



# A

## Campaign of Radical Welcome

Update from the Steering Group

There is much progress and activity to report since the last meeting of Mission Council.

### 1. It's a green light!

The Review Group appointed by Mission Council completed its work and authorised the campaign to proceed. Complaints and concerns across a range of issues were heard and addressed (see paragraph 12 below).

### 2. The training plan is now clearly in place

There is a three stage process for churches.

- a) The first stage is exploration. What is the state of the welcome we offer? Whom do we exclude? How can we raise our game? This is commended to every church.
- b) The second stage is to opt in. Each opt-in church is assigned a companion to help them explore radical welcome at a more searching level. A contract sets out the expectations which companions and churches will bring to the partnership. The training is tailor-made for each congregation, recognising that they start in very different places. A core of trained companions is helping to roll out training across each synod so that there are enough companions to meet the need. This too is offered to every church.
- c) The third stage is covenant. When a church decides that it wishes to affiliate with the campaign and reckons itself to be ready, and its companion agrees, the church meeting takes a formal decision to join the campaign. This is marked in an act of worship. Covenanted churches will be listed on the campaign website and this is how enquirers will find the church nearest to them.

### 3. Internal Launch +1

After the controversy and confusion earlier in the year, the Review Group recommended that the campaign be presented to the churches afresh. This will happen in various ways, significantly through synod visits, some of which have already taken place. These give the opportunity for people to hear about the campaign in depth and ask their questions. The Communications office is also fully involved with regular updates offered through QU and Reform.

### 4. Youth and children

The staff at Church House are creating some materials on radical welcome suitable for young people and children.

### 5. Ecumenical preparations are proceeding

In autumn 2012 the campaign will become available as an evangelism tool for the wider Christian family in Britain. There is thinking to be done about how to turn a single denomination project into a movement that is fully owned by a range of partners, and discussions have begun. However, the urgent task is to alert our partners to what is about to happen so that no one is taken by surprise on launch day. Roberta Rominger has made visits to evangelism officers, ecumenical officers and/or communications directors in the

Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, Baptist Union, Salvation Army and Society of Friends. Response has been overwhelmingly positive. She will be travelling to Scotland in November to meet with the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army, with hopes of adding Methodists, Baptists and the United Free Church to the itinerary as well. Peter Noble is taking the lead in speaking to Welsh colleagues, although CWM partners (the Union of Welsh Independents, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Congregational Federation) are already on board. In addition to the denominations, there has been huge encouragement from Christian Aid and the Student Christian Movement.

Discussions are also taking place with the organisers of Greenbelt with a view to the adoption of radical welcome as a key theme of the festival in 2012. The URC has been asked to lead Bible studies and workshops throughout the programme.

6. **A ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ page has been posted on the URC website**  
[http://www.urb.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/campaign\\_of\\_radical\\_welcome/campaign\\_of\\_radical\\_welcome](http://www.urb.org.uk/what_we_do/campaign_of_radical_welcome/campaign_of_radical_welcome).
7. **New body copy**  
 The Steering Group heard concerns that the body copy (the smaller print on each ad) as initially presented was (a) illegible (b) a bit arrogant and (c) potentially offensive ecumenically. This has been remedied and new wordings have been agreed. These are available with the FAQs.
8. **New launch date**  
 At the request of churches and synod training and development officers, the launch date has been put back until May 2012. This is to give as many churches as possible the time they need to prepare for affiliation with the campaign.
9. **A draft project plan is now in place**  
 Much work remains to be done to make a May 2012 launch viable. This has now been captured onto a comprehensive diagram with individual steering group members being assigned responsibility for taking each area forward. This diagram doubles as the foundation for a risk assessment document. There are various key deadlines and deliverables which must be met if the campaign is to launch successfully. The work of risk mitigation follows as the steering group considers how to undergird the more vulnerable points of the programme.
10. **Additional Steering Group members**  
 The Mission Committee gave approval to the enlargement of the steering group to include one of the synod contact people and a FURY member in addition to Simon Peters who is spending a year at CWM Mission House in Amsterdam. It has also been noted that ecumenical roll-out of the campaign will require legal, structural and fundraising skills not represented in the current steering group.
11. **Fundraising**  
 This is now an urgent matter. The CWM grant will allow for modest media coverage but further funding is required for the ecumenical roll-out, development of further advertising materials and fuller media coverage. Options have been identified and specialist help has been sought.
12. **Addressing the requirements of the Review Group**  
 The Review Group report outlines ten areas of required work which form the conditions upon which they gave the campaign their go-ahead.

- a) **Communicate radical welcome as a journey commended to every church.**  
This will be an ongoing task, but existing documents have already been revised to take into account this change of emphasis.
- b) **Fix new reporting structure with Mission Committee**  
This has two parts. The first is to agree the form and frequency of reports offered to Mission Committee meetings. The second, recognising that Mission Committee does not have time to give the campaign the detailed scrutiny which is required, is the appointment of a Liaison Group to keep on top of developments and monitor the work of the Steering Group. The Liaison Group must have a representative from the Communications & Editorial Committee as well. Names are being confirmed and will be reported to Mission Council.
- c) **Communications strategy** This is in process.
- d) **Internal Launch “+1”** See paragraph 3 above
- e) **Financial information for local churches** In process, to be added to FAQs
- f) **Relationship with Faith & Order Reference Group** In hand
- g) **Consultation with other groups**  
The Faith & Order Reference Group and the Human Sexuality Task Group are specified. The Steering Group is in active contact with both. There is also a request that the Liaison Group and Steering Group consider whether there are other groups that should be on this list.
- h) **Risk assessment document**  
The project plan mentioned in paragraph 9 is the first stage in naming and addressing the risks ahead. Further work will follow.
- i) **Minimum number of churches** See numbers in Review Group report. At the time of writing the number of exploring churches stands at 389.
- j) **Revised body copy** Completed and agreed.

### 13. CWM review

In May the Mission Committee considered terms of reference for a CWM mid-term review. The latest news is that this is not required and that the normal annual reporting to the European Region Round Table is all that is expected.

Roberta Rominger

20 October 2011



# B

## United Reformed Church Mission Committee Discussion paper of the Review of Ecumenical Relations

### Introduction

In January 2010 the Mission Committee approved the terms of reference for a review of Ecumenical Relations (appendix 1). A group of four people from across the denomination and the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations was brought together. The group, which was supported in its work by the Administrator for World Church and Ecumenical Relations<sup>1</sup>, began its work in November 2010.

The core documents for the review were the General Assembly adopted papers ‘Three Ecumenical Principles’ (2001) and the ‘Statement on the Nature of Ecumenical Relations’ (2007). The group recognised that much of the description of the ecumenical landscape from 2007 is applicable today. Churches, including the United Reformed Church, are still grappling with the twin challenges of ‘describing, affirming, managing and developing the diversity in our unity’ and ‘living with difference.’

The group also wishes to affirm the four ways forward in response to these challenges articulated in the statement:

1. The importance of organic unity as defined by the 1937 Faith and Order Conference, ‘A Church so united that the ultimate loyalty of every member would be given to the whole body and not to any part of it.’
2. A commitment to reciprocal recognition
3. The image of a standard (inter-)national core and responsible local variant expression
4. Ecumenical exploration of the theme of space

A denomination wide consultation has formed the major element of the review to date. Twelve Synods sent representatives including a number of Synod Moderators, Synod and Denominational Ecumenical Officers, members of Synod Ecumenical Committees, and members of Regional Ecumenical committees/organisations. The consultation was joined at various points by General Assembly staff and Conveners and members of General Assembly appointed permanent working groups e.g. Faith and Order Reference Group. The consultation programme had been discerned from conversations which had taken place in a number of Synods in a preparatory phase. The consultation was designed to be a place to share experience and explore the resulting questions rather than seek out answers or test policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The members of the review group were Rev Lindsey Sanderson (Synod of Scotland, Convener); Rev Roy Fowler (South Western Synod); Rev Stuart Jackson (Synod of Wales); Mrs Valerie Jenkins (Yorkshire Synod); Rev David Tatem (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations), Helen Garton (Administrator for World Church and Ecumenical Relations)

## Discerning the signs of the times

From the review process three key themes have emerged for the review group.

### A. The complexity of ecumenical relationships

Complexity is a major factor in the ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church. Because ecumenism is primarily relational it is always changing and the challenge is to continually respond in ways which reflect the changing context. As the URC continues to develop its sense of being a church in three nations, we can see that in each of those nations ecumenism has its own dynamic and relationships (TofR3). As a consequence the URC finds itself with different priorities and partners in each nation. In Wales for example, the Covenanting Churches; in Scotland the EMU (Episcopal, Methodist, URC) Partnership; in England, the Anglican-Methodist Covenant and across the nations e.g. the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

However, even within nations, and particularly in England, within different geographical regions, different relationships can take precedence. Relationships with other three nation churches are not necessarily any less complex. Methodist-URC relations take on different characteristics in England, Scotland and Wales.

Complexity can also be seen in the range of partners with whom we engage. Partnerships include formal ecumenical structures which exist at national and county levels and local initiatives which may bring a wider range of partners than the formal structures. Partners may be the traditional churches of the ecumenical movement, and newer partners, particularly from the black and ethnic minority communities. There are many initiatives with which the denomination, Synods and local churches engage which are ecumenical initiatives but which would be hesitant to describe themselves as part of the formal ecumenical movement e.g. Street Pastors; Fresh Expressions.

Within this review European and World partnerships were also under consideration (TofR3). This adds a further dimension to our sense of partnership and belonging to God's *oikumene*.

### B. The effects of denominational restructuring

Strong feelings were expressed that since the demise of the Ecumenical Committee and the formation of the Mission Committee and Mission Team, the visibility of Ecumenical Relations within the denomination has diminished. This has been exacerbated by the move to a biennial General Assembly and the lack of a specific ecumenically focussed report. Where in the past, the Ecumenical Committee provided a focus for ecumenical relationships, reflection and action, to which other General Assembly committees were invited to have representation and input, in the new Mission Committee ecumenical relations is one of seven major subject areas. Therefore the agenda time and resourcing available to ecumenical relations is of necessity much reduced. The former Ecumenical Committee also provided a structural relationship for the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and the Ecumenical Officers of the Synods of Scotland and Wales. During the course of the review it was agreed that the Ecumenical Officers in Scotland and Wales would be part funded from General Assembly budgets as much of their remit should properly be understood as General Assembly business and the review group welcomes this initiative.

Linked to the reduced visibility of ecumenical relations is the perceived invisibility of Faith and Order work. The Faith and Order Reference Group now sits within the remit of the Deputy General Secretary rather than the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations. Much of the Faith and Order work of the denomination is carried out quietly by small groups of highly skilled and experienced people but there is little knowledge of the fruits of their work, or even the key issues



under discussion. The dissemination of the fruits of these discussions is vital to the health of Local Ecumenical Partnerships who need to understand the theological underpinnings of their practice in order to differentiate between local tradition and the consequence of deeply held beliefs. We need to hold together both faith and order concerns as well as reflections upon practice.

The demise of Districts has also had an impact on ecumenical relations (TofR2). Synods have responded differently to life without Districts with a variety of 'key people systems' or committees in English Synods and national roles in Scotland and Wales. Within England it is common practice to find a URC representative on a County Ecumenical Body. In addition to these representatives some Synods have an Ecumenical Officer or Ecumenical Committee. Churches Together in England has just completed its review of the Intermediate (county) bodies and the URC will need to consider that report and its response to it.

A further issue for ecumenical relations is the increasing sense of fragmentation across the Synods within the URC. (TofR2) This is most acutely felt with the development of Synod policies in the areas of deployment and ministry which at best can be confusing for an ecumenical partner working with the URC across a number of Synods.

### **C. The energy for ecumenism.**

One third of URC congregations are Local Ecumenical Partnerships, our commitment to unity is written clearly into our governing documents, our history is a story of union across three nations and four ecclesial traditions. Many of our partners would identify our commitment to ecumenism as the indelible DNA of the denomination. However the consultation recognised that there is a need for a renewed vision for ecumenism, but the consultation was uncertain about the content of the vision. It has to be recognised that many within the denomination do not find energy within the ecumenical movement as traditionally understood and express their ecumenical commitment through initiatives such as Fresh Expressions and Street Pastors (see above) giving rise to new discussion about 'light-touch ecumenism'<sup>2</sup>.

Concern was also expressed that in the Vision 2020 framework for mission, ecumenism, articulated as Christian Partnerships is simply listed as one strand out of ten in the framework. John 17:21ff states the rationale for the quest for Christian unity - 'so the world may believe'. Unity and mission belong together and so ecumenism must, and does, flow through the entirety of the Vision2020 framework and should not be restricted.(TofR1) The review group's discussion with the Mission Team members reaffirmed that to varying degrees much of their work is ecumenical through specific working with partner churches i.e. Joint Public Issues Team (URC/Methodist/Baptist); Rural Officer (URC/Methodist) or representing the URC i.e. on CTBI /CTE Networks, or engaging with ecumenical initiatives i.e. More than Gold, Fresh Expressions. It was felt that the ecumenical work of each team member ought to be fully acknowledged so that the ecumenical grounding of Vision 2020 would be strengthened.

From this overview a number of specific areas of concern and challenge emerged, which are offered for further discussion.

#### **1. Understanding of Unity**

Forty years on from the original formation of the URC, and now as a community of four ecclesial traditions and three nations we would encourage denomination wide discussion of the URC's

- current understanding of the concept of 'organic unity' and its ecumenical vision

<sup>2</sup> 'light-touch ecumenism' has been used as a descriptor for ecumenical activity which uses joint activity as its starting place rather than a traditional Faith and Order perspective.

- the way in which that understanding and vision is articulated in programme activity, representation and resource allocation.

## 2. Faith and Order (TofR1)

We would encourage the Faith and Order Reference Group to give particular consideration to:

- questions of Presidency, the role of Elders and ordination, and Baptism giving the Disciples of Christ tradition particular attention in these reflections
- questions of reception, episcopacy and authority in the URC in light of ongoing discussions about the possibility of Ecumenical Bishops within the Welsh Covenant and discussions between the Methodist Church and Church of England concerning bishops
- questions concerning the mutual recognition of ministries

## 3. Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) (TofR2)

Local Ecumenical Partnerships have been the heartbeat of the ecumenical movement at a local level. At their best LEPs challenge denominations to push the boundaries of ecumenical engagement, at their worst they can become mired in multiple church bureaucracies to the detriment of everything else. Within our current ministry, deployment and ecumenical policies within Synods and as a denomination, the URC should give particular consideration to:

- creating new LEPs out of a sense of mission and purpose not as a lifeboat strategy for dying congregations
- the challenges of and responsibilities towards LEP vacancies
- encouraging URC ministers to serve in LEPs and exploring the barriers to URC ministers pursuing ecumenical appointments
- the review of LEPs and fresh thinking on LEPs (focussing on structure following relationship and vision) currently being undertaken by Churches Together in England and any consequences this may have for URC involvement in LEPs in Scotland and Wales
- the reluctance of some denominations to form new LEPs
- how denomination specific initiatives and requests for information and finance are handled in an LEP context
- the development of Fresh Expressions and emerging church models as new manifestations of Local Ecumenical Partnerships
- establishing coherent policies on ministry in ecumenical appointments which are consistent across the denomination (i.e. regarding stipends, manse provision)

## 4. Church Planting (TofR2)

It is recognised that different denominations have played either ‘leading’ or ‘following’ roles in the church planting movement. The URC has played a ‘leading’ role in the development of Local Ecumenical Church Plants giving money and ministers generously. Rarely has the denomination planted URC congregations or given members to new church plants. There is a concern that the commitment to ecumenical church planting using the LEP model has meant that the URC has ‘lost presence’ often to independent churches. Within our current ministry and deployment policies the URC should give particular consideration to:

- the ways in which the denomination participates in church planting initiatives
- the ways in which the denomination participates in the Fresh Expressions initiative and other expressions of emerging church.

## 5. The Methodist Church

The Methodist Church is a key partner of the United Reformed Church. The denomination should continue

- developing relationships with our Methodist partners in the three nations, as appropriate (i.e. Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity and Mission & Anglican/Methodist Covenant in England; EMU in Scotland and through the Covenant in Wales)
- exploring issues between the two denominations through bodies such as the Strategic Oversight Group and the envisioned Logjam Group which will seek to address ministry concerns at a denominational rather than Synod level
- supporting local Methodist /URC partnerships and United Areas through the Methodist/URC Liaison Group
- exploring the combining of the MURCLG and MAPUM to support local initiatives in England.

