2.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Colin Thompson [2001]
Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks [2000]
Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2001] Ms Kirsty Thorpe [2002] Mr Colin Ferguson [2002]
Revd Thelma Cole [2003]** Revd Dr David Peel [2003]** Revd Nadim Nassar [2003]**
Revd John Young #

2.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Bob Andrews [2001]
Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Ms Bethan Galliers [2000] Mrs Jackie Marsh [2001] Revd Richard Mortimer [2001]
Revd John Rees [2001] Revd Mary Buchanan [2002] Revd Philip Jones [2002]
Revd Elizabeth Nash [2002] Revd Stuart Jackson representing the Synod of Wales *
Revd Peter Arthur [2000]** Revd John R Smith #

2.5.1 ECUMENICAL - OVERSEAS EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd John Crocker [2003]**
Secretary: Secretary for International Relations
Mrs Virginia Becher [2001] Mr Peter Bryant [2002] Revd Keith Forecast [2002]
Revd Keith Riglin [2002] Revd Gwenneth Collins [2003]**

2.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Revd Nannette Lewis Head [2003]**
Secretary: Ms Ruth Norton [2003]**
Mrs Lucille King [2000] Ms Georgette Margrett [2001] Revd Wilf Bahadur [2001]
Miss Stella Salmon [2002] Revd Derek Hopkins [2002] *To be advised [2003]***

2.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Honorary Treasurer
Secretary: The Chief Accountant
Mr Bill Grieve [2000] Miss Catriona Waterson [2001] Mr Alan Duncan [2002]
Mr Gordon Latham [2003]** Revd John Piper [2003]** Convener of the URC Trust

2.8 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Mrs Daphne Beale [2003]**
Secretary: Revd Brenda Willis [2000]
Mrs Linda Hopley Ms Sarah King Revd Jonathan Dean
Revd David M Taylor [2002]

2.9 LIFE and WITNESS (formerly Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness)

Convener: Revd Frank Beattie [2003]**

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Revd Bob Day [2000]

Revd Peter Ball [2002]

Revd Kenneth Forbes #

Miss Tina Arthur [2001]

Revd Suzanne Hamnet [2003]**

*To be advised [2003]***

Mr David Williams [2002]

Ms Sheila Thatcher [2003]**

*To be advised [2003]***

2.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS - STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Julian Macro [2000]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mr Tom Hamilton [2000]

Mr Frank Dale [2003]**

Mr Geoffrey Wood [2000]

Mrs Sheila Yates [2003]**

Mrs Susan Wilkinson [2002]

2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Graham Long [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Tony Ruffell [2000]

Revd Brian Jolly [2001]

Revd Tjarda Murray [2003]**

Revd Graham Sweeney [2000]

Ms Sally Abbott [2002]

Miss Marjory King #

Revd Martha McInnes [2001]

Revd Roz Harrison [2003]**

Convener of National Assessment Board

2.10.1 MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Robery Way [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Julie McLaren [2001]

Mr Peter Mann [2003]**

Revd Graham Robson [2001]

Revd Roberta Rominger [2003]**

Mrs Frances Caldwell [2002]

2.10.2 MINISTRIES - CRCW Management Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Susan Flynn [2002]

Secretary: Mr John Boddy

Mr Simon Loveitt

Revd Clifford Wilton [2002]

Revd Alison Hall [2002]

Revd Peter Cruchley-Jones [2002]

2.10.3 MINISTRIES - LAY PREACHING Sub Committee

Lay Preaching Commissioner: *To be advised [2003]***

And four members elected by the Lay Preacher Commissioners Consultation

2.10.4 MINISTRIES - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Geoffrey Wood [2003]**

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings [2003]**

Revd Tony Wilkinson [2000]

The Honorary Treasurer

Miss Margaret Atkinson [2000]** Mrs Jill Strong [2003]**

2.10.5 MINISTRIES - RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING - Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Simon Swailes [2002]

Secretary: Mr Clive Willis [2003]**

Mrs Margaret Waller [2001]

Revd Graham Cook [2002]

Mrs Sheila Woodcock [2001]

The Honorary Treasurer

Revd John Pugh [2002]

Note: Properties are managed by a Company viz: RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY LTD Details of the Members of the Board etc may be obtained from the Secretary: Mr Clive Willis at Church House

2.10.6 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Brian Evans [2001]

Retiring 2000 Mrs J Baraclough, Revd Ivor Rees, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Mrs Flo Humes-Dixon,
Revd Howard Starr

Retiring 2001 Revd Derek Wales, Revd Reginald Rooke

Retiring 2002 Mr Alan Small, Revd Denise Megson, Miss Margaret Compton, Revd Alison Davis,
Mrs Janine Lawley, Dr Christopher Whitehead

Retiring 2003 Mr David Coaker, Ms Elaine Gentles, Mr Monty Helmn, Revd Lythan Nevard

Retiring 2004 Revd Marilyn Allen **, Revd Craig Bowman **, Revd Graham Hoslett **,
Revd Kevin Watson **, Revd Ray Adams **

2.10.7 PANEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES - CRCW - Sub-Section

Mrs Daphne Beale [2000]

Mrs Ann Sutcliffe [2000]

Mr Graham Ghaleb [2003]**

Revd Peter Loveitt [2000]

Revd Bob Day [2003]**

Mrs Kathleen Stephenson [2003]**

Revd Kate McIlhagga [2000]

Mr Andrew Edwards [2003]**

Ms Allison Trimble [2003]**

2.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Glyn Jenkins [2002]

Secretary: Mr Desmond Curry [2001]

Synod Representatives: Miss Janet Turner [1], Revd Geoff Tolley [2], Revd Angus Duncan [3], Mr John Seager [4]*, Revd Christopher White [5], Mr Simon Rowntree [6], Revd Elizabeth Caswell [7], Revd Ray Adams [8], Revd George Thomas [9], Revd Adrian Bulley [10], Mrs Christine Meekison [11], Mrs Barbara Willis [12], Revd John Arthur #, with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary

2.12 PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd David Jenkins [2003]**

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd Arnold Harrison [2003]

Revd Jean Forster [2000]

Mrs Joan Staples [2000]

Dr Anthea Kaan [2001]

Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee

The Honorary Treasurer

2.12.1 PASTORAL WELFARE -Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Nelson Bainbridge [2003]**

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

2.13 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Proctor [2003]**

Secretary: The Secretary for Training

Revd Sandra Dears [2000]

Dr Iain Frew [2000]

Dr Tony Jeans [2001]

Revd Ruth Ball [2001]

Mrs Helen Brown [2002]

Revd Roy Lowes [2002]

Dr Andrew Dawson [2002]

Dr Graham Campling [2003]**

Revd Carole Ellefsen-Jones [2003]**

Revd John Dyce #

2.14 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Revd David A L Jenkins [2001]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Revd Angela Hughes[2000]

Revd Stephen Thornton[2001]

Revd Douglas McFarlane [2003]**

Convener of Windermere Management Committee Convener of Life and Witness Committee

Minister of Carver URC

2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Derek Lindfield [2002]

Secretary: Mrs Soo Webster [2003]**

Mr Simon Loveitt [2000]

Revd Philip Nevard [2000]

Mr Gareth Curl [2001]

Revd Margaret Collins [2001]

Mrs Caroline Chettleburgh [2002]

Mrs Brenda Cheer [2003]**

Miss Rita Joyner [2003]**

Revd Kathryn Price [2003]**

Mr Mark Williams [2003]**

FURY Chair

FURY Council Member

2.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission Panel

Convener: Revd Donald Hilton

Deputy Convener: Mrs Helen Brown

Secretary: Revd Alasdair Walker

Members:

Miss Ina Barker

Ms Kate Breeze

Mr Keith Brooks

Revd K Chippindale

Revd Alison Davis

Mr R Forsyth

Mrs Wilma Frew

Mr Alan Hart

Revd Brian Johanson

Revd R M Jones

Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC

Revd Julian Macro

Revd Ted Marley

Revd Denise Megson

Sir James Nursaw

Mrs Sheila Pratt

Mr Nicholas Pye

Mrs Sally Quilter

Revd Michael Rees

Revd John Slow

Dr David Thompson

Miss Sheila Tweed

New Appointments following GA98 Resolution 14:

Mr John Moore, Mr Ray Holden, Mr Mike Garnett, Mr Donald Taylor, Mr Peter Mann, Mr Peter Jolly, Dr John Kennedy, Mr Ian Lloyd Parry, Mrs Barbara Martin, Ms Rachael Greening, Mrs Vera Maskery, Mrs Ruth Clarke, Ms Elizabeth Whitten, Revd John Chisholm, Revd David Main, Revd Raymond Singh, Revd David Skitt, Revd Dr Rick Mearkle, Revd Brenda Hill, Revd Margaret Taylor, Revd Joan Winterbottom, Revd Margaret Juhasz, Revd Shelagh Pollard, Miss Janice Jeater, Mr Martin Ballard,

3 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Synod Moderators and three representatives from each Synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Northern	Dr Peter Clarke, Mrs Wilma Prentice, A N Other (<i>To be advised</i>)
North-Western	Revd Geoffrey Townsend, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mrs Janice Cockcroft
Mersey	Mrs Lillian Clovell, Dr Donald South, Revd Peter Roche
Yorkshire	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr Steve Wood, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands	Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Clifford Wilton, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Tom Bayliss
Eastern	Revd Michal Burrell, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
South Western	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Revd Sandra Lloydlangston
Wessex	Mr Graham Rolfe, Revd David Williams, Mrs Sue Brown
Thames North	Revd Rachel Poolman, Revd John Edwards, A N Other (<i>To be advised</i>)
Southern	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Margaret Collins, Dr Graham Campling
Wales	Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, Mrs Delyth Rees, Mr Peter Devaney

4 TRUST BODIES

4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Dr Brian Woodhall

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Directors:

Revd Tony Burnham	Mr Clem Frank	Mrs Christine Meekison
Mr Graham Stacy	Mr Clive Willis	Dr Brian Woodhall [2004]
Mr John Squires [2004]	Ms Valerie Ham [2004]	Mr David Marshall-Jones [2004]
Mr Peter Ward [2005]**		

4.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD - BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Revd Dr. Arthur Chadwick

Secretary: Revd John Martin

Members of the URC:	Ms Valerie Ham	Mr Desmond Davies
	Mr Tom Swan	Mr Ray Chambers *[2001]
	Mrs Lindy Anderson [2002]	Mr Richard Nunn [2003]**
Members of the Fund:	Revd Pam Ward	Revd John Martin
	Revd Dr Arthur Chadwick	Revd Alasdair Walker [2001]
	Revd Jessie Clare [2002]	Revd Kenneth Graham [2003]**

[ex officio Mr Clem Frank, Mr Graham Stacy, Mr Victor Hughff, Mr Geoffrey Wood]

4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp	Mrs Christine Meekison	Revd Maurice Hussenbee	Mrs Mary Stacy
Revd Geoffrey Satchell	Mr Graham Stacy	Mr Arthur Smith	Revd David Hannen
Mr Hartley Oldham	Revd Peter Grimshaw	Revd John Taylor	

5 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Mrs Wilma Frew, Revd Peter Brain
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Murdoch McKenzie
Methodist Conference	Revd Bob Andrews
General Assembly of Church of Scotland	Mrs Wilma Frew, Revds Ken & Meriel Chippindale
Scottish Congregational Church	Revd Peter McIntosh
Presbyterian Church of Wales	Mrs Wilma Frew
Union of Welsh Independents	Revd Pamela Lewis
Congregational Federation	Revd David Helyar

6 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH on ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as URC representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of representatives to other ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, will be distributed to all members of General Assembly. Additional copies are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

6.1 World Council of Churches

Assembly 1998 Revd Tony Burnham Mrs Wilma Frew

6.2 Council for World Mission

Revd Pat Nimmo Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid Miss Joanne Ellis *
Secretary for International Relations

6.3 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Assembly 1999

General Secretary Convener of the Ecumenical Committee.
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Secretary for Church and Society, Revd Donald Norwood,
Mr John Bradbury, Mrs Ruth Clarke, Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mrs Jackie Yeomans, Mrs Kathleen Ziffo,
Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper and Miss Sarah King.

6.3.1 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - Church Representatives Meeting

General Secretary Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.4 Churches Together in England - Forum 1999

Convener Ecumenical Committee, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Revd Elizabeth Caswell together with the following nine representatives: Mrs Wilma Frew, Ms Tina Arthur, Ms Georgette Margrett, Mr Graham Ghaleb, Revd Donald Norwood, Revd Rudi Dixon, Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Peter Southcombe, Revd Alan Thomasson.

6.4.1 Churches Together in England - Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.5 ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland)

Central Council
Revd David Taylor Mrs Kathleen Ziffo

6.6 CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales)

Y Gamanfa The Synod Moderator (Wales) Synod Ecumenical Officer
Revd David Wilkinson

Council The Synod Ecumenical Officer (alternate Synod Moderator)
Mrs Jackie Yeomans (alternate Mrs Eileen McIlveen)

6.7 FREE CHURCHES' COUNCIL

Council Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
To be advised Revd Janet Lees

Executive General Secretary

Women's Council Revd Janet Lees

6.8 FREE CHURCH COUNCIL for WALES

The Synod Moderator (Wales) Synod Ecumenical Officer

7 URC Representatives at formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees.

7.1 SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH / UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Negotiating Group

Co-Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Co-Secretary: Revd Tony Burnham
Revd James Breslin Revd Mary Barr Miss Felicity Harris

7.2 ENFYs (The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales)

Synod Moderator (Wales) Synod Ecumenical Officer Mrs Ann Shillaker
Revd Henry Gordon *To be advised* *To be advised*

7.3 Council for Wales Consultation on Forming a United Free Church in Wales

Synod Moderator Synod Ecumenical Officer Mr John Rhys
Revd James Breslin Revd Mary Davies

7.4 SCOTTISH CHURCHES INITIATIVE FOR UNION [SCIFU]

Revd Peter Arthur Revd James Breslin Revd Sheila Maxey Revd Fleur Houston

7.5 METHODIST/URC Liason Committee

The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations together with: Revd Derek Wales, Ms Rachel Greening, Revd Alan Thomasson, Revd Joe Clemson, Revd Geoffrey Clarke and Ms Karen Watts.

7.6 Church of England - Methodist formal talks

URC Ecumenical Participants: Dr David Thompson, Revd Sheila Maxey

7.6.1 Trilateral Informal talks [Church of England/Methodist/URC]

URC Representatives: Revd Bob Andrews, Revd John Waller, Revd Elizabeth Welch with Secretary for Ecumenical Relations as Staff Member

8 URC Representatives on Governing Bodies of Theological Colleges etc.,

8.1 Mansfield College:

Ministerial and Educational Training Committee: Revd Graham Robson,
Revd Dr David Peel,
Revd Janet Sowerbutts

8.2 New College London

Foundation Trustees
Mr John Smethers, Mr Graham Stacy, Revd John Pugh

8.3 Northern College

Secretary for Training, Ms Bethan Galliers*,
Mrs Helen Brown, Mr Jim Wilkinson
Council of the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester
Secretary for Training

8.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors

Convener: Dr David Thompson
Clerk: Mr Andrew Armour
Mr Don Taylor, Secretary for Training,
Mrs Valerie Burnham, Revd Sandra Lloydlangston

8.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Desmond Davies, Revd Michael Dunford

8.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Convener Westminster College Governors
Secretary for Training
Joint Academic Committee
Secretary for Training

8.5 Homerton College Trustees

Mr John Chaplin, Lady Sally Williams,
Mrs Elisabeth Jupp, Dr David Thompson

8.6 Queen's College, Birmingham

Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd Ken Chippindale
Secretary for Training in attendance

8.7 St Andrew's Hall Selly Oak

Mrs Mareke Arthur, Mrs Haro Horsfield
Secretary for Training, Secretary for International Relations

8.8 Aberystwyth (Memorial College)

Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris, Mr Leslie Jones

8.9 Westhill College

To be advised

9 GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the URC is associated

9.1 Caterham School

Revd David Helyar, Mr John Mathias *

9.2 Eltham College Walthamstow Hall

Revd Clifford Charlton
Miss Margaret Vokins

9.3 Milton Mount Foundation

Mrs Gwen Hall, Revd Peter Grimshaw
Revd George Thomas, *To be advised*, Mr David Butler

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- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 9.4 Silcoates School, | Dr Clyde Binfield |
| 9.5 Taunton School | Revd Ray Adams |
| 9.6 Wentworth Milton Mount, | Revd George Thomas |
| 9.7 Bishops Stortford College | Mr Hugh Joscelyne [until 2000] |

10 Miscellaneous:

The URC is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund | Mr Ken Meekison (Hon.Treasurer),
Revd Geoffrey Satchell,
Mr Laurence Macro |
| Christian Education Movement Council | Mrs Margi Jenkins |
| Churches Main Committee | Mr Clem Frank, Mr Hartley Oldham, Mr Tegid Peregrine |
| Congregational Fund Board | Revd Cyril Grant, Revd Dorothy Havergal-Shaw
Revd Eric Allen, Revd John Taylor* |
| Guides' Religious Advisory Panel | Mrs Susan Walker |
| National Christian Education Council | Mrs Patricia Hubbard*, Mrs Rosemary Johnston |
| Scouts' Religious Advisory Group | Mr D Marshall-Jones |
| United Reformed Church History Society | Mrs Mary Davies, Revd Peter Jupp, Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd Eric Wollaston, Dr David Thompson |
| URC Boy's Brigade Companies Council | Revd Michael Rees |
| Wharton Trust | Mr Norman Fabb |
| Widows Fund of the Three Denominations | Mr Ken Meekison, Revd Geoffrey Satchell
Mr Laurence Macro |

- 11 Visitors to the Northern Synod** (1998 Assembly resolution 17)
Mr Brian Evans (convener), Revd Sandra Dears, Revd Keith Forcast

RESOLUTION 54**Secretary for Training**

Assembly re-appoints the Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee as Secretary for Training until 31 August 2002.

RESOLUTION 55**Director Windermere Centre**

Assembly re-appoints the Revd Peter McIntosh as Director of the Windermere Centre until 30 June 2003.

RESOLUTION 56**Moderator Southern Synod**

Assembly re-appoints the Revd David Helyar as moderator of the Southern Synod until 31 August 2001.

RESOLUTION 57**Moderator East Midlands Synod**

Assembly re-appoints the Revd Malcolm Hanson as moderator of the East Midlands Synod until 30 September 2003.

Pastoral

The purpose of the Pastoral Committee is to consider the cases of ministers which are referred to it by district councils or provincial synods, their officers or committees. (See GA 1983 Reports, pp 5 and 6). By a Welfare Sub-Committee, it also deals with all welfare and emergency matters including the use of welfare funds. Because of the nature of many of the cases, it is a confidential committee which reports in general terms only, directly to the General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd John Johansen-Berg* **Secretary:** *Revd John Waller*
Revd Tony Burnham, Revd Jean Forster, Revd John Humphreys, Dr Anthea Kaan,
Mrs Joan Staples and the Convener of the Welfare Sub-Committee.

1 The Committee has had a lighter year in terms of individuals brought to its attention and this is good news. However, many pastoral difficulties are resolved locally with district or synod help. In addition there are varied practical needs and many of these are addressed by the Welfare Sub-Committee whose report is attached and whose members we thank for their careful work. Particular thanks are expressed to the Convener, Mrs Shirley Paton, who concludes her term of office at this Assembly.

Sensitivity and confidentiality are needed in the work of the committee and so nothing further is added under this heading except to commend ministers and their families at times of pressure and stress to the prayers of the Assembly.

2 One of the ways in which the Church can offer help is through the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service and this too is confidential in the way it operates. It has been used with satisfaction by

a number of our ministers and their households and remains an available resource. The Church covers the cost of this counselling but is not notified of the names of the persons concerned so that this is clearly a confidential service.

3 In the light of the new procedures for discipline it is necessary to put before Assembly new terms of reference for the work of the Pastoral Committee and this is appended to our Report. The changes are minimal. It is commended to Assembly for approval confident that it is the right basis for offering help to ministers and their families when special pastoral need arises.

Note: The Revd John Johansen-Berg completes his term of office at this Assembly, and the Pastoral Committee wishes to place on record its appreciation of the sensitive and thorough way in which he has guided its work. The Church is considerably in his debt.

RESOLUTION 58

Terms of Reference

Assembly approves the revised terms of reference of the Pastoral Reference Committee as set out on page 122 of the Book of Reports.

1 Terms of Reference

1a The Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee will consider the cases of URC ministers which are referred to it on account of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, district councils or synods or their committees or moderators of synods, and when the continuation of a minister's service: (i) within an existing pastoral charge or (ii) within the URC is in question.

1b The Committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial support for a course of retraining or therapy or counselling.

1c The Committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this possible.

1d The Committee may authorise the MoM Sub-Committee to provide stipend or part stipend and may authorise the Secretary for Finance to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge, for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance but may be renewed by the Pastoral Reference Committee. The MoM Sub-Committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the MoM sub-committee) or the Secretary for Finance will accept this authority for payment.

1e In each case the Committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and whether or not it may be extended.

2 Limitation on powers

2a The Committee does not have authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The Committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have the authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, church meeting and district council.

2b The Committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or other direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. Nevertheless the Committee may authorise any financial payments allowed under its terms of reference (see 1d).

3 Confidentiality

It is evident that the work of the Pastoral Reference Committee will be confidential and pastoral. Nevertheless it will need to keep a record of its meetings. The Committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved in the matter who need to know the outcome. It would be inappropriate for the Committee as a body, or individual members of it, to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

4 Composition

A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be Convener
The General Secretary
Two lay people
One minister in pastoral charge
One Provincial Moderator
The Honorary Treasurer
The Deputy General Secretary who will act as Secretary

5 Attendance

5a The minister whose case is being considered by the Committee may request a meeting with the Committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively the Committee may invite the minister to meet some or all of its members. In either case the minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.

5b The Committee shall have discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.

6 Relationship to Structure

The Committee will report to the Assembly each year. However the report will only deal with general matters and the Committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.

Welfare Sub-Committee

Convener: Mrs Shirley Paton

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

1.1 This is a sub-committee of the Assembly Pastoral Committee and as such carries out its duty in accordance with the remit laid down by that Committee.

1.2 The sub-committee has met 3 times since the last Assembly Report. It has continued the welfare work of the Church and has been able to give assistance to ministers and their families, especially those who fall outside other areas of the Church's care.

1.3 **Ministers' Welfare** Gifts from this fund amounting to £35,537.00 have been made to ministers and their dependants and to ministers' spouses following bereavement. The grant paid to spouses immediately on the death of a minister has been raised from £200 to £400, which reflects the increased cost of day to day expenses at a very difficult time. At Christmas 1998 a total of £50,760.00 was paid out to widows/ers and dependent children.

1.4 **Educational assistance** Assistance amounting to £37,313.00 has been given from a variety of educational funds for school uniform, equipment and fees.

1.5 In August 1998 a letter was sent to all stipendiary ministers and CRCWs setting out possible uses of available funds and inviting ministers to apply for grants as applicable. There has been a considerable response and the sub-committee has endeavoured to deal with these cases in as sympathetic way as possible.

1.6 The guidance and support of the Provincial Moderators has been much appreciated.

Training

The committee will encourage and enable the integration of the training of the whole people of God and to this end will seek to influence the philosophy and methodology of learning; the core content of courses; and the development of resources. It gives direct support to, and acts in partnership with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship; Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness; Church and Society, and Youth and Children's Work Committees; and synods and districts, as they respond to the needs of local churches in training matters. It collaborates with Ministries Committee in the training of ministers of word and sacraments, CRCWs and Lay Preachers. It also supports all other committees and task groups, in particular the Ecumenical Committee and the Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group. It also gives oversight to the YLTO and YCWT programmes.

