Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure

Currently each of these contains a Part I and a Part II. The Assembly has passed the necessary resolutions to allow the two parts to be conflated into a single process in each case, and was informed that the changes needed to put this into effect would be brought to this meeting of Mission Council for approval.

The proposed changes were before Mission Council in March of this year in the form of Papers A3 and A5 for the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure respectively. Papers A4 and A6 explain how Parts I and II have been conflated. These changes were approved by Mission Council in March and were made available for members of Assembly to inspect. None did so.

Therefore Mission Council is now asked to implement the decision of the General Assembly to conflate Parts I and II of the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure.

Resolution

Mission Council resolves to:

a) replace the current Disciplinary Process (Section O) with that contained in Paper A3 of Mission Council in March and October 2012, and

b) replace the current Incapacity Procedure (Section P) with that contained in Paper A5 of Mission Council in March and October 2012.

MCS

October 2012

Medium Term Planning in the United Reformed Church

Proposals for coordination of the work of various review groups and committees

Introduction

There are at least six major strategic groups in the life of the URC at present whose thinking needs to be coordinated. These are:

- The Faith & Order Committee. They have been pondering the future of the Church.
- The review of the role of the synod moderator. This review came to Assembly but was given insufficient time. Its six principles require Mission Council consideration.
- The review of the central secretariat. This work arises from the vacancy in the role of Head of Human Resources. It is being conducted by the Staffing Advisory Group.
- The Moderators' Think Tank 2010-12. This group led the process to create the 2013 budget based on wider thinking across a range of strategic issues.
- Ecumenical initiatives. The Methodist Church is in a similar place to the URC in terms of reducing its central operations and is open to discussions about how key admin functions might be shared, eg in HR and safeguarding. The Baptist Union is involved in the explorations. A Methodist/URC Joint Property Strategy Group has been established with a shared executive officer. The work of the Joint Public Issues Team (Methodist/Baptist/URC) is well known and highly regarded.
- Five synods consultation. The five northern synods met in September 2011 to consider the sharing of support services, events, celebrations and personnel. Similar conversations have taken place in the Midlands.

A meeting with representatives of these six pieces of work took place in August 2012. Every effort has been made to incorporate their key questions and insights in the analysis below.

The task is actually wider than this. The plea for a review of the General Assembly should be included. Also, the Ministries Committee's proposals in "Resourcing Ministry" (Resolution 26, Assembly 2012) and the new strategy of the Youth & Children's Work Committee both address the relationship between the Assembly and the synods, and their thinking should be included so that coherent decisions can be made. The purpose of Church House needs clarifying so that a staffing strategy can be agreed in time to inform the 2014 budget process. While the task may seem daunting, the clarity that will result will greatly ease the work of governance across the councils of the Church as well as the work of management at various levels.

While there is little mention of finance in this paper, it should be recognised that the reducing financial resources of the denomination are a key driver behind the urgency of many of the issues named.

1. What does a faithful, vibrant, sustainable United Reformed Church look like?

- A prior question: are we still persuaded that the ongoing life of the United Reformed Church as a separate denomination is within God's purposes for the building of the

Kingdom? What specifically would be lost if it ceased to exist? (Q1 – for Mission Council, facilitated by the Faith & Order Committee)

- The Faith & Order Committee urges us that we need to refresh our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church at every level. (Q2 – ditto)

2. It has faithful, vibrant local churches.

a) Each of them gathers around the Word and celebrates the sacraments. However, there is concern about their spiritual health. Many struggle to pass on the faith to the next generation, and many lack confidence.
   - How do we re-evangelise the Church? (Q3 – for the Mission Committee)

b) Beyond this, their variety is exhilarating. They vary in size, context, age, theology and practice. A third of them are in ecumenical partnerships. They represent every stage of the life cycle, from Fresh Expressions and other new inceptions through development, maturity, and end of life. They say very different things about their need for and expectations of the wider Church.
   - Work is needed on the understanding of this life cycle. Can we enable churches to die with dignity, understanding that this is natural? (Q4 – for the Faith & Order Committee)
   - What about more church planting? (Q5 – for the Mission Committee)

c) A vibrant church meets to govern its life by seeking to discern the will of the Spirit.
   - There is significant concern about the health of church meeting. (Q6 – for the Faith & Order Committee and the Medium Term Strategy group)

d) A vibrant church can articulate its sense of purpose. A question first raised in the "Growing Up" report (1999) is still relevant today: "Is there, here in this place, a part for us in God's mission?"

e) A vibrant church has good leadership, beginning with its elders meeting. A wide range of leadership operates: ordained ministry of Word and sacraments, church related community workers, lay preachers, local church leaders, youth and children's workers... to name a few. Asked what it wants/needs from the wider Church, the first answer from the local church is always, "Ministers!" The budgeting process for 2013 was based on the principle that when resources are scarce, the churches will want to safeguard the number of stipendiary ministers as much as possible.
   - The Ministries Committee has repeatedly challenged Assembly, synods and churches to be imaginative and flexible in meeting the leadership needs of the churches. But in many places the only leadership in evidence is stipendiary ministry, stretched more and more thinly. What can we do to encourage churches to explore and implement other possibilities? (Q7 – for the Ministries Committee)

f) A vibrant church engages in mission. Some churches will focus on one thing, striving to do it well. Others will run full programmes of activities, striving to do many things well. Vision2020 is the agreed framework for mission in the URC and offers a range of resources across its ten priorities.

g) If a vibrant church has buildings, they will be fit for purpose. The Methodist/URC Joint Property Strategy Group will have more to say on this subject in due course.

h) A vibrant church recognises the need for appropriate accountability to the wider body of which it is a part. The Local Ministry and Mission Review is the URC's vehicle for supporting and challenging local churches.

3. The churches are grouped into synods.

a) The Structure of the URC defines a synod as "representative of the local churches in that province or nation united for the purpose of dealing with matters of wider concern". This is feeble! Perhaps the old definition of the purposes of a district council could be adopted: "fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action". The Five Synods Consultation discussed four possibilities: service (meeting the needs of the churches); instrumental (providing a vehicle for the churches to do things together which they could

not do for themselves, such as sustaining regional/national ecumenical relationships or addressing regional/national public issues); cooperative (enabling the churches to support one another through active networking); or governance (setting priorities, initiating programmes, managing resources).

- What are synods for? (Q8 – for the Medium Term Strategy group)

b) Synods came into existence alongside provincial trust bodies. They still operate trusts which hold assets on behalf of the synod and its churches. There is a great disparity of wealth between the synods, though the general belief that some are happily sustainable financially needs a reality check: 12 out of the 13 synods pay their operating expenses out of the proceeds from sold buildings. Inter-synod resource sharing was created to address the disparity, enabling a voluntary redistribution of money.
   - Inter-synod resource sharing is supported by the wealthier synods on the understanding that it pays for development work and creative ventures that would not otherwise be possible in synods with fewer resources. The reality is that much of the money simply enables survival. What is the long-term viability of such a programme? What about the ethics of it? What do we want? (Q9 – for the Medium Term Strategy group)
   - The review of the role of synod moderator suggested the central coordination of the synod trusts. Do we wish to endorse this? (Q10 - ditto)

c) Synods vary widely in their staffing levels.
   - Are we content that the level of service offered to our churches is governed by regional/national wealth? (Q11 - ditto)

d) Each synod has a full-time minister of Word and sacraments as its moderator. The review of the role of the synod moderator offered a revised job description and person specification which will need approval once various issues of principle have been decided by Mission Council and General Assembly.
   - The first of these issues is fundamental to the rest. The research of the review of the role of synod moderator revealed an overwhelming consensus across the Church that the synod moderator's primary role should be pastoral, including preaching of the gospel, teaching, encouragement and reproof, discernment of the Spirit, and servant leadership. Do we agree? (Q12 – for Mission Council)

e) Synods oversee the compliance of their churches to a host of legal requirements and good practice issues, such as proper accounting and financial safeguards, charity registration, health and safety and the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Each has a legal adviser (and sometimes synods receive conflicting advice).
   - The group reviewing the role of the synod moderator urged that attention be given to this cluster of governance issues. They asked that the synod moderator be released from responsibility for such matters, rather than being made to cover for shortfalls in the system elsewhere, and that consideration be given to the centralising of service/administrative activities. (Q13 – for Mission Council)

f) Synods also play a significant role in maintaining good order, including operation of the grievance and appeals procedures, the ministerial disciplinary process and the incapacity and capability procedures.
   - The group reviewing the role of the synod moderator advocated removing the moderator from the formal role s/he performs in the initiation of the disciplinary process. (Q14 – for Mission Council)

g) It costs a lot of money to run a synod office, employ development staff, exercise oversight and deliver services.
   - How many synods should there be? Does each require a full-time synod moderator? (Q15 – for the Medium Term Strategy group)

4. The General Assembly embodies the unity of the United Reformed Church, acts as the central organ of its life, and is the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life.