## 6. Investment in People (TofR1)

An external perception of the United Reformed Church is that a commitment to ecumenism is part of its indelible DNA. However if that is the marker by which the denomination wishes to be known then it must continually invest in people to ensure a culture of ecumenism remains at the heart of the denomination. There are many examples of such investment in young people, through FURY, lay people, ordinands and ministers, many of which include the international dimension of our ecumenical relationships. As a denomination we should to continue to:

- provide education and training opportunities in ecumenical formation for all engaged in ministry
- utilize the fruits of receptive ecumenism<sup>3</sup> as a mechanism for congregations and individuals to continue their ecumenical formation and self-understanding of faith.

## 7. European Partnerships (TofR3)

European relationships operate on two levels; the bilateral relationships with Reformed churches in other countries and participation in European ecumenical bodies. The URC is a member of both the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE). The URC sends representatives to each organisation's assemblies and can nominate representatives to the various committees and bodies that are set up on either a permanent or short term basis. We currently have no-one serving on CEC but for the last 12 years the Revd Fleur Houston has served on the central committee of CPCE. Her term of service is due to end at the next Assembly in Florence and as she serves on behalf of a number of Reformed Churches from the UK it would be appropriate if another UK CPCE member was to nominate the next member. This raises questions about how the URC engagement with CPCE is maintained at an effective level when we don't have direct representation.

In our bilateral relationships the policy has been for some years to ask Synods to engage in and develop appropriate European bilateral relations on behalf of the whole denomination (see Appendix 2). These have been variously effective and there are deficiencies in how this works. There is often a negative perception by our partners that the partnership is not being taken seriously by the URC as they do not relate to the whole denomination. There is also the perception that there is a lack of European identity within the URC.

In seeking to develop our European partnerships

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<sup>3</sup> 'The essential principle behind Receptive Ecumenism is that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not "What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?" but "What do we need to learn from them?" The assumption is that if all were asking this question seriously and acting upon it then all would be moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship.'  
<http://www.centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk/?cat=6> {accessed 09.09.11}



- the review groups suggests that a conversation is held with the Secretary for International Relations and the Mission Committee about locating responsibility for the European partnerships within International Relations.

## **8. Global Partnerships (TofR3)**

The United Reformed Church is a member of four global bodies – the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and the Council for World Mission. Responsibility for these partnerships currently lies with the Secretary for International Relations and so fuller discussion of the URC's engagement with these global bodies would be better considered within a review of International Relations. However, the review group would affirm the importance of these relationships, particularly for the witness the URC, together with other United and Uniting Churches, gives within global bodies.

In our participation in global ecumenical bodies we would encourage the development of the cooperation through CTBI in agreeing representation for governing bodies and in shared reporting back to member churches.

## **9. Representation**

During the course of the review, the review group was specifically requested by the Mission Committee to look at the question of URC representation to Ecumenical organisations. A detailed cost and value analysis is currently being undertaken by the review group to address this issue and a preliminary analysis of representation is attached in Appendix 3.

## **Conclusion**

Many people currently engaged in various aspects of the ecumenical movement in the United Kingdom have described the current period as an 'ecumenical winter.' As the United Reformed Church approaches forty years since its first inception, many of the dreams of those working towards union in 1972 have been realised, whilst others have not yet been brought to fruition. At this particular anniversary it is pertinent to ask again, 'What is our vision of unity in the United Reformed Church?' 'Does the URC discern a call to be a leader in the ecumenical process once again?' 'In what ways can we work with our partners to re-energise structural, formal ecumenism and fully engage with new expressions of ecumenism in emerging church movements?'

This paper is offered to Mission Council as a stimulus for discussion and as a mechanism for further consultation in the review of ecumenical relations.

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for a Review of Ecumenical Relations

- 1) To extend the reflection on the URC's Three Ecumenical Principles (2001) and its further Statement on the Nature of Ecumenical Relations (2007); to consider in depth how the URC's ecumenical commitment connects with the development of mission strategy and initiatives.
- 2) To review again current patterns and trends in relation to local ecumenical activity and the extent to which they are adequately resourced and supported through Synod and other ecumenical support officers, networks, resources and guides. To take into account the different patterns of working that is emerging in synods across the UK in the wake of the demise of districts and to reflect on how team working in that context can be best developed and supported.

*(Involvement in CTBI and the three national instruments through Church house secretary and two national officers (Wales is currently vacant). This includes team working with corresponding post holders in partner denominations.*

*Networking within the URC through Synod ecumenical officers or committees and in relation to URC denominational ecumenical officers on intermediate bodies. Direct relationships to local churches when requested from national level.)*

- 3) To map the ecumenical relationships at the 3 nation, European and international levels in which the URC currently plays a role and therefore:

To consider the distinctive nature of ecumenical engagement in Wales, Scotland and England and the implications for the work of ecumenical officers in each country.

*(In each of the three nations the ecumenical officer's remit also extends to cover interfaith relationships. This has a significant ecumenical dimension itself through relating to the interfaith networks on an ecumenical basis and co working with other denominational desk officers for interfaith.' The February meeting of mission committee decided that interfaith should not be a feature of this review.)*

To review the way in which the URC has delegated its European relationships to synods and its representation on and involvement in European Ecumenical bodies. *(Ecumenical relations also extend to cover European connections through bodies such as CEC and CPCE. Through the system of synod and longstanding national links we also have links with churches such as the Waldensians in Italy and the Pfalzkirche.)*

To review the URC's engagement with world ecumenical bodies.

### Part 2

- 1) To analyse the working relationships of the Secretary; the networks and teams to which the Secretary belongs and the consequent implications for the role of the Secretary within the Mission Team. To make suggestions for desirable clarifications or alterations.

## Appendix 2: European Partnerships

This is the official list of partnerships which exist between synods and European Church partners. It is recognised that there is a variety in the levels of active engagement across the partnerships e.g. the partnerships between Eastern Synod and the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and South Western and the Evangelical Church of Lippe, Germany are no longer functioning whilst the Wessex, Reformed Church of France link and Scotland, Reformed Church of Hungary link are well established and developing partnerships.

Northern	None
North Western	Waldensian Church in Italy
Mersey	Mission Covenant Church of Sweden
Yorkshire	Protestant Church of the Palatinate in Germany
East Midlands	Reformed Church in Croatia
West Midlands	Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany
Eastern	Protestant Church in the Netherlands
South Western	Evangelical Church of Lippe in Germany
Wessex	Reformed Church of France
Thames North	Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren
Southern	Reformed Church in Sub-Carpatho, Ukraine
Wales	None
Scotland	Reformed Church in Hungary

### Appendix 3: Table of Representation on Ecumenical Bodies and Structures

Name of Body	Acronym	Nature of involvement	Annual Cost	Comments
<b>Churches Together in Britain and Ireland</b>	CTBI	Denominational Membership	£10,000	
CTBI Faith and order Reference Group		URC Representative		Travel costs
Churches Interreligious Network	CIRN	URC Representative		ICOW, SER
China Forum		URC Representative	Approx £50	Travel Costs. Has been Walter Houston for 16 years.
Network Meeting		URC Delegates	Approx £250	Annual event for last three years. Usually SER can be others.
<b>Action of Churches Together in Scotland</b>	ACTS	Denominational Membership	£8750 from General Assembly budget	
Members' Meeting		2 Synod representatives	Travel costs met by Synod	Mod and SNER
ACTS Networks -Faith Studies -Church & Society -Church Life -Mission		2 Synod representatives on each Network	Travel costs met by Synod	
Scottish Churches Rural Group		1 Synod representative	Travel costs met by Synod	
Scottish Churches Racial Justice Group		1 Synod representative	Travel costs met by Synod.	
Churches Agency for Interfaith Relations in Scotland	CAIRS	1 Synod representative	Travel costs met by Synod	SNER
Working with children in the church community		1 Synod representative	Travel costs met by Synod	CYDO

Scottish Churches National Sponsoring Body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships	NSB	2 Synod representatives	Travel costs met by Synod	Mod & SNER
Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office	SCPO	1 Synod representative	Annual contribution from General Assembly budget £600	SNER or Synod Church & Society Committee representative.
<b>Churches Together in England</b>	CTE	Denominational Membership	£17,500	
Directors		URC has one director		Travel Costs
Enabling Group		URC Representative	£110	ICOW, SER
Group for Local Unity	GLU	2 URC representatives		ICOW, SER + a Mod.
Theology and Unity Group	TUG	URC Representative		ICOW, SER
Free Churches Group	FCG	Membership	£1,930	ICOW, SER
County Ecumenical Bodies		URC Representatives	Unknown	Usually a mod plus DEO. 60 bodies of one form or another.
<b>Churches Together in Wales</b> - Trustee - Board - Project Officer - Finance Ctte - International Ctte - Racial Justice Ntwk -	CYTUN	Membership	£8750  Travel costs met by Synod  Synod contributes up to £800 for local events	WNER  Trustee (Mod) Mod, WNER WNER Synod Treasurer Rep Rep
Commission of Covenanting Churches - Liturgy panel - Governance panel - Episcopo Panel		URC Representative	Costs shared 50:50 by General Assembly and Synod of Wales	Mod, WNER, plus 1 representative  representative representative representative
<b>Bi-Lateral Bodies</b>				



C of E / URC group		Selected URC membership		Group now completed its work. Pending decisions on future work.
RC/URC group		6 URC members	Approx £750	Residential plus travel costs. Group report pending
Methodist / URC Liaison Group	MURCLG		Approx £550	Travel
URC/ Presbyterian Church of Wales liaison group	URC/PCW JLC		£200 approx	Welsh mod plus WNER and 3 others.
Wales Meth/URC Liaison Group				3 reps
Rep to UWI				WNER appointed by URC Gen Sec
Rep to Covenanted Baptists				WNER
Church in Wales Governing Body				WNER
PCW Assembly				Assembly Moderator
EMU partnership (URC/Methodist /Scottish Episcopal)	EMU	Synod partnership		Mod. & SNER
<b>Other Denominational Bodies</b>				
General Synod		Representation		Permanent Ecumenical Rep. Currently Graham Maskery.
Joint Implementation Commission	JIC	URC participant observer		Methodist/Anglican body to implement the Anglican/Methodist Covenant. ICOW, SER
Methodist / Anglican panel for unity and Mission	MAPUM	URC participant Observer		
Council for Christian Unity	CCU	URC Participant Observer		ICOW, SER
Methodist Faith and Order		URC representative		Currently a synod training officer.
<b>European Ecumenical Bodies</b>				

<b>Conference of European Churches</b>	CEC	Membership	£7,000	2 Representatives to assemblies. SER + another.
Church and Society Commission	CSC	Membership	£4,500	Occasional representation in meetings.
<b>Community of Protestant Churches in Europe</b>	CPCE	Membership	£400 Expenses £300	1 representative to assembly. Currently URC member of central committee
<b>International Ecumenical Bodies</b>				
World Council of Churches	WCC	Membership	£10,000	Delegates to assembly.
WCC Central Committee	WCC	URC Representative	Travel and accommodation costs for 7 day meeting every 18 months £1,250	Elected at each General Assembly. Current term will end in October 2013.
WCC Faith & Order Commission	WCC	URC Representative	Travel and accommodation costs for meetings	
<b>World Communion of Reformed Churches</b>	WCRC	Membership	£14,500	
European region				
Total Identifiable Costs			£87,190	

## Key:

ICOW = In Course of Work

SER = Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

WNER = Welsh National Ecumenical Officer

SNER= Scottish National Ecumenical Officer

Mod = Moderator

DEO = Denominational Ecumenical Officer i.e. the URC representative on a county ecumenical body.



## Vision2020

### 1. Introduction

In July 2010 General Assembly adopted vision2020 as the framework of mission planning and church growth for the United Reformed Church in the coming decade.

#### **Vision2020**

Vision2020 is a ten-year strategic framework for mission planning and church growth. It is based on two central ideas: mission priorities (or statements of mission and purpose) and local mission pledges. The basic idea is that on a regular basis, e.g. every two years, churches identify one or two of these statements as their mission priority - as appropriate to their context and resources. They also identify what activities they will offer as an expression of that priority and share this with the Synod – this is the local mission pledge. It is envisaged that most, if not all, Synods will develop this process of making regular mission pledges through the Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR). The churches' mission pledges will help to shape the Synods' priorities and focus their resources. Synods in turn will make pledges to Assembly, and in doing so shape the work at denominational level and help the church as a whole to see where support and resources are needed.

### 2. Where we are now

Since the Assembly in 2010 the Mission Team has worked extensively on vision2020, liaising with Synods and Assembly Committees in particular to explore how they can engage with vision2020. Wider conversations have been had with the Assembly staff team at Church House and monthly staff meetings have focused on a vision2020 statement in an attempt to get an overview of what each 'department' is doing in that particular area of work. Over the course of the last year all statements have been covered.

Materials have been produced for local churches and for the website; and staff members have acted as resource people at Synod gatherings, ministers' conferences and the like to communicate as widely as possible what vision2020. A more detailed overview of these activities is given below.

#### **a. Vision 2020 and local churches**

A number of Synods have been very active in communicating what vision2020 is about to local churches and in trying to make links with the Synod's own strategic mission priorities or aspirations. More detailed reports on how the Synods have engaged with vision2020 are given as a separate document.

The Mission Team has produced a leaflet aimed at local churches, explaining the key principles of vision2020 and how as churches they can engage with it. The leaflet also includes information about vision2020 grants that are available for small one-off mission projects and for longer-term projects. The leaflet came to Synods later than planned, which has hampered communication in some cases, but it has now been distributed to local churches via the Synod offices with a joint letter from the Synod Moderator and the Mission Committee.

The website pages have been also been updated, with a vision2020 button on the home page, to give quick access to the relevant pages. The pages now include general information on vision2020, the full report to the 2010 General Assembly, the ten statements of our mission and purpose, the vision2020 grants information and application form, a link to the Synod Mission Enablers to help with vision2020, and downloads such as the leaflet, logos and a short PowerPoint presentation. ([www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/mission/vision2020](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/mission/vision2020).) A short resource to help churches make local mission pledges and a form to submit the local mission pledge are yet to be added, as the latter is subject to conversations with the Synods. In the longer term we are hoping to add a vision2020 module (for use by resource centres for learning and in lay training) and an inventory of materials already available for each statement. The Education & Learning Committee has started work on such an inventory.

A scan of about half of all annual returns of 2010 reveals that 30% of the churches are able to say which are their vision2020 priorities. This is encouraging, given that churches were asked about this very soon after vision2020 was adopted by the General Assembly. So far the three priorities mentioned most are Spirituality & Prayer, Community Partnerships and Evangelism. This tells us what some of the current priorities might be, while at the same time helping us to determine where the future challenges lie.

Where churches are not indicating their vision2020 priority we should not infer that they are not engaged in mission. Many if not most are, and it is urgent that we start mapping this activity. How we can encourage churches to make mission pledges, especially when LMMR is not yet fully operational, is an urgent item for further conversations with both the Synods and the Ministries Committee. We also need to think about how vision2020 and LMMR can be integrated more.

We are continuing to consider how we can communicate vision2020 as widely as possible. We are aware that much more is to be done and the development of a clear communication strategy will be crucial. One of the things we need to communicate clearly is how vision2020 and the Radical Welcome campaign relate: i.e. vision2020 as a strategic framework for all aspects of mission across the URC, and the Campaign as a programme enabling churches to address particular statements within vision2020, in particular evangelism, church growth, and hospitality & diversity. .

We also need to strengthen our support for local churches and would suggest this involves training people, making funding available and encouraging churches to share their stories. Mission Enablers and Training and Development Officers have an important role to play and involving them therefore will be instrumental. This is already in process, but more remains to be done. Communication and discussion of vision2020 with ministers, church-related community workers, and especially with new ministers and ordinands will also be an important part of the strategy in the time ahead. We are grateful for the opportunities we have already been given to share vision2020 through the college programmes, the new ministers' conference, the Welcome to the URC course, and Synod ministers' conferences.