Committee Members

Convener: *The Revd Dr John Sutcliffe* **Committee and Staff Secretary:** *The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee*
Revd Ruth Ball, Mrs Helen Brown, Dr Jean Butler,
Dr Andrew Dawson, Revd Sandra Dears, Dr Iain Frew, Dr Tony Jeans
Revd Roy Lowes, Revd John Proctor, Revd Chris Warner,

1 Introduction

1.1 This has been a busy and difficult year for the Training Committee. There have been long and difficult discussions about two colleges: Mansfield College, Oxford and St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak. We have been both involved in these talks, and concerned for their effect upon the members of the two colleges. The Committee has, however, been able to work on an overview of its task, and presents the following strategy to General Assembly.

2 Training Strategy for the United Reformed Church

2.1 **What are the Priorities?** Within an overall concern for:

2.1.1 the development of learning opportunities for all in the Church,

2.1.2 the fullest attainable ecumenical co-operation; we presently aim to:

- a) foster excellence in and monitor the development of Initial Ministerial Education and Training;
- b) expand, sustain and develop Continuing Ministerial Education, in the Post-Ordination period and beyond;
- c) promote, sustain and advocate opportunities for Lay Training; and
- d) integrate the training of lay people and ministers so far as appropriate.

2.2 What has been done so far?

2.2.1 Emphasis on developing learning opportunities

- a) *Developing Discipleship* was produced by the Integrated Working Group for post-confirmation groups.

b) *Training for Learning and Serving* was adopted as an integrated Lay training course for training Lay Preachers and others serving the Church. The first groups taking this course began in September 1995.

c) It was also agreed that the *Exploring the Faith* course for Lay Preachers and others be phased out from June 30th 1998.

2.2.2 Initial Ministerial Training and Education

- a) Criteria for courses for initial ministerial training. (*General Assembly 1995*)
- b) Minimum standard of initial training, plus requirement of 800 hours of placement experience. (*General Assembly 1997*)
- c) Minimum entry requirements for candidates attending assessment conferences. (*1997*)
- d) Changes in routes through training for Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers. (*1997*)
- e) Beginning to arrange consultations of Synod Officers and College and Course representatives.
- f) An advisory role in the use of colleges review exercise.

2.2.3 Continuing Ministerial Education (Both Ordained and Lay)

Proposals on Continuing Ministerial Education and Post Ordination Training were accepted by General Assembly in 1998, and are now moving forward to implementation.

2.2.4 Oversight of Training provided through the YCWT Team.

A revised policy for the staff development of YCWTs and for the guidance of their Synod managers has been produced, is in use, and has been submitted for Youth Agency approval.

2.3 Future Strategy

A What we mean to do next

- a) Implement new plans for Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) work (including Post Ordination and Training (POET)). Make and keep them lively and sustainable.
- b) Reflect afresh on the Church's curricular expectations for Initial Ministerial Education and Training.
- c) Review arrangements for CRCW Training.
- d) Work on Elders' training - as we have been instructed by Mission Council.
- e) Consider more broadly the Church's strategy on Lay Training, and seek to secure some advances in this area.

B What we mean to do in the next few years.

- a) Seek to develop opportunities for Continuing Education and Training for Lay Preachers.
- b) Encourage a shared exploration of the training overlap with various committees.
- c) Sustain discussion with the Synods about possible areas of integration and co-operation between their varied training posts and the resources provided through Assembly.
- d) Develop more regional co-operation in the area of training resources.
- e) Review the ways in which Continuing Ministerial Education might equip and prepare ministers to take up tutoring and training roles within the Church.
- f) Keep in view a concern for an integrated training policy.

3 Continuing Ministerial Education

3.1 Following the adoption of proposals for Continuing Ministerial Education by the 1998 meeting of General Assembly, the Training Committee has been working hard to work out a structure so that all ministers may benefit from this initiative. During the year, the Training Committee has set up the Continuing Ministerial Education Sub-Committee, (which is currently convened by the Revd Chris Warner), to initiate and oversee the programme. In January 1999, the Committee sponsored a very useful Consultation on Continuing Ministerial Education for representatives from Synods, who have helped us jointly develop the programme. In addition, we have launched a twice-yearly journal *CME News*, explaining the developments in Continuing Ministerial Education to Ministers and local churches, and we hope that this will be published on a regular basis giving information about the various courses available. The real importance of this programme is to give ministers and Church Related Community Workers as much support as possible as times change.

3.2 The **Continuing Ministerial Education** programme consists of three main sections:

(i) **Post Ordination Education and Training (POET)** This programme takes place during the first three years after a new Minister's ordination. It consists of two nationally organised residential week-end courses and three days organised by Synods per year.

(ii) **On-going Education and Training (ONET)** This programme begins at the end of the POET programme and it is expected that ministers will follow this throughout the rest of their ministry. In the academic year 1999-2000, this consists of seven days, increasing to fourteen days after 1st September 2000. Ministers may take these days in one block or over separate days.

(iii) **Sabbaticals**

Ministers may apply for a Sabbatical term of up to three months every ten years but not after the age of 60. A shorter, two-month sabbatical is available for Ministers between their 60th and 63rd birthdays. Ministers from other denominations who transfer to the United Reformed Church, are not eligible for a sabbatical until they have completed at least five years' service as Ministers of the United Reformed Church, after which, up to five years' service in their previous denomination may be 'credited' for sabbatical purposes. (For example, a minister who has served their previous denomination for six years and the United Reformed Church for five is eligible to apply for a sabbatical.)

3.3 New Funding System for Continuing Ministerial Education Grants.

3.3.1 In the past, grants for the In-service training of ministers have been administered by and paid for first by a Synod representative (such as the Provincial In-Service Training Officer) and then by the Secretary for Training, who arranges for a national grant. The disadvantage of this system is that it involves several layers of administration, and that it creates inequality. Some Synods are able to award larger grants than others. From 1st September 1999, we hope to simplify this system and administer it closer to the original applicant. We also aim to create a fairer grant award to every minister, wherever they live. Each Synod is asked to designate someone who will be responsible for signing grant forms. These should be registered with the national Finance Office.

- 3.3.2. Objectives for the Expenditure
- (i) To organise the expenditure of new national Continuing Ministerial Education funds, so that the provision of money to enable training is made more equal between Synods, in particular, to increase the money available to ministers and CRCWs in poorer Synods, without losing the current input from richer Synods.
 - (ii) To pay the reasonable costs of Continuing Ministerial Education for all ministers and CRCWs.
 - (iii) To organise the payment of Continuing Ministerial Education Grants at Synod level rather than the National.

3.3.3 **Timing** All Continuing Ministerial Education and *Belonging to the World Church* grants will begin from 1st September 1999. Grants for all training which begins after 1st September 1999 will be implemented as soon as the procedures are in place.

3.3.4 **What do the Grants cover?**

- (i) National Post Ordination Education and Training residential courses.
- (ii) Synod Post Ordination Education and Training events.
- (iii) National Continuing Ministerial Education events such as Refresher Courses.
- (iv) Synod arranged residential courses such as Spring and Summer School, after, as at present, making deductions for local church and Trust income as arranged by each Synod.
- (v) **Grants to Individuals.** These are available for all serving ministers (Stipendiary, and Non-Stipendiary), and Church Related Community Workers from ordination until retirement. All grants described below are a maximum and depend on the actual cost of the training/education and on national guidelines. All grants will be agreed and paid by the Synod Continuing Ministerial education Officer directly to the minister/CRCW. The Synod will then claim back the national proportion of the grant.

a) **Annual ONET Grant** Full cost of course, including travel and books up to £700 (1999-2000). Less current Synod contribution.

b) **Sabbatical Grants**
Every ten years but not within five years of expected retirement (see above) Cost of sabbatical up to £1,200 (1999-2000) less current Synod contribution. Sabbaticals of less than three months duration will receive a proportionately lower grant (e.g. for a two month sabbatical, the maximum grant will be £800).

c) **Additional Synod Contribution**

Those Synods which pay a greater proportion of the cost of the training or even the total cost should assume the national grant to be 50% of the maximum set out above and make the calculation of their contribution accordingly.

d) ***Belonging to the World Church* ONET Grant.**

Not more than once every five years for travel and related costs. Related costs would include accommodation necessitated by the travel, health precautions and any particular costs related to travel overseas. Europe and North America, up to £500 Elsewhere in the world, but excluding the Holy Land, up to £1,000 (1999-2000) (The Holy Land is excluded because there are alternative sources of money and most of the travel there is not directly for training purposes.)

(vi) **Reports and Record Keeping**

Each Synod will keep a record of the training/education each minister/CRCW has done and the grants they have received. Reports, depending on the size and kind of training will be required by Synods. Sabbatical Reports will then be sent on by Synods for holding at Westminster College, Cambridge; reports which have received *Belonging to the World Church* grants will be sent to the *Belonging to the World Church* Officer; POET records will be kept nationally; ONET records will be kept by the Synod.

(vii) **Flexibility**

There will be some flexibility in the application of this scheme, in regard to the wide range of individual and local needs around the Church. We hope to learn from experience, and to adjust any of the general rubrics in the coming years. For the moment, any requests for particular individual flexibility should be channelled through the Synod Continuing Ministerial Education Officer who will consult the National Continuing Education Officer, or the *Belonging to the World Church* Officer.

3.3.5 **Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education.**

We are delighted that the Revd Jean Black has been appointed Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education. She will begin work on 1st June 1999.

3.3.6 **Future Proposals for Continuing Ministerial Education.**

Among other areas of work, we plan to address the following:

- (i) to help Synod Training Officers develop their liaison with one another;
- (ii) create a database of courses to be available as a leaflet and on the World Wide Web;
- (iii) develop a core-curriculum for Post Ordination Education and Training;
- (iv) review the place of the Church's Refresher courses within the whole CME structure;
- (v) develop wisdom and experience in portfolio techniques;
- (vi) consider the ways in which CME connects with other Church programmes, such as the Accompanied Self-Appraisal and *Belonging to the World Church* programmes, and the work of the Church and Society committee;
- (vii) continue to develop induction courses for ministers who move to a new sphere of service that will require some different skills.

4 The Use of Colleges Review

In 1997, the Training Committee asked Mission Council to take the lead in discussing the future use of Colleges by the Church for initial ministerial education. During the year, the Training Committee has completed work in order to give technical advice to Mission Council regarding the number of colleges the Church could usefully use. The Committee could find no evidence to rebut the tentative conclusion drawn by the March 1998 Mission Council and the December 1998 Consultation on Mansfield College that 'we should cease to use one of the colleges for initial ministerial education'.

5 Mansfield College

5.1 Response to the 1997 Inspection of Ministerial Training and Education at Mansfield College. The Training Committee has studied with care the Mansfield College Review of December 1998, and finds clear evidence that Mansfield has responded positively to criticisms that were made by its Inspectors in 1997. There is a perception that the discussions at General Assembly in July 1998 were adversely influenced by the Inspectors' criticisms, so that two issues intersected to the disadvantage of Mansfield: the issue of quality and the issue of the nature and extent of the Church's training requirements. We are content that the issue of quality is being addressed. Any future decision should be based on the single issue of the nature and extent of the Church's requirements.

5.2 The Committee has explored with Mansfield College and the Congregational Federation ways in which both denominations might make future use of Mansfield College should the United Reformed Church cease to use the college for initial ministerial education.

5.3 The committee wishes to record its thanks to the Revd Dr Catherine Middleton who has done so much, despite her serious illness, to guide Mansfield's positive response to the 1997 Inspection report through a very difficult period and to handle the situation with wisdom and care.

6 The Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester

6.1 Representatives from the Training and Finance Committees met with representatives from the proposed Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester, in July 1998 and were very impressed by the educational plans for the future of the Northern Theological Federation, which we hope will legally become the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester, in August 1999. After some investigation into the financial background for the development of the Partnership, in which, hopefully, the United Reformed Church should become a stakeholder, the Training Committee, together with the Finance Committee, recommended to Mission Council that the United Reformed Church approve the capital investment of £200,000 in Luther King House Trust, subject to the officers of the Finance Committee being happy with the level of financial expertise available to the Trust, and to the legal structure of the organisation, and requests the General Secretary and the Treasurer to make the nomination or appointment of an appropriate person to the board or Trust.

7 Westminster College, Cambridge

7.1 The Training Committee rejoices with Westminster College, Cambridge as it celebrates one hundred years on its present site. Several events have been planned by the College to celebrate this centenary, not least a Conference on Reformed Theology to which Jürgen Moltmann will contribute.

8 St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak.

8.1 This has been a very difficult year for St Andrew's Hall, as its Council came to the reluctant decision in September 1998 to sell the buildings and the land. The Training Committee has worked with the Ecumenical Committee on the future of mission training in Selly Oak. It wishes to be associated with the Ecumenical Committee's report. The officers of the Training Committee are willing to stand with the officers of the Ecumenical Committee in any debate about the future of Mission Education.

9 Training of Church Related Community Workers

9.1 The Training Committee has been concerned about the length of time that it has taken to replace Mr Graham Ghaleb as Church Related Community Worker Development Officer. Representatives from the committee have had detailed discussions with the Ministries' Committee, the CRCW Central Management Committee, and with representatives from the Faith in Living Course, Manchester about the best way in which we can support the training of Church Related Community Workers.

10 Lay Training

10.1 The Training Committee is delighted with the progress of some very interesting lay training projects, not least the growth of the *Training for Learning and Serving* programme, and the enthusiasm of the students. Mission Council has asked the Training Committee to look at Elders' training, and this we are beginning to do. We also know of some Continuing Education programmes for Lay Preachers, and we should like to consolidate and extend this area of the Church's training work. Encouraged by these advances, we mean to take a fuller look at the whole spectrum of lay training in the next year or two.

11 Training for Learning and Serving

11.3 The *Training for Learning and Serving* programme has both grown and consolidated. There are now 116 students on the Foundation Course (more than in Scotland), and 18 students in the *Worship and Preaching* course now being delivered for the second year. Ten people belong to the one-year *Life of Prayer* course, which began in September 1998, and three English students are sharing in the *Pastoral Care* course, which is delivered in Scotland. All those on the *Worship and Preaching* course in the academic year 1997-1998, passed, and most are now being accredited as Lay Preachers.

11.2 Further growth is planned for the 1999-2000 academic year. We hope that the *Helping Christian Adults Learn* Course will then be launched, and we are expecting around 30 *Worship and Preaching* students, necessitating two parallel weekend centres for this course. In total, there will be 42 residential TLS weekends between September and July! The opportunities which TLS courses can offer as part of the training portfolio for Local Leaders is under active discussion.

11.3 Everyone involved in TLS (National Co-ordinator, Regional Organisers, Weekend Tutors, 54 Local Tutors, Lay Preaching Commissioners, over 500 support group members and some 20 placement

supervisors) give of their time and skills voluntarily. We continue to be immensely grateful for this commitment, and especially grateful for the energetic and effective commitment of the Revd David A L Jenkins, the National Co-ordinator. With TLS now so firmly established, we are investigating how more security can be given to the programme by spreading the central workload to provide cover against illness and other eventualities. We would also like to express our thanks to the Revd Sandy Mailer who has done much to launch the *Worship and Preaching* course but who has had to stand down as Lay Preaching Commissioner due to serious illness.

12 Training of Local Leaders

12.1 Representatives from the Training Committee attended a joint Consultation in February 1999 to consider the setting up to the Local Leadership programme. The Training Committee recommends that all Local Leaders receive training for their work, although this may be done on an in-service basis. We commend the initial course developed by Mersey Province as a starter, and we also recommend that other courses such as the Training for Learning and Serving programme be used to develop skills.

13 Training Board at National Assessment Conferences

13.1 The Training Committee has been working with the Ministries Committee to review the ways in which training advice is given by the Church to candidates for ministry.

14 Part-time Initial Ministerial Education and the 800 Hour Placement

14.1 Work continues on the development of part-time training for ministry, and in particular the placement work - which mirrors the internship year served by many who train full-time for ministry.

15 Personalia.

15.1 The Training Committee wishes to record its very grateful thanks to the Revd Dr John Sutcliffe, who has convened the Training Committee during its first four years with insight, vision, great enthusiasm and care. The Committee has been sad that his illness during the winter months has prevented his greater contribution this year, but we know that his leadership will be a lasting influence on the Committee and in the Church. We would also like to offer thanks to Dr Jean Butler and the Revd Chris Warner, who have been very effective and loyal working members of the committee. Thanks are also due to Ms Lesley-Anne Morgan, who as Personal Assistant to the Secretary for Training, until December 1998, has contributed a great deal to the smooth running of the Committee.

15.2 We are pleased to report that Howard Nurden was appointed as Youth and Children's Work Trainer by Southern Synod for five years from 1st October 1998 until 31st September 2003, and that Stephen Collins was appointed as Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer by Thames North Synod from 1st December 1998 for five years until 30th November, 2003. They have already made a considerable contribution to the work of their Synods. We are also delighted to report that Wallie Warmington has been re-appointed as Youth Leadership Training Officer by West Midlands Synod until until 31st March 2004, and Ivan Andrews has been re-appointed for a further five years as youth and Children's work Trainer by South Western Synod until 31st December 2004. We value the work of all these workers and wish them well for the future.

15.3 The Nominations Committee recommends to this Assembly that the Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, Secretary for Training, have her seven-year contract renewed for a further three years until 31st August 2002. The Committee heard of this nomination with great pleasure. The development of our Continuing Ministerial Education programmes in the last year has added extra pressure to an already onerous job, yet Lesley has continued to carry her work through with efficiency, wisdom and good grace. We value her abilities and her service very highly indeed.

Youth and Children's Work

This Committee supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people, including the policy for the YLTO and YCWT Programme, giving oversight to Pilots, the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings, and relates to Fury Council. It also ensures that its concerns are fully taken into account in 'Doctrine Prayer and Worship', 'Church & Society', 'Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness' Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Derek Lindfield **Secretary:** Mrs Jean Antcliffe
Mrs Caroline Chettleburgh, Revd Margaret Collins, Mr Gareth Curl, Revd Ron Forster,
Mr Alex Hudson, Mr Lewis Mackenzie, Revd Phil Nevard, Mr Neil Platt,
Revd Barbara Plenderleith, Miss Kathryn Swift.

1 Sharing a Vision

1.1 The year since the last General Assembly has been one in which difficulties have started to be put behind us, good solid work has been done and a sense of hope for the future has established itself. Out of the difficulty, through the work which has been done has emerged a vision for the future. It is that vision which the committee wishes to share with General Assembly.

2 Children's Work

2.1 For some time the Children's Advocate, Rosemary Johnston, has ploughed what has seemed to be a lonely furrow. As the only full-time officer at Church House, in the service of the church, through the committee, she found herself doing things which should have been done by other full-time colleagues and was delighted when they were appointed and started their work.

2.2 The committee is grateful for all the work among and for children which has been done throughout the church. Information, through the medium of *URCHIN*, (United Reformed CHildren's Information Network, thrice yearly mailing, subscription £4.50 from the Youth and Children's Work Office) continues to be a valuable tool of the church. The website serves as a useful means of communication. (<http://www.urchin.org> Then click on 'our work' - children) The networking of people involved in working with children continues to be a lifeline to many. Ecumenical links through the National Council for Christian Education and the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children have been useful.

2.3 It is good to be able to report that every synod has a Children's Work Secretary and that they, together with District Children's Work Secretaries, had a very successful event in June working on producing a 'Rainbow List', which is an in-depth look at policy for children's work.

2.4 The response to *Children in Communion* has been both positive and encouraging. A leaflet to encourage local churches in their thinking is available. *Wholly Worship* - resource material to develop worship in local churches, was conceived and delivered during the year.

2.5 So what is our vision for working with children? It is to work quietly and confidently alongside all those whose ministry it is to work with children and seek to respond to their needs, wishes and aspirations from the very mundane to the highly spiritual. Local events will continue to happen in churches and districts. Support to churches will be given through beginning work on a revised and updated *Good Practice - safeguarding children and young people in the life of the church* pack, possibly ready for next year's General Assembly, to help churches ensure the effectiveness of their policy.

3 Pilots

3.1 Pilots is the non-uniformed Christian organisation for children and young people sponsored by the United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation. The new full-time member of staff, Karen Bulley, has brought time and energy to Pilots which has enabled the organisation to have a 'facelift', improve support networks for local companies and Provincial Pilots Officers, and consolidate its management structure. The Pilots Desk is now based in Church House and offers help and support to all interested in Pilots.

3.2 So, what is our vision for Pilots? It is to put the excitement back into the organisation and help local leaders feel valued and proud of their work. It is to help Provincial Pilots Officers enjoy their responsibilities and build on their skills to give them greater job satisfaction. It is to enable the organisation to develop on a secure and firm foundation.

4 Youth Work

4.1 The Secretary for Youth Work has been in post since 1 September 1998 and is working together with FURY and the Youth and Children's Work Committee for the development of the Church's youth work.

4.2 Since the last General Assembly major FURY events have taken place including TGI FURY, attended by more than 400 young people. FURY Assembly passed resolutions on the minimum wage and tuition fees, Jubilee 2000, Iraq, and referred the issue of genetic manipulation back to FURY Council for more research. *Just Do It*, looked at ways to proceed with the action. FURY has also been involved in the Joint churches Youth Service Initiative, Young Peoples Forum and participated in an ecumenical youth conference in December.

4.3 Department for Education and Employment funding has been granted for work on a feasibility study to identify current youth work throughout the URC and investigate the possibility of local churches in their communities, setting up projects to work within the Government's Social Exclusion Unit remit.

4.4 The FURY Review recommendations have been presented and accepted by both FURY Council and the Youth and Children's Work Committee and formally adopted at FURY Assembly. Their implementation will be an ongoing task for the coming year and into the new millennium.

4.5 So what is our vision for working with young people? It is to be able to identify what work with young people is being done in the United Reformed Church. It is to challenge local churches to look seriously at being of service to young people who are unchurched and disadvantaged. It is to identify and offer specialist training to churches which respond to that challenge. It is to plan ways in which churches can be helped to encourage all their young people to feel that they are part of FURY. It is to encourage clusters of churches to establish FURY Councils.

5 Yardley Hastings

5.1 Since the last General Assembly Liz Byrne has been inducted as Centre Minister. During the year there have also been two other new appointments: in October a new full-time chef brought the catering team

up to full strength and in March a new Centre Manager was appointed, following a six month struggle without a Manager. Five new Community Team Members started in September and in October an international member from Hungary joined in the Team. The Community Team continues to change and develop as members come and go. A new, fresh approach at the Centre has been symbolised by a newly painted dining room.

5.2 The Centre has hosted some good and successful events including Junior and Senior Theatre Weeks (from auditions to performance in a week), an event to bring in the New Year and 'Desert Springs' working with leaders to look at ways of exploring spirituality with young people). One of the major changes to have taken place at the Centre is the replacement of the Pick 'n' Mix programme with an event called *Jigsaw*. *Jigsaw* builds on the experience of the past but takes us into new ideas and a new event. Through these events, and many more, many young people have passed through its doors and have benefited from staying at the Centre.