a) As the church meeting is essential to the health and faithfulness of the local church, the Assembly is essential to the unity and faithfulness of the United Reformed Church.
    - It is time to review the pattern of biennial Assemblies in light of a new agreement on the purpose of Assembly. (Q16 – for the Medium Term Strategy group in consultation with the Assembly Arrangements Committee)

b) There is concern in many quarters about the sense of belonging that holds the United Reformed Church together as one body.
    - Do we have the membership of Assembly right? Should it be larger? Smaller? (Q17 - ditto)

c) There has been a suggestion that consensus decision making is a wonderful tool for discernment on high-level questions where, ideally, an issue is presented with all the relevant information and Assembly is left to devise its own decision without being constrained by resolutions previously drafted elsewhere. However, with other sorts of decisions, the consensus process can be cumbersome and frustrating.
    - Attention should be given to the different kinds of decisions Assembly is asked to make, with authority given to the moderator and the Assembly Arrangements Committee to determine which mode of decision making will be used at each point in the agenda. (Q18 - ditto)

5. Mission Council acts between meetings of the Assembly.

a) Most of the Mission Council agenda arises out of committee work. Only occasionally do the synods bring items for consideration.
    - Is the balance right? How should Mission Council agendas be generated? (Q19 – for the Mission Council Advisory Group)

b) Mission Council is responsible for prioritising the work of the Church. It needs to be more rigorous in this function so that the churches are not overwhelmed by a multiplicity of initiatives.

c) Given the ever increasing pressure on Mission Council agendas does modern technology offer other options for consultation? Decision making? (Q20 – MCAG)

6. The United Reformed Church elects/appoints officers to preside over its corporate life. It operates a Church House to provide services as sought by local churches, synods, Mission Council and Assembly.

a) An effective denominational structure needs to deliver six functions: embodiment, development of strategy, governance, management, advice and implementation.
    - Clarity is needed as to who within the structure is responsible for each of these functions. In some cases responsibility will appropriately lie with an individual within a framework of rigorous accountability. (Q21 – for the Staffing Advisory Group)

b) The proposal about centralising service functions has already been mentioned (3e above). Clarity is also needed as to the proper location for mission and development initiatives. When these are taken both at Assembly and synod level without proper coordination, the local churches experience initiative overload. The synods employ training officers and mission enablers. Assembly-employed children's and youth development officers are deployed within the synods, which also provide the finance. This host of visionary, enthusiastic workers is replicated at Church House by departmental secretaries who also see themselves as leaders and shapers of the Church. The posts held by Assembly-appointed staff are almost identical to those we had in 1972 – for a very much smaller Church.
    - If admin functions are removed from the synods and located in regional offices or at Church House, how will this be funded? (Q22 – for the Medium Term Strategy group)
    - The question of whether we are one Church or 13 does not have easy answers. It must be explored area by area, recognising that what is right for (e.g.) youth and

children's work might not be right for ecumenical relations or church and society. (Q23 – ditto)

- Some people are saying that the concept of operation by committees is past its sell-by date. What other options exist? What is most appropriate for the United Reformed Church? (Q24 – ditto, with the Staffing Advisory Group)
- The relationship between the United Reformed Church and the United Reformed Church Trust needs clarifying. Outsiders regularly observe that we have an excess of governance for an organisation our size. What is the solution that will honour our core principles and conciliar convictions while reducing unnecessary duplication? (Q25 – Medium Term Strategy group and Staffing Advisory Group)

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A MEDIUM TERM PLANNING GROUP

1. To review the pieces of work listed in the introduction to this paper.

2. To ensure that the principles, role description and person specification proposed in the review of the role of synod moderator receive proper consideration in Mission Council.

3. To liaise with the Faith & Order Committee, the Staffing Advisory Group, the Methodist/URC Strategic Oversight Group, the Methodist/URC Joint Property Strategy Group, the Inter Synod Resource Sharing Task Group, the Church House Connective and other committees and groups engaged in strategic reviews and planning, supporting the General Secretary in the work of coordinating thinking across the full range of strategic issues.

4. To prepare papers to enable Mission Council and General Assembly to take the necessary decisions of principle underlying medium-term strategic, organisational and financial planning, guided (but not constrained) by the questions in this paper.

5. To ensure proper consultation with individuals and groups whose work would be affected by the principles and proposals under consideration.

6. To identify pieces of work requiring specialist attention and present Mission Council with suggested terms of reference for research projects and/or working groups as appropriate, and to receive the results of this work.

7. In partnership with the Staffing Advisory Group, to bring proposals for a staffing strategy for the work of the Assembly.

8. In partnership with the Treasurer, the Chief Finance Officer and the Finance Committee to determine and facilitate the process towards the creation of the 2014 budget and a three-year forward planning budget.

Membership

A core group of four members (the General Secretary, the Treasurer, and two members appointed by Mission Council for their skill in strategic planning) with a wider reference group of about 20 people available to receive regular updates and offer comment on proposals as they emerge. The reference group would include representatives of the following groups, ideally also including someone from each synod and a balance of male/female, lay/ordained. Further members could be co-opted on a short term basis according to their interest/expertise in a particular topic.

The two Moderators of General Assembly
Assembly Committees
Church House Connective of senior staff
FURY
Resource Centres for Learning
Staffing Advisory Group
Synod moderators
Synod clerks

Initial thoughts on a timetable:

This timetable recognises that not all decisions can be implemented immediately and major ones affecting the General Assembly, for example, could not be implemented earlier than the 2016 meeting.

October 2012 Mission Council

Consideration of principle 4 of the review of the role of synod moderator ("A change of ethos to focus on the mission of the local church") [And to note that principle 6 of that review, "Working together to change procedures", is incorporated into the work of this report.]

Consideration of a paper from the Staffing Advisory Group

Approval of terms of reference for the Medium Term Planning Group and appointment of members

May 2013 Mission Council

Discussion led by the Faith & Order Committee on the future of the Church.

Consideration of principle 3 of the review of the role of synod moderator ("Moving the oversight of compliance issues")

Other aspects of the "one vs. 13" question, including the "Resourcing Ministries" proposals (if time does not permit us to address these in October 2012)

Final proposals from the Staffing Advisory Group in its review of the central secretariat, including a staffing strategy for the work of the Assembly

October 2013 Mission Council

Discussion led by the Faith & Order Committee on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Consideration of principles 1, 2 and 5 of the review of the role of synod moderator ("Pastoral leadership," "Strategic focus on core role" and "The separation of pastoral care and formal discipline") and the role description and person spec for synod moderators

First discussion on the purpose, frequency and processes of the General Assembly

March 2014 Mission Council

Agreement of resolutions for General Assembly

Resolutions:

1. **Mission Council receives the paper, "Medium Term Planning in the United Reformed Church" and asks Council members to send their comments to the General Secretary by 30th November 2012.**

2. **Mission Council agrees that a fundamental principle underlying the strategic planning of the United Reformed Church is the primacy of the local church and its mission.**

3. **Mission Council agrees the terms of reference and membership of a Medium Term Strategy group.**

4. **Mission Council asks the Faith & Order Committee to lead a discussion on the future of the Church at the May 2013 Mission Council meeting.**

C

Staffing Advisory Group

There are three elements to the SAG report:-

1) Review of Church House Management processes remitted to SAG in November 2011, with an interim report in March 2012.
2) Interim Human Resources arrangements
3) Routine work to be reported on.

Review of Church House Management processes

The paper 'Review of the General Secretariat within Church House' will be presented and discussion groups held in relation to it at Mission Council. It is hoped to collate responses over-night and to bring to Mission Council resolutions arising out of the discussion the following day.

Interim Human Resources arrangements

In November 2011 Mission Council agreed that the Staffing Advisory Group would be responsible for proposing interim arrangements to cover the Head of Human Resources post during the review of church house management processes. Currently Assembly posts are overseen by this group and support and non-assembly staff by the Church House Management Group (CHMG). As the review takes place it is becoming clear that it would be good to have one group overseeing all the posts. Therefore it is proposed that a Human Resources Advisory Group be established combining the human resources elements of the current Church House Management group and SAG for the following reasons

1) To gain a consistency of approach for the process of change brought about by the budgetary decisions for 2013 and through the review of the General Secretariat.
2) A single group for HR staff to relate to.
3) One reference point for all HR matters.
4) One HR group would enable all staff to be regarded on a similar basis leading to a single staffing policy

The proposed Human Resources Advisory Group combines aspects of the current Staffing Advisory Group and Church House Management Group terms of reference. Terms of reference for the proposed new group and continuing Church House Management Group can be found below.

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG)

Timescale: It is recommended that this be put in place for the period October 2012 – July 2015 to cover the interim period as new structures are put in place.

Purpose: to provide a unified reference point on HR matters for Mission Council (General Assembly) / Trust and Church House personnel.

Accountability: The HRAG will be accountable to Mission Council as the employer but may be called on to report to the Trust with regard to legal and reputational management issues.

The HRAG will have delegated authority from Mission Council in relation to all operational HR matters including the agreement of HR policies and procedures and will provide regular reports.

Membership
Convener (appointed by Mission Council or Nominations)
4-6 members with HR and / or management experience including those with experience of accredited ministries in the church
Ex-officio General Secretary
Member of HR staff

SAG could become this with the addition of the HR specialists currently on CHMG.