The vision2020 grants have now been advertised widely and we are seeing an increase in applications from local churches. This suggests the need to enlarge the fund in the future, to support and encourage churches in their mission and outreach. The Mission Committee would like to consider the possibility of applying to CWM's Mission Support Programme. The website also refers churches to their own Synod's mission fund, where this exists.

The website also gives information about outside funds churches can access. We intend to collate and advertise information about other funds (e.g. for community work or interfaith work) as and when we find it. We hope that this combination of denominational, Synod and outside funding will provide a significant boost to the mission of local churches.

We have considered starting a story telling award to encourage churches to share their mission story. As a Committee we are undecided about how to proceed with this at this stage, but it is worth considering how we can use existing awards, such as the Community Awards and the Multicultural Storytelling Award to support vision2020 further. The Director of Communications has suggested making a short video about vision2020 for the website to start the process of sharing stories. In the long term, storytelling about mission involvement in local churches, will be a crucial part of vision2020 and is something that all departments/Committees could share. We would welcome ideas on how we can make this happen.

### **b. Vision 2020 and Synods**

Since October 2010 Mission Team members have started conversations with the Synods about their engagement with vision2020. We had envisaged that these conversations would involve the Synod Moderator, the Mission Team Link Person (or another link person from the Church House staff), the Synod's Core Member on the Mission Committee, and other people involved in developing the Synod mission strategy. The discussion would focus on the implementation and communication of vision2020, especially in relation to the Synod mission strategy and the Local Mission and Ministry Review process, and on how to use the denominational and Synod websites to gather the local mission pledges. This conversation has not yet happened in every Synod, as the engagement with vision2020 has varied greatly from place to place.

The Synod reports give a clearer overview of how they have engaged with vision2020 so far. We hope that the discussion at this Mission Council meeting may go some way in addressing the outstanding issues identified in this report.

### **c. Vision 2020 and Assembly Departments**

Several departments and Committees have started to explore what the vision2020 framework might mean for them. The role of wider Church House staff and other Assembly Committees remains an area for further discussion and development. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made:

- The Youth and Children's Work Committee has done considerable work on aligning their priorities with the vision2020 statements.
- The Church Related Community Workers have looked at their projects and linked them with the statements. The revised application form for CRCW ministry now encourages applicants to use the vision2020 materials as part of their reflections on their mission and purpose.
- The Education and Learning Committee has considered what it can do until General Assembly 2012 to support vision2020 and has tried to formulate its own Mission Pledge. Vision2020 has been shared in the 'Welcome to the URC' weekend and the new ministers' conference; an inventory of all the resources we have that relate to the vision2020 statements will be put together; and the annual Education & Learning Conference in December is organised around the vision2020 statements.
- The Mission Committee itself has reshaped its meetings around vision2020 statements, which each meeting focusing on two statements. For each meeting one or two other Assembly Committees have been invited to further the conversation around vision2020. This has included initial conversations with Communications, Youth and Children's Work and with Education and Learning. The remaining Committees will be invited to the February or May 2012 meeting.

What is urgent now is the development of guidelines in partnership with the Ministries Committee as to how local mission pledges can be developed within the Local Mission and Ministry Review process, although this may be in the hands of the Synods. Further



engagement with the Communications Committee on how vision2020 can be communicated is also needed, as is a conversation with the Finance Committee on how we finance mission across the denomination in the future.

### **3. Vision2020 and the Mission Team**

Since the adoption of vision2020 the Mission Team members have reshaped the team workplan. The 2011 workplan no longer focuses on the specific work areas of team members, but on the ten vision2020 priorities and the work each team member does in relation to these. This has given the team a better sense of working together, as well as new ideas for future team working.

A direct result of this was close co-operation between the Secretaries for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (RJMM) and Mission on a conference on Evangelism (vision2020 statement 6) in July 2011, bringing together the RJMM and Mission Enablers networks. We suggest holding a vision2020 conference (on one of the themes) every non-Assembly year, with a different member of the Mission Team (or the Assembly-appointed staff team) taking the lead.

An addendum to each team member's job descriptions has been written to reflect each one's responsibility for and changing role in relation to vision2020. The discussion of the addendum is part of the annual appraisals taking place throughout September and October 2011.

The Mission Committee has started conversations on reshaping the 2013 budget around vision2020. It is envisaged that new ideas for the budget will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee and a small group has been commissioned to work on this with the Mission Team. The Committee is aware that this conversation needs to be set within the wider context of discussions on the financial future of the URC.

The URC website is due to be redesigned and the intention is that vision2020 will be integral in the new design. The total re-design will take place in February 2012.

### **4. Areas for further development or discussion**

Until the 2012 Assembly the focus of the Mission Committee is on advocating vision2020 with Synods and churches; and enabling the process of making local mission pledges (integrated with LMMR where appropriate). We envisage that after the General Assembly of 2012 vision2020 will be more or less self-running – and the focus will shift to accompaniment and support.

However, to achieve this target the following issues need to be addressed:

- a. Developing a clear communications strategy for vision2020, and in particular focused on how we communicate the relationship between vision2020 (a framework) and the Radical Welcome campaign (a programme).
- b. Working out the connection between Synod mission strategies and vision2020.
- c. Working out how churches can make local mission pledges, integrated with LMMR and otherwise, and how this information is shared both with the Synod and Church House.
- d. In the longer term: how vision2020 shapes future budgets and deployment.

*Francis Brienen/Ed Cox  
October 2011*



## Synod Reports on vision2020

### 1. Northern Synod

#### Vision 2020 hymn

8:7:8:7:D (written to Abbots Leigh)

We who live by light surrounded  
Blinded in a neon glare -  
News of hatred, greed and squalour  
Drowning signs of love and care -  
Turn to you whose word brings vision  
Seeking 20:20 sight.  
Not denying earth's real darkness,  
Seeing too the gospel light.

Word incarnate bring new vision  
Of a world by love renewed.  
You, who called us into service,  
Give us grace to trust in you.  
Though the storms of change surround us,  
Threat'ning all that we have known,  
Show that here, where saints have laboured,  
Seeds of hope can still be sown.

As we meet in prayer and worship,  
Spirit who renews Christ's church,  
Help us hold the past in honour  
And for fresh expressions search.  
Lead us on to work with others,  
Partners of all creeds and none,  
Sharing work and songs and stories -  
Striving to see justice done

Give us strength to live the Gospel,  
Life that springs from cross and grave;  
Hope that shines through loss and failure  
Knowing Jesu's power to save.  
This age brings new needs and pilgrims  
Make your church a welcome sign  
Sharing healing, challenge, friendship;  
Off'ring all love's bread and wine

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At the October 2010 synod meeting we held a session on vision2020 and shared stories from around the synod under the 10 statements – 2/3 on each. This was inspirational.

This was followed by a consultation process that took place in three forums in Northern Synod. 1) One with the committees and groups of the synod who each had a discussion as to where their work fitted with the vision 2020 framework followed by a meeting of convenors with Mission Executive. 2) One with the children of the synod at an event that John Brown facilitated on this, alongside a bowling trip. 3) The third forum was a questionnaire to each church as to what mission planning they had done or were doing. 26% of responding churches had already used vision2020 by July 2010 as a tool. This was very encouraging.

Mission Executive have since developed a mission plan called 'Dying to Live – vision2020 in Northern Synod' based on the image of John 12:20-26 of the grain of wheat being sown and dying in order for a harvest of abundant life to arise. This has questions or indicators for each of the ten statements for the synod and also explains who will take the lead in the synod for each one.

This was deferred back from the October 2011 synod meeting for various reasons: a lack of urgency in it; not enough focus on reformed identity, and the question of is this simply a paper exercise rather than being about growth now.

'Dying to Live' will hopefully be on the agenda of all synod committees in coming months. There will hopefully be a launch during 2012 when the concerns raised at synod have been heard and dealt with. Including: a) a competition with prizes for a project developing one or more of the statements; b) a gift of sunflower seeds to all local churches to plant to die as

seeds and grow a harvest as a symbol of this; c) a synod celebration in October 2012 to receive stories from around the synod about seed planting and celebrate life and harvest around the URC's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday; d) the synod web site has designated pages for 'Dying to Live – vision2020 in Northern Synod' and worship resources are being gathered from synod folk; e) a DVD using the £1k Mission Committee communication grant will be developed.

*Northern Synod Mission Executive*

## **2. North Western Synod**

In November 2010 North Western Synod decided on a three year strategy which prioritised three of the areas covered by the statements. These are spirituality and prayer, community partnerships and evangelism. The intention behind this was not to mandate local churches to pursue these priorities but simply to determine how the synod will allocate resources at its disposal. Mike Walsh, NW member of the Mission Committee, is our link person with the General Assembly Committee.

However, we realise that simply prioritising the statements does not achieve anything unless it is matched by outcomes. We are currently asking particularly our Learning & Ministries Committee to task our training team according to these priorities. Our activities in the past year have sought to further our engagement with these three in the following ways:

First, Spirituality and Prayer: we are giving more time to bible study at our October synod led by the Revd Dr John Bradbury and a major synod retreat is planned for February 2012. We have an active retreats group which put on a labyrinth at our recent synod day. A number of churches in the South Area have worked together to compile booklets of Lent devotions and Advent devotions which have been widely circulated.

Secondly, Community Partnerships: we have a number of significant community partnerships in the synod from which we are trying to learn. We are currently considering a formal relationship with Bubble Enterprises which is a social company that has been involved in a number of our churches. Their expertise is in social entrepreneurialism.

Thirdly, Evangelism: Our synod has agreed a pattern of special category ministries, one per area, for which we will apply to further the churches' evangelistic endeavours. We are hoping that our forthcoming synod will authorise a new year out scheme for mission interns to come alongside churches and minsters as they engage in community evangelism.

*Richard Church*

## **3. Mersey Synod**

Before our synod meeting in November 2010 all the churches were circulated with a request to identify three key areas of mission in their church life, drawn from the vision2020 priorities, that they would want to focus on for the next three years. The responses were then analysed and the three most identified areas were brought to the November synod for approval as the ones that would be priority areas for the synod to promote.

The November synod identified the following three areas:

1. Prayer and Spirituality
2. Hospitality and Diversity
3. Evangelism and Church Growth

During 2011, the synod produced a leaflet for all our churches entitled "Focus In" to encourage churches to engage with these priorities and offering support in the form of resources and training opportunities. So far, we have completed three training sessions on Hospitality and Diversity with over 100 people representing about 25 - 30 churches and one

training day on Evangelism which attracted about 30 people. Two more Evangelism training days are planned in the new year, led by Andrew Willett and members of our Mission Strategy group.

We have just begun the initial tranche of churches for LMMR (Local Mission and Ministry Review) and the local church pledges are part of the process that the churches will be encouraged to follow. It is very early days yet and we cannot comment on how well that is working.

Vision2020 has given some of our churches, and indeed the synod itself, a focus for their activity in the coming year. Shortly before vision2020 was launched I spoke at a Synod meeting about the church's need to become more "intentional" about mission and vision2020 became a tool in working this out.

A challenge we face, both as a synod and as local churches, is of "initiative overload" and, despite being told all Assembly led initiatives are merely a toolbox from which to select resources, it sometimes doesn't *feel* like that. Another factor is that we have a significant number of congregations for whom survival is a priority and all their energy is taken up with "keeping the show on the road". Whilst this may be dismissed as lacking in mission planning I wonder if sometimes we are apt to forget that in putting all our effort into new initiatives and activities we might lose the ministry of presence and the significance of the holy place.

*Howard Sharp*

#### **4. Yorkshire Synod**

..... Every Synod engages with vision2020 in a different way. Here in Yorkshire it may seem as though we are approaching vision2020 in a very low key way. I suppose that is true, but not because we don't think much of it – quite the opposite. Yorkshire has often heard me say that the church suffers from project-overload. As though trying to justify itself, the church churns out projects, strategies and plans. What happens to them? They are binned, shelved or lost under piles of other worthy literature! Sadly there can often be good stuff we could use for God's mission, but it is lost.

We do not want vision2020 to be remembered as that good idea we never did! Vision2020 is not someone's hobby-horse, a luxury extra to do if we have any time left, which we won't! Nor is vision 2020 another unconnected project to fill a vacuum after Vision4Life.

In Yorkshire we want vision2020 to be at the heart of our synod's life. It is the test of how good Vision4Life has been – by the fruit we see through vision2020. We think vision2020 is a great tool that can help in Yorkshire to turn us around from decline to growth, from being inward-looking to building God's kingdom.

We have therefore embedded vision2020 into the heart of

- preparing church profiles,
- our new Church Life Reviews,
- helping churches to focus on their mission.
- our assessing applications for the new Synod Mission Grants.

We invite each church to look at the 10 Mission Statements - not to panic, but be encouraged as to what we are already doing, then, to be realistic as to what we can do - and focus on only one or two and aim to do them well as a church! And then, maybe risk planting some seeds.

So, sorry folk – no fancy launches or razzamatazz – simply the commitment from this synod to pick up this tool and tend the garden. Called vision2020 – we pray we will see the beauty of God's Kingdom!

Kevin Watson

## 5. East Midlands Synod

### ***How are you as a synod engaging with vision2020?***

1. The synod bases its synod strategy on the principles of vision2020 and has ensured local churches have understood the principles of vision2020. We have done this in several ways:

- Distribution of information direct to churches.
- A session at a synod meeting.
- Mention of vision2020 at County Roadshows
- Working with churches reviewing their pastorate profile.
- Working with ministers at events to raise the awareness of the principles of vision2020.
- Some applications for grant aid have been linked with church work on vision2020.

### ***What progress have you made?***

As above. Our Executive Group will be asked to consider further work to be undertaken in January.

### ***What challenges are you encountering in your engagement with vision2020?***

As with other recent initiatives ensuring synod groups, churches, ministers and Elders give due attention to such initiatives is difficult to gauge.

### ***How does vision2020 fit with your synod's priorities?***

It fits in well: see first question.

### ***Is there any further help or support you need?***

With regard to further help and support the Synod Executive will be asked to review progress and if help is required we will be in contact.

Duncan Smith

## 6. West Midlands Synod

### ***How are you as a synod engaging with vision2020?***

We see it as a means of helping local churches especially and the synod to

- map clearly the areas of church life in which we are currently engaged i.e. 'where we are now', by using the statements of mission and purpose;
- see 'where we are going' by using the pledges as a tool to help decide the next steps.

### ***What progress have you made?***

1/ At synod level we have developed a strategy document which maps the areas of our life using the 'Statements'. It is strongly based on the vision2020 structure. That is to say under each statement we have an aim. Under the aim we have a series of indicators which spell out our (mainly) measurable targets.

The aims and indicators have been developed bearing in mind the outcomes from two processes in the synod over the last 5 years (the synod's Catch the Vision consultation in 2007 and the Mission Committee's consultation on vision2020 in 2009). Together these identified areas of local church life for which urgent support was needed. Our response has included establishing a Mission Fund, a Special Category Ministry Evangelist post, a revamped Youth and Children's Work policy as well as a Ministerial deployment policy in line with Challenge to the Church. That responsiveness to local needs we intend to keep going as more churches undertake mission pledges.

2/ We are encouraging local pastorates to engage with the mission pledges. This mainly by:

- the rolling out of the Local Mission & Ministry Review process. This seems to us absolutely key as a means of regularly engaging with local churches as they reflect on their mission and ministry and identify the pledges for the next stage of their journey.



- using synod in its more formal and experimental form (we have had two residential experimental synods in the last two years) together with Roadshows around the Areas in the last 18 months to speak of vision2020 and the pledges. We have focussed on helping churches to see how the confusing plethora of resources and initiatives that currently exist can be accessed and understood better by using the pledges. That is to say if they know what their next steps are they can better identify the resources they need for taking those steps. In that sense vision 2020 is not an extra burden but a means to bring clarity and support

***What challenges are you encountering in your engagement with vision2020?***

- Communicating what it is about takes lots of time and energy but is essential because misunderstanding is a huge problem. For many in our churches what is common knowledge to most at Mission Council is either totally unknown or a highly confusing sea of jargon. The loss of District Councils amongst other things has left a (perceived) gap between synod and local church which we are still working to bridge.
- We are still at the stage of struggling to get a comprehensive handle on which churches have already made pledges. We are also some way off engaging with the challenges of moving to a more sophisticated level of making pledges where churches might share pledges in partnership or where synod and churches might have closer conversation about their pledge making and synod's resources.
- At synod level it is a difficult task to make sure that our targets are measurable and achievable and that we have in place a system of reviewing those targets. We have not yet fully nailed this but are on the case.
- Getting a good number of trained partners for Local Mission & Ministry Review and having churches get into the good habit of using it to develop and redevelop mission pledges is going to be medium to long game. But nevertheless we are targeting all pastorates undertaking Local Mission & Ministry Review by the end of 2014. Churches can of course (and are) developing Mission Pledges without waiting for their Local Mission & Ministry Review.