5.3 So what is our vision for the National Youth Resource Centre? It is to put the Centre very much back on the United Reformed Church map. To make it a place where young people want to visit and feel they belong; a place where young people, youth leaders and ministers come to be and not just to do; a place that is theirs, where they can expect the unexpected and experience the movement of the Spirit. It is to establish links and relationships with other centres (not least Windermere), with the other areas of the United Reformed Church's life and with other denominations. It is to go out with the *Jigsaw* programme and the spirit, enthusiasm and challenge of the Centre to places around England, Scotland, Wales and beyond!

6 Sharing the Vision

6.1 The denomination is now being served by a team of dedicated professionals who are prepared to work with the Youth & Children's Work Committee vision for the future. There is also a full complement of provincial Youth and Children's Work Trainers. The vision has been shared with General Assembly through this report. Our hope is that our sharing will lead to ownership of it in the church at large.



Appendices

General Assembly
1999

Appendix 1

Growing Up - a Mission Programme for the URC

Part 1 A Church at the Crossroads

1. The Churches in the United Kingdom

1.1 Any study of the mainline churches in the United Kingdom shows that the number of people belonging to the church during the post-war period has fallen. The experience of the United Reformed Church since 1972 is not unique. Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics have all shown a decline in the number of members ⁽¹⁾. In 1975, 72% of the UK population claimed to be Christians and 8 million were church members. Twenty years later in 1995, only 60% made the claim and membership had fallen to 6.5 million.

1.2 The 50% fall in membership within the lifetime of the United Reformed Church is serious but it needs to be understood in a context of general decline. Statistics are difficult to interpret and compare but the Church of England between 1960 and 1985 was effectively reduced to not much more than half its previous size ⁽²⁾. And since 1975, when Basil Hume became Archbishop of Westminster, attendance at Mass in England's Roman Catholic churches has halved. It is with no satisfaction that we note that all our other partner churches in England, Wales and Scotland share this decline. It is true that there has been growth in the independent and in some Pentecostal churches. Davie comments 'Persistently high levels of growth may or may not be sustained as the house churches move into their second generation, a crucial stage in the development of denominational life'.

1.3 However the extent of the reduction in church membership and attendance is even more serious when it is seen in a longer perspective. Most of the Free Churches have been in numerical decline relative to the total population since the 1880's, even though absolute numbers continued to increase until the first decade of the twentieth century.⁽³⁾ Exceptionally the Presbyterian Church of England and the Churches of Christ reached a numerical peak later, between the two wars. For the Church of England and the Independents (including Congregationalists) the trend was obvious from 1851. The growth in the number of church

buildings outstripped the growth in membership: the optimism of church builders was not matched by effective evangelism. Far from pre-World War 1 pews being full, Gill shows, for example, that at Congregationalism's numerical peak, most of its chapels were only a quarter full. David Cornick ⁽⁴⁾ writes

Historians have long noted that the ratio of Christians to the total population began to fall around 1840. In 1854 when the report on the only religious census ever to be taken in Britain was published, all churches had to face the sobering news that only 40.5% of the population were in worship on Census Sunday. There are arguments amongst historians and sociologists about the precise interpretation of that evidence, but it is clear that secularism had become a serious part of British life. People might still believe in God, might still view the world through Christian spectacles, but many no longer felt the need to belong to a Christian community and worship corporately.

The United Reformed Church

1.4 It is worth examining in more detail some statistics related to the URC. What has happened since union in 1972?

(The figures are for the end of each year and, except for churches, are in '000's.)

Table A

Year	Churches	Members	Adherents	Children & Young People
1972	2080	192	n/a	102
1977	1990	148	n/a	77
1982	1943	140	n/a	57
1987	1832	127	40*	70
1992	1803	110	56	104
1997	1738	94	40#	89

* 1989 figure

Category redefined as *Regular Worshipping Non-members*

(1) Grace Davie *Religion in Britain since 1945* 1994

(2) A Hastings *A History of English Christianity* 1986

(3) Robin Gill *The Myth of the Empty Church* 1993

(4) David Cornick *Under God's Good Hand* 1998

Of course, membership may not be a good measure of the number of people belonging to the church. Moreover we may argue about the accuracy of the statistics returned annually by church secretaries but the continuing downward trend over the past 24 years cannot be denied.

The precise number of stipendiary ministers in any year is difficult to assess, particularly in the earlier years. However the figures used are sufficiently accurate to illustrate the trend.

Table B

YEAR	MINISTERS (Stipendiary)
1972	1093
1997	720

It is worth noting the contrast between the reduction in number of members and the decline in number of churches and ministers (stipendiary).

Table C

1972-97	% fall
Members	51
Churches	16.4
Ministers (Stipendiary)	34.1

Table D

Year	Average per church
1972	92 members
1997	54 members

Table E

Year	Average per minister	
1972	176 members	1.9 churches
1997	131 members	2.4 churches

1.5 These statistics do not reveal the number of members in Local Ecumenical Partnerships. Nor do they take account of the proportionately large number of adherents. And what do we make of the number of children and young people? Wild fluctuations in those latter figures must be related to the way the statistics have been collected but trends do emerge. If we conclude that it might not be so bad as we fear, nevertheless the bottom line is that the church is much smaller now than it was in 1972. This has continued a trend that began in the nineteenth century.

1.6 For local congregations there are many effects which arise from smaller numbers. There are fewer to do the work and pay the bills to fund ministry, buildings and mission. Of course, sometimes a small

congregation can be more effective than a larger group of members who are less committed. Fewer members per minister ought to deepen relationships. Nevertheless ministers find that caring for an increasing number of congregations means more meetings, not only in the church but also in the different communities where the churches are located. The average figure of churches per minister in 1972 is difficult to interpret. Both Congregationalists and Presbyterians had many single pastorate churches. In addition, the Congregationalists had many small churches without ministry. At union a decision was taken that stipendiary ministry would be shared between **all** churches. It was a response to the requirement that all churches pay for ministry. It was this policy which stimulated the development of the multi-church pastorate. It is also true that falling numbers in themselves tell us nothing about the congregation's age spread, though general observation reveals ageing congregations. If statistics are the only measure, we have not been very successful.

Reasons for Decline

1.7 The peak of Congregationalism in England was 1910-12. Membership was at its highest both as an absolute and as a proportion of the whole population. Yet in a 1909 sermon on the subject of **Church Membership**, Sydney Berry, later to be the Secretary of the Congregational Union of England & Wales, said

I am no pessimist but I confess that the signs in many of our churches are not altogether hopeful. At present they are held together by older people, but one looks in vain for the support that is to come after the older people have passed away.⁽⁵⁾

If this seems at odds with the statistics, he offers an explanation

People may come into our Congregational Churches Sunday after Sunday, they may help swell our congregations, and yet many never really become part of the church. And it may justly be feared, I think, that this disinclination to commit themselves to anything definite is growing.⁽⁶⁾

1.8 In this brief paper it is only possible to present headlines, each of which deserves fuller explanation. Nevertheless the scale of the decline and the number of denominations involved ought to confirm that the reasons are complex and therefore

(5) A sermon on Church Membership preached in Macfadyen Memorial Church, Chorlton-cum-Hardy on Sunday evening 14 November 1909 Revd Sidney M Berry

(6) Ibid

are unlikely to be corrected by any simple solution. The starting point has to be the rapid industrialisation of the late eighteenth century. This was accompanied by a rapid increase in the size of the population. In spite of the Evangelical Revival, in England it is possible to interpret nineteenth century church history as the failure of numerous attempts to convert the majority of the newly created urban working class. Congregationalism was part of this failure. Algernon Wells, Secretary of the Congregational Union claimed, in 1848, that Congregationalism was the church of the middle class. English Presbyterianism was less typical, smaller and dependent for its growth on Celtic migration doubling its 1850 membership by 1875. The Churches of Christ experienced their rapid growth between 1861 and 1892. (See Cornick) ⁽⁷⁾

1.9 Although the churches in the nineteenth century failed with regard to the masses, large numbers were gathered in Sunday Schools, a vast range of organisations and improving groups, as well as at least twice at Sunday worship. However successful such churches were, their size was dramatically affected by the demographic changes of the early twentieth century, shown by the reduction in the size of families. The effect of these on the numbers belonging to a three-generation church was very significant. Part of our sense of failure today is that our small memberships are likely to meet in and manage a nineteenth century building with seats for ten times the present membership.

1.10 Robin Gill ⁽⁸⁾ argues that empty churches played a significant part once decline began. The decline could be due, in rural areas, to depopulation or, in urban areas, to the middle class moving to the suburbs. The situation was aggravated by the competitive building of chapels and the failure to prune the surplus. The empty church results in heavy financial demands on the remaining congregation, the need for ministers to serve more than one church, and newcomers finding it difficult to attend casually. Empty pews lower the morale of the congregation and give some evidence to those who argue that secularisation has triumphed.

1.11 Struggling with the effects of demographic change and empty churches, we then suffered the First World War. Check the memorial boards in many churches and imagine the devastating result of the loss of so many young men. (The board at Castle Hill URC, Northampton, lists 38 names). There are stories also of those who survived the trenches but, having been encouraged to volunteer by preachers,

never went to church again. In the twenties and thirties, facing the hedonism of the middle class and the despair of labour, Congregationalism responded with liberal Christianity at its emptiest. The Second World War sacrificed fewer lives. Theologians' tougher response to the more obvious evils stirred preachers, while people's pastoral needs gave new purpose and the church began to recover its nerve. However, in the late fifties and the sixties, with full employment giving greater prosperity and the development of youth sub-cultures, the churches failed to make a radical response. In the seventies and eighties local churches, lost more ground. In this period elderly congregations benefited from the prevailing political values and were largely unwilling to respond to the issues which attracted both young people and thoughtful adults (anti-nuclear weapons, the environment, world poverty, feminism). The major source of recruitment, the children of our most committed members, of our elders and ministers, fell away. This lost generation is the cadre from which in the past we drew many of our ministers and leading lay people. The miracle is that 1,738 congregations have survived to the present.

1.12 In contemporary Britain, there have been social changes some of which create difficulties for the churches. Employment makes demands on both partners, taking time from voluntary activities, and can involve moving home frequently. There is not only Sunday shopping but the day is widely used for sporting and cultural activities for the young, keeping them and their parents away from worship. This is also the day when children of split families spend time with the "other" parent. The media, for their own reasons, in general oppose, ignore or trivialise the churches. The sexual revolution of the past forty years, has presented further significant challenge.

1.13 Beneath these changes in personal lifestyle and habits there are profound changes in how humanity perceives itself and its history, past and future. Several centuries of technological discovery, economic growth and aspirations to personal freedom have climaxed in a world where too many people have ceased to believe in the traditional *something* and now believe *not in nothing but in anything*. There is resistance to organised religion as symbolic of the discredited *something*. Yet at the same time, during the past thirty years, there have been perhaps more serious enquirers than ever, all more or less disappointed by the claim of science and technology to be self sufficient and self-authenticating. This somewhat random subjectivism, whether formally known as post modernism or not,

(7) Op. Cit. p.123ff

(8) Op. Cit.

has not destroyed but has reshaped the human instinct to believe and to feel profoundly moved by success and by tragedy; the acres of flowers for Diana demonstrate this. Grace Davie calls it *believing without belonging*, but it is nevertheless the *touching place* where evangelism must begin again. It is our task to demonstrate the truth of what we preach by our love and our integrity, since that speaks much louder than words in a soundbite-ridden society. Our priorities and programmes must be shaped by this insight: Jesus said *follow me*. Thus, to worship the incarnate God is to ascribe value to persons and relationships rather than to things and deals, it is to coax young people into maturity rather than to damn every pleasure, it is to forgive even the Enniskillen bombers, it is to remember the wretched of the earth when the cameras have departed to another story. That is the living sacrifice which the apostle commands, *the worship offered by mind and heart*, not the dead institutional routine which has long since passed its sell-by date.

1.14 This brief description of the serious numerical decline of the mainstream churches in the United Kingdom, including the United Reformed Church, which began in the nineteenth century, points to the conclusion that there is no quick fix, no simple human solution to reverse this downward spiral.

2. Planning for Growth in the URC

2.1 There is a serious discussion to be held as to whether the church is withering or is being pruned by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the outcome of that debate, the church must still respond to its predicament. One consistent reply to the signs of numerical decline has been to urge the church to **plan for growth**. At the 1983 Assembly, The Missionary and Ecumenical Work (MEW) at Home Committee dipped a toe into the waters of evangelism.

The committee is inviting the Assembly to designate 1984 as a year of evangelism.

Billy Graham and other evangelists were on their way and so the report continued:

We hope that all our local churches will take up the evangelistic task in their own way in 1984, whatever that way may be.....to help them to do so, we have proposed the appointment of an inter-departmental working party, widely representative of convictions and insights in the URC, to prepare materials for local use

and encouragement as well as a major presentation on evangelism at the 1984 Assembly.⁽⁹⁾

That brief paragraph is very revealing. The URC has never been comfortable with the word evangelism. It is not used in the Basis and appears in the Structure only once concerning the first function of the elders' meeting:

to foster in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community, evangelism at home and abroad, Christian education, ecumenical action, local inter-church relations and the wider responsibilities of the whole church.⁽¹⁰⁾

MEW at Home's paragraph avoids anything contentious by pushing the action on to the following year, allowing local congregations to take up the evangelistic task *in their own way*. In case this was believed to be too directive it was softened by adding, *whatever that way may be*. It then proposed that the working party be *inter-departmental*, rather than made up of provincial representatives. Even then it had to be *widely representative of convictions and insights*. Finally the task was defined, not as achieving a major objective but merely to *prepare material for local use and encouragement as well as a major presentation at the 1984 Assembly*. The actual resolution continued the cautious approach and remembered another URC sensitivity. Not only were local churches urged *to develop such methods as seem right to the Holy Spirit and to the fellowship* but there was added *ecumenically if possible*, with the after thought *and with prayer*.

2.2 **Growth for Their Sake** was the theme of the report presented in 1984. The Record states that the challenge was accepted *after considerable discussion*. Not until three years later did the Working Party produce **Planning for Growth** (Assembly Reports 1987 pp27-32). The accompanying resolutions refer the Report to each synod and district, each being asked *to set its own objectives*. The provincial reports back came after two years (Assembly Reports 1989 pp3-27). Afterwards the whole subject faded away. During this activity over the six years from 1983 to 1989 the membership declined by 12% (16,000 members). There may have been some small successes as a result of **Growth for Their Sake** but overall it resulted in an aim that was not specific enough and a timetable that lacked momentum.

(9) Reports to General Assembly 1983 p.61

(10) The Structure of the United Reformed Church para 2(2)i

Appendix 1

2.3 However, if the term *evangelism* disappeared in a flurry of words and good intentions, at least numerical growth was not advocated in a mechanistic way. It is not just that we have a cultural aversion to such an approach but that theologically we are not convinced. There have been too many instances of growth arising from questionable initiatives.

2.4 During the same period, the Assembly was also going down another track. In 1982 under the heading *New Enterprise in Mission*, the MEW at Home Committee presented a report *Good News to the Poor*. Assembly agreed to remit this to the appropriate committees for consideration and action. This was an attempt to respond to the needs of a nation with increasing numbers of poor people and, in some of the older industrial areas, high levels of unemployment. At the same time, the slow, steady, development of the replacement for the Deaconess, the Church Related Community Worker, continued. Both these programmes were not about building the church but building and serving the community. Over the years this programme, albeit on the margins of the church's life, has grown. However it has never been properly integrated within the mainstream of the church's thinking on mission. The twin threads of community work and evangelism have both woven in and out of the URC's life without becoming intertwined, both peripheral to the priority given to maintenance rather than mission.

2.5 In 1995 Mission Council identified Eight Priorities which were referred to synods, districts and local churches for comment. One priority was **Growth**. The responses indicated that no one was against it but some saw growth as the fruit of going about things in the right way and it was argued that growth should not be a target for its own sake. Other responses rejected *niche evangelism*, appealing to a narrow segment of society. The question was also asked as to how aiming for growth squared with the prophetic task?

Growth: God's Gift

2.6 In the New Testament there is much about growth and a great deal about evangelism: announcing by word and deed to those who have not heard it before, *all that God has done, is doing and will do* ⁽¹¹⁾. The call is always to faithfulness even if this leads to a cross. When Jesus sent out the *twelve to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal*, he warned them that not everyone would welcome them. As they were leaving those towns, they should shake the dust off their feet (Luke 9. 1-5). Planning a strategy for evangelism therefore is not to be

confused with planning for growth. In the New Testament, *numerical* growth is not a major concern, although there is the important reference to the rapid growth of the early church in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. This growth came after the preaching, after the common life, and after breaking the bread. It was only then that

..... day by day the Lord added new converts to their number (Acts 2.47)

Growth in numbers is by God's gift not by our planning. But if seeking for growth is not our primary task, what is?

2.7 The purpose of our life as a church is spelt out clearly in the Basis of Union

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

- *to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;*
- *to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;*
- *to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;*
- *and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.* ⁽¹²⁾

If the church is faithful, then history records that, in God's own time, the church will grow. For example

- a corrupted European church was renewed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the Reformation, though there is no evidence to suggest that this resulted in numerical growth
- a complacent English church was resurrected towards the end of the eighteenth century by the Evangelical Revival
- missionaries to Madagascar began work in the 1820's, were expelled after ten years, yet returned in the 1860's to discover that, after persecution, there had grown a thriving church

(11) See *Transforming Mission* David J Bosch 1991 p.412

(12) The Basis of Union para 11

- during the Chinese cultural revolution, beginning in the mid 1960's, attempts were made to destroy the Christian faith. Churches were closed, ministers sent to work in factory and field. After ten years, when freedom was restored, the church grew and flourished as never before in all its history.

Through death the Spirit brings new life. In each of these examples, during the periods of corruption, complacency, persecution and suppression there remained a remnant who were faithful and from whose seeds the Spirit reaped a harvest.

2.8 For a church to be anxious about its size is like our *being anxious about food and drink to keep you alive and about clothes to cover your body.* Jesus' response was *set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice, and all the rest will come to you as well.* (Mt 6.25 & 33) It is quality that counts: *You are salt to the world. And if salt becomes tasteless It is good for nothing but to be thrown away.....*(Mt 5.13ff) It is by the light we shed and the good we do, that people will come to *give praise to our Father in heaven* (Mt 5.14ff) And so the message to those who gloomily ask if the URC has a future is *do not be anxious about tomorrow; tomorrow will look after itself. Each day has troubles enough of its own* (Mt. 6.34).

2.9 Recalling that Jesus said *If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross* (Mt 16.24) we ought not to assume that faithful evangelism will produce growth in numbers. It might produce the opposite.

In short, church growth says *come and join us;* the gospel call is *follow Jesus.*

3. Unity in Mission

3.1 At the time of union in 1972, the URC saw its direction as dying and rising in further unions of churches. The Basis states that the URC

sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people. ⁽¹³⁾

On a limited scale this happened in 1981 when there was union with the Churches of Christ. Now Assembly has taken a first decision to unite with the Congregational Union of Scotland. Further unions still remain our goal. But a sense of realism teaches us that these will not happen in the immediate future. What then is our role now?

3.2 This urgent expectation in 1972 for further union is perhaps the main explanation of the absence from the Basis and Structure of many specific references to **mission**. It is true that the purpose of the URC is clearly defined and it may be argued that mission is there in everything but name. However, nowhere is there a systematic exposition of the URC's understanding of mission. On the other hand, a World Church and Mission Department, with Mission and Ecumenical Work committees, was formed.

3.3. Within the Structure the members are given opportunity in the church meeting to *care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the church.*⁽¹⁴⁾ One function of the church meeting is *to further the church's mission in the locality.* While many other functions of the church and elders' meetings, the district council and provincial synod fall within any definition of mission, the term only specifically occurs next in a reference to the General Assembly, where one function is *to support and share in the missionary work of the church at home and abroad.* Twenty six years later, our direction is still to seek unity but, given that progress will be slow, we now need to have greater clarity about mission.

3.4 However *mission* is defined, we may no longer use the language of *missionary work at home and abroad.* This looks backwards to a time when *mission* was an extra activity, when churches were divided into those who sent and gave and those who received and took. Within the family of the Council for World Mission (CWM), the URC has been a strong supporter of the concept of partnership. Resources are to be given according to ability and all have a voice in deciding how they are to be used.

3.5 It has taken some time for the URC to recognise that it is a receiving church. The regular input from five missionaries from partner churches has helped to change our thinking. Now, as a result of the proceeds of the sale of land in Hong Kong, CWM is no longer dependent on the URC for a significant part of its income, and all thirty two partner churches are on a similar footing for giving and for receiving.

3.6 It is not insignificant that our CWM partners have now recognised that, after two centuries of seeing Britain as the source of missionary endeavour in their lands, the needs of Britain require them to share with the URC in mission here. Preman Niles' letter of January 1998 (see 1998 Assembly Report p.169) eloquently recognises this change.

(13) The Basis of Union para 8

(14) The Structure of the United Reformed Church para 2(1)

3.7 The Council of CWM has also recognised that it needs to stimulate the mission of each partner church. Therefore each one has been asked to examine its mission strategy and to prepare a mission programme for a three year period. This challenge fits closely with the Mission Council's own decision to respond in appropriate ways to the decline in membership.

3.8 However any understanding of mission which is to accord with the URC's experience and roots must reflect our commitment to unity. The organised unity we seek is not of static institutions but of churches engaged in mission. The unity we express in our ecumenical pilgrimage now must also be between churches which are in mission together. The way forward is *by mission in unity* and our goal is *unity in mission*.

4. Mission is.....

4.1 It is stimulating to compare different attempts to describe mission. Three expressions are given here:

- the purpose of the United Reformed Church
- a short definition by a writer on mission
- Five Marks of Mission

4.2 The purpose of the United Reformed Church

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

- to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;
- to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;
- and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.

4.3 As the final sentence of his important book, *Transforming Mission*, David Bosch states that mission is ***the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.*** This simple summary of the previous 500 pages of reflection and study highlights certain principles

- ***the good news:*** the words and deeds that express the life, death and resurrection of Jesus;
- ***of God's love:*** the mission is not ours but God's. The initiative is God's, ours the response; and God's love points us to the cross which stands over our life in judgement and grace;
- ***incarnated:*** mission is not an extra but takes flesh wherever the body of Christ is;
- ***in the witness:*** by a church which is not hidden away but gives testimony and evidence;
- ***of a community:*** for the church to be effective, to be the body of Christ, its members must be in relationship with each other;
- ***for the sake of the world:*** mission is being sent to the world and not for the church's sake, for self-preservation or its numerical growth but as an offering in the mission of God.

4.4 Alongside that dynamic analysis of mission it is helpful to use the formulation of **Five Marks of Mission** first drafted by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and later revised. The 1997 Forum of Churches Together in England endorsed this formulation:

- to proclaim the good news of the kingdom;
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society;
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Mission is necessary for the life of the Christian church, which, in the striking phrase of Emil Brunner, *exists by mission as a fire by burning*. Mission can be defined as **all the deliberate outreach of the church:** it is the sense of being called, sent and empowered by God, of being *the only human organisation which exists for the benefit of those who are not its members* in William Temple's phrase.

Mission is thus **activity in line with God's own loving purposes** for the world as we believe we know them in Jesus Christ and by the Spirit. Mission seeks, by word and by action together, to generate and sustain faith, hope and love in obedience to God the Holy Trinity, interpreting the whole world of space and time as God's creation, affirming Jesus as Lord, open to be led by the life-giving Spirit.

4.5 Various activities follow from the basic understanding set out in these five marks of mission, including worship and evangelism, Christian education, compassionate care, campaigning on issues of justice and peace, striving for a more wholesome lifestyle. Engagement in mission on this basis requires listening as well as speaking, learning as well as teaching, as Part Two will demonstrate. Some of these activities require particular gifts and ministries though all are, to a degree, for everyone. We would do well to keep these five points at the forefront of our thinking as criteria for mission when we appraise new ideas and suggestions.