Responsibilities
1) Oversee and sign off all central staff employment policies and procedures; that is all staff employed at Church House (i.e. by or on behalf of the central church), whether based on or off site with the exception of Synod Moderators.
2) Monitor, review and approve Staffing strategy – including grading, numbers, expertise, career development, remuneration policy (currently Remuneration Group reports to Finance/policy is a CHMG matter).
3) Posts - Agree all central staff posts for appointment and renewal in accordance with the staffing strategy. Review and approve with operational people or with committee conveners as appropriate the job description and person specification for each post.
4) Terms and Conditions of Employment. The Group shall oversee the development of, approval and implementation of the terms and conditions of staff. These shall include taxation and benefits, housing policy and the provision of cars and training. Terms and conditions of Assembly-appointed staff who are ordained ministers shall come within the framework of the Plan for Partnership.
5) Review Lay Pensions policy – in conjunction with the Pensions Executive.
6) Oversight of training and development in management skills and the evaluation of outcomes.

Church House Management Group (CHMG)

Membership
a Convener and three other members appointed by nominations (through to Mission Council/ General Assembly) who have experience in finance and management, together with the senior staff member from each of the service departments: finance, communications, facilities. The group will appoint a secretary as appropriate.

Accountability
CHMG shall report to the Deputy General Secretary (DGS)/Chief Finance Officer and (where necessary) to Mission Council.* The DGS shall be responsible for ensuring communication to

Church House staff those decisions which are directly relevant to them and will receive any matters, within its terms of reference, which staff wish to be considered by CHMG.

Responsibilities
1) CHMG shall set and monitor policies relating to the management of Church House. The responsibility for implementation of such policies remaining with those appointed by the Church to do so and ultimately the General Secretary.
2) CHMG shall have budgetary responsibility for capital expenditure on 86 Tavistock Place, London, for maintenance to the fabric (including the caretaker's flat); and for such equipment and staffing costs as come under the "Church House Costs" budget head in the annual accounts. It will also deal with Assembly appointed staff houses.
3) CHMG shall authorise a policy and hold budgetary responsibility for IT in Church House.
4) CHMG shall ensure the development of, oversee and monitor the implementation of a Health and Safety Policy.
5) CHMG shall ensure the development of, oversee and monitor the implementation of a Data Protection Policy.
6) CHMG shall ensure the development of, oversee and monitor the implementation of an Archiving Policy.
7) CHMG shall be responsible to the Board of Trustees for that part of the Church's Risk Assessment Policy which relates to the running of Church House, including all matters covered within its Health and Safety policy.
8) CHMG shall be responsible for any other related matters which affect the welfare of staff or operational matters in Church House, which may arise from time to time, and for which a formal policy or procedure is required (excepting human relations matters that will be the responsibility of the Human Resources Advisory Group); and any other associated matters referred to it by Mission Council

**Assuming the review of the General Secretariat within Church House is accepted CHMG above will be accountable to the Departmental Secretary for Administration and Resources and where necessary to Mission Council.*

Routine work to be reported on

For report SAG has, in recent months, worked with various committees to review job description and person specifications for various roles
1) Director of Communications: Martin Hazell's post as Director of Communications has been extended from August 1st 2012; SAG has reviewed the job description as part of this.
2) Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry – a two year deferral of review and consequent extension of the post until 2015 as an exceptional circumstance is suggested – resolution below.
3) Secretary for Church and Society following the resignation of Frank Kantor – this post is currently being considered.
4) Secretary for Ministries – this post is currently being reviewed.
5) Honorary treasurer and deputy treasurer – job descriptions are currently being reviewed and developed as appropriate.

RESOLUTIONS

1) **Resolutions will be tabled at Mission Council in the light of discussion of the 'Review of the General Secretariat within church house' paper.**

2) **Mission Council**
   a. **agrees the establishment of a Human Resources Advisory Group until July 2015 with the above remit in Paper C;**
   b. **appoints the current Staffing Advisory Group as the interim Human Resources Advisory Group with the addition of those with human resources expertise currently serving on the Church House Management Group;**
   c. **agrees that the Church House Management Group shall continue to serve with the revised remit as in Paper C;**
   d. **agrees that further members, up to an additional 4, may be co-opted or nominated to HRAG to do specific pieces of work as part of the implementation of changes in church house over the coming year.**

3) **Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, extends the appointment of Michael Jagessar as Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry until August 2015.**

Rowena Francis
Convener SAG
September 2012

D

MISSION COUNCIL 17TH – 19TH OCTOBER 2012

From *multi*cultural to *inter*cultural: Transforming Mission and Ministry

This paper is intended to enable exploration, discussion and response from Mission Council on the intercultural implications of our declaration that we are a multicultural church. The questions at the end are there to "frame" our discussion. They are not intended to be prescriptive.

Locating our Conversation

1. Declaring ourselves a multicultural church (2005) did not happen in vacuum. The stories of our isles tell of the movement of peoples to and from these shores for centuries. The movement of peoples continues to this day, though this reality has only become more prominent over recent decades. We now speak of our diverse landscape with terms, such as, multi-cultural, multi-religious, migrant communities, diversity, and ethnicities etc becoming operative in our discourse in political and ecclesial contexts. The contemporary conversations around multicultural societies tend to be based in western nation states (egs. USA, Canada, Australia & Europe, and Australia) and especially around ethno-religious mix and democratic citizenship in what is considered unusual for these societies. We need to remember, however, that many nation states of the majority world have had a long history of being multicultural. Distinguishing between the reality that we are a diverse and multicultural society and multiculturalism as a policy is important. As a policy, multiculturalism evolved from both central and local government as a conscious attempt to answer racial inequality (and especially the resistances to it after the 'riots' of 1981 and 1985) with cultural solutions.

> 'Multiculturalism simply means cultural diversity and that diversity can either be a good thing, leading to integration, or a bad thing, leading to separatism. It is the social and political context that determines in which direction multiculturalism develops.' [A. Sivanandan]

2. When we declared ourselves a multicultural church we did so against the backdrop of the above realities, wider political and societal developments and conversations related to the above and other shifting realities. Our declaration in 2005 is especially located in the context of a New Labour government (from 1997) that sought to emphasize the plural and dynamic character of British society. Furthermore, we did so in the midst of critical voices from left-wing radicals, newer voices from the centre-left and from some erstwhile supporters including anti-racist supporters. From 2001 there is a sense of a turning

> "Over the last decade multiculturalism, like political correctness, has come to mean whatever its opponents want it to, so long as they don't like it...Its contemporary critics keep telling multiculturalism's supporters to admit it has failed, without identifying what "it" is and who ever supported the lampooned version they present." [Gary Younge, *The Guardian* March 14, 2011]

point for the idea of multiculturalism in Britain: it became common to read titles such as: "is multiculturalism dead?" "is multiculturalism over?" and "beyond Multiculturalism" with the discourse perhaps reaching a peak with the London bombings of July 7, 2005. Religious leaders also joined in the critique that Britishness is being challenged by cultural separatism, self imposed segregation of Muslim communities, and politically correct multiculturalism. In itself multiculturalism simply means cultural diversity. But as practiced in that diversity can either be progressive leading to integration or regressive leading to separatism. Perhaps the secular discourse on multiculturalism has been guilty of over-racialising human relations, and in the process has placed too much emphasis on separate rather than common needs/vision which may have also contributed to further marginalization of minorities (for instance the internalizing of victimhood)

3. The URC's adventurous and timely declaration evolved from its own story of formation in 1972. While the declaration is biblically and theological grounded[1], the URC's *uniting, reforming, conciliar, non-conforming* and *marginal* characteristics were also crucial to our ability and willingness to make the declaration of our multicultural intent. *The Manual* states that the United Reformed Church is "catholic" as "Christ calls into it all people" and because "it proclaims the fullness of Christ's Gospel to the whole world" (A3). Mindful that human ambiguities and failures are also part and parcel of Church, *The Manual* goes on to note that the generosity and grace of God in Christ "has taught the Church that its life must ever be renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (A6) The emphasis on renewing and reforming through promptings of the Holy Spirit is further reflected in its faith statement as the URC affirms its right "to make new declarations of its faith…as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit" (A18). It is this obedience that led us to the above declaration and to commit ourselves to intentionally live out this calling through lives of faith and faithfulness. And it is this same obedience that propels "Catch the Vision", "Vision4Life", "Vision2020" etc and the initiating of this paper and conversation.

4. Given historical and colonial links, many who came and are coming to these shores do find a home in Christian communities that once visited their own shores to share the gospel. The reality is that the number of minority ethnic Christians are growing, and new migrant churches are very much part of the vibrant and growing Christian story in the UK. Obedience to the movement of the Holy Spirit demands that the presence of sisters and brothers (in all their cultural, ethnic, and national diversity) among our ecclesial communities, urges us to intentionally practice our renewing and reforming commitment.