***How does vision2020 fit with your synod's priorities?***

They are integrated (see 2 above) – but we have yet to take the step of articulating synod pledges to assembly and identifying resources that we might need to meet them.

***Is there any further help or support you need?***

Yes – but too early to say in what ways!

***Are there any other comments you would like to make?***

There is a feeling that it would be good if the next few years allowed us to concentrate on existing initiatives rather than adding further ones.

Roy Lowes

## **7. Eastern Synod**

***How are you as a synod engaging with vision2020?***

Our main way of engaging with vision2020 is through the LMMR process, where it forms a part of the review process. The first ten churches are doing this in 2011. Some local churches are looking at vision2020 for themselves and we are planning a vision2020 Synod Day in mid-June 2012.

***What progress have you made?***

The visit of Francis Brienen to our 'Ministers Get Together 2011' was a good opportunity to take time to reflect on this initiative. The posters have just gone out to local churches. Both will raise awareness and keep the momentum moving. Vision2020 was highlighted as part

of the Moderator's address to the October Synod Meeting. We have appointed a Synod Church Growth and Evangelism Advocate from January 2012, who will be promoting vision2020 as part of his new role.

***What challenges are you encountering in your engagement with vision2020?***

Many churches simply feel overwhelmed by all that has come out of Church House and they need help to see that this is not another job to be done but a useful tool for their mission and outreach. For some the idea of vision2020 seems to be too far away to be real, feedback indicating that they cannot see it as being worth their time if results are 10 years away. We are aware that education is needed in this area.

***How does vision2020 fit with your synod's priorities?***

Our synod policies and grant system are based on showing mission priorities. Our new heritage property fund asks local churches to use vision2020 to show us their priorities. Over time I would see vision2020 being the groundwork for all grants.

***Is there any further help or support you need?***

We anticipate that the Synod vision2020 day in June will help. We are asking Tracey Lewis, URC Mission Committee Convener (elect), to come to speak to us at that event and we will run workshops to help people's knowledge and understanding of vision2020. Hands on materials would be a great help to resource our churches, particularly worship resources for Sunday and/or Church Meeting or group use.

***Are there any other comments you would like to make?***

We anticipate it will take time and patience as congregations are encouraged to engage with vision2020 as a tool to take mission forward.

*Linda Harrison, Peter Ball*

## **8. South Western Synod**

Report to be tabled at the meeting.

## **9. Wessex Synod**

Wessex synod has not dealt with vision2020 as a separate priority. However, there are a number of ways in which it has been, and continues to be promoted within the life of the synod.

- Churches in ministerial transition have been looking at mission priorities as they prepare profiles.
- As LMMR is being introduced in churches, from this autumn, they are being encouraged to look at mission priorities and to set targets in line with the v2020 statements.
- Francis Brienen was invited to a Ministers' day earlier this year to explain more about vision2020 and encourage ministers to use the framework in their ongoing life and mission.
- We have surveyed our churches to identify which of the vision2020 indicators is their highest priority.
- Our November synod will be concentrating on vision2020. This will be done within worship, items of business (including resolutions from individuals), workshops around some of the statements and looking at our world church links.
- We are reviewing our Synod Strategy in early 2012 and vision2020 will be a central part of that process.

*Clare Downing*

## **10. Thames North Synod**

We have been introducing vision2020 for more than two years at various forums. The Mission Initiatives Group had a consultation day on mission policy in January 2011 which

was based on vision2020. We have tried to build the principles of Bread to Spare into the framework of vision2020. Vision2020 was also presented at the Spring Synod meeting.

The Mission Initiatives Group has developed application forms for its Mission Fund in line with the Mission Committee guidelines for vision2020 funding. In addition, knowing that the Assembly vision2020 grants budget is limited, the Synod will fund the vision2020 applications coming from Thames North churches. The process and accountability will be the same, also for the sake of statistics.

We are discussing how information received by Church House on churches' engagement with vision2020 can be shared with us. This will help us to know how many churches have responded and are committed to taking up vision2020. Vision2020 could become our main mission strategy if the take up by the churches has been significant.

*Andrew Prasad*

### **11. Southern Synod**

The introduction of vision2020 to Southern Synod came at time when synod was grappling with the practical issues of restructuring the way in which synod works out its life and witness through local churches, synod and united areas. Alongside this, a new and radical way for deploying ministers was introduced and Synod Mission Criteria were being written. Vision2020, whilst being acknowledged by synod as a useful tool for mission, was seen in many local churches as 'just another initiative' from the national URC.

Information was disseminated in local churches and many local churches and individuals did provide feedback to the Mission Committee. Vision2020 was introduced at synod meetings with time on the agenda given to information sharing about its progress. Indeed the Southern Synod Mission Criteria was loosely based both on the 5 Marks of Mission and the 10 mission priorities of vision2020. However, at this point in the life of the synod, vision 2020 did not fit in with synod priorities. It was not that Southern Synod disagreed with the framework but that the initiative did not seem to take into account that the synod may have other frameworks that would be facilitating local churches in their mission.

At present Southern Synod continues to use the Synod Mission Criteria which undergirds all its thinking in preference to other initiatives. The Synod Mission Criteria is instrumental in helping the local church look at, and prioritise, its mission most particularly when considering deployment and LMMR.

Southern Synod continues to pass on information from Church House to local churches regarding vision2020.

*Nicola Furley-Smith*

### **12. Wales**

Report to be tabled at the meeting.

### **13. Scotland**

Vision2020 is being used to varying degrees in Scotland. Church Meetings do not need to report their use or indeed their lack of use of vision2020 to the synod, though some are sharing their stories of vision2020. Vision2020 is advocated as one of the tools available for local churches to use in planning their intentions and ministry into the future. In particular the synod understands and affirms the close connection between vision2020 and LMMR. Instead of seeing these as competing for congregations' energy, vision2020 is advocated as one of the tools available for developing the church profile and for measuring movement in

the life of congregations. The regular building up of the pastorate profile which LMMR aspires to achieve is in itself an expression of vision2020's achievable pledges.

As for the synod the ethos behind vision2020 is not a new approach. In the autumn synod of 2005 after discussion and amendment the synod decided on a five year approach to certain aspects of the synod's life around the theme of developing *intentionality*. This culminated in a gathering of folk from around the synod. In the driving rain of a Scottish June Saturday around 450-500 people travelled from as far afield as Thurso and Annan for a day on the Perth race course (it was not a race meeting!). The day was an opportunity for workshops and worship, but as importantly for meeting and sharing the stories, particularly the intentional stories of congregations. The five year process had touched many congregations with intentionality in a variety of ways; congregations have continued with the theme, not necessarily using that 'word!'

The synod spent time identifying the principles that should undergird re-structuring when Assembly restructured the denomination. Synod spent an 18 month period developing its *aspirations*. This was done through a variety of road shows, college educational opportunities and synod discussions.

The synod's eight aspirations are:



One of the issues that has become clear is the sense that many congregations had of being damped by 'initiative overload'. To this end synod sought to make it clearer how Assembly initiatives relate to each other and how they can also complement the on-going life of the synod. In August 2010 we held a 24-hour consultation on how we could be less burdened by synod and Assembly initiatives and how these often complement each other whilst initially appearing to be in competition.

The current foci of synod include finance, deployment, the development of collaborative ministry, communication and a continuing commitment to meet the demands of our particular context. There is a sense of wanting to allow things to take root.

*John Humphreys*



# B3

## Update on the Council for World Mission

Many of you will know that the Council for World Mission has been undergoing a review and many changes over the past few years. The trustees (one from each member church) have adopted a new strategic priorities and governance structures and looked at the location of the CWM Offices.

The new strategy for CWM will be focussed in the following areas:

1. Deepening of partnership: Deepening the partnerships between member churches, deepening a sense of identity and belonging.
2. Enabling member bodies to develop missional congregations: Enabling member churches to equip local congregations for mission, with a particular focus on implementing new models of mission, renewal and life-giving community.
3. Exercise solidarity and prophetic witness: raise a prophetic witness both inside and outside CWM.
4. Reflect and research: undertake theological and missiological reflection and research.

The governance of CWM will also be altered to include:

1. Gathering place: CWM Assembly which meets every 5 years to read the signs of the times, listen to God, set strategic priorities, elect a moderator, treasurer and a 'community of elders' (Executive body).
2. Meeting place (Council): legally responsible for CWM (trustee body), meeting annually to monitor, review and evaluate CWM's strategy, principal programmes, budget etc.
3. Community Elders (Executive): meeting three times per year to lead and exercise oversight of the implementation of strategy, approve major grants, appoint executive staff, provide annual report to the meeting place (trustees).

The location of CWM offices.

In June 2010, after much discussion and many meetings it was decided that the Offices should remain in London; however things dramatically changed when CWM was denied a Certificate of Sponsorship by the UK Border Agency which meant that Rev Dr Collin Cowan was unable to move to London to take up his post as General Secretary.

After much campaigning the visa was eventually granted but this led the CWM officers to rethink the location decision.

In June this year the trustees were asked again to reconsider the location of the CWM offices and decided (after much struggle) to relocate the offices to Singapore.

This means that at the end of the year the London office will close and only a small team of staff will move to Singapore to relocate. The General Secretary and others have attended meetings with CWM officials to discuss the issues etc.



## **CWM Assembly and Global Trustees**

Mission Committee is asked to nominate 4 representatives to the CWM Global Assembly and to the regional meetings, one of these will become our global trustee. We were asked that everyone one of our representatives be suitable and willing to become a global trustee in order to have a balanced body. We must offer a balance of male/female, lay/ordained and a young person. At the time of writing we are still waiting to hear from various people we have approached but Mission Committee approved the names of: Jane Rowell (female, ordained) and David Coleman (male, ordained).

Jane Rowell

13<sup>th</sup> October 2011



## General Assembly resolution on Nestlé

### 1. Background

General Assembly adopted the following resolution in Loughborough last year based on the recommendation from the Facilitation group established to reconsider Mission Committee's resolution related to the rescinding of the URC's boycott of Nestlé products:

#### Resolution 4

#### Facilitation group recommendation

***General Assembly resolves that if Nestlé obtains listing on the FTSE4Good index, Mission Council be instructed to rescind the boycott of Nestlé products outlined in the Assembly 1992 resolution.***

This was resolved by agreement following a lengthy debate and represented a compromise position which recognised the fact that despite improvements by Nestlé in the management and reporting procedures related to their marketing of breast-milk substitutes (BMS), there were still concerns with aspects of their marketing of these products in high risk countries which needed to be addressed. Assembly members were of the view that the long-standing boycott on Nestlé products had impacted negatively on the company's reputation in the UK which had proven effective in bringing about change to the company's marketing practices. It was therefore hoped that by maintaining the boycott of the company's products a clear message would be sent to the company to continue to address reported contraventions of international codes. However, members also recognised that by seeking listing on the FTSE4Good Index, Nestlé was demonstrating good faith and transparency in responding to these concerns and that achieving listing would provide an objective basis for the URC to rescind their product boycott

### 2. Nestlé listing on FTSE4Good Index

The URC received notice from the FTSE4Good press office on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011 that after an independent assessment by EIRIS on their management and reporting practices Nestlé has been listed on the FTSE4Good Index under their newly formed BMS division. Their listing is the start of a process which will include on-going verification of Nestlé's marketing and management systems as outlined in the following section of their press release:

*“Once a BMS manufacturer meets the criteria and is included in the index, FTSE, together with third parties, will commission a verification assessment of the company's practices. The independent verification is not a one-off assessment but an on-going annual requirement, following inclusion into the index, whereby BMS manufacturers need to demonstrate that the practices on the ground follow their policies*

*This includes aspects such as whistle blowing procedures, senior executive responsibility, training of sales and marketing staff, internal monitoring, compliance mechanisms and responding to allegations. The verification will take place in the following places:*

- *Global Headquarters*
- *Country operations in two 'higher-risk' countries*
- *Site visits to clinics, hospitals, and health centres and any other sites as appropriate, in the two 'higher-risk' countries.*

*This process aims to encourage improved practices and focuses on how companies can develop systems for continuous improvement. The results will form the basis for positive engagement and dialogue with companies but would also inform committee decisions regarding a company's eligibility for deletion from the indices, if there is evidence they are no longer meeting the criteria and failing to take this issue seriously. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has been appointed as the assessor for the first cycle and the verification assessment will be commissioned in collaboration and consultation with a number of organisations.”*

The URC was subsequently asked to participate with other agencies in helping to develop the assessment criteria and a country risk matrix together with PwC and the BMS Committee. India and Zambia were selected as the outputs of the risk assessment matrix based on their high overall risk ratings. The verification assessment has now been undertaken by PwC to determine whether Nestlé's practices on the ground in these two countries are in-line with their stated policies. However, the findings of PwC's report have not yet been made public as they still need to be discussed with Nestlé but an undertaking has been given by FTSE4Good that a letter summarising the key findings of this process will shortly be forthcoming. A verbal report will therefore be given to Mission Council to update members on these findings when this report is discussed.

Baby Milk Action (BMA) have challenged the process followed by FTSE4Good in listing Nestlé ahead of verifying their country operations in two 'higher-risk' countries and a letter was written by The International Baby Food Action Network (IFBAN) outlining BMA's concerns. A copy of the letter of response from FTSE CEO, Mark Makepeace, addressing each of these concerns is attached for your information.

### **3. Mission Committee resolution**

The issue of Nestlé's listing on the FTSE4Good Index was discussed by Mission Committee at their May meeting (5-6 May 2011) and based on this discussion resolved the following:

“Pursuant to 2010 General Assembly Resolution 4 (see above) regarding the rescinding of the boycott of Nestlé products, Mission Committee has now received notification that Nestlé has been listed on the FTSE4Good Index after an independent assessment by EIRIS.

**Mission Council acting on behalf of General Assembly therefore instructs Mission Committee to rescind the boycott on Nestlé products outlined in the Assembly 1992 Resolution based on the following condition:**

Mission Committee will continue to monitor Nestlé's response to the issues raised in the PwC Assessment Report and their compliance with the FTSE's BMS criteria in higher risk countries and will advise Mission Council of any changes to their current status.”

**Frank Kantor**  
25<sup>th</sup> October 2011



# B5

## Nestlé Letter from FTSE

**FTSE**  
THE INDEX COMPANY

17th June, 2011

Dr. Arun Gupta, MD, FIAP  
Regional Coordinator IBFAN Asia  
BP-33 Pitampura,  
Delhi 110088,  
INDIA

Dear Dr Gupta,

We received your letter by email from Mr Mike Brady of Baby Milk Action last week and I wanted to respond directly to the points you have made.

Thank you for commenting that you welcome our efforts to improve company practices in relation to the issue of the marketing of breast milk substitutes (BMS). FTSE4Good is the only responsible investment index globally that considers breast milk substitute marketing. However, in a number of places you have misconceptions about our aims and approach, which we would like to remedy. Before addressing the points you have raised I should provide some background on the FTSE4Good Series and what we have aimed to achieve.

We launched the FTSE4Good Series in 2001 with an aim to provide investors with an index that would measure the performance (returns) of companies that were meeting good standards in terms of environmental and social responsibility. A major feature of the index was that it should encourage improved practices in companies by setting realistic, but challenging standards for each sector. An independent committee was established to oversee the criteria and with them, and our research partners EIRIS, we set about a process to regularly introduce inclusion criteria to encourage improvements in companies around the world. Over the years we have developed and introduced criteria for environmental management, human and labour rights, supply chain labour standards, countering bribery, uranium mining, nuclear power and of course the marketing of breast milk substitutes. This continual evolution of standards has led to hundreds of companies improving their practices to remain in the index or gain inclusion.