The witness of the church must be well organised but not compartmentalised. We need a strategy which will drive the approach of those whose primary task is to make more effective the evangelistic and 'church life' aspects of mission as well as those whose calling is to serve and work for social transformation. We need to

speak and to serve. This first section has shown that the decline in size and influence of most local churches has made us less able to serve and less confident to speak. Added to which, the rapid change and growing diversification of British society leaves many traditional activities well past their 'sell-by' date and traditional church language barely intelligible. Now we have a unique opportunity for a fresh, constructive look. Mission thinking sees the broader picture; it deliberately reflects *on what God is about today and tomorrow*; it integrates our words and our activities in an appropriate evangelism and an authentic lifestyle; and generally it underpins church life and work with theological and spiritual strength which is not always there at present. We can evaluate not only our practice but our ideas against these **Five Marks of Mission**.

After all, if God had wanted us to live in the past he would never have promised us the future!

Part 2 Towards A Mission Strategy

5. Introduction

5.1 One starting point of **Growing Up** is that people feel something is missing from our life as a church. They look for a vision, a sense of direction, leadership: there are different labels. Usually it is related to a deep unease about numbers. When at Mission Council in 1997 the concerns of the synods were expressed, more than all the other issues mentioned were declining numbers and the need for mission. The foregoing analysis and theological exposition make it clear that there can be no simple solution to the problem of numerical decline. Yet in spite of all the frustrations amongst our ministers, elders and members there is a real commitment. In most churches, there is at least one thing done well. In some churches there are many things done well. But it is patchy: here and there, now and then. The challenge is to build on this commitment and on the faithfulness already demonstrated. The response to decline must be greater maturity in faith; not so much a strategy for growth but a growing up. It should be all of our members doing better what some already do well. It is about being more faithful where we are. It is being ready to share, eager to receive and open to learn from Christians in other places. It is listening and learning from God's action through people outside the church. Our calling is to be more loving as disciples of Christ, more trusting in the leading of the Spirit and more obedient to God, Source, Guide and Goal of all that is.

5.2 However it is also clear that some of our failure is a result of too many largely empty, struggling churches, the maintenance of which distracts us from mission, and whose empty pews discourage members and visitors alike.

5.3 The earlier analysis of decline (1.1ff), coupled with an understanding of mission in unity, which sees growth, not as an objective to be achieved but as a gift from God (2.5ff), and which may be tested by the **Five Marks of Mission** (3.10), points us in the direction of changing, building up and supporting the local church. Such an analysis suggests radical changes and many opportunities. Moreover CWM has challenged us to prepare a practical programme for three years. The programme described below does not deal with every part of church life but focuses on a few pivotal points for change. Nor are there proposals about district, regional or international mission. This is because these aspects of mission cannot be done well by a single church. They reinforce the need for mission in unity. Not everything will be new, as if no one has begun to create the building blocks of such a mission programme already. Some decisions have already been taken and some elements of a strategy are already in place.

6. The Mission Programme: An Introduction

6.1 **The aim** is for the United Reformed Church to balance its commitment to the unity of all God's people with a similar commitment to share in God's mission. The test of this commitment will be as we shape the life of our local churches according to the **Five Marks of Mission**.

6.2 The courses of action in paragraphs 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are set out grouping them under the appropriate **Mark of Mission**. Other courses of action follow regarding **leadership**, paragraph 11, **structure**, paragraph 12 and **finance**, paragraph 13. It must be stressed that this programme points to changes, it does not include all that is already being

done by local churches and other councils and their committees. In particular it is against a background of regular worship in all local churches and the mission in which they share day by day.

6.3 **The Timetable.** At the General Assembly in 1997 and 1998 various programmes were agreed and also in that period, Mission Council took some initiatives, all of which can be interpreted as separate strands in a developing mission strategy. These now need to be interwoven with further proposals to give a more rounded programme. In addition, the church needs to respond to CWM's invitation to prepare a mission programme for the next three or four years. It seems appropriate therefore to attempt to achieve the aim (6.1) during the three years 1999-2001.

6.4 **Implementation.** Although this programme is presented as a single package, it takes an overview recording actions recently taken by Assembly or Mission Council and proposals for decision and implementation by different committees and councils of the church. Each proposal stands or falls on its own merits.

7. The Mission Programme: Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom

7.1 **Belonging to the World Church.** A vision is needed that will enable the local church to lift its eyes from the limited horizons of its own locality. This programme was accepted by the General Assembly in 1998. Various practical programmes have been outlined but their prime objective is to enable each local church to be part of a world-wide Christian family so that, *working together and learning from one another we can gain the perspective and form the networks that help us understand God's purposes in this age and enable us to proclaim and live a gospel that speaks to our time.* (A summary of the programme is in Annex A. A fuller account is given in Assembly Reports 1998 p 82.)

7.2 **Witness.** This is part of the calling of every member. As was outlined earlier, (2.1 - 2.3) the URC has shied away from direct evangelism. Partly this has been because it has been associated with some methods, styles of church life and theology with which many members and ministers have been uncomfortable. Yet there is an inescapable obligation for Christians to speak of the faith in which they believe. David Bosch speaks of the obligation of a church to witness, to give testimony and evidence (3.9). At the 1998 Assembly, in a report on Evangelism, it was emphasised that *the local church and its members are universally seen as the primary agents of faith-sharing.* The need was also emphasised to *find ways in which Christians can learn to speak comfortably about their faith.* (The full report can be found in Assembly Reports 1998 pp 68-9). A resolution on the report called on local churches, district councils, synods and

the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee to engage in particular activities to encourage evangelism.

However the lessons of the URC's past resistance to what the New Testament means by evangelism indicates that the Committee must sharpen its focus, to help the people become more effective in its witness of *proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.* But people need help to be credible witnesses. The faith must be clearly and relevantly presented within each congregation. Everyone, young and old, should have experience of articulating this faith to others. We can no longer rely on those outside the church coming in to sample what is on offer. However, any that do must find a welcoming group who are eager to learn about and share the faith, enjoy worshipping God and show that they love each other and are ready to give loving service and work for justice. If the Holy Spirit adds to their number, then we must rejoice. But the starting point can only be the word and deed of witnessing. To revive the desire to witness and to suggest the ways, must be the focus of the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee's work in supporting the local church in proclaiming the good news. This may involve funding for particular mission projects, including the provision of enabling and training. The Committee will advise on such applications for funding.

7.3 **Unity.** In the light of the historical analysis and the challenge we now face, the ecumenical pilgrimage towards unity cannot be viewed in contrast to mission or as a distraction from evangelism. The whole church should remain alert for every opportunity of co-operating in mission with other denominations. Celebrating the Millennium is one such opportunity. We should also continue to seek organic unity for the sake of mission: our emphasis must be *mission in unity*; our goal, *unity in mission.* Current developments include negotiations with the Congregational Union in Scotland, resulting in a first decision by the URC's 1998 Assembly to unite; the publication of the first report of the Scottish Church Initiative for Union; in England, the beginning of informal talks with the Church of England and the Methodist Church; and, in Wales, within the context of the Covenant for Union (Enfys), a move towards developing ecumenical oversight.

8. The Mission Programme: Teach, baptise and nurture new believers

8.1 **Children.** In the last few years the traditional interest of the United Reformed Church in the contribution of children to the life of the church (e.g. family church, all age worship etc) has been re-awakened by the Youth and Children's Work Committee and its staff. **Pilots** is another way in

which it is intended to stimulate this part of the church's life. Pilots is a non-uniformed children's and young people's organisation in which the United Reformed Church collaborates with the Congregational Federation. Its aim is to enable children and young people to grow in faith within the family of the church, by respecting the individual personality of each member. Its teaching focuses on the life of the worldwide church and on the Christian's calling to safeguard the integrity of creation. The Mission Council resolved to put resources released by CWM into the creation of a new post to support local churches in developing Pilots Companies. A Pilots Development Officer was appointed in 1998.

8.2 Faith Development. Many churches in recent years have received into membership, women and men who have committed themselves to Christ after many years, or a lifetime, outside the family of the church. Local churches must be ready to welcome them and to encourage and nurture their growth in faith. Developing Discipleship⁽¹⁵⁾ is a useful tool.

8.3 The Elderly. Concern is sometimes expressed at the proportion of elderly people in our congregations. However this is not surprising given the age structure of the general population. The gifts of these members ought to be seen positively. General Assembly in 1998 accepted a strategy to enable the church to regard older people more appreciatively and to enable older people themselves, whether members of the church or not, to regard themselves more positively. A full report *Respecting the Gift of Years* was produced to assist the church in its thinking.⁽¹⁶⁾

9. The Mission Programme: Respond to human need by loving service

9.1 The Local Church in the Community. Proclamation of the good news is not only by word but also by deed. Many local churches serve the community well in a variety of ways. However it is an astonishing fact that throughout the history of the URC, no attempt has been made nationally to co-ordinate, share experiences, take initiatives, or suggest policy within this field. Alongside a renewed concern for witness, it is proposed to entrust the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee with the development of this new area of work. The proposal is worked out in some detail in Annex B which makes it clear that: *In line with the latter three of the five marks of mission (4.4) we must re-affirm that to fulfil the church's calling requires a deliberate engagement with the local community.*

10. The Mission Programme: Seek to transform unjust structures of society

10.1 Working for Peace and Justice. The Church and Society Committee should be encouraged as it gives leadership, through its concern for the poor here and overseas, in particular, through the **Commitment for Life** programme and through the **Jubilee 2000** campaign, to wipe out the debts of the world's poorest nations. That, however, is only one stride on the longer journey to end world poverty. Work done by the committee and staff is complemented by efforts in local churches and by district and synod committees and groups, to keep alive the vision of *peace and justice for the whole creation.*

10.2 Mission in a multi-racial and multi-cultural society. A modest step has already been taken in appointing a Development Worker in this field for 1997-2000. Assembly will need to decide in 2000 how the whole of the United Reformed Church, not merely those parts of it with a visible ethnic mix, is to respond to the findings of this research. Work alongside Ghanaian Presbyterians having been reviewed, will continue. Some Urdu-speaking congregations from a Presbyterian background have recently come into contact with us. The challenging task of relating to these congregations, serving their needs and enabling their own mission is not straightforward. But all this work has enabled the church to begin to tap deep and diverse spiritual gifts which members of ethnic minority backgrounds bring to our own life and mission.

10.3 Church Related Community Work. Mission Council commissioned a review of this ministry the report of which was received in October 1998⁽¹⁷⁾. The report affirmed the work, which in different forms exercises a ministry of service (a diaconal ministry). It also attempts to transform the unjust structures of society by enabling people to take more control over their lives and local community. After listing the different models of community work and its theology the report makes number of recommendations, the chief of which are that

10.3.1 the theology and practice of diaconal ministry, largely developed by Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) and the churches-in-community be taken into the mainstream of the United Reformed Church's life;

10.3.2 a policy is implemented which devolves the management of the CRCW programme from an Assembly committee to the synods and district councils;

(15) *Developing Discipleship* - Available from the URC Bookshop.
(16) *Respecting the Gift of Years* (compiled by Nigel Appleton) - Available from the office of Church & Society.

(17) *Church Related Community Work in the United Reformed Church* by Graham Cook & Bob Day, October 1998 available from the office of the Ministries Committee.

10.3.3 it is aimed to increase the present ten CRCWs to thirty, with at least two serving each synod;

10.3.4 consideration be given to the appointment, not only of a CRC Work Development Worker but also of a second member of staff to support the development of community work of all local churches.

There are eleven other recommendations which refer to issues of accreditation, training and support. The above four recommendations have already been agreed by the Mission Council and the rest referred to the Ministries Committee for action.

10.4 **Sharing Synod Resources.** For reasons which are partly historical but largely to do with property values of redundant buildings, synods have unequal financial resources. Learning from the CWM pattern of churches contributing as they are able and receiving according to their needs, the synods themselves have devised a method of sharing resources. Essentially this involves redistributing 5% of their annual investment and property income in an inverse proportion to their income. It is now being argued that justice and the needs of mission require the sharing to be increased to 10%.

11. The Mission Programme: Safeguarding the integrity of creation

11.1 No further major initiatives are proposed which deal with this exclusively. Recent new work has been done by the Church and Society Committee on the environment. This has resulted in the production of *Roots and Branches*,⁽¹⁸⁾ which is commended to local churches to enable them to reflect on issues related to sustaining and renewing the life of the earth and to begin to care for God's creation.

This is also intended to be a significant element in the teaching material offered by Pilots.

12. The Mission Programme: Supporting structure

12.1 **A question for each local church.** Populations move. Across the road, there may be another church with whom God wants us to unite. There may be another United Reformed Church in the town, and in coming together, both may be more useful to the Kingdom. There may be another neighbourhood which needs a church. Every church, therefore, whatever its size must ask: ***Is there, here in this place, a part for us in God's mission?*** If the answer is yes, then the question becomes one of assessing if the church is playing a full part in God's mission there. Such matters are not for that

congregation alone. There must be openness to receive the advice of other churches through the district council and others.

12.2 **Small churches.** The 1998 Assembly requested Mission Council to set up a Task Group to *consider and report on the opportunities, challenges and difficulties* which small churches face. It is not easy to define *small* but out of 1733 churches, 179 have 10 members or fewer. There are even towns where there are two congregations belonging to the United Reformed Church, each with fewer than 10 members. There is nothing significant about 10. To define *small* as having fewer than 12 members would add another 48 congregations to the list, 1 in 8 of our churches.

12.3 **Local groups and the district council.** In order to strengthen the local church's mission and to reduce internal administration, new patterns of the grouping of local churches are being considered. Mission Council has already set up a working party on this matter which is due to report in October 1999. However the Structure 2(3) defines the district council as *churches grouped together for the purpose of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action*. It would therefore be appropriate to explore how the purpose of the district council could be shared between a group of local churches and the synod. The danger of creating another layer of structure must be avoided.

12.4 **The Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness Committee** of the Assembly should be strengthened to cope with the additional responsibility for the local churches' involvement in the community. Proposals for a revised remit, its structure, staffing and new name are set out in Annex D.

13. The Mission Programme: Leadership

13.1 **Elders' training.** The key to change in the local church is leadership. This is the responsibility of the elders working with the minister. Many synods undertake programmes of elders' training. A significant element in that training should aim to improve the collaboration between elders and minister. The Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness and Training Committees should be asked to review the work which is being done and to present proposals for a systematic programme.

13.2 **Local Leadership.** In order that each local church should have better oversight without using scarce stipendiary ministry ineffectively, the supply of local leadership should be encouraged by each synod. The pioneering model created by the Mersey Synod could be a starting point. Guidelines on Local Leadership were accepted by the Assembly in 1998 (Assembly Reports pp 66-7).

(18) *Roots and Branches: A starter pack for churches.* Available from the URC Bookshop.

13.3 Ministry (Non-Stipendiary). This form of ministry was created in 1979. After nearly 20 years experience, the Ministries Committee is reviewing all aspects of this ministry to see what lessons have been learned and to develop further this gift of ministry.

13.4 Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal. This was agreed in 1997. Its purpose is to enable ministers to assess their performance and to identify areas where they need help and further training. In order to respond to the needs identified, the Ministries Committee, which has oversight of this programme, should liaise closely with the Training Committee regarding its policies.

13.5 Continuing Ministerial Education. This policy was adopted by the 1998 General Assembly. This policy should be implemented in the next three years. In many respects this programme could be the key point in transforming the church. The role of ministers in enabling local churches to reshape their life according to the **Five Marks of Mission** is crucial. By expecting ministers to undergo training throughout the life of their service, the emphasis should be on developing and sharing their knowledge of current thinking and good practice as it focuses on mission in unity.

13.6 Recruitment of Ministers. In the analysis, (1.4), it was demonstrated that over twenty five years the number of members had halved but the number of ministers had only fallen by one third. Whereas in 1972 there were 176 members per minister, in 1997 there were only 131 members per minister. It is easy to argue from these figures that there is no shortage of ministers. However the figures also show that the number of churches in the same period has fallen only by one sixth. This has resulted both in ministers having responsibility for more churches than in 1972 (from 1.9 to 2.4 churches) and more and longer vacancies. As a consequence, the cry of ministers and churches has been that more ministers are needed. The Mission Council in October 1998 received from its Resource Planning Group a paper on the **Procurement and Deployment of Stipendiary Ministry**. This offered a number of options for a recruitment policy for this situation. In the end it was agreed to budget for minister numbers to track membership for the next five years. If membership rises, the figure for stipendiary ministers will be increased at proportionately half the rate. However the figure in the budget will be reduced at a rate of about half that of any decline in membership. This policy ought to provide the finance for a modest growth in the number of ministers. However there are two cautions. First, this modest increase will be a charge on members' giving. Second, budgetary provision, in itself, does not recruit ministers.

13.7 The Call to Ministry. The previous paragraph deals with the scaffolding. But the formation of any consideration of ministry with regard to a mission strategy, must be listening for the call of God. At the heart of our understanding of *call*, is the conviction that Jesus' words are true in our experience: *you did not choose me: I chose you.* (John 15.16) This call to ministry is to the whole people of God. However, to give leadership in mission, we must pray not only that God will call women and men to a ministry of word and sacrament but that they will hear and obey. To speak to a younger generation, increasingly alienated from the Christian institutions, the church needs more young ministers. To provide the energy and drive to transform tired structures, the church needs ministers with understanding of contemporary culture and lifestyles. The challenge is to every member old and young. Some should ask themselves if God has chosen them for the work of ministry. All should ask if God is asking them to speak a word of challenge to a particular person. Individual convictions still have to be tested by the councils of the church. But the United Reformed Church, with a mission programme has a worthwhile vision to challenge every one of its people to ask if God's voice can be heard demanding their life.

13.8 Deployment. In the union of 1972 it was agreed to *take steps to ensure that so far as possible ordained ministers of the Word and Sacrament are readily available to every local church* (Basis para 24). This intention was followed by an early decision to unify the method of payment of ministers' stipends so that all, instead of only the former Presbyterians, would be paid from a central fund. This system left local ministry costs (manse, car, telephone, etc) to be met locally by the pastorate. The consequence was that, although a system of sharing ministers evenly was introduced in 1974 (deployment) those pastorates with stronger financial resources, able to meet local ministry costs without much difficulty, have found it hard to understand a policy which limits the availability of ministers. Some of those wealthier churches have therefore found it hard to share ministry. District councils are discouraged from following mission-driven priorities by the overriding commitment to provide ministers for every church. (see 1.4 Table E)

14. The Mission Programme: Finance

14.1 Maintenance of the Ministry. One of the great successes of the United Reformed Church has been the central payment of ministers. This is based on the Plan for Partnership under which synods agree how much they will contribute to the *Ministry and Mission Fund*. Each synod then agrees with district councils and local churches how much the latter will pay. Ministers' stipends are paid directly through the central payroll. The principle is that

Appendix 1

churches pay as they are able but receive the ministry they need. District Councils are responsible for scoping pastorates i.e. defining the level of ministry received by each church. It is argued that this system does not adequately reflect our need to support mission. Therefore consideration ought to be given to a more strategic use of the element of subsidy to support mission.

14.2 **Mission Programme Costs.** It is estimated that the major costs arising in the first three years (1999 - 2001) will include

14.2.1 three new initiatives (total for three years)

- Continuing Ministerial Education (Ref. 13.5) £744,000
- Pilots Development Officer (Ref. 8.1) £125,000
- Belonging to the World Church (Ref. 7.1) £700,000

14.3 **Financing the Programme.** The above costs have already been included in our budget for the year 2000, and revised estimates for 1999. This has been done without creating any additional burden on local churches by making use of existing resources as follows:-

- 14.3.1 the resources released by the reduction of £500,000 in our annual contribution to CWM
- 14.3.2 accumulated reserves in the World Church and Mission Fund
- 14.3.3 accumulated reserves in the church's general funds

In addition, CWM has allocated two specific funds:

- 14.3.4 Mission Programme Support fund allocation of £313,000.
- 14.3.5 Self-support Fund allocation of £366,000, which it is proposed should be made available to local church projects (see para 14.4 below).

14.4 **Self Support Fund.** CWM has set aside a capital sum to assist each partner church to become Self-Supporting. The URC has been allocated £366,043 The intention is for member churches of

CWM to use this allocation to enable them to be self-supporting. The problem for the URC is that we are already self-supporting. CWM has set criteria regarding the use of the funds within the context of self-support (See Annex C). It is recommended by the Mission Council that this is made available for the self-support of appropriate community work through local churches. This would be a way of enabling the church to act on two of the **Five Marks of Mission** (3.10)

- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society.

The conditions and procedures regarding the use of such resources will be worked out by the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee

Resolutions

The General Assembly

- 14 accepts the mission programme outlined in the report **Growing Up** and strongly commends it to local churches, district councils and synods;
- 15 instructs the Mission Council to oversee the planning of the mission programme;
- 16 submits the mission programme of the United Reformed Church to CWM;
- 17 enlarges the remit, adjusts the structure and changes the name of the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee as set out in Annex D

These proposals, together with the rest of the life of the United Reformed Church, are offered to the Council for World Mission and to God, by the General Assembly, as a mission programme for the years 1999-2001:

***whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything
in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.*** ⁽¹⁹⁾

Annex A

Belonging to the World Church

The Need

For centuries Christians from this country took the gospel to foreign lands. Today the striking missionary challenge is to present the gospel confidently and meaningfully here. Many of our overseas partners are steeped in the tradition of being "missionary" churches. Alive and vital they display a self-confidence that is sadly lacking in much of the church in this country (witness the comments of those who have served with us from our overseas partners outside Europe). We should be learning from them that we might rediscover our missionary calling and, interpreting what we find, seek fresh approaches to God's mission here. We need to be challenged by our Christian sisters and brothers from other cultures on attitudes that we take from society which are not gospel or Kingdom values and which hinder our mission. At very least, we should allow their enthusiasm, commitment, courage and vision to inspire us and energise our sense of purpose.

Alongside this is another contemporary challenge - globalisation. The church being both global and local is uniquely placed to speak to this phenomenon. The increased control of wealth and power across the world by a few individuals and large corporations needs challenging, most especially where the needs of people are ignored and the environment is mercilessly exploited. Working with our church partners, sharing stories and experiences, we can make connections and begin to try and understand the forces that are at work behind the term "globalisation". As the Christian community, we too can be global players, but we need to learn from one another and to work much more closely together. Our world church partnerships make this possible.

For both these reasons we need to raise our awareness of the world church so that we might

- stretch the imagination and vision of people in the URC by exposing them to churches whose life, witness and circumstances whilst markedly different from ours, offer much to be learned about being the church engaged in God's mission today

- take seriously the global challenges facing us and find ways of responding together as Christians called to care for God's world.

The Vision

God's purposes are global. They encompass the world, seeking to bring healing to the nations, reconciliation and peace with justice. They speak to our sin and failure, offering love and forgiveness; liberation from the past and new opportunities for tomorrow. They offer a vision of wholeness, of shalom - people at one with God, with each other and with the creation. They call us into partnership, to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Each generation has to make these purposes their own. To see in the signs of the times where God's mission lies for them. To interpret afresh Jesus' understanding of the kingdom and in their own words and actions to witness to these things that others might believe and share in the new life they offer.

The fruits of previous generations' missionary activity provide the foundations for our response to today's challenges. Partnerships transcending the world enable us to think and act globally; to make connections; to link local and international experience; to learn from and share with one another; to challenge others and to be renewed ourselves.