---

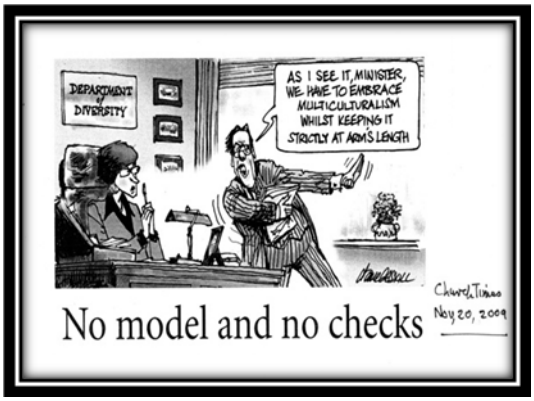
[1] A few references to the biblical/theological groundings: It is God's intention and God's promise from the beginning that diversity, not homogeneity is good. After creating a diverse world, God affirmed its goodness. Diversity is created, "of every kind" (Genesis 1); The writer of the book of Acts noted humanity's one source of origin (Acts 17:26), implying that people of all nations, no matter the shade of their skin or the language they speak are equally included in the God's blessing and will be equally accountable for their response to this blessing;); Inclusion, not dissolution is the word from Jeremiah (Jer.29:4-8) who noted the need for balance between giving and receiving culture for in God's sight we are no longer strangers or aliens but faithful sojourners; Acts of the Apostles is replete of stories of breaking boundaries and inclusion: we read of Peter's transformation and his discovery of God who is inclusive and who shows no partiality (Acts 10:34-36); while Isaiah visions "a house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:6-8), John on the isle of Patmos sees an uncountable multicultural multitude (Rev 7:9) that makes the Pentecost gathering (Acts 2:5-13) look more like a small scale multicultural assembly; indeed, the world of Acts of the Apostles may have been small geographically, but it was a complex multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural one (see Acts 15 – 1st ecumenical council); And, Jesus-Christ, descendent of the lineage of Ruth (the Moabite who chose to become a stranger in the land of Israel) carried out a ministry of inclusion, giving value to diverse peoples. He strongly challenged laws and traditions of the dominant culture of his time and countered exclusionary theology. His whole ministry was geared towards an inclusive community: breaking geographical, cultural and religious boundaries. He died for it!

5.

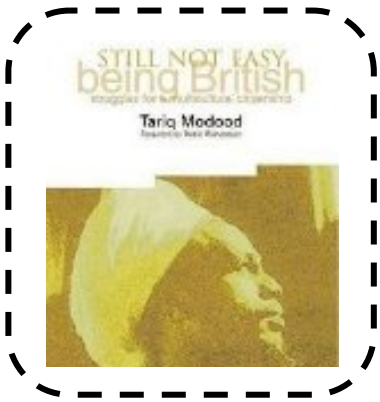
The Multicultural Vocation: Joys, Challenges & Limitations

1. Our initial understanding of a multicultural vision for the church is more about a proactive working towards valuing cultural diversity in all dimensions of our ecclesial (church) life. Our motivation is premised on the heart of the Good News: that Jesus' offer of abundant life is for all people and nations. Herein is located the joy, urgency and hope of the Christian faith. Living out the declaration in an intentional way was never going to be cheap. It is demanding and costly. For starters, a multicultural vision of church means living a paradox or tension: on the one hand there is the unity of the church characterised by an open welcome to all and on the other hand there is the need to create spaces (cultural, ethnic, national) for multiplicity or diversity within that unity. The often quoted "we are one in Christ" ought to give agency to the multiplicity within that oneness. The issue is not about belonging. It is about how to re-negotiate belonging - how to adjust the fact of *belonging for all*.

2. While the joys of multiculturalism were and are being celebrated, the challenges and limitations have and are also evident. The challenges and limitations are often tied up with the wider conversations in our society. Critical views on multiculturalism such as: "different ethnic communities living parallel lives" (Ted Cantle); "sleepwalking our way to segregation" (Trevor Phillips), "multiculturalism has run its course and it is time to move on" (Jonathan Sacks who also argues for "the dignity of difference"), multiculturalism enabling groups to "self-segregate" (David Blunkett), "the weakening of our collective identity" (David Cameron) and the call for "muscular liberalism" (Angela Merkel) have opened up an ongoing and necessary scrutiny of multiculturalism. Notwithstanding the critical voices on 'multiculturalism' and the very fluid nature of the conversations, the term still functions to describe the reality of our landscape. Moreover, as a policy agenda the notion of "multiculturalism" continues to serve to redress the unequal treatment of cultural and minority groups.



3. There are also positive voices on the wider landscape One of these is that of Tariq Modood who suggests that now more than ever there is an urgent need to give more agency and content to the multicultural vision that "challenges certain ways of thinking and certain political positions but the challenge is of inclusion and adjustment, not of giving up one comprehensive politics for another." In his view, *difference must also mean commonality* and that to emphasize and nurture what we hold in common is not to deny difference. Commonality that is "difference-friendly" calls us to move "beyond a focus on exclusion and minorities" to "a positive vision of society as a whole" but one that is reshaped to include the previously excluded or marginalised on the basis of equality and belonging. He sees the need to create spaces for "multi-logues that allow for views to qualify each other, overlap, synthesize, reshape etc in the light of having to co-exist with that of others so that newer conversations to take place.



4. The URC has employed the terms "multicultural Church" and "multicultural ministry" to express its search to be God's diverse people. Mindful of the limited and various understandings of "multicultural" (largely influenced by secular conversations), I have attempted (from September 2008) to explore and expand our understanding of "multicultural" in terms of what it means to be a *welcoming and inclusive church*, opting for a broadened understanding of culture. Yet, the challenges, misconceptions and limitations remain. This is evident, for example, from some of the Vision2020 responses in relation to question five, from my conversations with various groups in the URC, from some of the responses to the annual returns, and some of the ways we continue to articulate our theology and the practice our church life.

5. There are a number of connected issues related to the challenges and (mis)conceptions. Among them I note the following:
    a. the static use of multicultural to merely describe the presence of a multiplicity of cultures rather than speaking of how interactions should take place.
    b. multiculturalism that emphasizes group difference at the expense of what people share in common.
    c. cultural straitjacketing/stereotyping that forces those described as a minority ethnic group into a block identity/authenticity denying them to cross borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves. In a world of constant movement of peoples and ideas, the purist ideal or appeal is false for no culture is fixed.
    d. evaluating a minority ethnic group predominantly through the lens of an homogenised culture and as an explanation of everything the group says and does – with one of the consequences being that the diversity and marginal voices within such groups are not given agency nor heard.
    e. The tendency to redefine culture to mean something that characterises non-western or minority groups and unhelpful binaries such as: "they have cultural traditions – we have moral and democratic values".
    f. multiculturalism that is unable to see similarity in human experiences that enable people in different cultural contexts to formulate similar principles for governing the well being of their life together (how we negotiate universalist and relativists positions need revisiting). Variation of practices is not proof of differences of principle.
    g. multicultural correctness that rules out someone from another culture being able to critique another cultural view or practice, effectively shutting down dialogue and interaction.
    h. co-opting BME's into the dominant ethos of the URC, by tolerating the former as long as they fit into the established rules and ethos. The flip side to this is that "minority-ness" can become internalised and a comfort zone for BME's without wanting to become an integral part of our life together.
    i. a form of inclusion that seems open to welcoming people from a variety of cultural backgrounds without any commitment to change or to be transformed.

> A multicultural perspective comprises of the **creative interplay** of three complementary insights: "cultural embedded-ness of human beings; fact and necessity of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and the internal plurality of all cultures". [Lord Bikhu Parekh]

Growing Deep & Wide: A Multicultural Vocation is necessarily Intercultural

1. The concern is that our declaration of being a multicultural church runs the risk of remaining stuck to a mere recognition of the presence of a multiplicity of cultures with little or no interaction beyond one's own group. This in turn can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices and lead to ignorance about, and indifferences to, the concerns and sensitivities of all who make up the body of Christ. The affirmation of ethnic diversity do give a sense of belonging: yet, if

ethnicity becomes a primary criterion of defining identity, we risk marginalising ethnic minorities. At the same time marginal groups can remain locked in a "marginalised" mentality - impoverishing them from seeing the whole of which they are also a part. In effect we all end up with a diminished sense of our common vocation *together* around the table of Christ.

2. It is true that our use of multicultural not only affirms the presence of a multiplicity of cultures. It also envisions some form of engagement given this presence. To be more intentionally inter/cross cultural, however, points to: *a deeper, active and critical interaction* and *mutually reciprocal relationships among and between diverse groups* (entering the threshold of the other). Such a process will involve a *movement beyond a dialogical relationship towards transformation in all parts of the life of Church.*

3. An intercultural "habit" is important in managing multiple cultural affiliations in a multicultural environment. It is a means to constantly achieve a new identity balance, responding to new openings and experiences and adding new layers to identity without relinquishing one's roots. It helps us to avoid the pitfalls of identity policies and to remain open to the challenges of modern societies. While giving space to both individuals and the recognition of diversity it also offers a new dimension: dialogue premised on equal dignity and shared values – the vision of our common life together.

4. A multicultural church must be intercultural, inviting *all of us* to journey beyond our cultural comfort zones and boundaries to discover new insights of the Divine and what it means to be followers of the Jesus Way *together,* while allowing for multiplicity or many-oness in that vision of *togetherness*.