In the infant food sector we were not able to engage the companies as they were all being excluded from the index. Our experience in other areas is that once you have standards that leading companies can meet, they will compete with others in their sector to meet the

requirements and the standards can then be raised over time. This brings us to the points raised in your letter which are addressed in turn.

1. How the FTSE4Good BMS Criteria relate to the WHO Code?

You refer to our criteria being weaker than the Code which is something we do not accept. In September last year the Committee approved the FTSE4Good Breast Milk Substitutes marketing inclusion criteria which set requirements for company policies, lobbying practices, management systems, and reporting. I enclose a copy of the criteria with this letter.

The criteria build on the WHO Code, but in addition to criteria requiring company policies to be aligned with the WHO Code it goes much further by assessing how a company implements this in practice by covering internal system factors such as;

- senior level accountability and responsibility at HQ and across different country operations,
- internal training systems,
- whistle blowing,
- on-going internal and systematic monitoring of practice against policies,
- investigating and responding to allegations
- public reporting on these matters

The requirements also go a step further than they do for any other FTSE4Good environmental or social criteria area by setting out that once a company meets the criteria on the basis of documentary evidence provided to our researchers EIRIS, and is included in the index, the company is then subject to an independent verification assessment in two of the high risk countries conducted by a professional audit firm.

The verification assessment is regarding compliance with the FTSE4Good Criteria which include the factors set out above rather than against the WHO Code *per se*. Therefore a large part of the assessment is examining whether the company's policies are working in practice and if not then understanding why. In the area of BMS products there are cases where there are differences of interpretation of the Code and we will not be asking the assessors to act as a judge with regards to specific allegations but rather to assess whether the companies practices on the ground are in-line with their stated policies.

It is true that the criteria are much more focused on company practices in higher risk countries rather than low risk countries, while the WHO Code is universal in nature. In this respect the committee felt the weighting should be placed where there is the greatest risk to baby and infant lives and health, and that the tougher criteria could be expanded to cover the lower risk countries over time.



## 2. Selection of India and Zambia for verification assessments

To select the two countries for the verification audit we developed a country risk matrix with PricewaterhouseCoopers and the BMS Committee and got advice from those we are collaborating with which included NGOs and ethical investors. India and Zambia were selected as the outputs of the risk assessment matrix based on their high overall risk ratings, which were based on the wide variety of contributing risk factors in the risk assessment matrix. The following factors were used to generate a risk score for each of the Higher Risk Countries in the FTSE4Good Inclusion Criteria:

Child mortality, malnutrition, access to improved water, access to midwives, corruption, human development, economic development, WHO member state, BMS regulation, IBFAN allegations, and scale of Nestle activities.

BMS regulation was included in the matrix and decision process, but not given special weighting above the other important factors in the matrix. India and Zambia were in lower risk quartiles for BMS regulation but higher risk quartiles for the other indicators. Their ultimate risk scores rated these countries as high overall risk, and this was the basis for the decision taken to visit these countries. It is also worth noting that out of the 149 higher risk countries listed in the FTSE4Good BMS criteria only 18 have IBFAN allegations and this includes both India and Zambia.

We expect further verifications to take place in the future and your suggestion to give additional weighting to the BMS regulation factor will be considered by the Committee. Their aim is to have a robust and independent process to select those countries rather than the company or any specific group choosing which countries should be visited.

## 3. Giving companies advance notice prior to the verification

Part of the audit is based on assessing that the systems are working internally, and part is going to external sites and to understand what is happening in practice. The assessment of systems includes assessing accountability from senior executive staff down to country sales and marketing representatives, that staff understand the policy and are being properly trained, and checking that appropriate corrective actions are taken following non-compliances. In order for the audit to be effective there needs to be some coordination with the company; if for example all the sales and marketing team were away for a global company conference the week the assessors visit, it would not be satisfactory. Furthermore, I would add that FTSE has chosen to appoint a firm of professional assurance providers (PwC) to perform the assessment and they are well versed in applying scepticism when performing this type of engagement.

## 4. Nestle references to the WHO Code compliance

Mr Brady drew our attention to an instance where Nestle had referred to WHO Compliance in the same sentence as a reference to their inclusion in FTSE4Good. We followed up with the company noting that their assessment is based on the FTSE4Good BMS Marketing criteria rather than WHO Code Compliance.

In summary, we feel that we have developed a robust process for what is a very challenging issue. We hope to contribute to raising standards in this sector through encouraging those companies who are prepared to make improvements to do so. We feel that IBFAN has much to contribute in providing technical input into this initiative and we are disappointed that you feel that you cannot be involved. Both myself, and my colleague, David Harris, Director of Responsible Investment, are at your disposal if you would like to discuss this with us.

Yours sincerely

Mark Makepeace  
Chief Executive  
FTSE Group

CC

Ms Joyce Chanetsa, Ms Yeong Joo Kean, Ms Annelies Allain



# C

## Role of the Synod Moderator

The group reviewing the role of the Synod Moderator are a representative mix of clergy, lay and academic people from a variety of geographical locations. Three meetings have been held to date – the first being in April this year when the group was formed.

Part of our remit was to hold wide consultation. There was a recognition that data needed to be gathered from as broad a perspective as possible in order to understand the difference in roles and the typical workloads being undertaken by Moderators across the UK. We decided to survey to all Moderators and a representative group of local churches and ministers. At the time of writing over 200 replies have been received from the 813 questionnaires sent out and these are in the process of being analyzed. The anonymity of respondents will be maintained and trends highlighted rather than individual Synods being highlighted. To date many of the submissions include additional comments which will aid our deliberations as a Group.

Views from the church at large were sought via an article in REFORM, the FURY group and the URC website. Significant contributions had been received by the closing date which the Group is taking account of in their deliberations. Some of the responses received will be followed up to elicit further ideas.

As a group we have resolved to take a radical perspective on the remit given to us rather than just tinkering at the edges. We hope to make recommendations which will reduce the administrative load of Synods and enable Moderators to work more closely with local churches in our fundamental mission. We recognize that the Church is reducing in size and financial pressures are beginning to impinge and therefore our structures and processes need to reflect this in some way so that Moderators can lead the Church more effectively. We believe that different procedures and changes in the way we manage our affairs could be the way forward rather than further constitutional changes. We shall be meeting twice in February 2012 to prepare resolutions for Assembly.

The Group:

Stephen Orchard, Convener

Sue Bush, Secretary

John Humphreys

Linda Harrison

Sarah Hall

David Hamblin

Tony Berry (C of E and Consultant)



# D

## General Assembly Moderators' Think Tank

### For discussion and decision

#### 1. The budget.

Elsewhere in the Mission Council papers there are details of some of the issues raised by our current financial situation. These cannot be ignored but as General Assembly Moderators we consider it is better for us all to concentrate our initial thinking on our priorities. We would like everyone to remember the Catch the Vision strap line "God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference for Christ's sake". In our discussions about resources we must not lose sight of why we are here. We are not here to serve ourselves, to build our structures or to despair at the state of our finances. We are here to worship and serve God, our generous, grace giving God, the God of hope and justice. We are here to ask how we can model for our unjust and hurting world a new and different way of being, built on faith in the power of the God who came into the world as a baby and built on hope underlined by the experience of resurrection. It is God who calls us and challenges us and it is to him we are answerable. So with that in mind we hope to begin to answer the question 'What are the priorities to which God calls us?'

#### 2. Resources

There are different ways in which we can think about resources. Some resources are needed so we can operate within the legal framework set down for us. Some of them are so we can provide centrally such things as ministries and training. Some of them are related to the local church. The first thing we want to say is that we recognise the importance of the local church. This is where we worship and serve our God, where we can model for our damaged world a new and different way of being, where we answer God's call and meet his challenge. So in thinking about priorities the first question to ask is:

- What does the local church need from the centre (whether 86 Tavistock Place or Synod) to enable and advance its mission?**

#### 3. Further information

It is our intention to provide some more detailed financial information to assist in the discussions at our meeting in November. Meanwhile, we ask you to start considering prayerfully how your local church might the answer the question above.

Val Morrison and Kirsty Thorpe

## Appendix 1

**Feedback from Mission Council – May 2011.** We received 9 responses to our presentation in May. We were grateful for these and they have informed our thinking in the subsequent months. The following is what was said:

Question 1 – How do we tackle this as a God-guided process?

- We believe we are tackling it as a God guided process.
- We had hoped CtV, V4L, LMMR etc was 'it'.
- What is needed is to become a God guided MOVEMENT i.e. a living organism to be revived, not an Institution to be organized.
- If the Think Tank is to be the answer it MUST be filled with Prophets, Dreamers, Visionaries rather than bureaucrats (although some continuity is probably needed).
- The top of our agendas should ask – 'How is this making Jesus known?'
- Potential in the consensus process – ask a good question then trust the answer to evolve in an open prayerful discussion.
- Have at least one session at each Mission Council and General Assembly with no agenda except discernment.
- Define what is the first question – the overarching goal.
- In a climate of 'we can't do everything' define the things that are essential to our ongoing being as a church.

Question 2 – Is there anything we have left out?

- Challenge to the church with an ecumenical dimension is key.
- Encourage a 'can do' attitude.
- Encourage the use of spiritual advisors to make the culture more spiritual.
- Rather than new reports, seek ways to draw local churches into themes, issues, insights and policies that Assembly and Mission Council are familiar with but remain 'new' to many local churches.
- Youth and Children's Work Strategy (but linked into V2020)
- Diaconal Ministry – order of deacons involving CRCW's linked with Methodists Diaconal Order? Ordination of CRCW's?
- At the end of their two years VM and KT use their authority and experience to propose a slightly longer Strategic Planning Group (but with a better name) to develop the pulling together of the resources issues in the context of the Assembly's policies.
- Do we gather information which is never used? E.g. baptism numbers. How do we gather information?
- How does listed buildings/churches in conservation areas affect our approach?
- The Marketing Campaign.
- We should use V2020 as a framework for review.

General

- This is the time for the Think Tank but it needs to be time limited – 3 years – to 2014 Assembly.
- There will be hares set amongst us from other areas e.g. pensions etc so we must not set off any more!
- Initiatives are never reviewed before the next one is launched. We need to 'bed in' initiatives with a suggestion that there should be a moratorium on all new initiatives until 2018.
- Don't change LMMR until we have done it.
- We need to be completer/finishers.
- Why hasn't the SCM, CRCW programme produced entrepreneurial results?



- We should clarify the relationship between General Assembly and Mission Council and the issue of where and what decisions are made.
- There is a need to communicate more effectively and in particular regarding the issues relating to General Assembly and Mission Council.
- We should look again at Synod boundaries including making a decision to form a London Synod.



# F

## The place of requirement in Education for Ministry Phase 2

### Joint Education & Learning and Ministries Resolution to Mission Council

Those candidates who complete Education for Ministry Phase 1 and are ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or commissioned as a Church Related Community Worker are currently expected to engage in a programme of Education for Ministry Phase 2 which normally lasts for three years from the date of ordination or commissioning. This is a three-stranded programme consisting of:

- Regional study events, organised through the minister's Synod
- The appointment, by the Synod, of a Pastoral Adviser who accompanies the individual in EM2 as a critical friend, mentor, and theological reflection partner
- Two residential events in each year, organised by the EM2/3 Officer for the Education & Learning Committee.

Additionally, individuals engaged in EM2 are expected to take part in general events organised by their Synod such as Spring/Summers Schools. They are encouraged to spend up to a further week in additional continuing ministerial development, for which they may claim up to £350 towards costs.

The EM2 programme is, by its nature, rigorous, bespoke, and flexible. Participants are encouraged to develop distinctive ways of capturing incidents from the ministries to which they have been called; one of the residential events each year may be substituted by alternative training provision in consultation with the Synod Training Officer and the Assembly EM2/3 Officer; and the Assembly residential events challenge participants to develop their abilities as reflective practitioners. On satisfactory completion of EM2, Synods award a certificate of completion and the individual enters the Education for Ministry Phase 3 programme.

Qualitative evidence suggests that active participation in the EM2 programme has reduced the proportion of people in public ministry who cut short their first pastorate or leave active ministry all together. It is also the case that those individuals who do not engage with the discipline of the EM2 programme sometimes exhibit behaviours and attitudes which are problematic for other aspects of their ministry. At present it is possible for an individual's EM2 programme to be extended beyond the initial three years on the advice of the Synod and the EM2/3 Officer, which means that the individual is not eligible for the increased allowance for training which comes with entry to Education for Ministry Phase 3.

Given the flexible and responsive nature of the EM2 programme, the Education & Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee propose the following resolution for Mission Council to consider:

**All entrants to public ministry as ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments or commissioned Church Related Community Workers in the United Reformed Church are required to engage actively in the Education for Ministry Phase 2 programme for three years after ordination or commissioning. This requirement will be stated at the time of entry to Education for Ministry Phase 1.**



# F1

## Requirement in Education for Ministry Phase 3

### Proposed Joint Education & Learning and Ministries Resolution to General Assembly

All Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers in the United Reformed Church are encouraged to engage in continuing ministerial development, in ways that are relevant to the ministries to which they are called at particular times and in particular contexts. This is known as Education for Ministry Phase 3. In order to enable individuals to devote time and resources to this the General Assembly of 1999 endorsed the inclusion in terms of settlement (or their equivalent) of two weeks of study leave each year. The Training Report to Assembly of 1999 suggested a figure up to £700 towards training costs for each eligible minister, and this figure has remained at this level since then. This is accessed through the Synod Training Officer, and is unaffected by whether service is full-time, part-time, stipendiary or non-stipendiary.

The purpose of the EM3 programme is to ensure that people in public ministry are engaged in continuous development, so that they are refreshed and equipped for the constantly changing demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century ministry. Some EM3 activities cost very little yet yield valuable rewards – others demand investment of time and resources which stretch the budgets of individuals and the church, and have long term positive impacts. The criteria for what can be included in EM3 is given in broad outline by Assembly and worked out in detail by individual ministers and their Synod officers.

From time to time there have been instances where the United Reformed Church has come close to requiring Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers to undertake particular training because the skills, knowledge and attitudes which it engenders are an essential part of what is expected of people in public ministry. Examples include Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult training, and some legislative aspects of trusteeship.

Given the public expectations that church ministry elicits, and the authority which comes from holding public office, the Education & Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee propose the following resolution to General Assembly:

**There will be occasions on which it is right for General Assembly to make certain training mandatory for particular groups of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, duration, and monitoring of such training.**



# G

## Nominations Committee

### 1. Appointing Group Convener

The Revd Roz Harrison has agreed to convene the Appointing Group for the Moderator of the Synod of Wales.

### 2. Officers of Committees

The following have agreed to serve from General Assembly 2012:

2.1.3 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group (Co-Convener elect)

Revd Clare Downing

3.1.1 Ministries – Accreditation Sub-Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Fran Ruthven

3.1.3 Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Catey Morrison

3.3 Youth and Children's Work Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Tim Meachin

4.1 Assembly Arrangements Committee (Convener elect)

Revd Michael Hopkins

4.3 Equal Opportunities Committee (Secretary elect)

Revd Adrian Bulley

4.5.1 Stewardship Sub-Committee (Convener elect)

Mr Keith Berry

Minutes Secretary for General Assembly/Mission Council (reappointment)

Mrs Irene Wren

From 1 January 2012

### 3. United Reformed Church Trust

Procedures have started to appoint three new Trustees on a rotation basis. Synod Clerks were asked to submit nominations by 23 November. After consultation with the present Board, and having ensured a proper balance of skills and personnel, names will be brought to the March meeting of Mission Council for transmission to the General Assembly.

John Durell

21.10.2011



# H

## Human Sexuality Task Group

### *Registration of civil partnerships on church premises*

At the last meeting Mission Council agreed in principle to take a resolution on this matter to the 2012 General Assembly. The Government then began a consultation process prior to publishing detailed proposals: although it has now been announced by the Equalities Minister that religious organisations may apply from 5 December, the detailed proposals were not available to the task group when it met at the beginning of November and so the full report and draft resolution will have to wait until the March Mission Council. United Reformed Churches will not be able to apply before the Assembly has made its decision.

### *Westminster College Consultation*

The consultation took place in September and a factual report is included below. A fuller verbal report, reflecting on the experience and indicating the way in which the task group intends to widen the discussion, will be made at this meeting.