We live in a global culture. Our cities are international centres with communities drawn from many ethnic groups, cultures and faiths. Our rural communities now compete with rural communities across the world for markets which not so long ago could have been taken as granted as theirs. Around the world we are partners in God's mission with churches whose own life reflects the individual strands of the multifaceted society in which we minister. Together we face the common challenge of a global economy and global news and entertainment media. Working together and learning from one another we can gain the perspective and form the networks that help us understand God's purposes in this age and enable us to proclaim and live a gospel that speaks to our time.

The Action

The 1998 General Assembly, receiving the above statement encouraged the Ecumenical Committee to implement an exciting set of programmes grouped together under the heading *Belonging to the World Church*.

The programmes are all intended to build into the life and witness of the United Reformed Church a new awareness of belonging to the world church so that we might better fulfil our calling to be witnesses to the ends of the earth, partners in God's mission responding to the challenges of today.

Briefly the principal programmes are:

1. **Overseas Training Opportunities for Ordinands and CRCWs**

On a reciprocal basis offering everyone training for the ministry or to be a church-related community worker the opportunity to spend two months learning and working with one of our CWM partners outside Europe.

2. **Lay Training Opportunities**

Seeking to enrich the whole life of the church through our world church partnerships we will initiate with CWM events that bring together lay people from the URC and our partner churches to learn from one another and experience at first hand the richness and variety of the world church.

3. **Opportunities for Young People and Children**

Working with FURY we will develop opportunities for young people in the United Reformed Church to learn from the world church. Through the appointment of a Pilots Development Officer new opportunities will be opened up for children and young people to understand that they belong to a world-wide community committed to work together in partnership in God's mission.

4. **Visiting Speakers**

Each year we will invite visitors for each province from our partners outside Europe to pursue a programme of mutual learning. They will learn about us and we will hear their stories of how the church is engaged in mission where they come from. Their visit will conclude with an opportunity to hear our visitors' observations on the life of church and society in Britain.

5. **In-service Training Opportunities**

Opportunities and incentives will be developed to encourage those already working for the church to learn from our overseas partners.

6. **Research Fellowships**

We hope to develop a research fellowship in each of our theological colleges for the study of an aspect of contemporary UK church life in the world context, with a view to developing our understanding and practice of mission here.

In addition we will develop and modify existing work, partnerships and programmes in line with the overall objectives of *Belonging to the World Church*, encouraging every opportunity for mutual learning, enrichment and support as Christians and churches working together we go about God's mission in the world today.

Annex B

The Local Church in the Community: a call to mission

1 A glance at a few of the changes in society that affect community work of various kinds (- and there are many kinds, on a spectrum from cautious room letting to outright political activism) reveals a steadily changing context and a varied pattern of how the churches are or might be responding.

1.1 The recent history of **public funding** for community projects presents a fascinating kaleidoscope. Direct support for capital and revenue projects run by voluntary bodies, including the churches, has ebbed and flowed.

Schemes of job creation from 1974 proved more and more demanding until many voluntary sponsors withdrew. Now they are being invited back and some churches will become involved in various aspects of the New Deal programme, in providing premises, ideas and people. Experience in the next two years will reveal the wisdom or otherwise of such involvement.

Capital programmes affecting church premises are legion, many of them drawing on public funds or on quasi-public funding such as the Lottery. The URC has attempted a relatively sophisticated approach to the acceptance of Lottery funding, namely that it is not ruled out for community benefit but is deemed unacceptable for direct church benefit; we wait to see evidence of how this distinction works out in practice

The system of **formal contracts** or similar arrangements for the provision of activities and facilities on church premises is now normally a condition for receipt of any substantial public funding for such work - day centres, lunch clubs, open youth work, etc. There are good stories and some not so good. Overall, it must be a concern that there is **no overall pooling of experience** across our church in the matter of public funding. Neither District Councils nor Provincial Synods and Trusts have much to offer in monitoring such projects and giving effective support. When our history is written, the failure of the wider church to collate experiences and to offer better support and guidance in such matters will be seen as a serious omission.

1.2 **All public programmes** have been radically and irreversibly changed from the post-war settlement. Thoroughgoing policy changes by Government in every area of public policy have affected community life and often disproportionately the poorer people across our country. It is not only specifically designated 'community work' that has been affected. Policy changes influence the well-being of communities and the post-war norms and expectations, often (though of course not always) in sadly damaging and divisive ways.

1.3 **New styles of community involvement** have emerged in the 80s and 90s, new ways for the churches to engage with others in responding to the needs of people within their communities. These include broad-based organising, the activities of 'social entrepreneurs', the transformation of some churches into community centres and campaigning round particular local issues.

1.4 Alongside all this, the **traditional programmes of provision** to particular groups continue to make vital contributions to community life. And, of course, the commonest community involvement by churches remains the **letting of rooms** to many different outside bodies though hardly any work has been done on how far room lettings may or may not be described as mission.

1.5 In addition, local churches would probably say that collecting and giving **money for good causes** can be valuable and authentic community service. And, of course, an immense amount of **work is done by church members** in various capacities in society (see below, 3d and 3e)

1.6 The pattern of church involvement is not known in any detail but this should not necessarily encourage us nor invite exaggeration of what is being done. Some research was carried out by Church and Society in 1993 into local church involvement in community work and service. The researcher stated: "The results suggest that relatively little effort has been made to identify the changing needs of society in recent years. ... Few new initiatives have been started in the past five years". We need to know more of what is going on (see below, 5.3).

2 In line with the latter three of the five marks of mission (see above, 3.10 and 9.1), we must re-affirm that to fulfil the church's calling requires a **deliberate engagement with the local community**. All those church programmes that might be described broadly as community work (from basic service provision to a more partnership-based enabling style) must be regularly reviewed and improved to meet the changing needs and expectations of those around us. People actually deserve more than 'the best we can manage' and certainly more than 'the best we could think of twenty years ago'.

We need to begin by affirming the **variety of styles** of what has to be generically called community work, though we should also say that some are more authentic than others. We should start from a basic premise that the aim of good community work is to enable and to empower local communities and vulnerable groups, as well as to serve and provide for them. The logic of this is usually that the church does not 'go it alone' but joins with other bodies around that aim; there is some experience of this in the URC. This approach is far from straightforward, since the credibility of the church in seeking the well-being of a community is not always established - many suspect us of hidden motives - nor is it easy for Christians to form demanding partnerships with non-Christians. But this open approach can result in a deepening of the quality of church life and a strengthening of our credibility.

3 The resources of the church for mission activity are three-fold, primarily people, then funds, then buildings. Mission Council has taken steps to begin work on a strategy for the use of local church premises.

We can look first to a **range of human resources**:

- a) *regular ordained ministers*, many of whom are experienced in community work of one kind or another; with new patterns of continuing ministerial education, many more ministers will have the chance to acquire skills in this area;
- b) *ministers in 'special category' posts*, with specialist work, in demanding locations or within institutions; such ministries are sometimes resented as being a distraction from the 'real ministry' in the local pastorate but this experience must be seen as a valuable resource;

- c) *Church Related Community Workers*, self-evidently a primary resource for any developing strategy of church and community engagement; as well as those in post there are several others whom we have not used since they ceased to be in post, even though considerable sums have been spent on their training;
- d) *professional people* in our churches, qualified professionals in relevant fields (community work, education, politics, social sciences, finance, building, administration, etc.) are often available to help; we often fail to acknowledge them and their work as part of God's mission in the world today;
- e) *other people with time* in today's world, the most precious gift of all to offer; their contribution (as noted above, 1.5) is made through a range of organisations in addition to the church.

4 What gives this discussion its edge and thrust is, of course, the **prospect of new funding**. This is primarily down to the Council for World Mission and their challenge to us. However, grants from Assembly funds each year to local projects already exceed £100k. Thus it is not simply the 'new money' which has sparked off new thinking and there has been growing scope for funding of new work in recent years. But the CWM *challenge* to concentrate on mission in our own land has jolted and spurred us.

5 The specific proposal which affects the church nation-wide is for an enabling programme (see below, 5.2) which will be part of the wider responsibility of the Life and Witness Committee and might require an additional staff member. It must be stressed that the proposal must be evaluated by the intended impact on **local** churches, with actions and events at Provincial and District levels intended towards that basic aim.

5.1 The **additional responsibilities** include:

- a) overall policy development in church and community work complementary to the work of the CRCW Development Worker.
- b) implementing the 'enabling programme' (see below, 5.2) including the task of compiling a short list of possible applications for funding through the Self-Support Fund of CWM (see above, 14.4).

- c) promoting research and exchange of information, ideas, etc. on church and community engagement among local churches and other Councils, including liaison with other similar work, e.g. the outreach programme of Youth and Children's Work Committee.

5.2 One way of implementing any overall commitment in a new mission strategy which committed us to reach out more pro-actively into the community would be **an annual enabling programme**, co-ordinated nationally but delivered at local, district and synod 'level', including at least the following elements.

5.2.1 There might be additional specific training opportunities in community work to existing ministers and leaders at £5k + per synod, no less than ten persons to benefit each year. (£75k pa) These might well be provided by one or more specialist bodies contracted to serve the whole church. Some of these opportunities might be overseas or involve overseas personnel through the complementary 'Belonging to the World Church' programme.

5.2.2 There might be major consultations, one per synod per year, on church and community involvement, (£13k pa). These would address such topics as criteria for good projects, applying for funds, making cross-community partnerships, coping with criticism, etc.

5.2.3 It would be helpful if, there were some opportunities to share these ideas and information imaginatively in each district, to revisit earlier ideas which never went anywhere, to identify churches with good proposals for consideration for funding.

The Committee and its Officers will need to liaise widely to ensure that best use is taken of ecumenical options throughout this enabling programme.

5.3 Fairly soon, Mission Council should commission fresh **independent research** into what community work is being done in our churches, what form it takes and how effective it is. This would be done by a statistical survey and a supplementary qualitative survey and might take six - nine months.

Having reviewed the current mood of the church, the context and the theological imperative for community work as mission, and the fresh opportunity to deploy some new money, these proposals could form a key element in the new mission strategy being developed for the United Reformed Church into our second 25 years.

Annex C

CWM's Self Support Fund

1.1 This fund arose out of a desire to place the control of some additional financial resources under the control of each member church. It was decided by the Council that churches should be encouraged to provide for some of their own financial needs rather than rely on grants from abroad.

1.2 However it was also recognised that all member churches should learn to be receivers as well as givers. Therefore the Fund (£7.5m) was apportioned between the member churches using a formula that took account of the relative economic strength of the country, the size of the church and the number of sovereign nations in which the church was set.

1.3 The amount allocated to the United Reformed Church under this formula is £366,043. This does not have to be spent on a single project and all applications will be assessed by CWM before funds are released.

1.4 The Self-Support Fund is for projects that

- represent the church's long-term strategy to become self sufficient;
- can support the church's mission priorities;
- are economically viable and sustainable, taking into account the country's economic situation and showing good business practice;
- will generate profits in the short and medium term;
- use safe investment options;
- create jobs, especially for unemployed people in the church;
- will increase the member church's contribution to CWM's common pool of funds.

Annex D

Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee

The Mission Council, having noted the suggestions in Appendix 1 (9.1) and Annex C, the Review of Church Related Community Work (10.3); and the proposals for the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee in Appendix 1 (12.4) recommend that:

1. the Committee be given the additional responsibility for the work of the local church in the community with a revised remit:

The Purpose of the Life and Witness Committee is:

1. <i>to enable the local church to capture the vision of God's mission for itself and to plan its life accordingly;</i>	<i>by monitoring and assessing relevant government policy and advising the local church accordingly;</i>
2. <i>to encourage growth in faith among people of all ages;</i>	6. <i>to support the work of elders and the work of the district councils in their oversight of the local church;</i>
3. <i>to challenge members in their stewardship and witness;</i>	7. <i>to stimulate district councils and synods in the development of their own strategies for mission;</i>
4. <i>to encourage the local church to engage with its community in evangelism, if possible ecumenically;</i>	8. <i>to support the work of the Windermere Centre and of the Rural Consultant;</i>
5. <i>to enable each church to engage with its local community in partnership and service; by gathering ideas and experience, including best practice, and advocating these to the local church;</i>	9. <i>to enable ongoing reflection on issues related to the Community of Women and Men in the Church.</i>

2. the Committee be increased in size from eight to ten members;

3. the Committee to continue, for the time being, with separate sub-committees for Stewardship, and the Community of Women and Men in the Church. The Committee may also commission task groups for specific work;

4. the Committee to be named **the Life and Witness Committee**.

5. **Staffing.** The Revd John Steele will be the Secretary for Life and Witness. He will work with the newly appointed CRCW Development Worker, whose job description includes some responsibility for the local church's community work. With regard to a proposal for a second post in the field of community work, the General Secretary has been asked to convene a meeting of the officers of the Life and Witness, Ministries, Training and Church & Society Committees to explore this and report to the Mission Council. Such a meeting should take place approximately nine months after the CRCW Development Worker has been in post.

Appendix 2

Accounts

The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom
86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT

Assembly Officers

Moderator of the General Assembly (1998/9) - Mrs Wilma Frew
General Secretary - Revd Anthony Burnham
Clerk of the General Assembly - Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee - Revd Alasdair Pratt
Deputy General Secretary - Revd John Waller
Honorary Treasurer - Mr Graham Stacy FCA

Other Officers

Moderator Elect – Revd Peter McIntosh
Immediate Past Moderator – Revd David Jenkins

Trustee

United Reformed Church Trust
(Chairman of Board of Directors – Dr. Brian Woodhall)

Bankers

Midland Bank Plc
Newgate Street Branch, 31 Holborn, London EC1N 2HR

Legal Advisers

Dawson & Co
2 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3RZ

Towns, Needham & Co
6/8 Albert Road, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 3PJ

Auditors

Robson Rhodes
186 City Road, London EC1V 2NU

Investment Manager

HSBC Asset Management Europe Limited
6 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7QP

Actuaries

Aon Consulting Limited
Carnegie House, Peterborough Road
Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AJ

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

**FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER
1998**

These accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds administered for the benefit of The United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of synods, districts or local churches.

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Note: These accounts do not include the "Review of activities" which normally forms part of a charity's annual report and accounts. The information which would be included in such a review is incorporated in the book of Annual Reports to General Assembly.

For readers unfamiliar with financial statements there is an explanatory note at the foot of most pages describing the content in simple terms.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Format of the report and accounts

The formal accounts for the year 1998 are set out on pages 6 to 19 and follow the layout we have used for the past three years. Some additional information has been included outside the formal accounts this year: immediately following this report are two pages giving explanations of the objects and restrictions on use of the main funds which are combined in the annual accounts, and on pages 20 and 21 there is a five year summary of key figures from the annual accounts and some other statistics.

Results for 1998

The results for 1998 are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7. This shows that there was an increase in funds in the year of £3,862,000. The breakdown of this increase compared with the increase for the previous year is shown below:

		1997
Surplus for the year on:		
Ministry & Mission Fund and the other funds		
covered by our annual budget	1,697,000	877,000
Restricted funds	162,000	1,263,000
Capital funds	90,000	9,000
Increase in market value of investments	<u>1,913,000</u>	<u>2,497,000</u>
	<u>£3,862,000</u>	<u>£4,646,000</u>

Ministry & Mission Fund and other funds covered by our annual budget - £1,697,000 surplus

The 1998 actual amounts are compared in detail with 1997 and the 1998 budget on pages 22 and 23. The budget showed a break-even; the actual surplus of £1,697,000 is mainly accounted for by two items. First, during 1998 we received one legacy of £1,145,000 which is, by any standard, exceptional.

The second major difference between actual and budget is the reduction of over £500,000 in our contribution to the Council for World Mission. We were encouraged to make this reduction by the CWM Executive, who suggested that better use might be made of these resources for mission in the United Kingdom.

Using such substantial surpluses, which cannot be foreseen at the time we adopt annual budgets, is a major challenge. This matter has been addressed by the Resource Planning Advisory Group and their conclusions are set out in the commentary on the year 2000 budget which forms part of the Mission Council report to the 1999 General Assembly. In brief, they are recommending that we should, in future, budget to spend rather more than our anticipated, regular, income; the 2000 budget set out on pages 22 and 23 of this report adopts this approach and shows a deficit of £660,000.

Restricted funds surplus - £162,000

This surplus is a net figure made up of increases and decreases on a number of funds. The income and expenditure of the restricted funds (but not the net increase or decrease for the year) is summarised by major fund on page 10. This summary shows that the Retired Ministers' Housing Society and Funds had income of £912,000 with expenditure of £33,000 to produce an income surplus of £879,000. £674,000 of this surplus was, in fact, required for investment in the purchase of houses. Funds which had an excess of expenditure over income in 1998 were the Westminster College funds, the Church Buildings Fund and the Retired Ministers' Fund. Explanations about each of these are included in the new information about funds on pages 4 and 5.

Increase in market value of investments - £1,913,000

Investment values fluctuated during 1998. Although for the year as a whole our investments increased in value significantly, at one stage they were showing a decrease in value. This illustrates the uncertainty of stock markets at the present time and serves as a reminder that we cannot expect increases in value every year.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CONTINUED**Five year summary on pages 20 and 21**

These new pages provide a great deal of information for those interested in exploring trends in the URC's finances and may well stimulate more questions than they give answers. It is important to recognise that most of the financial figures in this summary are of the total of all our funds, not just the funds for which we prepare an annual budget. In general, the five year summary shows us to be in a very healthy financial state. The only year when we did not show a surplus of over £1,000,000 was the year in which we made an additional contribution of £2,500,000 to the Pension Fund.

It is interesting to note that the cash flow information shows the substantial amounts that have been invested in retired ministers' housing over the five year period. Although the rate of growth in the total number of houses required may be diminishing, as houses become vacant and have to be sold, the proceeds of sale are usually lower than the cost of purchasing new houses so that there is a continuing need for cash to maintain the housing stock.

Another key figure which the statistics highlight is the cost of Ministry & Mission contributions expressed as an amount per member. Even in the years when total M&M contributions did not rise, the cost per member still rose because of the drop in overall membership numbers.

Conclusion

The finances of the URC are not simple and the annual accounts can only give overall information. Those wanting information on specific areas may not find the answers to all their questions in the 24 pages of the report and accounts. The Treasurer and the Financial Secretary will be pleased to respond to requests for further information or explanations on any aspect of the accounts at General Assembly or at any other time.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee.

GRAHAM STACY

Convener

30th March 1999

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS

The major funds or groups of funds which are included in the URC annual accounts are shown on pages 10 and 11. Descriptions of these funds are set out below, with the total amount of each fund as at 31st December 1998 shown in each heading.

Ministry and Mission Fund - £12,319,000

This is the General Fund of the Church through which the bulk of our income and expenditure, covered by the annual budget presented to General Assembly, is passed.

Maintenance of the Ministry Fund - £685,000**Ministerial Training Fund - £159,000**

Both these are capital funds which are invested to provide income towards the costs of Maintenance of the Ministry and Ministerial Training. Each year's income is taken up in the Ministry and Mission Fund which is responsible for meeting these costs

Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund - £nil

In past years the Memorial Hall Trust (MHT) has made monies available to The United Reformed Church for use within the trust terms of the MHT. About £2 million of this money was used to finance, by way of loan, the retirement housing operation. During 1998 the loan was repaid and replaced with a loan from the Ministry and Mission Fund. The MHT monies have been used in accordance with the terms of the MHT for the payment of ministers' stipends.

Westminster College Funds - £2,402,000

About 18 accounts make up this group of funds, all of which are associated, in some way, with Westminster College. In addition to the College general fund, there are library funds, prize funds, scholarship funds, and other funds with a more specific use. In 1998 the 'Teachers Pension Fund', which was a designated fund of the College, was transferred to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund on the authority of the Board of Governors of Westminster College, in the sum of £258,000.

Church Buildings Fund - £3,864,000

This fund may be used in the upkeep and repair of the buildings of the local churches of the URC and the maintenance of the services therein; in the improvement and extension of the buildings of such churches; and in the provision and erection of buildings in England and Wales for use for the purposes of such churches or as residences for ministers of The United Reformed Church.

Although the Fund has been used, recently, mainly for the purchase of property for use by the Church centrally (as manses) and in loans to local churches for major works, the fund has been used more recently for grant-aiding local church developments, including one grant of £100,000 paid in 1998.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS CONTINUED

The Retired Ministers' Housing Funds and the URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society - £11,094,000

The whole of these funds is utilised by the Retired Ministers' Housing Committee in providing accommodation for ministers and ministers' widow/ers in their retirement.

The Welfare Fund - £641,000.

This fund can be used to relieve cases of need among ministers of The United Reformed Church, their spouses and other dependants. The main uses have been to provide a grant on the death of a minister to the surviving spouse, and to provide a grant at Christmas time to most of the widow/ers of URC ministers about whom we know. Medical assistance grants are now paid from this account, including counselling costs.

The Retired Ministers' Aid Fund - £1,010,000

The Retired Ministers' Fund - £5,954,000

These funds are used to supplement the pensions paid to ministers and ministers' widow/ers, principally by upgrading the pensions of former ministers of the Congregational Church and the Churches of Christ and the widow/ers of such ministers to a level of 95% of the pension that would have been paid if the minister's service had been to the former Presbyterian Church. The Church's actuaries advise that the balance on the Retired Ministers' Fund of £5.9 million is approximately equal to the actuarial liability of the Church to meet these payments.

World Church and Mission Funds - £1,630,000

These funds have been building up over a number of years. The Ecumenical Committee is developing plans under the "Belonging to the World Church" programme to use these funds where the terms of the trust permit.

The Windermere Centre Fund - £345,000

The Yardley Hastings Fund - £554,000

These funds were raised to develop the Windermere and Yardley Hastings Centres and are mainly invested in those properties.

Commitment for Life Programme - £37,000

This programme involves substantial sums of money being collected through the Church and Society Office, and disbursed for various purposes. The balance held at 31st December 1998 represents monies received before the year end which had not yet been allocated.

Other Funds - £3,679,000

There are some fifty other funds in the care of United Reformed Church Trust, covering many different activities relating to the Church centrally, and some to the wider parts of The United Reformed Church. The income arising from the majority of these funds is being spent currently, but some funds are held in trust for purposes which are now difficult to implement. Progress has been made in freeing up some of these difficult-to-use funds but further work remains to be done.