5. To this end, the vision of a multicultural vocation that nurtures and practices intercultural habits will embrace mission and ministry that:
    a. joins with others in living out our life-long commitment to justice in solidarity with all marginalised people;
    b. encourages deep engagement by taking the initiative to cross from familiar cultural spaces into an unfamiliar ones;
    c. requires of us all to make adjustments as it challenges the established group to move out of their comfort zones and make connections, it also confronts the newer groups with a call to come over the bridge.
    d. involves boundaries crossing, listening with the heart to one another, evaluating preconceptions of others, abandoning stereotypes and allowing others to be their true selves in our presence;
    e. provides space for intra-cultural conversations so that people who share an identity can be empowered to find and express their voice, including the marginalised voices in that minority;
    f. honestly and openly interrogates its own habits and attitudes that exclude and operate contrary to the fullness of life way of Christ

An intercultural habit is grounded on **mutuality in giving and sharing**: where we are all in need; where we **all must be inconvenienced** for the sake of the other and the gospel.

A Luta Continua...An Ongoing Journey

1. We can reasonably argue that the story of the early Christian community has been among the oldest, largest and most complex border crossing and intercultural journeys with evidence of how efforts at homogeneity (through edicts and councils) not only stifled growth of the Body of Christ; it also gave birth in unsettling ways to

The competences necessary for intercultural engagement are not automatically acquired: they need to be learned, practised and maintained throughout the whole of our life together as a Christian community. The growing of such a habit is largely a matter of intentionally cultivating spaces for dialogue.

reforming and non-conforming voices throughout this history.

6. In obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the church, *a multicultural community that practices an intercultural life style*, is a rehearsing Eucharistic community walking the way of a welcoming God who offers abundant life for all in Christ. Such a practice involves turning our lives towards this God and opening ourselves to sharing equally across all boundaries. This is the good news that enables us to be church in a missional framework – seeing "togetherness embracing multiplicity" as a powerful witness to the dawning of the new order of relationships in God's fullness of life offer.

For Reflection/Discussion

1. Is the inter-cultural vocation as described, a helpful way/model for our present and future life together as a church?
2. Can an intercultural habit (way of life) open ways through some of the challenging conversations we need to have together?
3. What are some intentional steps that will enable churches/synods in new directions of intercultural engagement in mission and ministry?

Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (rjmm)
Michael N. Jagessar (Revd Dr)
May 17-19, 2011

Review of the General Secretariat within Church House

Staffing Advisory Group

We are called to be God's people, transformed by the gospel, making a difference in the world. The life of the church - councils, structure, strategy and organisation - has to be infused by the Spirit and undergirded by its theology and ecclesiology.

1 Structure

An effective structure needs to deliver six functions: embodiment, governance, compliance, management, advice and implementation.

a) Embodiment, is representing the Church to society and the whole Church to its more local expressions, whether synods, congregations or extra-conciliar networks. Assembly Moderators take this role and are a focus of unity.

b) Governance is setting and ensuring implementation of the overall strategy which is discerned under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit. At Assembly level the role of the General Assembly and the Mission Council acting on its behalf includes the ultimate responsibility for policy on the use of the Church's resources, whether financial or human. The Moderators of General Assembly have the role of chief governance officers.

c) Compliance is monitoring the evolving policies of the governance bodies to ensure they are consistent with the legislative, fiduciary and charitable requirements laid on the Church. The Chair of the Trust is the chief compliance officer and has access to the Assembly Moderators as chief governance officers at all times.

d) Management is the oversight and leadership of the staff as they develop and implement the policies and activities as agreed by the governing bodies. The staff will seek to produce highly professional and distinctively Christian resourcing of the Church. It is one part of the role of the General Secretary to be the chief executive officer who is responsible for ensuring it happens.

e) Advice is professional input, knowledge and expertise provided to enable decision making and implementation. This is the role of committees and staff. Committees may exist to advise Assembly, Mission Council or management, but they should not be exercising governance functions unless such is explicitly delegated to them by the governance bodies.

f) Implementation is delivery of agreed policies and programmes into the life of the church. It belongs in a variety of places in the Church. Implementation at Assembly level is the responsibility of Church House staff and such work teams, paid or voluntary, as they or the councils of the Church establish. Work teams are accountable through staff to management. Implementation at other levels is the role of synods and congregations.

2 Church House

2.1. Church House should understand itself as having three roles:

a) Providing a secretariat for General Assembly and Mission Council and for those who need representatively to "embody" the Church, who may sometimes be voluntary officials and sometimes members of paid staff.

b) Providing such service functions as the congregations and Synods seek. It is not the job of Church House staff to initiate programmes except in response to a clear and demonstrable demand or specific requirement, for example a legislative matter.

c) Maintaining communication networks within the Church and between the Church and the wider society.

2.2. In order to undertake these roles, Church House needs three Departments, as previously identified in the "Catch the Vision" process:

a) a Ministries of the Church Department, providing:
- ministerial recognition (for ordained, CRCW and Assembly-recognised lay ministries) and associated tasks
- ministries training and equipping of the whole people of God (for ordained, CRCW and lay ministries of all kinds, whether in church or world)
- effective coordination of youth and children's work
- equal opportunities and safeguarding

b) a Mission Department, providing a URC voice and participation external to the URC through:
- URC participation in the Joint Public Issues Team (with Methodists and Baptists)
- co-ordination of URC participation in inter-Church and inter-Faith relationships
- external and internal Communications
- engagement in mission activities that need to be conducted at Assembly level (e.g. public communication of the gospel).
- the areas currently under the Mission Committee

c) an Administration and Resources Department, providing:
- Finance and Trust services
- Human Resources
- advice on compliance with legal obligations and church policies
- administration of General Assembly and Mission Council
- Communications services
- IT services

Some of these services may be shared by negotiation with other Churches or charities.

d) MCAG will take responsibility for servicing Mission Council and Assembly Arrangements Committee for General Assembly.

e) Faith and Order will be a resource to inform the life of the whole church

Notes: It is recognised that these changes may have implications for the roles and structures of committees and task groups.

A primary aim of the review has been to reduce the number of direct reports to the General Secretariat. Each Departmental Secretary will be responsible for the staff in their Department in order to achieve this aim. The three Departmental Secretaries will report directly to the General Secretary.

2.3 The General Secretariat will therefore consist of the General Secretary and the Departmental Secretaries of the three Departments, the latter normally deputising for the General Secretary as necessary and appropriate. There will no longer be a post of Deputy General Secretary.

a) Consultation will be required to define the nature of the role of each of the Departmental Secretaries.
b) Reputation management in conjunction with Communications, Pastoral Reference and Welfare, and Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline (MIND) will be covered by the General Secretariat.

3 Strategy

The development (but not the execution) of strategy cuts across these divides. A strategy for the whole Church needs strong ownership at Assembly, Synod and congregational level. It cannot be imposed. That suggests:

a) Strategy would be the key task of the General Assembly, with its meeting planned in such a way that people come having already considered the strategic issues in local churches, synods and wider (as appropriate) and ready to engage in a carefully-planned process towards an agreed strategy. Necessary governance functions would be kept to the minimum necessary for accountability.
b) A small Strategy Development Group, chaired by the General Secretary, would enable the discernment process of General Assembly (and Mission Council) in conjunction with the other councils of the church, wider church and society. This group would also prioritise and oversee the implementation of strategies, policies and decisions thereby agreed and ensure consistency and coordination of actions
    i) It is recommended that this small group would comprise the General Secretary and the three Departmental Secretaries. There would also be additional members, elected or appointed representative of the wider Church.
c) There is a key role for Synod Moderators as the group who have routine contact with congregations but are also sufficiently removed from the very local – and sufficiently few in number – to be able to think together in conjunction with the General Secretary. The role is to engage in consultation of a kind that enables the discernment of the key strategic questions and offer realistically-grounded options.
d) Policy development will emerge from the discerning process of the councils who might then appoint a group to do the detailed work or draw from one of the three Departments in Church House but this must be in response to a clear and demonstrable demand or specific requirement, for example a legislative matter

QUESTIONS FOR MISSION COUNCIL

A: Structure:

A1) Do you agree with the six functions for the central structure and where they are described as residing?

A2) Are there any changes or suggestions you would make to these?

B: Strategy:

B1) Do you agree that there is a need for a small Strategy Development Group in the structure?

B2) Who would best serve on this group?

C: Church House:

C1) Do you agree with the three roles outlined for Church House and if not, why?

C2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the three Departmental model?

C3) Please indicate how strongly you warm or not to this as a direction (10 highly in favour 0 against)

Assembly Arrangements Committee

General Assembly 2014

1. Account for Assembly 2012

The appended spreadsheet includes a provisional account for this year's General Assembly in Scarborough. It is perhaps encouraging to note that the final cost appears to have been just within the budget set by the Finance Committee of £300k. The move from a campus to a conference centre and hotel based venue appears to have made little difference to the overall cost, but the improved facilities and ambience were widely welcomed, though the extra work involved in planning for the team and administrative work for Ann Barton, the Assembly Organiser, was significant.