Also included below are some Guidelines for good conversation which were made available to the Consultation by permission of the United Methodist Church in Norway. They are commended to Mission Council, both for its own discussion of sensitive subjects, and for any discussion that may take place in other contexts.

It is hoped that copies of three of the main papers given at the Consultation will be available at Mission Council for those who would like to read them. The task group hopes that they will also find a place on the URC website.





# H1

## Human Sexuality Task Group Consultation Statement

A consultation on human sexuality was held at Westminster College, Cambridge, from 14 to 16 September 2011. It was arranged as part of the work of the human sexuality task group of the Mission Council. All 13 synods and FURY were represented among the participants.

The background to the consultation was the Commitment on Human Sexuality agreed by the General Assembly in 2007 and endorsed by some of the synods thereafter.

A variety of topics were discussed with the invited speakers. The Revd Dr John Campbell spoke on the ways people use the Bible to do theology; the Revd Professor Neil Messer spoke about how Reformed churches come to a view on ethical issues; and two major papers entitled “Towards a theology of same-sex relationships” were presented by the Revd Dr John Bradbury and the Revd Paul Stokes, each speaking from a different perspective.

Papers on the present state of medical science (reprinted by permission of the Church of Scotland), and on the Equality Act as it affects the church, prepared by Mr Andrew Middleton, the church’s legal adviser, were available to the consultation. Mrs Ann Leck, as the ecumenical participant, updated the consultation on the Methodist Church’s discussion of human sexuality issues.

The consultation spent a good deal of its time in worship and Bible study, and specific times were set aside for silence. Perhaps the most valuable part of the experience was the time spent in small groups, deliberately arranged so that each contained people with very different convictions, where people had to experience what it means for Christians to disagree yet discover fellowship together. This was a demanding, yet ultimately rewarding, experience for most people.

The task group had invited the Revd Elizabeth Caswell to be the Facilitator for the consultation, and she made it clear from the beginning that there was no intention to come to conclusions or to make decisions. That intention was fulfilled! However, among the ideas that surfaced was the thought that the discussion ought to be widened to include other aspects of human sexuality, and the conflicting facts that this discussion could deflect attention from more pressing issues before the church as against the fact that this topic was already affecting other aspects of the church’s concern. The value of facing difficult issues in small groups, as opposed to larger gatherings, was clear to all the participants.

At the end the convener of the task group, the Revd John Waller, assured the participants that he and his fellow members would be considering how to take this particular discussion forward within the general life of the church, as well as suggesting opportunities for dialogue to Mission Council in order that those coming to Assembly 2012 can be prepared to understand the issues created by the Equality Act in regard to the possibility of the registration of civil partnerships on church premises.



# H2

## Human Sexuality Task Group Consultation

### Guidelines for good conversations

- 1) Respect one another's integrity and identity when you listen to their viewpoints.
- 2) Be careful when you describe or retell viewpoints with which you disagree.
- 3) Be careful which words and phrases you use to describe someone else's viewpoint, avoid the use of hurtful words.
- 4) Avoid generalising too much; try to be as specific as possible.
- 5) Try to put yourself in each other's shoes so that you understand the background and experiences that have brought the other to believe what they believe.
- 6) Be careful not to hurt or insult each other and do not take another's viewpoint as a personal attack against you. If we hurt each other it can quickly close down a conversation.
- 7) Listen thoughtfully and patiently to what another is saying before you make a response.
- 8) Be open to changing your own beliefs and views, and be patient with others so that they have time to work through their own changing thought processes.
- 9) Ask for more help from people with specific experiences if your group will benefit from it.
- 10) Even if we believe that others are wrong, or their views are wrong, it is not our views that make us the people we are. Our identity as Christian people has its foundations in our relationship to God and in what Christ has done for us.

*These guidelines are extracted from a report of the United Methodist Church in Norway and they are reprinted with permission.*

*They are offered to members of the consultation as we prepare to come together.*



# J

## General Assembly 2012

# Consultation on the Book of Reports

The Assembly Arrangements Committee and Mission Council indicated earlier in the year that they would be grateful for comments from individuals, churches and synods regarding the contents and distribution of the Book of Reports on the basis of the options set out below. In 2010 the Book of Reports was circulated to churches on a CD-rom, with hard copies sent only to the members of Assembly, and the Committee received many complaints, including resolutions from two Synods. These complaints have been heard. This paper sets out some options and invites further suggestions and responses.

Crucial to this discussion is the question, what is the Book of Reports for? Traditionally, the United Reformed Church has answered the question in this way:

- It is a vital tool for communication between the Assembly and the churches.
- It is a vehicle for accountability, containing a report of the activities of all committees and groups since the previous Assembly.
- It fulfils constitutional and statutory requirements, giving notice of new policies and procedures, proposed amendments to existing governing documents, and the Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts.
- It contains proposals for the future, including the background materials necessary to enable the Assembly to make good decisions.

It is important that all of this material should be easily obtainable to anyone who wants it. It is essential that it be provided to every member of Assembly. But does the Book in its familiar form really serve the needs of the local churches? How might we improve our communications and enable churches and Synods to grapple with Assembly issues in advance, so that lively discussion can take place across the denomination in preparation for Assembly? Here are some options for your consideration, together with their cost implications. The list is not exhaustive and your further ideas would be most welcome.

**Option 1** (cost £33,330) (N.B. the total budget for Assembly is £300,000)

All of the material is published in a single Book of Reports which is sent to all churches and Assembly members. The contents are also posted on the URC website.

**Option 2** (£27,300 – does not include the cost of additional staff time required)

A complete hard copy of the Book of Reports is sent to all Assembly members. The contents are posted on the URC website. Anyone else wishing to have a hard copy may order one (£30). A user-friendly booklet outlining the major items coming for Assembly decision is prepared and sent to every church in February as a discussion tool for church meeting and Synods.

**Option 3** (Also around £27,300 plus the same amount of staff time, reduced postage costs)

A slimmer Book of Reports contains the forward-looking documents: programme development, strategy and new policies and procedures. It is sent to all Assembly members. Its contents are posted on the URC website. Copies are available to anyone else at cost (£15). A second volume

contains things like the standing orders, the Trustee's Report and Accounts, the Nominations report, and amendments to the disciplinary process. This too is sent to every Assembly member, posted on the website, and offered for sale (£15), in the expectation that many local churches would wish to have a copy of Part I but would be content to access Part II online, thus reducing costs. As in Option 2, a user-friendly booklet outlining the major items coming for Assembly decision is prepared and sent to every church in February as a discussion tool for church meetings and Synods.

**Option 4 (£19,500)**

As in 2010, a hard copy of the Book of Reports is sent to all Assembly members with the contents posted on the URC website. A CD-rom is sent to the churches.

In September 2011 the Assembly Arrangements Committee noted that consultation with Synods was being undertaken on the above basis. AAC also noted that the Finance Committee had indicated that it did not favour the issue of hard copy Book of Reports to all local churches at a cost of about £35k. The Assembly Arrangements Committee agreed to indicate to Mission Council that such expenditure could not be met from within the existing Assembly budget. A report will be made to Mission Council on proposals that have come forward from Synods. On that basis a proposal will be put to Mission Council as how best to proceed.



## Budget 2012 and Implications

1 Attached is the draft budget for 2012 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council with the support of the URC Trustees. This is discussed in Section 1 below. The budget highlights significant challenges for the medium term which Section 2 of this paper seeks to open up. Mission Council needs to give a clear steer to future work, not least by Assembly Committees before the 2012 General Assembly.

### SECTION 1: THE 2012 BUDGET

#### Ministry and Mission Fund (M&M) Contributions

2 M&M offers from the Synods are the predominant source of income for the budget. The latest information from the Synods, on behalf of local churches, suggests that the M&M offering in 2012 will be a reduction of £372,000 (or £372k) relative to offers for 2011. This is equivalent to a reduction of 1.8% in cash terms and over 6% in real terms (ie in terms of what the money will buy after the effects of inflation). This confirms the hints in recent years that, at this stage in the life of the URC, M&M offers are on a downward trend. Reduced income is the context for expenditure decisions.

#### Setting the Stipend

3 Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the ministerial stipend to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The budget incorporates the decision to raise stipends by 2% for 2012.

4 The discussions leading to this conclusion were exceptionally difficult and protracted this year. The conventional formula takes the average of the annual rise in the Retail Prices Index excluding housing costs (RPIX) and the index of Average Weekly Earnings excluding bonuses. That would have produced an increase of 3.7%.

5 There is much to be said for keeping consistently to a clear and straightforward formula for setting stipends. Some ministers no doubt sense that the Church's willingness to follow where the formula leads, even in difficult economic times, is one important way the Church shows its appreciation of their ministry. There is no plan to abandon the formula as the norm for considering stipend rises. However, as 2011 progressed and the wider economic news unfolded, there were growing doubts about whether a rise of 3.7% was the right one for 2012.

6 The main reasons for deciding that 3.7% was too high were:

- The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) is increasingly used as the best benchmark indicator of inflation and also excludes housing; it was running 0.8% lower than RPIX
- The one-off increase in VAT in 2011 was temporarily adding 0.8% to the inflation indices and we do not normally compensate ministers for changes in tax policy
- The formula used for setting stipends has meant ministers have received average increases in the three years since the economic downturn (2009-11) no less than those in

the last three years of “boom” (2006-8), which contrasts sharply with the experience of many church members

- A stipend rise of 3.7% would mean giving per member would have to rise more than was felt reasonable in the present economic climate.

7 Eventually a decision was made to fix the 2012 rise at 2% and so raise the stipend from £23,232 to £23,700. This adds around £350k to the overall budget.

### Minister Numbers

8 A key figure for the budget is the number of stipends likely to be in payment. Assembly policy is to change the number of stipends in line with changes in the overall membership of the Church, for which we currently assume a trend decline of 3% pa.

9 On this basis the budget estimate for the number of stipendiary ministers in 2012 is slightly below the trend number as shown in Table 1 below. However it is too early to be sure of the impact of a more flexible retirement policy and some of the ministerial Baby Boomer retirements built into these figures for 2012 may be postponed. Given that uncertainty, and the wider financial tightness, the Ministries Committee has suspended the issue of Certificates of Eligibility which allow ministers from sister denominations to join the URC Roll of Ministers.

Table 1: Stipendiary Minister Numbers (full-time equivalents)

	Assembly Policy	Actual/Expected
2010	522	510
2011	506	504
2012	491	485

### Committee Programme Costs

10 For all parts of the budget not directly related to minister costs, this budget has been prepared on the basis that Assembly Committees and all budgetholders need to restrict their expenditure to no more than was agreed for 2011. This continues the policy of recent years but this year represents a more demanding reduction target in real terms of 5% given the current level of inflation. The overall target has not quite been met, with an increase in costs (other than stipends for front line ministry) of £53k: this is a rise of 0.9% in cash terms but still a reduction of over 4% in real terms.

11 There are major uncertainties relating to the Education and Learning budget due to the Government’s evolving policies on Higher Education funding and this is the one area where the 2012 budget is significantly above 2011, eg by £47k for initial ministerial training. The budget for *Reform* reflects the decision of the May Mission Council to provide an annual subsidy of up to £90k. The budget also reflects the Mission Council decisions on medical checks for ministerial students, a shared post with the Methodist Church regarding the creative use of buildings and the use of two part-time ministerial posts to be ecumenical officers in Scotland and Wales.



## Overall Budget Balance

12 As the Appendix indicates, the tight control on committee programme and infrastructure costs, when coupled with lower direct ministry costs, result in an overall expenditure budget of £22,823k. This is a reduction relative to the 2011 budget. However, the lower M&M offers mean that the income side totals £21,865k, a larger reduction relative to 2011. As a result the overall deficit has risen to £958k.

13 A deficit of almost £1m is not comfortable or sustainable. After full discussion, the Finance Committee and the URC Trustees believe the best course is to accept this budget on condition that action is instigated now to ensure the 2013 budget can look distinctly different with a much reduced deficit. The URC Trustees recommend to Mission Council that the 2013 deficit should be not more than £500k. If income falls by a similar amount in 2013 as it looks likely to do in 2012, this implies reducing costs by around £1m by 2013. Section 2 of this paper looks at some of the issues.

### Resolution 1

**Mission Council accepts the budget for 2012 set out in the Appendix, noting a substantial projected deficit and the need to reduce this in 2013.**

## SECTION 2: BEYOND 2012

### Pensions Impact

14 By law our pension funds are subject to a formal actuarial valuation every three years. Mission Council last May made some decisions to help set the framework for the next valuation, which will include taking a snapshot of market conditions as at 31 December 2011. The last valuation, at the end of 2008, took place in the midst of unprecedented economic turmoil. As a result, its conclusions certainly did not assist our overall budget.

15 For 2009-11 Mission Council decided to make short term arrangements to handle the enlarged Ministers' Pension Fund deficit from the 2008 valuation, as the exceptional circumstances of 2008 made it impossible to predict which of the dramatic changes taking place then were permanent and which were temporary. The willingness of the Synods to promise a total of £2.5m in extra pensions support over the period has been crucial in avoiding drastic changes in other parts of the budget.

16 As the 2011 valuation of the ministers' fund approaches, and we also negotiate on the smaller lay staff pension scheme, it is all too clear that many of the same issues that affected the 2008 valuation remain. Therefore we cannot expect a markedly more palatable outcome from the valuation. The changes Mission Council agreed in May to the benefits which the ministers' scheme provides will reduce the contributions required but is unlikely to reduce them to the level before 2008.

17 Therefore we need to decide whether to make the special support from Synods a permanent feature of our financial arrangements or to phase it out and bring a realistic estimate of total pension costs back within the normal budget, funded from M&M giving. Given the overall financial situation a commitment to an immediate end to this special support after 2012 does not look wise. The Finance Committee is willing and able to work with either a phasing out or a permanent retention but to test the mind of Mission Council brings the following Resolution.

## Resolution 2

**In setting future budgets, Mission Council will seek to phase out not later than 2016 the current request for special pensions support from the Synods.**

### The Structural Problem

18 Being realistic about pension costs underlines the fact that the figures for 2012 demonstrate we have a structural, rather than just a temporary, problem with the budget. The costs of supporting each minister in active service and through retirement have risen over recent years and are not about to fall back; the Assembly has asked for the number of ministers to reduce in line with the number of members; but the higher cost per minister means the total cost of providing ministry is rising per member. Meanwhile the M&M offers are falling, not rising. In short, our main source of income is falling but on existing policies our main expenditure item will continue to rise. Hence the advice that a budget deficit of almost £1m can be sustained for one year but only if there is a plan in place to reduce it thereafter.

### Revisiting Minister Numbers

19 One way to bring the budget back towards balance would be to change the Assembly policy on stipendiary minister numbers. If the number of paid ministers reduced more rapidly, the higher cost per minister could be more comfortably borne. Clearly Mission Council will not be keen to suggest any changes that make ministers less evident around the Church. However if a change is to be made, this is a good time to make it: minister numbers are likely to fall relatively sharply over the next five years due to the retirements bulge and so overall numbers could be reduced without any need to change policies on accepting candidates for training and ordination. A continuing suspension of Certificates of Eligibility would almost certainly be necessary.

20 The Finance Committee would therefore like to propose that Mission Council considers an alternative policy to make the trend in the overall costs of supporting stipendiary ministers move in line with membership instead of the overall minister numbers.

21 When the Assembly decided to link minister numbers to membership trends the intention was to help ensure that the costs borne by church members through the M&M did not rise at a rate that members were not willing or able to meet. Effectively the challenge to members was to increase their M&M giving by at least the rate of inflation without expecting larger increases as the norm. This policy creaks badly, however, if the costs of supporting ministers rise faster than general inflation. This has been the case recently, as stipend and pension costs have risen per minister by more than inflation. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to balance a budget where the main income is M&M and the main cost the support of ministers.

22 If as an alternative we linked the costs of supporting ministers in real terms (ie after taking out the effects of general inflation) to the membership trends, in periods when the costs of supporting ministers rise rapidly per minister we would not incur costs with no source of income with which to cover them. Conversely, in periods when the costs of supporting ministers might rise less rapidly, the number of ministers could increase above trend again.

23 If this alternative policy had been in place over the last few years, it would have made very little difference in the period 2007-9 as minister support costs were not accelerating above inflation and therefore target numbers would have been much as they were under the existing policy. However in the period 2010-12 the pressure to meet markedly higher costs would have been greatly relieved by the proposed policy and the impact on the target number of ministers in 2012 would have been to reduce it from around 490 to around 460.