ACCOUNTS page 6

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1998

1997 £'000		Notes (pages 14 & 15)	1998 £'000
	FIXED ASSETS		
	Tangible assets	2	
12,512	Houses for retired ministers		13,350
3,348	Houses for serving ministers		3,599
1,846	Other properties		1,924
17,706	Total properties		18,873
380	Cars and equipment		393
18,086			19,266
18,347	Long term investments	5	22,038
550	Loans and advances	3	698
36,983			42,002
	NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	Current assets		
65	Stock		94
960	Debtors	4	943
5,633	Short term investments	5	3,642
1,089	Bank balances and money on call		1,689
7,747			6,368
4,219	Less: Current liabilities	6	3,997
3,528	Net current assets		2,371
40,511	TOTAL NET ASSETS		44,373
	Representing:		
9,951	Unrestricted income funds		11,919
25,241	Restricted income funds		26,594
5,319	Capital funds		5,860
40,511	TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 10 & 11)		44,373

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered centrally for the benefit of the whole Church. It includes, in particular, the assets and liabilities of The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1998**

1997 Total funds £'000		1998			Capital funds £'000
		Total funds £'000	---- Income funds ---- Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
INCOME					
16,763	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,712	16,712		
1,229	Investment income	1,114	493	621	
981	Grants received	941	871	70	
388	Legacies	1,869	1,192	677	
1,372	Sundry income	772	204	475	93
370	Profit on sale of properties	164	0	164	
21,103	Total income (see page 8)	21,572	19,472	2,007	93
EXPENDITURE					
13,979	Ministry	14,684	13,756	928	
1,492	Training	1,565	1,533	32	
593	Assembly appointed staff	623	607	16	
1,596	Mission	1,267	571	696	
193	Assembly related costs	274	273	1	
194	Communication and editorial	225	225		
907	Administration	985	900	82	3
18,954	Total expenditure (see page 9)	19,623	17,865	1,755	3
2,149	Net incoming resources before transfers	1,949	1,607	252	90
-	Transfers between funds	-	90	(90)	-
2,149	Net incoming resources	1,949	1,697	162	90
Gains and losses on investments					
315	Realised gains	9		9	
2,182	Unrealised gains	1,904	271	1,182	451
2,497	Total gains on investments	1,913	271	1,191	451
4,646	Net increase in funds in the year	3,862	1,968	1,353	541
35,865	Balances brought forward at 1st January	40,511	9,951	25,241	5,319
40,511	Balances carried forward at 31st December	44,373	11,919	26,594	5,860

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered centrally on behalf of the whole Church. The total for 1998 is divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which are available for the general purposes of the Church, "Restricted income funds" which may be spent for specific purposes only, and "Capital funds" which have to be invested to provide future income. The column headed "Unrestricted" shows the income and expenditure covered by the budget shown on pages 22 and 23

ANALYSIS OF INCOME

1997 Total funds £'000		1998			Capital funds £'000
		Total funds £'000	---- Income funds ---- Unrestricted Restricted £'000 £'000		
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS					
Synods					
1,088	Northern	1,080	1,080		
1,511	North Western	1,520	1,520		
1,120	Mersey	1,120	1,120		
1,135	Yorkshire	1,110	1,110		
1,071	East Midlands	1,087	1,087		
1,260	West Midlands	1,280	1,280		
1,462	Eastern	1,454	1,454		
1,150	South Western	1,105	1,105		
1,831	Wessex	1,831	1,831		
2,000	Thames North	2,020	2,020		
2,565	Southern	2,535	2,535		
570	Wales	570	570		
16,763		16,712	16,712	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME					
806	Dividends	713	139	574	
423	Interest	401	354	47	
1,229		1,114	493	621	0
GRANTS RECEIVED					
616	Memorial Hall Trust	546	476	70	
235	New College London Trust	254	254		
71	URC Insurance Company Limited	83	83		
8	Council for World Mission	8	8		
51	Department for Education & Employment	50	50		
981		941	871	70	0
LEGACIES					
For					
59	Ministry and Mission Fund	1,192	1,192		
303	Housing Retired Ministers	672		672	
26	Other	5		5	
388		1,869	1,192	677	0
SUNDRY INCOME					
181	Synod contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	177	177		
570	Transfer of retired ministers' housing funds from Yorkshire fund	-			
372	Donations	489	4	392	93
249	Other	106	23	83	
1,372		772	204	475	93
370	PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	164		164	
21,103	TOTAL INCOME	21,572	19,472	2,007	93

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7.

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

1997		1998	Income funds		Capital
Total		Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	funds
funds		funds	£'000	£'000	£'000
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
MINISTRY					
11,874	Stipends - local and special ministries	12,147	12,147		
146	Stipends - Church Related Community Workers	157	157		
555	Pension grants	592		592	
279	Resettlement and other grants	390	312	78	
375	Synod moderators - stipends & expenses	390	390		
750	Pension Fund additional contributions	1,008	750	258	
13,979		14,684	13,756	928	0
TRAINING					
813	College training for stipendiary ministry	819	787	32	
74	Other training for stipendiary ministry	80	80		
71	Training for non-stipendiary ministry	93	93		
363	YLTO/YCWT programme	358	358		
(3)	Support for Westminster College	10	10		
37	Support for Windermere Centre	46	46		
36	Support for Yardley Hastings	54	54		
20	Lay training costs	22	22		
81	Scholarship programme	83	83		
1,492		1,565	1,533	32	0
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF					
245	Salaries/stipends - executive staff	242	238	4	
231	Salaries/stipends - support staff	244	232	12	
117	Housing and expenses	137	137		
593		623	607	16	0
MISSION					
647	Council for World Mission	100	100		
92	Missionaries	103	103		
725	Grants for national and local mission	873	177	696	
132	Ecumenical councils	191	191		
1,596		1,267	571	696	0
ASSEMBLY RELATED COSTS					
94	General Assembly	156	156		
72	Assembly committees/conferences	84	83	1	
27	Mission Council committees/conferences	34	34		
193		274	273	1	0
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL					
141	Salaries	166	166		
53	Other costs	59	59		
194		225	225	0	0
ADMINISTRATION					
273	Personnel and finance - salaries	294	294		
37	- other costs	39	35	4	
168	Premises costs	231	231		
89	Professional fees	70	64	6	
-	Costs of conversations with CUS	48	48		
340	Miscellaneous expenses	303	228	72	3
907		985	900	82	3
18,954	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	19,623	17,865	1,755	3

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of expenditure shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7.

**MOVEMENT ON FUNDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1998**

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Investment	Balance	
		1st Jan 1998 £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	value change £'000	31st Dec 1998 £'000	
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	400 7,798					400 11,919	
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital Unrestricted	614 0				71	685 0	
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital Unrestricted	143 120			(120)	16	159 0	
Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund	Capital Unrestricted	0 2,033			(2,033)		0 0	
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	1,031 1,425		68	(293)	82 88	1,113 1,289	
Church Buildings Fund	Capital Restricted	184 3,538		102	(258)	103 195	184 3,680	
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	360 1,354		147	(3)	11	360 1,509	
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted	0 8,490		765	(30)		0 9,225	
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	142 378		29	(82)	32 17	50 75	224 417
Retired Ministers' Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	166 752		38	(52)	2	19 85	185 825
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted	0 5,597		14 253	(439)	25	14 5,940	
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	240 1,286		68	(42)	(90)	24 144	264 1,366
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	0 345					0 345	
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	0 554					0 554	
Commitment for Life Fund	Capital Restricted	0 0		355	(338)	20	0 37	
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	2,039 1,522		79 182	(3) (218)	(32) (179)	189 100	2,272 1,407
Totals (see page 7)		40,511	21,572	(19,623)	0	1,913	44,373	
Comprising:	Capital	5,319	93	(3)	0	451	5,860	
	Restricted	25,241	2,007	(1,755)	(90)	1,191	26,594	
	Unrestricted	9,951	19,472	(17,865)	90	271	11,919	

This page and the following page 11 are intended to be used as reference sources rather than to be read through at one go. This page shows the breakdown of the main totals in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7 by major fund or group of funds

**DISPOSITION OF FUNDS
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1998**

Balance 31st Dec 1998 £'000	Property £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Investments £'000	Loans £'000	Net current assets £'000	Inter- -fund balances £'000	Fund
400	400						Ministry and Mission Fund
11,919	1,975	292	5,171	145	2,568	1,768	
685			685				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
159			159				Ministerial Training Fund
0							
0							Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund
0							
1,113	612		501				Westminster College Funds
1,289		40	1,129			120	
184			184				Church Buildings Fund
3,680	1,693		1,709	541		(263)	
360	360						Retired Ministers' Housing Funds
1,509	1,205					304	
0							Retired Ministers' Housing Society
9,225	11,786				(197)	(2,364)	
224			224				Welfare Fund
417			451	12		(46)	
185			185				Retired Ministers' Aid Fund
825			823			2	
14			14				Retired Ministers' Fund
5,940			5,846			94	
264			264				World Church and Mission Funds
1,366			1,386			(20)	
0							Windermere Centre Fund
345	308	23				14	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
554	482	38				34	
0							Commitment for Life Fund
37						37	
2,272	52		2,220				Other Funds
1,407			1,087			320	
44,373	18,873	393	22,038	698	2,371	0	Totals (see page 6)
5,860	1,424	0	4,436	0	0	0	Capital Restricted
26,594	15,474	101	12,431	553	(197)	(1,768)	
11,919	1,975	292	5,171	145	2,568	1,768	Unrestricted

This page shows the breakdown of the assets and liabilities in the Balance Sheet on page 6 by major fund or group of funds.

**CASHFLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1998**

1997 £'000		1998 £'000
RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOMING RESOURCES SHOWN IN THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES TO THE ACTUAL CASH INFLOW FROM GENERAL ACTIVITIES		
2,149	Net incoming resources (see page 7)	1,949
6	Decrease/(Increase) in stock	(29)
33	Decrease in debtors	17
(245)	(Decrease)/Increase in creditors	139
(471)	Decrease in sums held for synods and congregations	(361)
(370)	Profit on sale of properties	(164)
159	Depreciation	132
65	Amortisation of gilts	48
(25)	Interest added to loans	(21)
1,301	Net cash inflow from general activities	1,710

**STATEMENT SHOWING DISPOSITION OF CASH
RESOURCES IN THE YEAR**

1,301	Net cash inflow from general activities (above)	1,710
Net amount of cash received from/(applied in) investing activities		
1,046	Fixed assets sales	800
(1,786)	purchases	(1,948)
2,067	Long term investments sales	372
(582)	purchases	(2,198)
(2,633)	Net change in short term investments	1,991
(1,888)		(983)
Cash received from/(applied in) a net decrease/(increase) in loans and advances to congregations and ministers		
(146)	Loans made	(311)
283	Loans repaid	184
137		(127)
(450)	Bank balances and money on call (Decrease)/Increase in balances	600
1,539	Balances at beginning of year	1,089
1,089	Balances at end of year	1,689

This is a somewhat "technical" statement which some may prefer to pass over quickly. Not all income or expenditure results in an immediate cash receipt or payment. This page shows the difference between net incoming resources (some cash and some not cash) and actual cashflow. It then shows how cash has been spent or invested during the year so as to increase our cash balances by £600,000.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 - ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities" and applicable accounting standards. The particular accounting policies adopted are described below.

(i) Scope

The accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds administered for the benefit of The United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of synods, districts or local churches.

(ii) Classification of funds

Unrestricted income funds may be spent generally for furthering the religious and charitable work of the Church.

Restricted income funds are funds whose use is restricted to specific purposes according to the terms on which the funds were received. However, if the purpose is one that forms part of the Church's regular expenditure and the income of the funds could therefore be fully spent each year, the restriction has no practical effect and funds with such restrictions are treated as unrestricted.

Capital funds are permanent endowments which are required to be retained but the income from these funds can be spent for the benefit of the Church subject, in certain cases, to specific restrictions contained in the original endowment.

The main funds included in these accounts, and their classification, are listed on page 10. A brief description of these funds is given on pages 4 and 5.

(iii) Income

Income is brought into account as soon as it becomes receivable except for legacies which are not credited until received.

When a synod remits more than its agreed contribution to the Ministry and Mission Fund in any year the excess is carried forward to the following year as a payment in advance.

(iv) Pensions

The Church operates a defined benefit pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are managed independently of the Church. Pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of an independent qualified actuary. Contributions for the regular ongoing cost of pensions are such that the regular pension cost is a substantially level percentage of the current and expected future pensionable payroll.

(v) Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at original cost less depreciation calculated at the following percentages on cost:

Properties deemed to have a useful life of 40 years or more	0 %
Properties deemed to have a useful life of less than 40 years	2½%
Cars	30 %
Computers	25 %
Photocopiers	20 %
Other furniture and equipment	10 %

(vi) Investments

Listed securities, investment properties and units in the United Reformed Church Trust Investment Pool are included at market value at the Balance Sheet date. Unlisted securities are stated at cost or, in the case of gifts, market value at the date of receipt. For gilt-edged securities purchased within ten years of maturity at a cost in excess of redemption amount, the excess is amortised over the period to maturity and deducted from interest receivable.

(vii) Stock

Stock, which consists mainly of books in the bookshop, is stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(viii) Westminster College

With the exception of certain improvements and additions since 1983, the buildings of Westminster College are not included in the Balance Sheet since the College was originally a gift to the Church, the value of which cannot readily be ascertained.

This page contains fairly "technical" information about the way the accounts have been prepared.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 2 - TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Houses for retired ministers	Houses for serving ministers	Other properties	Cars and equipment	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost					
At 1st January 1998	12,512	3,348	1,846	846	18,552
Additions during year	1,431	251	97	169	1,948
Disposals during year	(593)	-	(19)	(94)	(706)
At 31st December 1998	13,350	3,599	1,924	921	19,794
Depreciation					
At 1st January 1998				466	466
Charged during year				132	132
Written back on disposal				(70)	(70)
At 31st December 1998				528	528
Net book value					
At 31st December 1998	13,350	3,599	1,924	393	19,266
At 31st December 1997	12,512	3,348	1,846	380	18,086

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 1998 were £222,000 (1997 - £198,000) and maintenance costs were £231,000 (1997 - £159,000). All properties are considered to have a remaining useful life exceeding 40 years.

At 31st December 1998 315 (1997 - 312) houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 29 (1997 - 29) houses for serving ministers.

Other properties include United Reformed Church House, the Yardley Hastings and Windermere centres, and building costs capitalised at Westminster College since 1983.

NOTE 3 - LOANS AND ADVANCES

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Loans and advances comprise:		
To churches	540	405
To ministers	158	145
	<u>698</u>	<u>550</u>

Loans to ministers are generally interest free. Loans to churches bear interest at rates between 4¼% and 7%, except for certain loans which are interest free for an initial period of two years.

NOTE 4 - DEBTORS

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	54	56
Prepayments and accrued income	456	410
Other debtors	433	494
	<u>943</u>	<u>960</u>

This page and the following two pages set out additional information about various aspects of the Church's finances.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 5 - INVESTMENTS

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Long term investments		
Investments held for the longer term comprise the following:		
Units in the Investment Pool at market value (see note 14)	18,805	15,287
Other listed securities at market value	2,500	2,341
URC Insurance Company Limited shares at cost (see note 13)	73	73
Other unlisted securities at cost	24	24
Investment properties at estimated market value	636	622
	<u>22,038</u>	<u>18,347</u>

All investments are in UK companies or properties.

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Short term investments		
Short term investments comprise:		
Money market term deposits	3,642	5,633
	<u>3,642</u>	<u>5,633</u>

NOTE 6 - CURRENT LIABILITIES (Amounts falling due within one year)

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Current liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for synods and congregations	2,023	2,384
Advance contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	557	374
Other creditors	1,417	1,461
	<u>3,997</u>	<u>4,219</u>

NOTE 7 - REMUNERATION

During the year the following remuneration was paid to:

		1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Ministers: 715 (1997 - 731)	Gross	10,705	10,503
	Social security costs	993	962
	Pension contributions	1,151	1,018
		<u>12,849</u>	<u>12,483</u>
Lay staff: 93 (1997 - 94)	Gross	1,146	1,127
	Social security costs	99	98
	Pension contributions	77	97
		<u>1,322</u>	<u>1,322</u>

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and staff working for part of the year are included at the appropriate proportion.

Individuals acting in a trustee capacity for the various URC trusts receive no remuneration in respect of their services as trustee, other than the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

NOTE 8 - AUDITORS' REMUNERATION

Amounts charged for the audit of the accounts of the Church, The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited, and The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund were as follows:

	1998 £'000	1997 £'000
Auditors' remuneration	33	37

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 9 - ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS

At 31st December 1998 United Reformed Church Trust held investments with a market value of approximately £22 million (1997: £21 million) on behalf of synods, churches and trusts. The Trust also held property and other assets. All of these assets are held to the order of the synods, churches and trusts concerned and are not shown in these accounts (see notes 1(i) and 14).

NOTE 10 - THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

Pensions for most ministers are provided by The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. The Fund is a defined benefit pension scheme and the assets are invested and managed by an independent trustee.

During 1998 the Church contributed 11.75% (1997: 10.65%) of basic stipend in respect of members and makes further payments towards the actuarial deficit, as recommended by the consultant actuary.

A valuation of the Pension Fund was undertaken by the consultant actuary as at 1st January 1997. The valuation indicated that the shortfall on the long term valuation basis was £4.5 million. At that date the funding level was 90%, and the scheme assets were valued at £49.5 million. Following advice from the actuary, additional contributions of £750,000 per annum are being made, which should eliminate the deficit within nine years. These contributions will be reviewed following the next actuarial valuation in the year 2000. The valuation used the attained age method and assumed that the rate of return achieved by the Fund will exceed the rate of stipend increase by 3%. During 1998, an amount of £258,000 was transferred to the Fund from the Westminster College Teachers' Pension Fund, which had been dormant for many years.

The Church also operates a number of other defined benefit schemes for a relatively small number of office and other staff. These schemes showed actuarial surpluses at the time of the most recent actuarial review.

NOTE 11 - COMMITMENTS

At 31st December 1998 there were, in respect of the purchase of properties, commitments of £220,000 (1997 - £500,000), and contractual liabilities of £130,000 (1997 - NIL). There were also commitments to make grants of £220,000 (1997 - £100,000).

NOTE 12 - INTERESTS IN TRUSTS

The Church receives income from a number of trusts. The most significant are described below.

Memorial Hall Trust - In 1998 the Church received income of £546,000 (1997 - £616,000) from this trust. The trust owned a part interest in the building, now standing on the site of the former Memorial Hall, on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. In 1999, the building has been sold and consideration is being given to a partial distribution of trust capital.

New College London Trust - This trust holds assets relating to the former New College London on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. The Church's interest amounts to approximately 82%. In 1998 the Church received income of £254,000 (1997 - £235,000) from this trust, which has been spent on ministerial training.

The Cheshunt Foundation supports Westminster College by paying the stipend and expenses of one of the lecturers, by contributing to the college budget, and by providing financial support for ministers taking post-ordination training, and lay training.

NOTE 13 - URC INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

The Church owns the whole of the share capital of URC Insurance Company Limited ("URCIC"). The cost of this investment is £72,500 and is included in long term investments. 100% of the insurance placed with URCIC is re-insured by Ecclesiastical Insurance Group who also provide management services. URCIC entered into a deed of covenant to pay to the Church 100% of its pre-tax profits; in 1998 this amounted to £83,000 (1997 - £71,000). The accounts of URCIC are not included in the accounts of the Church on the grounds that its activities are not considered comparable with the main activities of the Church and are not material in the context of these accounts.

NOTE 14 - UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL

United Reformed Church Trust operates an Investment Pool for funds it holds as managing trustee and for funds of other trusts and churches. The financial statement of the Pool is shown on page 17. Of the total investment in the Pool, valued at £40.6 million (1997 - £36.3 million), only £18.8 million (1997 - £15.3 million) is held for central funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 5).

The Charity Commissioners have indicated that the Pool should be restricted to the investment of funds belonging to United Reformed Church Trust as managing trustee. An alternative investment structure is being planned in conjunction with Epworth Investment Managers.

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1998**

CAPITAL	1998		1997	
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 Units	£'000
Units in issue at 1st January 1998	594,750	36,344	602,645	32,569
Units issued in the year	33,011	2,244	26,013	1,501
Units cancelled in the year	(32,178)	(2,133)	(33,908)	(1,967)
Management fees		(82)		(73)
Increase in value of investments during the year		4,199		4,314
Units in issue to central funds	276,050	18,805	250,172	15,287
Units in issue to other funds	319,533	21,767	344,578	21,057
	<u>595,583</u>	<u>40,572</u>	<u>594,750</u>	<u>36,344</u>

REPRESENTED BY

	Cost £'000	Market value £'000	Cost £'000	Market value £'000
Investments				
British Government				
Gilt-edged securities	8,677	9,765	10,123	10,572
Other British fixed interest stock	1,777	1,862	906	1,025
British equities	19,461	28,698	16,776	24,328
	<u>29,915</u>	<u>40,325</u>	<u>27,805</u>	<u>35,925</u>

Cash and short term deposits	192	71
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Sundry debtors	55	348
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	<u>40,572</u>	<u>36,344</u>
--	---------------	---------------

Based on the underlying market value of investments and uninvested cash, the value of each unit was	<u>6.81 pence</u>	<u>6.11 pence</u>
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During the year distributions were made in respect of all income received as follows:

3 months ended	Rate per unit		Rate per unit	
	pence	£'000	pence	£'000
3 1st March	0.0758	449	0.0729	442
30th June	0.0626	381	0.0802	490
30th September	0.0706	423	0.0788	470
3 1st December	0.0542	323	0.0529	317
	<u>0.2632</u>	<u>1,576</u>	<u>0.2848</u>	<u>1,719</u>

The policy for accounting for income is as follows:

- Income receivable from fixed interest securities is credited to income on a daily basis.
- Credit for dividends receivable from listed equity investments is taken when the security is first quoted ex-dividend.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE ACCOUNTS

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that accounts are prepared for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of The United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church') as at the end of the year and of their income and expenditure for the year. In preparing those accounts, the Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that:

- suitable accounting policies are selected and applied consistently;
- judgements and estimates made are reasonable and prudent;
- the Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities" and applicable accounting standards are followed;
- the accounts are prepared on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to assume that the Church will continue its activities.

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper accounting records are maintained which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Church and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with generally accepted accounting practice. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Church and hence for taking steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS

We confirm, on behalf of the Finance Committee, our approval of the accounts as set out on pages 6 to 17.

A G BURNHAM
General Secretary

GRAHAM STACY
Treasurer

C M FRANK
Chief Accountant and
Financial Secretary

30th March 1999

The above statements are formal statements which are included in the accounts of all companies and major charities.

REPORT OF THE AUDITORS TO THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

We have audited the accounts on pages 6 to 17 which have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out on page 13. These accounts deal with those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of The United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church').

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and the auditors

As described on page 18, the Finance Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounts. It is our responsibility to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on those accounts and to report our opinion to you.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the accounts. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Finance Committee in the preparation of the accounts, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the circumstances of the Church, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the accounts are free from material mis-statement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the accounts.

Opinion

In our opinion the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Church as at 31st December 1998, and of its financial activities for the year then ended.

186 City Road
London EC1V 2NU

ROBSON RHODES
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditor

30th March 1999

The audit report by Robson Rhodes set out above is in the standard form used by auditors when there is nothing exceptional which they wish to draw to the attention of readers.