For the sake of clarity of accounting the numbers attending do not include those who paid for themselves and those whose costs were charged to another committee or organisation (the full total accommodated was 527). The eventual average cost per person per night for accommodation was just under £80 (slightly less than at Loughborough University). Hire of the Assembly hall and rooms and technical provision costs and the Children's Assembly, were significantly down on 2010. There were rather fewer participants in the Children's Assembly and ecumenical/international guests than had been provided for.

2. Planning for Assembly 2014

At Assembly it was agreed that the budget for 2013 and 2014 would be reduced by one third so that the total available for the next Assembly in 2014 will be reduced to £200k. However, Assembly did not appear enthusiastic about reducing the length of the meeting and referred to Mission Council the task of deciding on future arrangements. With this in mind the Assembly Arrangements Committee (AAC) has been considering possibilities for delivering a satisfactory Assembly within the budgetary restraints.

Under the accepted pattern of locations for Assembly meetings the 2014 meeting should be held in Wales. The AAC had been under the impression that, because of the decision to use consensus decision-making, future meetings would have to be arranged where members can meet round tables to facilitate group discussion and exchanges. It had proved impossible to meet this requirement in Wales, though possible venues had been found in Torquay and Eastbourne. However, on being advised that it was not essential for Assembly to meet seated round tables and in view of the substantial reduction in budget, a return to theatre style appears inevitable. On this basis the search for a suitable venue has continued.

After a satisfactory site visit to Cardiff in August and initial costings, the AAC recommends that the General Assembly be held in the St David's Hall from 3rd to 6th July 2014. Assembly met there in 1987. St David's Hall is located in the heart of Cardiff city centre within easy (almost level) walking distance of the Central Station and a number of hotels. It has a main auditorium seating almost 2,000, with many ancillary rooms and sophisticated technical facilities. The surrounding area abounds in eating places of all sorts. The total charge for the use of the premises appears competitive. The only other comparable and in some ways rather more attractive venue, though less conveniently situated, is the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay, but this had no dates available in July 2014.

Budget Process for 2014

The dilemma facing the AAC is to find a proposal for a meaningful, viable Assembly costing the central resources of the church only £200k – a third less than the last two Assemblies. A number of scenarios were suggested and the costs examined – both for St David's Hall, Cardiff and other possible venues. Eventually the Committee agreed to present just two options, both based on St David's Hall, Budget A assuming the same length of Assembly as in recent years, i.e. spread over four days and three nights and Budget B spread over three days and two nights.

It must be stressed that there are very few firm figures on which to base budgets two years ahead, apart from a ballpark figure quoted by the centre itself, so most are calculated (after consultation with the Chief Finance Officer) by increasing the actual 2012 costs by 5% for inflation and adjusting other figures in line with the savings proposed.

The appendix attached seeks to provide sufficient background information to enable Mission Council to consider the options and make a judgement. It contains:

1. **A provisional account for the 2012 Assembly.** There are a number of notes at the foot of this schedule and it must be stressed that at this stage it is "work in progress". However, is it encouraging to note that the "bottom line" is very close to the £300k budget.
2. **Assembly Base Budget 2014.** This indicates what the Assembly budget would look like if we were to continue with the same budget (£300k), numbers of participants and basic criteria as in recent years, with a notional marking up for inflation of 5%.
3. **Assembly Budget A – St David's Hall, Cardiff.** Assumes a day setting-up, then Assembly starts 2pm day 1 and concludes 1pm day 4 (i.e. the same length as at Scarborough).
4. **Assembly Budget B – St David's Hall, Cardiff.** Assumes a day setting-up, then Assembly starts 2pm day 1 and concludes 1pm day 3.

In order to achieve the savings required to meet the budget of £200k the following points summarise the changes that will be necessary.

3. Budget A:

1. Three nights accommodation required
2. Theatre style seating in main Assembly hall
3. Reduction 50% in ecumenical & international guests
4. Assembly planning restricted to £10k – restriction in personnel in advance parties
5. Inflation taken at 5% relative to 2012
6. £20k is included for a six month appointment in the run up to Assembly to ensure the Assembly Office is adequately staffed
7. Those attending book their own accommodation through a designated agency or privately as they wish. (A few exceptions for special guests, staff required to be there, etc.)
8. No meals provided or paid for. (A few exceptions for special guests, staff required to be there, etc.)
9. Each participant will be given an allowance towards their costs of £50per night.
10. No Children's Assembly paid from the Assembly budget
11. No Jubilee/ New Ministers/spouses and no new church reps (unless as Synod appointed reps)
12. No travel costs paid by Assembly, but we would organise a travel pool so everyone pays the same for travel
13. No crèche, no signers (no first aiders – provided by venue)

On the very provisional figures based on the above, the four day Assembly would cost almost exactly the £200k budget allowed.

4. Budget B:

Exactly the same criteria as for Budget A above except that:

1. Hotel accommodation would be provided for members of Assembly (estimated at a rate of £84 per person per night) as at Scarborough in 2012.
2. There would be some savings in variable costs such as hire of hall, technical provisions, etc (other costs and savings would be the same).

On this basis there could be a saving of about £10k compared to a four day Assembly, i.e. £190k, which should be retained for contingencies.

The Committee has prepared a timetable which would allow the same number of hours of business over the three days as in 2012 over four days and has considered ways of making the business more efficient whilst allowing sufficient time for the most significant matters, though the agenda would be restricted substantially to that of a purely business meeting.

It should be remembered that, until the Assembly began to meet residentially on university campuses (York 1989), the majority of members were accommodated by hospitality with church members, sometimes over a wide area round the venue and no meals were provided for participants. Whilst it would not be practicable to return to hospitality accommodation, it should be possible for participants to obtain accommodation (we can make arrangements through an agency for this) and choose whether they wish to stay in a B&B or a Five Star Hotel! Lunches and dinners at Scarborough Spa were charged at £19.10 per day (exclusive of VAT), whereas it should be possible to obtain meals for much less than this in central Cardiff.

Since the proposed costings above only just meet the £200k budget and there is no contingency sum included, it must be recognised that if any of the suggested savings listed is "added back", a comparable new saving will need to be found to replace it.

The Committee wishes to make it clear that the comments and recommendation in this paper only apply to St David's Hall, Cardiff in 2014 and savings anticipated here would not necessarily apply in other venues or circumstances in future.

5. Timing

One problem with St David's Hall is that it is only available for one period in July 2014 and this concludes with Sunday 6 July – the premises are not available on Monday 7 July. If we agree a four day meeting this could be scheduled for set-up on Wednesday 2 July, with Assembly starting at 2pm on Thursday, 3 July and concluding at 1pm on Sunday 6 July. Despite the perception that Sunday travel is difficult, Cardiff is a relatively good travel hub and it should be possible for everyone to return home leaving from 1pm. However, it appears that St David's Hall is available Tuesday 1 July for set-up so that Assembly could run Wednesday to Saturday, though this will make it more difficult for those in employment to attend.

6. Recommendation:

Bearing in mind that the business often appears rushed and sometimes is not completed in a four day Assembly and there appeared to be a strong reluctance to reduce the length of Assembly when the matter was aired at Scarborough, the Committee recommends that:

Resolution

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that the next ordinary meeting of General Assembly be held in St David's Hall, Cardiff from Thursday 3 July to Sunday 6 July, 2014 and that the criteria laid out in Assembly Budget A (in Paper G) be adopted as the basis for the financial arrangements of the meeting in order to comply with the agreed budget limit of £200,000.

7. Follow-up

If this is agreed, the dates and venue can be publicised and the Assembly team can begin more detailed research and planning, including giving further thought to how the Assembly agenda can be structured to ensure there is more time for discussion of key issues.

Appendix – Assembly Account 2012 & Budget 2014

(see attached)

ASSEMBLY ACCOUNT 2012 BUDGET 2014

G

	Nos Attend	Actual 2012	Notes	Base Budget 2014	Notes	Budget St Davids Nos	Budget A Cardiff Cost	Notes	Budget B Cardiff Cost	Notes
ACCOMMODATION			1							
Synod Representatives & other members	288	61,977		65,076		291	43,650	1	48,888	1
Ecumenical & International members	17	13,387		14,056		12	3,024	2	2,016	
Childrens Assembly (inc. staff)	36	8,925		9,371				4		
Assembly & Church staff personnel from budget	63	14,627		15,358		43	10,836	3	7,224	
Visitors & guests paid from budget	26	6,941		7,289		13	3,276	3	2,184	
Jubilee and new ministers, new churches (& spouses)	50	4,049		4,252						
	480	109,907	2	115,402	1	359	60,786		60,312	
CATERING		37,707		39,592			3,000	5	3,000	
REPRESENTATIVES EXPENSES (Travel to Assembly)		23,089		24,243			3,000	6	3,000	
HIRE OF ASSEMBLY HALL & ROOMS (inc set-up)		11,358		11,926			25,000	7	20,000	
TECHNICAL PROVISION (inc. streaming, Children's Assembly & Office)		39,125		41,081			30,000	8	25,000	2
ASSEMBLY OFFICE		3,131		3,288			3,288	9	3,288	
WHAT DO YOU THINK (inc. accomm/food)		1,460	3	1,533			1,533	9	1,533	
CHILDREN'S ASSEMBLY (excluding technical, food & accomm which are included above)		2,294		2,409				4		
CRECHE		2,650		2,783				10		
		230,721		242,257			126,607		116,133	
MISCELLANEOUS COSTS (General Note)		63,507	4	78,493	2/3		74,416	10	74,416	
CONTINGENCIES									9,451	3
Budget 2012 £300,000 2014 £200,000		294,228		320,750	4		201,023		200,000	

FOR NOTES SEE PAGE 2

ASSEMBLY ACCOUNT 2012 BUDGET 2014

General Note: No VAT included - charged elsewhere in the URC central budget. Miscellaneous costs include printing, postage, Assembly Arrangements Committee & planning and all the general staff & running costs of Assembly

Actual Account 2012 Notes - Unless otherwise indicated all costs are shown as 5% over 2012 for inflation.