24 As with the existing policy on stipendiary minister numbers, there would be no attempt to regulate minister numbers every month, or even every year, exactly in line with the formula. However for medium term planning by both the Ministries and Finance Committee it is very helpful to know the overall trends which the Church wishes to see.

### **Resolution 3**

**Mission Council asks for a proposal to be brought to the 2012 General Assembly to amend the policy on stipendiary minister numbers so that it links trends in the overall costs falling on the Assembly budget, rather than trends in the number of ministers, to trends in overall Church membership.**

### **Programme and Other Costs**

25 While costs of stipendiary ministry represent three-quarters of the budget, the remaining quarter is still £6m pa and needs to be re-assessed in the light of the structural deficit. It is unlikely Mission Council would wish to countenance a deliberate trend towards the proportion of the budget made available for stipends decreasing in order to preserve all other expenses borne centrally.

26 In the time available at Mission Council for the Moderators' Think Tank report, Council members will be invited to clarify what are the most important of the various activities and services provided from the Assembly budget. In the light of the outcome of that discernment exercise, and in the spirit of consensus decision-making, resolutions will then be drafted for Mission Council to consider regarding future spending by the Assembly Committees. It is unlikely that these resolutions would seek immediate changes but would focus on guiding the Committees as they consider what to suggest might be in the 2013 budget.

### **Hoping for Growth**

27 This paper is vulnerable to the charge that the Finance Committee is simply "planning for decline". It is true it is attempting to respond to the fact that Synods are saying Church members collectively wish to give less to support centrally funded work. However it is also important to note that every change proposed in this paper is reversible and if the wider economy or the life of the Church changes over the next few years, new options will emerge and can be seized gratefully.

John Ellis  
Treasurer

October 2011



# K2

## Support for Lay Pension Scheme

### The Scheme

1 As well as the Ministers' Pension Fund, the United Reformed Church has a quite separate arrangement to enable us to provide pensions to retired missionaries, Church House staff and some lay staff working in Synod offices and elsewhere. This pension scheme is operated through using the Pensions Trust. This body is not to be confused with the Trustees of the Ministers' Pension Fund; it is an outside organisation set up to provide a framework for a large number of relatively small pension schemes, especially in the charitable sector.

2 The Pensions Trust holds £12m of assets on behalf of our scheme which has around 350 members, just over a third of whom are currently drawing pensions. The lay scheme is therefore much smaller than the Ministers' Pension Fund with its assets of around £80m, but it has many similar characteristics, most notably that it is still a defined benefit scheme.

### The Issue

3 The Church is in protracted discussions with the Pensions Trust about the 2010 valuation of the lay pension scheme. This will in turn determine how much money the Church needs to provide to the Pensions Trust for the lay scheme over the coming years. An oral update will be provided at Mission Council. However the Pensions Trust has become aware that in 2007 the General Assembly provided a formal commitment to support the Ministers' Pension Fund but has never given a similar assurance with regard to the lay scheme. The Pensions Trust is likely to give us more favourable treatment if such an assurance were to be provided.

4 The URC Pensions Executive recommends to Mission Council that it should provide such an assurance in the name of the General Assembly. As there has never been any question in practice that the Church intended to stand behind the lay scheme as part of proper care for our staff, such a resolution makes no practical difference within the life of the Church.

5 Whether such a resolution is passed or not, the General Assembly itself of course has no way of raising money except from the Church at large and therefore the Assembly commitments are effectively commitments by local churches and Synods to respond to any requests to support the pension funds. In the case of the lay scheme, this is particularly pertinent for Synods as some of the staff in the scheme are Synod employees. However we are not asking every individual Synod affected to pass their own resolution.

6 The wording in the proposed Resolution parallels that used in 2007.

### Resolution

**Mission Council, acting with the authority of General Assembly and being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, reaffirms its commitment to the lay staff pension scheme with the Pensions Trust and undertakes to make arrangements to meet any deficits in the funding arrangements which may arise from time to time.**



# L

## Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying or harassment

### Introduction

This document is offered to local churches, all people with ministries in the United Reformed Church, including those exercising the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and the Ministry of Church Related Community Work (hereafter, both referred to as ministers) and those who have responsibility for caring for them.

Conflict is a reality in every human organisation. It can be positive when it presses us to confront difficult issues and disagreements that we might prefer to avoid. However, abuse against individuals or groups within the church is unacceptable. The United Reformed Church acknowledges that bullying and harassment do occur within local churches and the wider councils. It is important that people should know where to find help if they believe themselves to have been bullied, and that those responsible for pastoral care should be vigilant for signs that bullying may be occurring. These guidelines are offered to enable the parties concerned to respond appropriately.

This paper relies upon two more comprehensive booklets which are highly recommended:

*Dignity at Work: Working together to reduce incidents of bullying and harassment*, Church of England 2008, available online at [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org).

*Dignity at Work: Unacceptable Behaviour, Bullying and Harassment*, a comprehensive guide for Workplace Representatives in the 'Not for Profit' Sector of Unite the Union, 2007, available to order from Unite, Hayes Court, West Common Rd, Hayes, Bromley BR2 7AU, 020 8462 7744.

### Definitions

“Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable in the workplace.

‘Unacceptable behaviour’ changes its label to ‘bullying’ or ‘harassing behaviour’ when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time. Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved.” [Fergus Roseburgh, Unite].

It is not always easy to distinguish between harassment and bullying and it is not necessarily important to do so. Harassment attacks people because of their social identity, such as being female, black or gay, and is intended to disturb or upset. Aggression that is personal is bullying.

Bullying is persistent. It exploits imbalances of power, as between stronger and weaker children on a playground – or between a church treasurer and a minister claiming expenses. It is sometimes intentional but may also be unconscious. Sometimes it comes as a great shock to be accused of bullying, but being made aware of how others perceive particular behaviour can help self reflection. Individual incidents may seem trivial while the cumulative effect is what causes the damage. Both of the reports mentioned above contain long lists of behaviours which can



legitimately be regarded as bullying, and these may be helpful to an individual seeking confirmation that the treatment s/he has been receiving does indeed constitute bullying.

Ministers are sometimes the targets of bullying. They can also be bullies themselves. Elders have a duty of care to both ministers and church members.

Churches may unwittingly bully a minister or member. There may be a situation where one person is singled out for public criticism, as in the case of a youth leader being “reviewed” by an elders or church meeting. Individuals may find themselves isolated because they have expressed an unpopular opinion. Where a church is in pain it will sometimes look for a scapegoat.

Churches can also be the victims of a bully. It is not uncommon for someone with an aggressive personality to intimidate an entire congregation.

### **Consequences**

A person who is harassed or bullied may experience any number of stress responses: tears, anxiety, low morale, vulnerability, lack of confidence, anger, shame or depression. S/he may want to withdraw in self-protection. S/he may also find it impossible to pray, with a resulting crisis of faith. Destructive behaviours may develop: a victim-like refusal to engage, a loss of sensitivity to others, aggressiveness, self-harming or alcohol or drug misuse, to name a few. There may be physical symptoms such as asthma, hypertension, sleeping or eating disorders, sexual dysfunction or migraine.

Congregations that are bullied may develop a bullying culture with “no-go areas” to avoid discussion of painful issues. They may allow destructive behaviour to continue because they do not have the strength to confront it. A minister or member may find him/herself continually rushing around soothing ruffled feathers and persuading others not to resign in the face of behaviour which goes unchallenged. Where such dynamics operate, church meetings cannot do their work and worship may begin to feel hollow. The church may also acquire a negative reputation in the community.

These effects may be serious and long-lasting. It is essential that cries for help be taken seriously. It is also important to recognise that a person who is the victim of bullying may be reluctant to seek help, either because his/her confidence has been undermined, because s/he feels ashamed or responsible, or because s/he believes that objecting to inappropriate behaviour will cause unacceptable disruption to important relationships. In such cases it may fall to a third party, whether an elder, another minister, a friend, etc. to call the attention of the wider church to what is happening.

### **Prevention**

Identifying bullying is not always easy, but the best prevention is the church’s determination not to tolerate unacceptable behaviour. While all of us have bad days and say or do things that we later regret, a healthy community will be a place where apologies are offered and forgiveness is expressed. However these are difficult issues and apologies may not bring peace to either party, without support to discuss the pain experienced and space to work through the conflict constructively.

The United Reformed Church has structures in place which offer the foundation for good relationships and mutual understanding:

- Separate Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers and elders (General Assembly 2010)
- Role descriptions for ministers and other leaders through LMMR – the Local Mission & Ministry Review – so that expectations are clear
- Terms of settlement for ministers, which should be explicit on such matters as holiday



entitlement, working hours and claimable expenses

Given that money and conflicting role expectations, as well as power and position, can be frequent triggers for bullying behaviour, clarity on these matters provides a framework for good relationships. Not everyone is covered by these guidelines so it is helpful to remind everybody that treating others with respect and dignity is an essential part of life in the church.

Ministers should take responsibility to ensure that they have the pastoral support they need. It is not realistic for the synod moderator to be the sole provider of support. Ministry is demanding, particularly in a time of change and uncertainty, and it is inevitable that ministers will sometimes find themselves at the receiving end of someone's distress or strong disagreement. While intimidating behaviour is always undesirable, a one-off loss of control can be forgiven in the context of a relationship of trust. It is important that every minister has people to turn to in times of stress and difficulty both for personal and pastoral support and also for technical support to help them change the environment by working through the processes available.

### **Making an allegation**

Someone who believes that s/he has been the target of harassment or bullying, or a third party witnessing such behaviour, should not hesitate to seek help. The sooner this is done the better, even if they are not certain that it is bullying, but they feel that someone's conduct displays unwanted behaviour. Such request for help should always be treated seriously. In a local church, the minister, church secretary or chair of the local CRCW committee, would normally be the first port of call. Where that is inappropriate, the synod moderator or pastoral committee convener may be contacted. An allegation against a synod moderator should be directed to the General Secretary.

The following steps will assist others in addressing the problem, and support should always be provided so that an adequate disclosure can be made.

- Assemble the facts. Keep a log with the date of each incident and a description of what happened. Keep a record of emails and letters, as well as notes of conversations and telephone calls.
- Where possible, note the names of witnesses.
- Provide a copy of whatever role description may exist if the bullying or harassment has been about the performance of duties.
- Record consequences as well as actions, including any impact on health, emotional well-being, role performance and/or other relationships.
- If other people have been affected, note this too. Consult them as to whether they would be prepared to disclose their experiences as well.
- Make sure that you have the personal support you need. Put this in place yourself if it is not adequately forthcoming from the church.

### **Intervening on behalf of someone else**

Where bullying is suspected to be occurring, it is important not to remain silent. In the first instance a witness should speak privately with the person(s) perceived to be the victims of bullying. Several questions should be explored:

- Is the behaviour untypical and associated with a contained situation of conflict or is it part of an ongoing pattern? (Remember that each separate incident may appear trivial. The bullying may lie in the persistent nature of the harassment.)
- What action, if any, has the recipient taken to challenge the aggressive behaviour?
- If no action has been taken, what is the reason for this?
- If action has been taken, what effect has it had?

Following such exploration there will be a judgment to be made. If the person on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour sees it as an isolated incident or otherwise feels in control, it is possible that the situation should simply be monitored over an agreed period to determine

whether further action is needed. However, a witness should not hesitate to report the situation to the synod moderator, pastoral committee convener or General Secretary (if the moderator is perceived to be the bully) as an act of intervention if s/he believes that persistent bullying is occurring and that the person being bullied is unable or unwilling to act in his/her own defence. This decision must be taken with sensitivity as it could be experienced as compounding the bullying. However, the United Reformed Church can only act if those who witness harassing behaviour do not conceal or deny it.

### **Responding to an allegation of harassment or bullying**

Whenever an allegation is made, the person receiving it should take it seriously. Hardly anyone would make such an accusation lightly. Steps should be taken to ensure that pastoral support is made available to the complainant, the alleged perpetrator (as appropriate), and any others who may be affected, such as the family of the complainant or other people involved in the situation.

Confidentiality should be carefully maintained for the protection of all concerned: the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, innocent bystanders, and the church itself. Where there is any danger of reputational damage to the church, particularly if there is the possibility of media interest, the URC media office, Gill Nichol, is available to offer guidance (020 7916 9865, [media@urc.org.uk](mailto:media@urc.org.uk) ).

The following strategies are recommended as good practice.

1. Informal approach. Sometimes a complainant may simply want support in confronting someone with the expectation that the person who has acted inappropriately will be prepared to hear and apologise. (See Matthew 18:15-17, which indicates that when one person has been unable to make an offender take notice, two people should then go.)
2. Mediation. After an informal approach, where both parties want to find reconciliation and healing of the relationship, a trained mediator can lead them through a process of listening, extending and accepting apologies, and identifying solutions for the future. Mediation is future-oriented: it is not concerned with past grievances as much as future well-being. This mediation should be exercised by someone other than the synod moderator so that the moderator remains available for oversight of the broader picture and care for all concerned. It may be appropriate to use a mediator from another Synod and it is always important that the mediator is well trained and experienced.
3. A complainant should never be pressured to confront an alleged perpetrator.
4. Formal procedure.
  - a. In the case of an allegation against a minister, the caution stage of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process offers a suitable procedure (see The Manual, Section O, section AA). Very serious cases might warrant the bypassing of the caution stage and implementation of the Disciplinary Procedure itself.
  - b. In the case of an allegation by a minister against a church member or members, a local church/post, a ministerial colleague, the synod moderator or synod officers, the grievance procedure pertains.
  - c. It is always essential that those using the procedures should be well trained in using them.
5. Outcomes. Where bullying or harassment has taken place, successful resolution of the situation includes an acknowledgement on the part of the perpetrator, identification of any underlying causes with strategies for addressing them where possible, the offering and receiving of apologies, and the willingness of the perpetrator to accept help in changing his/her behaviour. A formal mechanism to review the situation in an appropriate time frame should be agreed.
6. Legal action. Where there has been physical violence or serious psychological abuse, it is a police matter. The church should encourage and support going to the police in this situation.

7. False allegations. Where investigation reveals that an accusation has been made maliciously, this is a disciplinary offence. There may be issues of mental illness or other mitigating circumstances to take into account. However, given the damage to the reputation of the person accused, some form of public exoneration may be appropriate.
8. Evaluation. There will always be lessons to be learned from intervention in a situation of bullying or harassment. Time should be set aside for serious consideration of what has been learned and how new insights might be shared, including the suggestion of amendments to URC guidelines and procedures.

### **If accused of bullying or harassment**

- Take the matter seriously. Consider your behaviour and do not be too quick to dismiss an accusation as a sign that the other person has a problem.
- Where apologies are due, offer them. But recognise that an apology might not be enough to restore right relations.
- Allegations must be proven and there is no automatic assumption that you are guilty. However, denials will not be taken at face value. Bullying and harassment are serious matters and require investigation.
- Do not hesitate to seek help and support from the wider church where you fear that local church processes are not strong enough to address serious accusations. Trained mediators are available to advise and assist: these may be recruited from outside the synod if necessary.
- If formal procedures are instigated, give them your full cooperation.
- Make sure that you have the personal support you need. Put this in place yourself if it is not adequately forthcoming from the church.



# L1

## Equal Opportunities Committee Membership

Like other committees of the United Reformed Church the Equal Opportunities committee has 8 members. However unlike most other committees it has no staff but depends on the committee members to do the work of the committee and also needs a variety of members to meet the work of the equal opportunities policy - gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability.

The Equal Opportunities committee has two staff members who attend meetings and who support and help the work - Michelle Marcano (Head of Human Resources) and Michael Jagessar (Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry). But they are not expected to do all the work, that is the responsibility of the committee members.

All the members of the committee (apart from the convener and secretary), are responsible for connecting to another Assembly committee, either attending the committee meetings, or receiving their papers and reflecting on them from an equal opportunities perspective. This is an important part of our work and on some committees e.g. Assembly Arrangements, it is a major piece of work. However there are more than 6 committees to connect to, so we are not able to connect to them all. Other pieces of work need to be done by the committee members together. For example writing the papers to support the equal opportunities policy and responding to emails, particularly between meetings when new issues are raised. Equal Opportunities is a busy committee. Recently we have been responding on issues concerning Sharia Law which has now been taken up by the Mission Team and the Inter-Faith Reference Group and we hope will result in a paper for the next Mission Council. We have also been helping with the United Reformed Church's policy on Bullying and Harassment.