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY

	1994 £'000	1995 £'000	1996 £'000	1997 £'000	1998 £'000
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS					
Income					
Ministry and Mission contributions	15,598	16,149	16,462	16,763	16,712
Investment income	1,266	1,392	1,409	1,229	1,114
Grants	827	840	880	981	941
Legacies	656	306	579	388	1,869
Other income	626	671	976	1,742	936
	18,973	19,358	20,306	21,103	21,572
Expenditure					
Ministry	13,153	13,197	13,426	13,229	13,676
Additional pensions contributions	921	998	3,600	750	1,008
Training	1,451	1,366	1,370	1,492	1,565
Assembly appointed staff	437	474	546	593	623
Mission	1,112	1,180	1,069	1,596	1,267
Other costs	839	785	1,047	1,294	1,484
	17,913	18,000	21,058	18,954	19,623
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	1,060	1,358	(752)	2,149	1,949
Investment gains/(losses)	(2,576)	2,462	1,112	2,497	1,913
Net increase/(decrease) in funds	(1,516)	3,820	360	4,646	3,862
CASH FLOW STATEMENTS					
Cash required for investment in					
Retired ministers' housing	35	1,244	568	571	673
Other properties	867	(24)	440	(8)	330
Cars, furniture and equipment	30	104	157	177	145
Loans to congregations and ministers	105	(239)	(171)	(137)	127
	1,037	1,085	994	603	1,275
Source of cash					
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year (see above)	1,060	1,358	(752)	2,149	1,949
Adjustment for items not resulting in a cash movement	(303)	(977)	(383)	(848)	(239)
	757	381	(1,135)	1,301	1,710
Net decrease/(increase) in investments	(3,096)	144	1,936	(1,148)	165
Decrease/(increase) in bank balances	3,376	560	193	450	(600)
	1,037	1,085	994	603	1,275

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY CONTINUED

	1994 £'000	1995 £'000	1996 £'000	1997 £'000	1998 £'000
BALANCE SHEETS					
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets					
Retired ministers' housing	9,321	10,811	11,619	12,512	13,350
Housing for serving ministers	2,824	2,854	3,480	3,348	3,599
Other properties	1,725	1,770	1,729	1,846	1,924
Cars, furniture and equipment	200	239	307	380	393
	14,070	15,674	17,135	18,086	19,266
Long term investments	16,141	18,180	17,362	18,347	22,038
Loans to ministers and congregations	1,003	805	662	550	698
	31,214	34,659	35,159	36,983	42,002
Net current assets					
Current assets					
Debtors and stocks	784	1,038	1,064	1,025	1,037
Short term investments and deposits	4,969	4,690	3,038	5,633	3,642
Bank balances and money on call	240	162	1,539	1,089	1,689
	5,993	5,890	5,641	7,747	6,368
less : current liabilities	5,522	5,044	4,935	4,219	3,997
	471	846	706	3,528	2,371
Total net assets	31,685	35,505	35,865	40,511	44,373
Unrestricted income funds	9,155	10,677	9,131	9,951	11,919
Restricted income funds	18,925	20,876	22,312	25,241	26,594
Capital funds	3,605	3,952	4,422	5,319	5,860
Total funds	31,685	35,505	35,865	40,511	44,373

NON-FINANCIAL STATISTICS

Members	107,000	103,000	100,000	97,000	94,000
Stipendiary ministers	813	774	741	756	730
Non-stipendiary ministers	207	219	204	193	193
Churches	1,784	1,768	1,752	1,739	1,736
Retired ministers	692	735	729	742	759
Ministry and Mission contribution per member	£146	£157	£165	£173	£178

Information on this page and the preceding page is aimed mainly at the analyst rather than at the casual reader. However, it shows some interesting trends and brings out features that do not show so clearly in a single set of accounts.

Budget

Page 22

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2000

	Actual 1997 £'000	Actual 1998 £'000	Budget 1998 £'000	Estimate 1999 £'000	Budget 2000 £'000
EXPENDITURE					
Ministry					
Stipends - local and special ministries	11,834	12,147	12,181	12,428	12,904
Stipends - CRCWs	146	157	164	204	241
Resettlement and other grants	279	312	309	285	293
Synod moderators - stipends & expenses	375	390	390	411	425
Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	750	750	750	750	750
	13,384	13,756	13,794	14,078	14,613
Training					
College training for stipendiary ministry	707	787	730	999	1,028
Other training for stipendiary ministry	74	80	82	175	199
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	71	93	90	90	90
YLTO/YCWT programme	363	358	446	377	390
Support for Westminster College	(3)	10	100	-	-
Support for Windermere Centre	37	46	35	39	40
Support for Yardley Hastings	36	54	46	75	73
Lay training costs	20	22	32	38	44
Scholarship programme	81	83	83	86	90
	1,386	1,533	1,644	1,879	1,954
Assembly appointed staff					
Salaries/stipends - executive staff	241	238	263	349	332
Salaries/stipends - support staff	223	232	207	311	362
Housing and expenses	117	137	134	150	158
	581	607	604	810	852
Mission					
Council for World Mission and missionaries' support	739	203	676	199	138
Grants for national and local mission	262	177	210	201	203
Ecumenical councils	132	191	141	196	193
	1,133	571	1,027	596	534
Assembly related costs					
General Assembly	94	156	144	158	187
Assembly committees/conferences	71	83	67	94	96
Mission Council committees/conferences	27	34	23	36	36
	192	273	234	288	319
Communication and editorial					
Salaries	141	166	164	188	192
Other costs	53	59	31	50	39
	194	225	195	238	231
Administration (support for the church centrally and locally)					
Personnel and finance - salaries	273	294	283	298	341
- other costs	37	35	39	36	35
Premises costs	168	231	177	191	194
Professional fees	77	64	73	71	71
Costs of conversations with CUS	-	48	-	97	-
Miscellaneous expenses	192	228	172	230	215
	747	900	744	923	856
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	17,617	17,865	18,242	18,812	19,359

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2000

	Actual 1997 £'000	Actual 1998 £'000	Budget 1998 £'000	Estimate 1999 £'000	Budget 2000 £'000
INCOME					
Investment income					
Dividends	156	139	144	180	549
Income from World Church & Mission Fund			50	50	-
Interest	366	354	250	330	350
	522	493	444	560	899
Grants					
Memorial Hall Trust	546	476	448	420	-
New College London Trust	235	254	225	253	266
URC Insurance Company Limited	71	83	78	75	78
Department for Education & Employment	51	50	63	13	-
CWM towards cost of multi racial development worker	8	8	8	8	-
	911	871	822	769	344
Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,763	16,712	16,665	16,700	17,201
Legacies and major donations	59	1,192	50	50	50
Other income					
Sundry income	23	27	41	12	11
Synod contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	181	177	202	183	194
	204	204	243	195	205
Profit on sale of properties	35				
TOTAL INCOME	18,494	19,472	18,224	18,274	18,699
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) IN YEAR	877	1,607	(18)	(538)	(660)

In addition to the costs reported on the previous page, the Belonging to the World Church programme is expected to cost £125,000 in 1999 and £200,000 in 2000. These costs will be met from the World Church and Mission Fund.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

	1998		1997	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME				
Contributions from ministers and central funds	1,514		1,370	
Transfer values received	<u>121</u>		<u>63</u>	
		1,635		1,433
Investment income		1,514		1,944
Allocation towards Actuarial Deficit	769		768	
Amount transferred from the Westminster College Teachers' Pension Fund	258		-	
Donations	<u>1</u>		<u>51</u>	
		<u>1,028</u>		<u>819</u>
		4,177		4,196
EXPENDITURE				
Benefits paid	3,232		3,077	
Transfer values paid	<u>13</u>		<u>0</u>	
	3,245		3,077	
Management expenses	<u>163</u>		<u>156</u>	
		<u>3,408</u>		<u>3,233</u>
NORMAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR		769		963
Realised profit on sale of investments		2,722		1,429
Increase in unrealised surplus on investment revaluation		<u>4,949</u>		<u>5,975</u>
TOTAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR		8,440		8,367
Balance of resources at 1st January		<u>57,881</u>		<u>49,514</u>
Balance of resources at 31st December		<u>66,321</u>		<u>57,881</u>
REPRESENTED BY				
Investments		65,310		57,657
Net current assets		<u>1,011</u>		<u>224</u>
		<u>66,321</u>		<u>57,881</u>

This account should be read in conjunction with note 10 on page 16.

This account is a summary of the full accounts of the pension fund which have been audited by Robson Rhodes, who have given an unqualified audit opinion.

The trustee's report and accounts, and also the rules of the pension fund may be obtained from the Central office of the Church.

Appendix 3

Students in Training 1998 - 1999

NORTHERN

Stipendiary

Kirsty-Ann Burroughs (Mansfield), Christopher Hucker (Mansfield), Jane Rowell (Northern), David Salsbury (Westminster), Alistair Smeaton (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

David Walton (NEOC)

CRCW

Linda Granville (Northern)

NORTH WESTERN

Stipendiary

Carole Allison (Northern), Jane Barron (Northern), Valerie Davies (Northern), Jason Mccullagh (Westminster), Peter Nunn (Northern), Michael Thomason (Northern), Mike Walsh (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Lorraine Mycroft (Northern), Marshall Sherlock (Northern)

MERSEY

Stipendiary

Elizabeth Blair (Northern), Gary Gotham (Northern), Martin Hardy (Northern), Chris Ray (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Christine Davies (Northern)

YORKSHIRE

Stipendiary

Alistair Ellefsen-Jones (Northern), Louise Franklin (Westminster), Catherine Morrison (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Heather Pollard (Northern)

EAST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary

Ruth Allen (Westminster), Jason Askew (Westminster), Trish Davis (Mansfield), Malcolm Fife (Westminster), Lynn Fowkes (Mansfield), Michael Hopkins (Mansfield), Heather Whyte (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Neil Eldridge (Northern), Ed Rawlins (Northern)

WEST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary

Ed Cox (Northern), Jacqueline Embrey (Queens), Camilla Frid (Northern), Pauline Rate (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Bob Ash (Queens), Peter Christie (WMMTC), Colin Offer (WMMTC)

CRCW

Joanne Ellis (Northern), Adella Pritchard (Northern)

EASTERN

Stipendiary

Andrew Berry (Westminster), Connie Bonner (Westminster), Yolande Burns (Westminster), Dilys Corbin (Northern), Timothy Jackson (Westminster), Les Mather (Westminster), Jon Morgan (Westminster), David Rees (Westminster), David Sebley (Westminster), Helen Wood (Mansfield)

SOUTH WESTERN

Stipendiary

Sian Collins (Westminster), Colin Phipps (Mansfield), Mary Thomas (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Susan Kirkbride (SAOMTC), Hazel Starritt (STETS), Angela Steele (STETS), Yvonne Stone (SWMTC)

CRCW

Susan Lincoln (Northern)

WESSEX

Stipendiary

Jan Adamson (Northern), Nick Adlem (Mansfield), Chris Coe (Mansfield), Sarah Hall (Mansfield), Stuart Nixon (Northern), Rosemary Pullen (Westminster), Jill Thornton (Northern), Alan Wickens (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Jackie Hillier (STETS), Maria Hooper (STETS), Tim Meachin (STETS), David Poulton (Northern), Linda Spokes (WMMTC)

CRCW

Allison Micklem (Northern)

THAMES NORTH

Stipendiary

Susan Chapman (Northern), Iona Christie (Northern),
Geoff Felton (Westminster), Janet Llewellyn
(Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Jayne Bazeley (Westminster), June Colley (Mansfield),
Meryl Court (Northern), Clare Davison (EAMTC),
Deborah Hodge (SAOMTC), Derek Ilines (SAOMTC),
Ann Jack (Northern), Alan Kirkcaldy (SAOMTC),
John Mackerness (Northern), Bridget Powell
(SAOMTC), Edward Sanniez (Northern),
Erna Stevenson (Mansfield), Martin Wheadon
(Northern)

SOUTHERN

Stipendiary

David Downing (Westminster), Harry Goodchild
(Mansfield), Catherine Hare (Westminster),
Roger Jones (Mansfield), Martin Knight (Northern),
Nicholas Mark (Northern), Peter Stevenson
(Westminster), Jim Thorneycroft (Mansfield), David
Varcoe (Mansfield), Nigel Warner (Westminster),
Kathy White (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Beatrice Buabeng (Westminster), Leena Knowles
(Northern), Barbara Pearson (SAOMTC)

WALES

Stipendiary

Robert Pope (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

David Marshall-Jones (Northern)

Appendix 4

Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service		
	Feb 1996	Feb 1997	Feb 1998	Feb 1999	1999	2000	2001
Full Time Courses							
Mansfield	19	16	18	18	5	4	5
Northern	21	25	26	24	6	5	6
Queen's	6	3	2	2	-	-	1
Westminster	27	29	27	28	5	11	6
Salford Urban Mission*	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	74	75	73	72	16	20	18
Part Time Courses							
EAMTC	2	2	3	1	-	1	-
EMMTC	8	6	4	-	-	-	-
MCI/Northern	11	12	17	19	2	7	8
NEOC	1	1	-	1	-	-	-
SAOMC	1	6	6	6	5	1	-
SEITE	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
STETS	5	5	3	5	1	1	3
SWMTC	1	1	1	1	1	-	-
WMMTC	2	1	-	3	-	-	3
URC*	3	2	1	-	-	-	-
Sub total	35	37	35	36	9	10	14
Total	109	112	108	108	25	30	31

EAMTC East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
 EMMTC East Midlands Ministry Training Course
 MCI Manchester Christian Institute
 NEOC North East Oecumenical Course
 SAOMC St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course
 SEITE South East Institute for Theological Education
 STETS Southern Theological and Education Training Scheme
 SWMTC South West Ministry Training Course
 WMMTC West Midlands Ministry Training Course
 URC URC Non-Stipendiary Ministry Training Programme

* *These courses have been discontinued*

Appendix 5

Reports from Colleges

Mansfield College

1 This year has been one of immense change and challenge in the life of the Ministerial Education and Training programme at Mansfield. Early last year we heard that the report of the Use of Colleges Review Group to Mission Council would be recommending that the United Reformed Church should cease to use Mansfield College for educating and training ministry students. Mission Council did not accept this recommendation but did send a resolution, which was passed by General Assembly, to ensure the future use of Northern, Westminster and the Queen's College. This resolution has, of course, left Mansfield feeling extremely vulnerable in the light of present discussions about reductions in the number of people training for ministry.

2 Happily, however, we were still able to receive a strong group of first year ministry students this year, several of them very determined that the Reformed ethos and the close attention to realising individuals' academic and ministerial potential at Mansfield were exactly what they wanted of their ministerial training. Our students learn and worship in the context of a full college of the University of Oxford, alongside undergraduates and graduates in a great variety of disciplines. This provides an experience of preparing for ministry in an environment (unique within the URC) in which faith cannot be taken for granted and which sharp questions about the mission of the church and its relationship with "secular" society are continually present. Mansfield enjoys co-operating with the other theological colleges in Oxford and has especially close links with the Anglican colleges and Regent's Park, the Baptist college.

3 In September we had the privilege of welcoming the Revd Dale Rominger as part of our core staff: he is Director of the Internship Programme. Dale's passionate and lively personality and his exciting range of gifts and skills have already made a great contribution of the life of the college. We were very grateful to have him back fit and well in early February after a gallstone operation in January.

4 The Revd Dr Catherine Middleton is now Acting Chaplain and Director of Ministerial Education and Training, following the retirement of The Revd Charles Brock. At the time of writing she is relishing the work of administration, teaching and pastoral involvement in the lives of students. However, the breast cancer of two years ago has now returned in the form of bone secondaries. Catherine knows she is dying.

5 Staff, students, and those who have appreciated the work Mansfield College has done within the United Reformed Church and its predecessors are deeply concerned that the United Reformed Church should continue to make use of its unique opportunity to be a Reformed presence within an otherwise strongly Anglican university context. Both in educating and training ordinands and in participating in the chaplaincy to Reformed students in Oxford, Mansfield continues to seek to live by and witness to the enduring values and challenges of the Reformed tradition.

Northern College

1 At the start of the 1998-99 session the profile of our student body was as follows: 5 preparing for Church Related Community Work (CRCW) ministry; 14 preparing for non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) and 26 preparing for stipendiary ministry (SM), one for the Congregational Federation.

2 Following the closure of the Manchester Christian Institute, we have taken responsibility for the administration and supervision of NSM and CRCW candidates within the new Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester (PTEM). With another new entry of young candidates the average age of our full-time ordinands has gone down dramatically.

3 Northern College has been at the forefront of the crystallising the vision which has led to the Formation of the PTEM and a Trust to run the Luther King House premises. A monumental commitment is being made to widen the focus of our activity from the exclusive concern of preparing people for ordained ministry to the more inclusive intention of being a theological resource for the whole church. Changes are all around us: a newly refurbished dining room; full disabled facilities; refurbished teaching areas and bedrooms. We welcome the confidence in what we are doing which has been shown by the Training Committee, Mission Council and the Assembly.

4 Our students continue to thrive on the *Faith in Living* course. Of our 10 honours graduates this year, we had 2 at First and 6 at Upper Second Level. Plans are being considered to publish some of the more outstanding examples of the work students have produced on this exciting course.

5 In October a service to celebrate the inauguration of the PTEM was broadcast throughout the ITV region. The contribution of Northern College governors, staff and students was very much to the fore.

6 We have welcomed as our overseas student this session the Revd Tofiga Falana from the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu in the South Pacific. Meanwhile, this session will see the end of the three year spell at Northern College of the Revd Dr John Ponnusamy, our overseas Theological Educator. He has brought to us a whole range of new insights and challenges of which we are very grateful.

7 Elaine Kaye's history of Northern College (and the Colleges which amalgamated to form it), *For the Work of Ministry*, was published in April and copies will be available at the General Assembly.

8 There will be the opportunity for the former students of the College who are attending Assembly to meet informally at the College lunch during the Assembly.

Westminster College, Cambridge

1 A centenary year - looking forward

1.1 Centenaries are odd events. They are, of course, an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving for the grace of God written in countless lives. They are also an encouragement to take stock and look to the future. Two of the guiding principles of our past - commitment to the Church, and a passion for ecumenism - are the touchstone of our present life, and the signposts to our future. Commitment to the Church means responding continually to the changing needs of the Church, most particularly in opening up the resources of the college to the wider church. That is why we rejoice to be partners with colleagues elsewhere in the URC in developing programmes for continuing ministerial education, lay-preacher and lay-leader training and other forms of theological reflection. Some 20% of staff time this year was spent in this kind of work. The Board of Governors is ever mindful of the need to strike a balance between the college's main contribution to the church through initial ministerial education, and the desire to support other essential programmes, both in their stewardship of the building and in the deployment of staff time.

1.2 When Dr Agnes Lewis laid the foundation stone of the college in 1897 she said 'We are catholic Christians first and Presbyterians afterwards'. She might have been amazed that a century on we are part of a Federation of six theological institutions, including Roman Catholics. Given her respect for the Orthodox, she would surely have welcomed the creation of new Orthodox House of Study within the Federation which will open during the forthcoming academic year. This is a moment of genuine ecumenical significance, and we hope the wider church will take note of it. A sure indication of the depth of our ecumenical commitment to each other was the inspection of the Federation which took place in November 1998, focusing primarily on the Federation and secondarily on the various denominational institutions of which it is composed. We look forward to receiving the finalised report (which regrettably is not available in time for this year's Assembly), and to reporting on our implementation of its recommendations to the 2000 Assembly.

2 A centenary year - news of the family

2.1 During the year we were delighted to welcome Professor John de Gruchy of the University of Cape Town as Commemoration lecturer, and our preacher was the Revd Dr Jack McKelvey. It was good to have two such old friends with us. Their presence reminded us that people are at the heart of what we do, people called by God to minister in many ways in the church world-wide. This year's leavers were Same Ansa-Addo to Halesowen and Blackheath, Jim Dalgleish to Hadleigh and Monks Eleigh, Clare Downing to Braunston and Evington Road, Leicester, Steve Faber to Bush Hill Park, Enfield, Anthony Howells to Bar Hill, Karen Knight to Haverhill and Castle Camps, Michael Shrubsole to High Wycombe, Anne Sardeson to Marsh Street, Trinity and Shalom, Walthamstow, Anne Stokes to Radcliffe and Stand, Greater Manchester, and Nigel Watson to Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. We also report with pleasure the settlement of one of last year's leavers, Kathryn Taylor, to the South Somerset Group.

3 A centenary year - looking backwards

3.1 The gifts of grace have been many and varied throughout the past century, and we give thanks that God has woven some of the threads of our life into the texture of the church world-wide. An elderly Anglican priest shook the Principal's hand after he had preached at a local parish church this year and told him how H H Farmer's lectures had changed his life. Farmer taught theology and philosophy at Westminster and in Cambridge University between 1935-60. So much of the work of a college and its teachers is as unseen and unknown as that. We have much for which to give thanks.

3.2 It is therefore only right that we should remember those who effected the translation of the English Presbyterian College from London to Cambridge in 1899. Assembly reports are not the proper place for church history lessons (even when their authors are church historians!). They are though, proper places to recall the vision and generosity and commitment to mission of our ancestors in the faith. Why did Westminster happen? Because a group of lay

people and ministers (but primarily lay people) believed that an English church should be served by ministers trained in England (rather than in Edinburgh or Dublin) who could resonate to its culture. Because they believed passionately that those training to work in God's church should have the best educational provision the church could afford. Because a small denomination of just 315 congregations believed in that vision and gave with self-sacrificing generosity. Mission, the value of studying God's Word and self-sacrificial giving are worth remembering and celebrating, and during this year we shall do so with gusto. During Commemoration Week in June the student community will be mounting a 'mini-Greenbelt' event for young people around the theme of vocation, the Reid lectures will be given by the distinguished American Old Testament scholar Professor Walter Brueggeman, and the Commemoration preacher will be Professor Graham Stanton, a former Lewis and Gibson scholar of the college, and now the newly appointed Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. The actual day of the

centenary (October 17th) will be marked by a service in the college chapel, at which the preacher will be the Moderator of the General Assembly. The first major conference of the Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies, on the subject 'Whither the Reformed tradition?' will take place in September when Jürgen Moltmann, Brian Gerrish and Colin Gunton will be amongst the speakers.

3.3 At our centenary we are a very mixed community in every way. We are black and white. We are young and old. We are male and female. We are ordained and lay. We are ordinands and stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry, elders and those training for lay ministers. We are from east and west. We are of all shades of theological and understanding, yet it is in our very diversity that we catch glimpses of Christ and the fullness of our humanity that we shall only attain by serving him together. As part of the United Reformed Church, we remain committed to that ecumenical vision.

Queen's College, Birmingham

The Ecumenical Foundation for Theological Education

1 Students

1.1 This year saw an unusually large intake of students with the result that the total number of students in the Foundation (which includes the Research Centre and the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course, as well as the College) increased to 117. This total includes 7 URC students, five of whom are ordinands (two in College and three in the Course) and two of whom are undertaking in-service degrees by part-time study. Within the College there are also 26 Methodist ordinands and 24 Anglican ordinands as well as a number of lay independent students. The gender balance in College is almost exactly equal, while in the Foundation as a whole there are slightly more women students than men.

2 Staff

2.1 Dr Mukti Barton was appointed Black & Asian Theology Tutor with effect from September 1st 1998. The Revd David Wood joined the staff as Senior Methodist Tutor, having had eight years experience on the staff of Hartley Victoria College in the Northern Federation (now Partnership). The happy opportunity arose for a job-share between the Revd Helen Cameron (already in post as Pastoral Theology Tutor) and Ms Nicola Slée. Preparations are now in hand for the appointment of a Deputy Director of Research to work with the Revd Dr Kenneth Wilson in the Research Centre. During my absence from the Foundation on study leave (October-December 1998) the Revd Dr David Bryan (Dean of Studies) acted very effectively as College Director.

3 Courses of Study

3.1 Now that the Postgraduate Diploma and MA courses in Applied Theological Studies are running well (and recruiting both full-time and part-time participants), we are finalising plans for the introduction of the Th.D programme. This is intended primarily as an in-service degree, focused on theologically reflective practice. It is designed to serve Christians in any ministry or calling, within the Church or the world. Like our BA and MA degrees, this is to be validated by the University of Birmingham. It is expected to be in operation from September 1999.

4 Chapel and Community

4.1 Sufficient funds have been raised to allow the first major phase of our Chapel Refurbishment project to be completed. The rich and varied diet of our worship is carefully planned to include good examples of the styles and patterns of Anglican, Methodist and Reformed traditions, but the joint Oscott/Queen's Course also gives opportunity for a Roman Catholic contribution to our chapel life. Among guests who have led worship and/or preached in recent months are the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary of the URC; we now look forward to the forthcoming visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly.