1. The basis costs per person per night (pppn) was £80. Most attended for three nights, Jubilee & New Ministers/CRCWs mostly for one night.
2. No account has been taken in these tables of visitors, who were invoiced and paid for themselves and staff charged to other budgets.
3. "What do you think" was held at another venue this year and most costs were not charged to Assembly.
4. Assembly planning & preparation costs were high for a new venue and method of working (hotels, not campus)

Base Budget 2014 Notes - This is the basic budget based on an overall increase of 5% for inflation and with small adjustments (below).

1. The accommodation rate has been calculated by assuming the same number of participants and adding 5% to costs - basically £84pppn.
2. Assembly Planning - site visits, etc., has been restricted to £10k.
3. All future budgets include a cost of £20k for an additional staff person in the run-up to Assemblies.
4. The total on this basis showns almost exactly a 5% increase on the basic budget of £300k - in line with inflation.

St Davids Hall, Cardiff Budget A assumes an Assembly over four days (three nights) - Notes:

1. A contribition of £50 pppn would be made for accommodation to Synod representatives.
2. Ecumenical & International voting guests reduced by 50% on the previous budget number (12 of each).
3. Staff and invited guests for whom we have to pay have been included at the budget rate of £84pppn.
4. The Children's Assembly has been taken out entirely from the Assembly budget. It may be able to fund it from other sources.
5. This assumes that all representatives pay for their own meals - small sum for guests & staff working.
6. This assumes that all representatives pay their own travel costs (though a fares pool arrangement could be organised at no cost to Assembly). Small sum for guests, etc.
7. St Davids quoted £20k for a slightly shorter period because they are not available Monday. We have asked to start Thursday till Sunday lunch so £5k has been added for this.
8. Because of the full provision available at St Davids Hall, the technical team gave the impression their costs would be considerably less. Also no Children's Assembly.
9. In these cases the base budget figure has been put in since of no savings are known.
10. A number of facilities such as the creche and signing in these budgets have been dropped unless alternative funding can be found. A budget of £1000 has been included for "hospitality".
11. Jubilee Ministers, new Ministers/CRCWs and their spouses and new church representatives have been taken out .

St Davids Hall, Cardiff Budget B assumes an Assembly over three days (two nights) - Notes:

1. The significant differences here are the Assembly would meet the accommodation cost of all participants (as now) but the nights have been reduced in all cases by one night.
2. The cost of hire of the Assembly hall and rooms has been reduced by £5k.
3. The small difference between the budget target & estimated costs has been included for contingencies (for which provision should always be made).

J

Nominations Committee

Convener appointments

Since General Assembly the following have agreed to serve:

Ministries – Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee
Convener: Revd Pamela Ward (with immediate effect)

Pensions Executive
Convener: Dr Chris Evans (from 1 January 2013)

RESOLUTION

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council approves the following appointments:

Ministries - Maintenance of Ministry Sub-Committee Convener: Revd Pamela Ward (with immediate effect)

Pensions Executive Convener: Dr Chris Evans (from 1 January 2013)

Budget 2013

1 Attached as Appendix 2 is the draft budget for 2013 which the Finance Committee presents to Mission Council with the support of the URC Trustees.

Income

2 Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund 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 2013 will be a reduction of around £130,000 (or £130k) relative to 2012. This is equivalent to a reduction of around 1% in cash terms and, with inflation in 2013 likely to be at least 2%, a reduction of about 3% in what the money will buy. This continues the trend of recent years of a mild but consistent downward trend in income.

Expenditure on Programmes and Support

3 Mission Council in November 2011, when presented with the 2012 budget showing a deficit of nearly £1m, agreed that the expenditure for 2013 must look significantly different. During subsequent work, Mission Council asked for the resources directly supporting stipendiary ministry exercised in local settings to be the priority and the new savings therefore had to be found mainly from the programmes overseen by the Assembly Committees and from other support functions paid for from the central budget.

4 The March 2012 Mission Council agreed to budget reduction targets for 2013 for six of the major spending Committees with a request to them and all other budgetholders to explore how further savings could be made in future years. General Assembly in July debated these proposed reductions at length and endorsed them all. As set out in Table 1 below, all these reductions have been achieved. This represents a great deal of hard and somewhat unwelcome work by the Committees and their staff.

5 With other budgetholders also managing, in aggregate, to reduce slightly their expenditure budgets relative to 2012, the total for Programmes and Support is £5.5m in the 2013 budget. This is a reduction in cash terms of 11% on 2012, or around 13% in real terms after taking account of likely inflation.

TABLE 1: Budget Savings (£k)

Committee	Saving Requested	Saving Proposed
Assembly Arrangements	50	50
Communications & Editorial	40	40
Education & Learning	200	205
Ministries	60	62
Mission	150	151
Youth & Children's Work	100	106
	600	614

Expenditure on Pensions Support

6 The changes in the benefits provided by the URC Ministers' Pension Fund, which Mission Council supported at its May 2011 meeting, went through the necessary formal consultation process with members of the Fund and were then agreed by General Assembly. A separate paper invites Mission Council to approve the consequent changes to the Rules of the Fund.

7 With clarity about the terms of the Fund's work, it has been possible to firm up the calculations arising from the 2012 triennial valuation of the Fund. The payments from the budget into the Pension Fund are likely to fall from £3.0m per annum to £2.6m per annum from 2013.

8 Given Mission Council's policy to phase out by 2016 the special Pensions Support that it has received from the Synods for the triennium 2010-12, the Finance Committee proposes that these savings in total funding costs should be reflected in a lower request to Synods for special Pensions Support in 2013. Instead of a total payment of £1m per annum, a request for £600k is recommended.

9 The Synod Treasurers have been consulted about the best way to divide up the total amount requested between the Synods. There was overwhelming support for continuing to do that on the basis of latest membership figures in the Synods. Appendix 1 therefore sets out what the donations being sought from each Synod would be on this basis if Mission Council wishes to achieve £600k overall.

Resolution 1

Mission Council notes with gratitude the Pension Support contributions from Synods over the triennium 2010-12 and requests Synods to continue this support in 2013 at a reduced level which will yield a total contribution of £600k.

Expenditure on Stipends

10 The largest part of the expenditure side of the budget is the funding for stipends of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church-Related Community Workers. The current stipend is £23,700.

11 Mission Council has delegated the task of setting the stipend to the Finance Committee in conjunction with the URC Trustees. The draft budget incorporates the decision to raise the stipend by 2% for 2013. The addition to the budget is around £300k.

12 The General Assembly in July accepted the recommendations from Mission Council for the target trend in the number of ministers. At a time of falling membership across the denomination as a whole, this implies a reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers. The impact of the changes in the Normal Pension Age on the actual ages at which our ministers choose to retire has yet to emerge and so the estimates behind the likely total stipend costs in the budget are subject to a larger degree of uncertainty than usual.

13 Nonetheless our best estimates of retirements in 2013 and the more certain estimated number of ordinations, imply a reduction in the number of serving ministers in 2013 on average compared with 2012 of around 20. The total cost for stipends and related payments would then be £15,918k. This represents a larger proportion of the overall expenditure budget, at 74%, than in any budget for at least ten years. This is in line with Mission Council's decision that expenditure on local stipendiary ministry was the priority.

Income v Expenditure

14 Taking all these factors into account, and assuming Mission Council asks the Synods for £600k in Pensions Support, total expenditure in the budget exceeds income by £160k. This is a clear contrast with the budget deficit of £958k for 2012 although plainly it is not quite a balanced budget.

15 The Church has a reserves policy to keep as an absolute minimum the equivalent of three months' expenditure in general free reserves. If the 2013 figures emerged in line with this draft budget, the reserves at the end of 2013 would still be above this minimum level.

Resolution 2

Mission Council adopts the budget for 2013 set out in Appendix 2.