The Equal Opportunities committee has recently agreed with Nominations committee that both the convener and secretary should serve for a year before taking up responsibility for their role. This is helpful so that for 2 out of every 4 years the membership of the committee is 9 rather than 8. However these additional members already have their responsibility laid out for them and are unlikely to have time for other work.

The Equal Opportunities committee would like to request an increase in it's membership from 8 to 10 members in order to have more people to work on equal opportunities issues for the United Reformed Church and also to give greater space for Nominations to fulfill the breadth of equal opportunities policy membership on the committee. The committee is of the opinion that we want full members of the committee rather than co-options because we want them to have the same commitment and expectations as the other committee members and because we need equality between us all. The increase in cost is limited to the cost of traveling to London 3 times a year for meetings and can be held comfortably within our current budget.

Elizabeth Nash  
Convener, Equal Opportunities Committee



# M

## MIND Advisory Group

### Proposed Changes to Part II of the Disciplinary Process

*The Advisory Group will be presenting to Mission Council next year major changes to both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure in order to compress Parts I and II into one single document. This is partly for simplification but also to enable the whole of both the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure to be dealt with by Mission Council. This will replace the cumbersome procedure which exists at present whereby the Parts I have to pass through General Assembly and are then subject to ratification at the next General Assembly two years hence. In addition to that major piece of work, there will be some other amendments to Part II which will be presented at the same time.*

*However, amendments are needed as a matter of urgency to the procedure within the Disciplinary Process for appointing persons as Synod Appointees. At present, both Synod Appointees are appointed from the Synod Panel. Under the proposed changes, which are set out below, one will be appointed from the Joint Panel and the other from the Synod Panel. The Advisory Group asks Mission Council to implement these at its meeting in November 2011.*

#### Proposed Changes to Part II of the Disciplinary Process

- A.5.22** Replace the existing wording with: " **'Joint Panel' shall mean the Panel referred to in Paragraph B.2.2 which shall serve the purposes set out in that Paragraph.**"
- AA.1.5.1** Replace the words "Each Synod is required to appoint from its Synod Panel two persons ..." with "Acting in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2, each Synod shall appoint two persons (known as "the Synod Appointees") ...". The words "from its own Synod Panel" do not appear in the replacement wording.
- AA.1.5.2** Replace the existing paragraph in its entirety with the following:-
- "The Moderator of the Synod in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate shall forthwith appoint persons to act as the Synod Appointees (and reserves) in any particular case in the following manner:-**
- (i) s/he shall appoint the first of the Synod Appointees from the Joint Panel (with another from the Joint Panel to act as reserve) and;**



- (ii) s/he shall appoint as the second Synod Appointee one of the following, that is:-
- (a) one person from its own Synod Panel or
  - (b) one person from the Synod Panel(s) of another Synod with the consent of the Moderator of that Synod, or
  - (c) one person who, although not a member of any Synod Panel, is a member of the United Reformed Church with legal, tribunal or other appropriate professional experience.

S/he shall also appoint in the same manner one person to act as reserve to the second Synod Appointee."

AA.1.5.3 No change required.

AA.1.5.4 Delete the current paragraph (now covered at AA.1.5.1) and substitute the following:-

**"In the event that one of the Synod Appointees is obliged to withdraw during the Caution Stage, the reserve appointed from the same Panel may, subject to the approval of the Moderator of the Synod following consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, take over his/her position and, jointly with the other Synod Appointee, continue with the enquiry, join in issuing Cautions (if considered necessary) and bring the Caution Stage to its conclusion. Should the Moderator of the Synod, following such consultation as stated above, consider that this would not be appropriate in any particular case, s/he will discharge the Synod Appointees and appoint two new ones in accordance with the above procedure."**

AA.2.3 Delete the current paragraph in its entirety and substitute the following:-

**"AA.2.3.1 Should both the principal and reserve Appointees under Paragraph AA.1.5.2(i) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other members of the Joint Panel to act as Synod Appointee and reserve Synod Appointee respectively."**

**AA.2.3.2 Should both the principal and reserve Appointees appointed under paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) be unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall, following such consultation as stated above, appoint two other persons to act as the other principal and reserve Synod Appointee respectively in accordance with the provisions of that Paragraph.**

**B.2.1.1 After the words "and (ii) the appointment of," replace the words "two persons in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5 to act as" with "one person in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5.2(ii) to act as one of".**

**B.2.2 Replace the words "assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group" with "(i) appointment in accordance with Paragraph B.3 as a member of a Mandated Group or (ii) appointment in accordance with Paragraph AA.1.5(i) to act as one of the Synod Appointees during the Caution Stage if initiated. The same persons shall not act as Synod Appointees and members of a Mandated Group in the same case." The final sentence of Paragraph B.2.2 remains unchanged.**



- B.3.1** Replace the words at the beginning of the paragraph up to “....under the authority of that Synod,” with the following:-
- "In cases arising under Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xvii) of the Structure (Synods) in respect of any Minister in membership or under the authority of the Synod in question, if the Moderator of that Synod either (i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct or (ii) resolves (where the case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act upon a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,...."**
- B.3.2** Replace the words "believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any Minister" with "(i) believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue involving Gross Misconduct in respect of any Minister or (ii) resolves (where a case has already passed through the Caution Stage) to act on a recommendation from the Synod Appointees to call in a Mandated Group,...."
- B.3.4** After the words "justify the calling in of" insert the words "the Synod Appointees under the provisions of Section AA or".

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# M1

## **Co-option of Mr Hartley Oldham to MIND Advisory Group**

Hartley Oldham's long period of service to MIND will conclude shortly when he reaches the end of his termed appointment and in matters relating to training he will be replaced by Keith Webster. However he continues to be deeply involved in detailed work, updating the guidelines, the preparation of forms and the bringing together of Parts I and II. He brings to this a breadth of knowledge and expertise which is not otherwise available to the United Reformed Church, the MIND Advisory Group therefore, following advice from the Assembly Clerk, will co-opt him to the Group to help in these continuing tasks at its next meeting.



# N

## **FURY Representation at General Assembly and Mission Council**

The Youth and Children's Work Committee bring the following resolution on behalf of FURY Executive.

At the March 2011 meeting of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth (FURY) Executive, one specific issue that arose was associated with the biennial format that General Assembly has now taken, and the fact that FURY Moderators are Moderator Elect for one year and Moderator for one subsequent year. The consequence of this pattern is that alternate FURY Moderators do not automatically attend General Assembly as a representative of FURY. Whilst it is possible that they may attend as a synod representative, there is no guarantee of this, and they would be there in a completely different capacity.

We would prefer every FURY Moderator to attend General Assembly in their capacity as FURY Moderator/ FURY Moderator Elect at some point during their two years. After long discussion, FURY Executive decided that the best way forward would be for the Moderator AND the Moderator Elect to attend General Assembly in these capacities (currently the FURY Moderator attends, and the only other FURY-specific representative at General Assembly is the FURY Representative to Mission Council and General Assembly). **We also believe that it would be helpful for the FURY Moderator Elect to attend Mission Council, alongside the FURY Moderator.**

**We recognize that there is a cost implication but believe that this is a necessary cost to ensure adequate representation of those under 26 years.**

**We request that Mission Council permit the FURY Moderator Elect to attend both General Assembly and Mission Council as a full member, in addition to the FURY Moderator.**

*Resolution: Mission Council appoints the FURY Moderator Elect to serve as a Member of Mission Council and General Assembly in addition to those already appointed.*



# P

## Synod Resolutions

### a) From Wessex Synod

Wessex Synod are concerned that Ministers and others working in an official capacity do not have any form of secure photo ID to assure users and to prevent outsiders from posing as accredited officers. At their November meeting the Revd. Tim Meachin, on behalf of the Synod Executive, introduced the matter. Synod resolved to bring the following resolution to Mission Council:

#### **Resolution on Photo ID**

**In order to ensure a high standard of safeguarding, Mission Council, on behalf of General Assembly, resolves, as a matter of urgency, to request Ministries Committee to identify means by which we can provide secure photo Identification, together with a means for identity to be verified, for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community workers and be available to Accredited Lay Preachers and Elders (both serving and non-serving) and other employees and volunteers who have a current Criminal Records Bureau certificate.**

### b) From Mersey Synod

Mission Council takes note of the following resolution of Mersey Synod:

**The Mersey Synod urges the URC Mission Council to take time to reflect on the number of denominational initiatives it is authorising and “rolling out” to Synods and local churches. We believe that at Synod and local church level there is a serious risk that these are beginning to overwhelm and stifle creativity. Whilst we acknowledge that the intention of these programmes and projects is to assist the church in being more effective, we feel that the number of them within short time scales is beginning to have a serious negative impact on the ability of the church to carry out its work of witness and mission within local communities; in which case the objective of greater effectiveness of the Church is frustrated. The number of initiatives is also placing a heavy workload on those responsible for their implementation at Synod level.**



# Q

## The Registration of Civil Partnerships in Religious Buildings (**Withdrawn**)

The Home Office has just published its report on the responses it received to the consultation document on the registration of Civil Partnerships. This document prepares the way for those religious bodies which wish to do so to allow Civil Partnerships to be registered in Churches and other places of Worship.

In the report the Government states:

*“It would not be for Government to determine how individual faith groups operate, nor should it be the function of local authorities to be involved in the internal discussions within a particular faith group. Therefore the regulations are clear that it is for a ‘governing authority’ of a faith group to determine whether their consent is required for any applications for their premises to be approved.”*

In the case of the United Reformed Church the ‘governing authority’ is deemed to be the General Assembly and it is that body which must, in July 2012 make the determinative decision.

Mission Council has the responsibility of deciding on the resolution or resolutions to be proposed and how the debate is to be conducted. As this is in part a legal question where the number of votes cast could become significant, the Parliamentary rather than the Consensus model for the conduct of the debate in the Assembly is recommended. (*Resolution 1*)

The Government Proposals currently require that before a church’s premises may be approved for the registration of Civil Partnerships the consent of all religious groups using the building must be obtained. These regulations not only require the consent of all parties sharing under the 1969 Sharing of Church Buildings Act, which is in itself a departure from the Act which generally requires the consent of only one of the parties, but appear to require the consent of other religious groups using the premises. The draft resolutions take note of the need to grant or obtain consent as appropriate but as we are still in discussion with the Government on the detail of the regulations it is not possible to say more at present.

There are three Resolutions which the General Assembly could adopt and two ways of proceeding.

The resolutions are:

- A. General Assembly grants its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.-(Resolution 4)**
- B. General Assembly does not grant its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of civil partnerships. (Resolution 5)**
- C. General Assembly recognising that the polity of the United Reformed Church is such that such questions are more appropriately a question for Local Churches,**

**resolves and declares that its consent is not required by Church Meetings which wish to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships. (Resolution 3)**

If Mission Council decides to present Assembly with one of these three Resolutions, that Resolution will be accompanied with appropriate supporting documentation and moved on behalf of Mission Council. It will thereby be given an advantage in the debate.

Alternatively, Mission Council may determine that these three Resolutions should be presented to General Assembly as “Alternative Motions”. In this case all three would be accompanied with supporting documentation and all three would be moved on behalf of Mission Council. Those introducing the debate would be required to confine their remarks to why Assembly should adopt that particular resolution and the Moderator would rule out of order any negative comments about the other alternatives. By adopting this process no one resolution would be given an advantage over the others (*Resolution 2*).

### **Draft Resolutions**

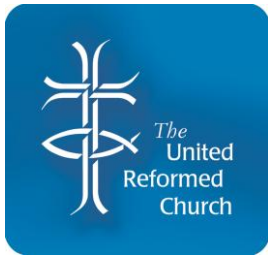
1. **Mission Council resolves that the debate on the Registration of Civil Partnerships in Religious Buildings be conducted in accordance with Standing Orders 3 to 13 of the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.**
2. **Mission Council resolves that draft Resolutions A, B and C be submitted to General Assembly to be debated under Standing Order 4k “Alternative Motions”.**
3. **Mission Council resolves that Resolution C. “General Assembly recognising that the polity of the United Reformed Church is such that such questions are more appropriately a question for Local Churches, resolves and declares that its consent is not required by Church Meetings which wish to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships.” shall be submitted as the Mission Council Resolution on the Registration of Civil Partnerships.**
4. **Mission Council resolves that Resolution A. “General Assembly grants its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of Civil Partnerships” shall be submitted as the Mission Council Resolution on the Registration of Civil Partnerships.**
5. **Mission Council Resolves that Resolution B. “General Assembly does not grant its consent for Church Meetings within the United Reformed Church to direct the trustees of their church’s premises (or to request the trustees of other premises, the use of which their church shares) to apply for the approval of those premises for the registration of civil partnerships” shall be submitted as the Mission Council Resolution on the Registration of Civil Partnerships.**

Only one of resolutions 2-5 can be adopted, so once one is agreed the others will not be moved. The order in which they are presented to Mission Council was determined by a random number draw.

J.Breslin

Clerk to the General Assembly





# R

# Review of Church House Management Processes

## Terms of reference

### Overall Requirement

In the light of the resignation of the HR manager, Mission Council through MCAG has requested the establishment of a group to review the overall Church House Management processes and procedures with a particular emphasis on the respective roles in the Central Secretariat Department which currently comprises:

- General Secretary
- Deputy General Secretary
- Head of Human Resources.

It has been recognised that the requirements for spiritual and managerial leadership can have different, even possibly conflicting, dimensions. For example, the General Secretary must be free to hear what the church at local level is saying.

Hence the overall aim of the review is to identify how the ministerial and spiritual leadership of the URC can be supported by efficient and effective Church House Management activities with the associated operational and organisational leadership of the various departments.

The review will recommend the optimum structure and requirements of the Central Secretariat including the number of direct reports.

The review will also recommend how the Human Resource function may best be situated and operate most effectively for Church House and for the whole United Reformed Church, especially in relation to the Synods.

The Staffing Advisory Group will be responsible for proposing interim arrangements to cover the HR manager's post during the review.

### Terms of Reference

1. To consider the leadership and managerial functions of the General Secretariat and HR Management roles
2. To consider the overall line management requirements of Church House employees and post holders and ways in which these may be met
3. To consult widely in exploring options (see proposed process)
4. To recommend future patterns of leadership and management at Church House
5. To propose outline role descriptions for future roles, within the proposed structure
6. To ensure proposals are both affordable and realistic

## Review Process

The Review Group will meet as appropriate with representatives of:-

- The Departments in Church House
- Other “management” groups in Church House also Church House Management Group
- Synod Moderator’s review group
- Assembly Committee Conveners
- Other organisations within the URC which work with Church House departments
- Synod Moderators
- Once the review is in progress the Group will have the authority to meet with other interested parties who can provide information that will enable the development of the recommendations.
- In addition they will take the opportunity to meet with relevant persons from other denominations, in particular the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church in order to gain an understanding of the organisational models that they have implemented.

## Membership of the Review Group:

- A Convener (*possibly drawn from the initial membership of the Group*)
- At least 2 members of the Staffing Advisory Group (SAG)
- A Synod Moderator
- A person with organisational experience in the voluntary sector
- A Theological reflector

There must be a good balance between the spiritual and the managerial inputs to the group. N.B. Knowledge of how Church House currently operates is not essential.

Note: The current members of the Staffing Advisory Group are prepared to undertake this review if agreed by Mission Council. However they would request permission to co-opt people as required. For example: a theological reflector and those with relevant experience in the wider voluntary sector. Some administrative assistance from Church House in arranging appointments and meetings would be required.

## Timescale

The results of the review will be presented to Mission Council in the autumn of 2012.

## Resolutions

1. Mission Council receives the report entitled “ Remit for Church House Management Review Group”, approves the Terms of Reference and Review Process outlined therein and instructs the Staffing Advisory Group to carry out the review and report to the November 2012 Meeting of Mission Council.
2. Mission Council further authorises the Staffing Advisory Group to co-opt as appropriate in setting up and carrying out this review.

Prepared by Staffing Advisory Group for MCAG/Mission Council

November 2011