4.2 The whole community of staff, students, families etc (and Council Members) have been sharing in the creation of new Equal Opportunities Policy and Charter under the guidance of an outside facilitator. Now that an increasing number of students are undertaking full-time study while living at home, within 'commuting' distance of College, we are considering together how our patterns of common life should develop and change.

5 Strategy

5.1 We appreciated the way in which the 1998 URC Review of Training was conducted, allowing fair opportunity to meet with the Review body and make our case. It is profoundly gratifying to us that we can plan confidently in the light of last year's General Assembly decision, knowing that the URC will continue to contribute to our life (and, we hope, to the URC's). The Charity Commission is presently preparing a new Scheme for our governance, reflecting the growing and changing shape of 'Queen's'. We have just heard that the Queen has given permission for us to take (officially) the new name. "The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education".

St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak

1 Events leading to the closure decision at St Andrew's

1.1 St Andrew's Hall will cease its existence as an ecumenical and international mission training centre including The United Reformed Church on 31st August 1999. The St Andrew's Council took the painful decision to sell the land and buildings at its meeting on 17th September 1998. There are different views on the underlying reasons for ending the thirty years association of the United Reformed Church, the Council for World Mission, and the Baptist Missionary Society at St Andrew's. However the immediate cause was that the three sponsoring bodies would not agree to continue their existing levels of finance beyond the above date. This was despite the fact that, as reported last year (Reports 1998 p.175), two new and experienced members of staff had been appointed to start work at the start of the Summer Term. They had accepted short contracts until 31st August 1999, on the basis of the Council's agreed expectation that development plans could be worked on, which would enable St Andrew's to play a positive part in the future of Selly Oak in general, and ecumenical training in mission in particular, about which discussion was then beginning.

2 Residential Use during April 1998 to March 1999

Basic statistics:

	<i>Summer 1998</i>	<i>Autumn 1998</i>	<i>Spring 1999</i>
URC Students	7	7	6
CWM	0	14	6
BMS	3	5	4
Others	19	11	22

2.2 General

For the period under report, staff and student morale has been excellent in spite of the closure decision. A rich and diverse international and ecumenical fellowship has provided an enjoyable context in which to reflect on the nature of Christian mission and to do theology Partner Churches of the URC, such as the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the Hungarian Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique, the Presbyterian Church of Angola and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, have been well represented in the students taking courses in Selly Oak and sharing in the life of St Andrew's. Regular morning worship continued and evening prayers were reintroduced and were well attended and appreciated. The Chapel continued to be the focus of united Christian worship in the Selly Oak Federation and this is planned to go on until the end of the 1998-1999 Session in July 1999. A regular pattern of social events and tutorials has taken place.

3 April 1999 onwards

3.1 In the expectation that the process of selling the buildings would be well-advanced by Spring 1999 it was decided that no new students would be admitted into residence in the Summer term, and arrangements were made to cease employment of catering and cleaning staff from April onwards, closing the kitchens, study bedrooms, and conference facilities at the end of April. At the time of writing the buildings were not sold, but not for the want of trying or through lack of interested purchasers.

3.2 The Revd John Burgess of The United Reformed Church will complete 9 years of dedicated service to the College and the Federation on 31st August 1999 when his third contract ends, and he should be thanked for his work and witness at St Andrew's. The Revd Pat Nimmo, also of the URC has contributed a great deal in the brief period allowed to her and also deserves thanks from her Church.

4 Financial Position

4.1 The audited accounts for the year ending 31 August 1998 show that the college was viable with the current level of grants. It is expected that the current year will show the same situation, though the special costs connected with closure, including 11 staff redundancies, will reduce any balance.

5 Future

5.1 It is likely that the buildings which have formed St Andrew's Hall will continue to be an important part of Selly Oak Mission Training and Education as the colleges continue their important ecumenical and international work in the days ahead, though no longer including a URC presence. However, the URC could have an opportunity through its scholarship-holders to be part of the new pattern of training from September 1999 onwards. It is to be hoped that the church will honour its commitment to share in the new forms of community developing in Selly Oak, in some way in the days ahead. The European Region of CWM Churches in general should have a significant part in this future. Most of all it is vital that the URC's essential relationships with Partner Churches world-wide, in which St Andrew's has played a major role, will not suffer through the ending of the present link. For this to happen, urgent decisions and committed funding are needed.



Information

General Assembly
1999

URC History Society

1 The Society met for its Study Weekend on 11-13th September 1998 at Westminster College, Cambridge. The Annual Lecture was given by Dr Julie Rugg, Research Fellow at the University of York. Her topic was "Nonconformity and the development of early cemeteries in Britain 1820-1850". This proved to be a very lively subject and provoked many questions. During the weekend members of the Society shared their interests and expertise by delivering a variety of lectures and talks. An afternoon trip to Sudbury URC also took place.

2 Dr Clyde Binfield, the editor, continues to receive a wide selection of excellent articles for the Journal. The Supplement written by Dr John Thompson to mark 250 years of the Coward Trust has been widely appreciated.

3 During the year, the Library and Archives were moved from the basement at Church House to Westminster College and the books housed in the new Reformed Studies Centre, the Healey Room and the space between the Library and the Senatus Room. The Archives are temporarily being stored in the Principal's Lodge, but lack of manpower has prevented their being sorted out and properly arranged. Firm plans are now in place to overcome this problem during the second half of 1999. Those wishing to make use of the Library are advised to telephone the Principal of Westminster College first.

4 Written enquiries should be sent to the Society c/o Westminster College, Cambridge. Long term plans for providing this service are under consideration.

5 The implementation of the 1997 General Assembly's Resolution One is proceeding in stages. The General Secretary has sent all the marriage registers to local record offices. He convened a meeting between representatives of the Society and representatives from the Northern Synod at which agreement was reached as to how relevant records would be released. This will serve as a pilot project for others. Material will be handed over only to professionally managed archives and standard terms of deposit will be negotiated.

6 At the Society Lunch during the General Assembly at Nottingham the President of the Society, Dr Elaine Kaye, spoke on "*An Instinct for Action: J B Paton and the Life of Nottingham*". Discussion and contributions from the floor followed.

7 Responding to an initiative by the Revd Eric Wollaston, the Society Council decided to add Study Days in the North to the Society's regular pattern of study days and weekends, beginning in March 1999 with a meeting at the old Northern Congregational College at Whalley Range.

8 The annual subscription to the Society is £10. Individuals and congregations with an interest in the history of the URC are warmly invited to join.

URC Musicians' Guild

1 Last year our Report began with the opening words of hymn 414 in Rejoice and Sing 'When in our music God is glorified'. Let us now quote from the last verse:-

'Let every instrument be tuned for praise!

Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!

This exhorts us *all* - instrumentalists and singers - to the praise of Almighty God.

1.1 The Guild in seeking to increase its membership circulated a poster (illustrated with singers and instruments of various shapes and sizes!) to all Churches in the Spring of last year. If your Church did not receive and display one please let us know. We were trying again to make the point that the Guild is for *all* who sing - not necessarily in a choral sense but as a member of the congregation or play an instrument of any sort. Despite our efforts we still find that the Guild is often (and wrongly) thought to be basically for Organists! If you or your friends play or sing, value the use of music in worship and/or have any interest in the subject, why not consider joining us and giving us your support? Details of where to get more information and how to join (the subscription is very cheap!) are given below.

1.2 Our Branch activities have continued and judging by the reports in our excellent Journal have covered a wide range of matters of interest to Church musicians. They have included, for example, visits to Churches and (yes!) organ music, but also music by instrumental groups singing of hymns, songs and anthems, talks marking the 250th anniversary of the death of Isaac Watts, sessions on different ways of singing the Psalms and acts of worship sometimes using material prepared or discussed during the day.

1.3 The Annual Celebration Day in October was held last year at Redland Park URC and was by all accounts an enjoyable and instructive day and one of

congenial fellowship with old and new friends. Members from all parts of the country attended and it was an opportunity in particular to meet members of the relatively new South Western Branch. It was a great pleasure to have the Moderator of the South Western Province, Revd Raymond Adams, with us for the day and leading one of the sessions.

1.4 Our 1999 Celebration Day is to be in London at Bloomsbury Baptist Church on Saturday 23rd October. The event is not restricted to Guild members so why not join us for the day? The Honorary General Secretary will be pleased to send you details.

1.5 The Guild's Organ Advisory Service has continued to give advice to Churches who would like to have comments from an impartial and experienced Advisor about the condition of their organ and suggestions as to any appropriate or necessary action. We have been greatly encouraged by the receipt of a small grant from the URC to enable us to help our Advisors to attend Conferences and so keep up-to-date with matters relevant to their expertise.

1.6 As we continue to pursue our aim to make the music of our worship more worthy and meaningful we again ask for your support and prayers and perhaps your active involvement.

1.7 Membership of the Guild is £4 per annum - £10 for Corporate (Church) membership. Membership forms and other information including details of the Organ Advisory Service and Redundant Organ Register are available from the Honorary General Secretary - John L Harding, Rainbow's End, 105 Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich IP4 3NU (Telephone 01473 725075).

Schools linked with the URC

1 When Assembly meets, representatives of the Six Schools, together with representatives of the Collegio Valdese, at Torre Pellice, will already have met for their 1999 Conference "Forward with Faith into the Future", held at Wentworth College, Bournemouth, June 14-15th 1999.

2 The Schools continue to value their links with the United Reformed Church, of which this Report to Assembly is a symbol, and they remain mindful of their original purpose, which was to educate the daughters and sons of ministers, missionaries, and others active in the life of the Churches. They would draw attention to the bursaries which remain available for this purpose, particularly those provided through the generosity of the Memorial Hall Trust and the Milton Mount Foundation.

3 The following reports draw attention to school achievements in the past year and a half.

4 Caterham School

A year or two ago Caterham School was being spoken of as "Surrey's best kept secret". Now the secret is well and truly out. The school has the reputation of steadily improving year on year. In south east Surrey it is becoming the school to attend. Applications for year 7 have increased by over forty per cent and the school has had to turn people away. In addition the vast majority of our present year 11 have indicated that they wish to stay on in the sixth form and pursue their advanced level GCE studies at the school. Boarding for girls, which started just a few years ago with three pupils, now numbers thirty-five. Interest in it has been so great that the governors have approved the building of an addition to the boarding house to accommodate twelve more girls. Boarding for boys, which nationally has been tailing off, has held its own at Caterham. As a consequence it has been agreed that their facilities will be completely refurbished over the next two years or so.

In his speech to parents and pupils on speech day last year the Headmaster, Rob Davey, spoke of his vision for the school. He hoped that "the real depth of our pastoral structures; the quality of our staff prepared to go the extra mile and more for a pupil; the intellectual vision combined with the vigour that drives the expectation of our pupils.....[will] conspire to present our children with a view of the world of real worth and sense".

Whilst acknowledging the importance of league tables (and Caterham is doing well in them, achieving 63.9% of passes at A and B at "A" level), the school is committed to quality in its pastoral care, and variety and breadth in its extra-curricular life including sport, music and drama. A notable milestone at the end of the autumn term was the production of the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. Those who saw it were amazed at the quality of the production and the acting ability of so many of our pupils. In addition the school is committed to wide-ranging community service, as well as emphasising its Christian ethos and links with the United Reformed Church. (The school continues to educate the sons and daughters of URC ministers and two more are to join us in September). Its documentation and practice concerning the Christian nature of the school has been commended by inspectors. The documentation has been exported to other schools.

Caterham is confident as it prepares to enter the new millennium. It hopes to continue providing a good all-round quality education to the boys and girls it serves.

5 Eltham College

The year at Eltham College sped by in a myriad of activity. Outstanding success was achieved by the leavers with the school's best ever "A" level results, gaining a place in the "top ten" coeducational Sixth Forms in the country; we have enjoyed a host of splendid plays, concerts and art exhibitions; sporting honours (some of them national) have been won by teams and individuals, mountaineering expeditions and foreign exchanges have challenged many pupils, and we have opened a beautiful new Library, greatly enhancing our facilities.

The school now had its own resident professional orchestra, the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square, with whom a special partnership has been formed for mutual benefit.

The school suffered the tragic loss of Dr Peter Page, Head of Sixth Form and Academic Deputy, the community coming together to express its thanksgiving in December, when fitting tributes were offered.

A different kind of loss was felt when Mr Derek Foster left after two years' service in the Religious Studies Department to return to Missionary work in Indonesia. As his replacement, the Reverend

Georgiana Heskins was appointed, bringing a wealth of experience and spiritual insight with her. The Reverend Clifford Charlton has joined the Governing Body as the URC representative.

Within the RS Department the major change has been the introduction of the GCSE short course examination for all Year 10 pupils. Members of the inaugural year group sit the examination this summer, a year in advance of their remaining ten subjects.

The Reverend Peter Stevenson of Spurgeon's College was invited to address the school for the Remembrance Day service, and as usual we have welcomed visiting ministers from time to time to morning assemblies. Speakers at other society meetings have included Kate Clanchy (poet), Lord Weatherill, the Bishop of Rochester, Lord Nolan, Professor Butler, and Lord Puttnam.

The school continues to remember its links with Eric Liddell and will commemorate the 75th anniversary of his Olympic triumph in the summer. Arthur Green, a school contemporary of Eric Liddell, has presented a silver trophy for a special 400 metres race on Sports Day to commemorate the 1924 gold medal. The school will be represented at the Liddell Convention in Edinburgh in July.

6 Silcoates School

Many prospective parents - including, interestingly, those of other faiths - attach great importance to the fact that Silcoates is a Christian foundation. "What it means to be a Christian school" has provoked lively discussion at Governors' meetings and in other fora. Even though Silcoates is now a day school, we maintain our tradition of lively, committed and regular Sunday worship; numbers attending have declined in recent years, but a significant minority consider it a very important feature of our corporate life.

With 642 pupils on the roll, numbers are at a record level at Silcoates School, as they are at the other two schools of the Foundation, Sunny Hill House and St Hilda's. Examination results have been very pleasing; our highest ever pass percentage at GCSE has led to a strong Lower Sixth Form year group. The music department, with two hundred instrument lessons per week, is flourishing. So is drama, and a dynamic production of *Oh What a Lovely War* was a highlight of the Autumn Term. There is a large and busy programme of sports fixtures; the girls' hockey squad have their sights set on their visit to South Africa this summer.

7 Taunton School

The School year 1997/98 was an important one in the history of Taunton School. It saw a new Headmaster, Julian Whiteley, in post from September; it saw an increase in pupil numbers, significantly in girls' boarding where alterations to existing premises to accommodate them were necessary; it saw the best ever examination results taken across the board at A Level and GCSE, a reflection on the quality of the teaching staff as well as the pupils. The reputation of the Science Department for excellence and innovative work continued to grow.

Outside the classroom, Drama continued to flourish using the excellent facilities of the new Theatre. So many pupils auditioned for the Summer production of the musical *Grease* that two alternating casts performed with great zest and humour. The Choral Society's performance of Haydn's *Creation* in the School Chapel was much enjoyed at the end of the Autumn Term. Pupils have travelled far and wide to represent the School at debating in Canada and Argentina, in addition to appearing as finalists in the English Speaking Union competition.

All levels of games have enjoyed some success. In particular the Girls' Netball 1st VII excelled, being unbeaten in School matches and finishing third in the UK U19 Finals, and the Boys' Hockey XI reached the final of the West of England Championships.

Three teams from the School successfully completed the arduous and challenging "Ten Tors" expedition on Dartmoor which was covered by a West Country TV documentary.

"Commemoration" in July, blessed with one of the best days of a poor Summer, was well attended. We welcomed Mrs Joanna Kennedy, a Senior Partner of Ove Arup Civil Engineering Consultants, as Guest of Honour; she spoke with enthusiasm for Science.

8 Walthamstow Hall

The school community was saddened by the death of Miss Elfreda Davies MBE, Headmistress, 1970 - 1983, but her memorial service arranged by the Old Girls' association was a lively celebration of a life of impressive service both in this country and abroad. Sustained by her firm faith, she fought a long and inspiring battle against cancer, and she leaves vivid memories of her strong public leadership and her quiet personal kindness.

The Old Girls' association this year celebrates its hundredth anniversary. It was founded in 1899 with the planting in the grounds of a commemorative chestnut tree which is still flourishing. A special centenary reunion will be held in June.

The year's major drama production was *The Oak, the Vine and the Mulberry Tree*. It was researched and devised in school and told the story of our own corner of Sevenoaks from the time of the French Revolution to the present day, by way of the Huguenot silk mill, Queen Victoria's visit, the suffragettes, the bombing of Walthamstow Hall and the coming of the Beatles to Knole Park. As it was a piece of "community drama" involving primary-school children as well as girls from our own Junior and Senior schools (and some boys from Tonbridge School), it attracted grants from the Arts Council and the Sevenoaks District Council. We invited groups of local children and old people to see the five public performances.

Other drama productions have included our annual classical tragedy workshop (this year Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*), the Junior School's *Alice and Joe Carpenter and Son*, and the House Drama Festival with a detective story theme. Concerts, recitals and musical events of all kinds have abounded, and the year culminated with a vast choir of girls, staff, parents, friends and governors joining to sing *Messiah*.

In July our Deputy Headmistress, Miss Margaret Vokins, retired, but we were consoled by her nomination to the Governing Body by the United Reformed Church, and she will also serve on the committee of the Foundation Fund for the Children of Missionaries. We have at present six daughters of missionaries in school, a larger number than at any time for more than ten years.

We were delighted to welcome in the course of the year four Italian students from the Collegio Valdese in Torre Pellice, which is affiliated to our Six Schools. We look forward to meeting representatives from the Collegio when we all gather at Wentworth College for our conference of heads, governors and staff.

Six daughters of missionaries and three daughters of ministers are at the school.

9 Wentworth College

In the summer, out of thirty-five girls in the fifth form entered for a total of 300 GCSEs, 12% were awarded an A star (the highest grade), while 84% were graded C or above. Even GCSE grades now carry a tariff: 8 points for a starred A down to 1 for a G. Each of our girls averaged 48.51 points. (But especially successful was Gemma Oram with 10 As, 9 of them starred).

Upper Sixth students entered for a total of eighty-four levels in twenty subjects. Between them they achieved a 91% pass rate, (and we were particularly pleased with Natalie Carter, Wing Lam Chow and Jennifer Hutton - our former Head of Boarders - who were each awarded four Grade As).

In September, our Speech Day guest was Sally Taylor, presenter of BBC "South Today", and so the School Officers gave us their insights on 1997-98 in the form of a news broadcast. It worked well and these are some of their items:

Business news: During the last year thirteen girls participated in the Young Enterprise scheme; many held positions of responsibility, including managing director and company secretary. Two girls went to a trade fair in Brussels and our companies received a total of five awards in the end-of-year awards ceremony.

Foreign news: Large groups of girls went on each of the Christmas holidays skiing course in Switzerland and the German and music tour at Easter. This latter group comprised choir, soloists, recorder group and other ensembles - they gave two concerts to large, appreciative audiences in Boppard and Bad Bertrich.

The Arts: The main drama production was *The Darling Buds of May*. In the summer term we had an excellent Creative Arts Evening which celebrated the girls' great range of talents, from art through dance to textiles. The senior recorder group reached the National Festival of Music for Youth final in Birmingham and Lucy Cochrane - a member of the fourth form - won a place in the National Wind Orchestra.

Sports news: Girls have enjoyed success both on and within the water. Two of our younger pupils - Pippa Wilson and Lauren Morrison - became the U15 National Inland Sailing Champions; Pamela Young, a member of the third form, won the individual section of the National Lifesaving Championships. Seventy-two swimming awards were presented to various determined individuals. Lacrosse had a good season, the highlight of which was the match against Portsmouth High that our team won 9-1. In netball, tennis and athletics there have been various team and individual triumphs. Since the girls have access to the Fitness Studio, which was opened at the start of last year, they now have no excuse not to be fit.

Community Service: There were various efforts to support selected charities throughout the year. The third form raised £113 in one evening by carol singing in Bournemouth; while each term the School

House boarders and their friends entertained elderly members of the local community through their support of "Contact the Elderly". Also, many girls have continued their involvement in Task Force. Through this they are able to canoe, sail and enjoy other activities with disabled young people from the Victoria School in Poole.

Scientific news: The Science Departments organised several educational visits to such places as the Polymer Circus - at which the girls were given a valuable insight into areas of science which cannot easily be demonstrated in school - and the Science Museum, where one visit involved sleeping overnight in the museum.

The Social calendar: There have been many events including the music and supper party for parents, the annual Christmas party for a local group of people with MS, carols and mulled wine around the Christmas tree, the Friends murder-mystery evening, and the Wentworth Annual Science and Technology lecture and dinner, at which the theme was aviation safety.

The School Officers ended with their forecast for the year ahead. This included "showers of goals", "sunny periods in the classroom" and "spells of hard work" before next summer's examinations. I hope they are right.

Silence & Retreats Network

Core Group Convener: Mike Playdon

Editor: Keith Green

1 THE SILENCE AND RETREATS NETWORK is...

...a network: individuals, groups, congregations, sharing a common concern for the deepening of spiritual life, through silence, quiet days and retreats. It includes the Silence & Retreats link persons appointed by the Synods (we are short of a link person for West Midlands at the moment), spiritual directors, retreat givers, centres like High Chapel House and The Windermere Centre in Cumbria and the Aston Tirrold Centre for Reflection in Oxfordshire, individuals and congregations who subscribe to *Windows*, and the increasing number of people who attend quiet days. The lines which make up the net are the conversations, letters, phone calls, faxes and e-mails, the leaflets and introductory pack, the articles in *Reform*, the communications in the *Information Service*, the pages on the internet, and the reports to congregations, District Councils, Synods and General Assembly. The points where the lines meet are wherever an individual goes on retreat or meets with a spiritual director, the two or three meet for prayer, or a group comes together for a quiet day, training session, or retreat. So we are not an organisation, but a network.

2 A small core group services the network. It meets twice a year to do whatever is necessary to maintain the network and to promote silence, quiet days and retreats within the Church. Once a year we hold a residential consultation with the Synod link persons, to share news, concerns and experiences, to provide 'in service training', and to offer mutual support and encouragement. Most of the 'work' is done in local, district and regional gatherings, and during the past year there has been around the

country a variety of events: 'drop-in' days, retreats for Ministers, Hildegard of Bingen, Easter reflections, Celtic spirituality, healing, hatred and heffalumps. The core group is responsible for nationally produced leaflets and the thrice-yearly journal *Windows*, and for keeping Silence and Retreats as high profile as possible within the structures of the Church. It is represented on the Doctrine Prayer and Worship committee and thus has access to the Church's councils. A diminishing amount of financial support is received from that committee, and the network is largely self-supporting through gifts and subscriptions to *Windows*. In July there will be a training day at Aston Tirrold for those who are interested in leading retreats and quiet days, and probably another during 2000, and from 1st to 4th November 1999 a residential session at The Windermere Centre. We hope there will be a good take-up.

3 The core group is very conscious of the fact that ecumenical commitment is written into the fabric of the United Reformed Church ('The United Reformed Church declares its intention, in fellowship with all the Churches, to pray and work for such visible unity of the whole Church as Christ wills and in the way he wills...'), so we count it a privilege to be involved in the work of the National Retreat Association. Soon to be re-named the Retreat Association, this Association comprises Christian retreat groups from Anglican, Baptist, Friends, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed traditions. We benefit enormously from what we learn from other communities, and are pleased to be able to share the particular spiritual heritage, which is ours in the Reformed tradition.