John Ellis

Treasurer

20 September 2012

Appendix 1: Possible Pensions Support from Synods

Synod	2013 Request £k
Northern	31
North Western	60
Mersey	37
Yorkshire	36
East Midlands	39
West Midlands	52
Eastern	50
South Western	38
Wessex	63
Thames North	55
Southern	79
Wales	24
Scotland	36
	600

Appendix 2: 2013 Budget
(see attached)

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH — Draft 2013 Budget — K

	Income and surpluses are shown in brackets	2011 Actual £	2012 Budget £	2013 Draft Budget £	Comments on 2013 Budget
Income					
	Ministry and Mission contributions	(20,124,841)	(19,885,000)	(19,752,000)	Cautious estimate
	Pensions - additional funding	(977,275)	(1,000,000)	(600,000)	Proposal to Mission Council
	Investment and other income				Assumes no increases
	Dividends	(659,144)	(690,000)	(652,000)	
	Donations	(12,371)	0	0	
	Specific legacies	0	0	0	
	Grants/Income - Memorial Hall Trust/Fund	(226,255)	(230,000)	(213,000)	
	Interest - New College Trust /Fund	(19,696)	0	0	
	Net other interest	(39,307)	(40,000)	(40,000)	
	Other income, including property rentals	(17,770)	(20,000)	(20,000)	
		(974,542)	(980,000)	(925,000)	
	Total income	(22,076,658)	(21,865,000)	(21,277,000)	
Expenditure					Pay: Ministers includes 2% stipend increase
A	**Ministry**				Lay staff: assumes 2% cost increase
	Local and special ministries and CRCWs	16,554,005	16,658,000	15,918,000	Numbers more uncertain than usual
	Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses	615,202	658,500	633,000	
	Ministries department	317,229	321,133	259,068	£60k saving achieved
		17,486,436	17,637,633	16,810,068	
B	**Education & Learning**				
	Initial training for ministry	624,623	628,000	628,000	
	Continuing training for ministry	180,951	204,000	110,000	2013-14 temporary cuts pending
	Resource Centres support	534,876	535,500	459,500	longer-term measures
		1,340,450	1,367,500	1,197,500	
	Windermere RCL - net support	135,769	113,000	114,250	
	Training for Learning & Serving - net support	109,615	121,300	85,700	
	Lay preachers support	10,072	10,000	10,000	
	Education & Learning department	160,783	157,200	157,000	
		1,756,688	1,769,000	1,564,450	£200k saving achieved

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH — Draft 2013 Budget — K

	Income and surpluses are shown in brackets	2011 Actual £	2012 Budget £	2013 Draft Budget £	Comments on 2013 Budget
C	**Youth & Children's Work**				Now combined for reporting & budgeting.
	Youth and Children's work	**287,610**	**409,800**	**303,640**	Detail being worked on; safeguarding moves
	Pilots development	**114,171**	**0**	**0**	to Admin.
		401,781	**409,800**	**303,640**	£100k saving achieved
D	**Mission**				
	Mission programmes and team	**761,162**	**821,300**	**670,000**	£150k saving achieved
	National Ecumenical Officers	**0**	**35,000**	**35,000**	
		761,161	**856,300**	**705,000**	
E	**Governance**				
	General Assembly (costs spread over two years)	**150,000**	**150,000**	**100,000**	£50k saving anticipated, options under discussion
	Mission Council	**52,008**	**50,000**	**44,000**	
	Professional fees	**117,456**	**110,000**	**105,000**	Assumes lower legal costs
	Other	**84,238**	**66,000**	**52,000**	
		403,703	**376,000**	**301,000**	
F	**Administration & Resources**				
	Central Secretariat & whole church	**430,153**	**418,200**	**444,800**	Provisional, post review, includes safeguarding
	Pastoral & welfare	**704**	**2,000**	**2,000**	
	Faith & Order	**0**	**0**	**2,000**	
	Equal Opportunities	**1,472**	**2,000**	**2,000**	
	URC House costs	**273,208**	**289,700**	**285,000**	
	IT Services	**162,005**	**154,500**	**155,800**	
	Finance	**477,485**	**505,500**	**499,400**	
	Communications & Editorial	**487,434**	**402,200**	**361,800**	£40k saving achieved
		1,832,460	**1,774,100**	**1,752,800**	
	Total expenditure	**22,642,230**	**22,822,833**	**21,436,958**	
	NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	**565,571**	**957,833**	**159,958**	

K1

Ministers' Pension Fund Rules

Background

1 At its May 2011 Meeting Mission Council considered and supported a number of adjustments to the benefits provided by the URC Ministers' Pension Fund. After a formal consultation with Fund members, the changes were presented to the General Assembly in July 2012.

2 Assembly debated these proposals and agreed to them. By means of Resolution 22, Assembly authorised Mission Council to agree to the changes in the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund to reflect these changes in benefits. This can be achieved by a Deed of Amendment signed on behalf of the Church in its role as "employer" (as understood by pensions legislation).

Deed of Amendment

3 The attached draft Deed is designed to achieve the changes in the Rules agreed by Assembly. Most of the text is focused on this.

4 In addition the opportunity of the Deed has been used to make a small number of amendments to the rules with the following purposes:

- To clarify some processes in the light of queries from members
- To update references to relevant legislation
- To correct some typographical errors in the existing Rules.

5 The draft Deed is acceptable to the Directors of the Ministers' Pension Fund.

Resolution

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the Deed of Amendment to the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund (as attached to Paper K1 before Mission Council in October 2012) should be signed on behalf of the United Reformed Church by the Moderator and Clerk of the Assembly.

John Ellis

Treasurer

29 September 2012

Dated 2012

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

DEED OF AMENDMENT

THIS DEED OF AMENDMENT is made on 2012

BY:

(1) **THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH** acting by [•] and [•] being respectively Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and duly authorised by the General Assembly to execute this deed on behalf of the United Reformed Church (the "**URC**").

WHEREAS:

(A) The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (the "**Scheme**") was established by an interim trust deed dated 29 May 1980 and is presently governed by a Definitive Trust Deed with Rules attached, as approved by the General Assembly of the URC in May 1993 (as amended), (the "**Trust Deed and Rules**").

(B) The URC is the current principal employer and United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Limited is the current trustee of the Scheme respectively.

(C) Definitions used in the Trust Deed and Rules have the same meaning in this deed.

(D) By Rule 34.1 of the Trust Deed and Rules, the URC may, acting by the authority of the Assembly, amend the provisions of the Trust Deed and Rules, provided no amendment shall be made until a report on its financial effect on the Fund has been obtained from the Actuary.

(E) The URC wishes to amend the Trust Deed and Rules as set out in this deed.

(F) The amendments made by this deed are not regulated modifications of the Scheme within the meaning of section 67A(2) of the Pensions Act 1995.

THIS DEED WITNESSES as follows:

1. In exercise of its powers under Rule 34.1 of the Trust Deed and Rules the URC makes the following amendments with effect from 1 January 2013:-

1.1 The DEFINITIONS section is amended as follows:

1.1.2 The definition of **"Normal Pension Age"** is amended by replacing "65" with "68";

1.1.3. The definition of **"The Pension Trustee"** is amended by inserting the words "Ministers' Pensions" in between the words "Church" and "Trust", by inserting the word "Limited" after the word "Trust", and by removing the word "the" before the word "trustees".

1.1.4. A new definition is added at the end of the DEFINITIONS section as follows:

"**30. Residuary Member**

means a member in Pensionable Service on 31 December 2012 or a member who had been in Pensionable Service at any time prior to 31 December 2012 and in relation to whom the Trustee exercises its discretion under Rule 14.2 upon him re-entering Pensionable Service after 31 December 2012."

1.2 Rule 13.2 is amended as follows:

1.2.1. By replacing the words "the pension age shall normally be" with the words, "Normal Pension Age shall be admitted to membership as"; and

1.2.2. By the addition of the following words at the end of the Rule:

"Members may continue in Pensionable Service until their actual date of retirement."

1.2.3. A new Rule 13.5 is inserted as follows:

"13.5 A minister or CRCW not eligible for admission to membership under Rule 14 as it applied immediately before 1 January 2013 shall be permitted to become a member on a contributory member basis on 1 January 2013."

1.2.4. A new Rule 13.6 is inserted as follows:

"13.6 In all other cases where a minister or CRCW has elected either not to become a member at the first opportunity to do so or to opt-out of membership whilst remaining in the service of the URC under Rule 14.3, that minister or CRCW may be admitted to membership as a contributory member at a later date before Normal Pension Age, subject to the prior written consent of the Pension Trustee and membership being granted on such terms as to benefits and contributions, including the provision of death and ill-health benefits, as the Pension Trustee determines at its absolute discretion. Where however the Committee in order to meet its legislative obligations requires the Pension Trustee to admit a minister or CRCW to membership, such that the prior written consent of the Pension Trustee shall not be required, the Pension Trustee retains a discretion to grant membership on such terms as to benefits and contributions, including the provision of death and ill-health benefits, as it sees fit, subject to any legislative minima required by the Committee to meet its said obligations."

1.3 Rule 14 is amended as follows:

1.3.1. Rule 14.1.1.1. is amended by inserting the words "With effect from 1 January 2013" at the start of the Rule, and by inserting the words "or CRCW" after the word "minister" and before the word "under";

1.3.2. Rule 14.1.1.1. is further amended by replacing the words "the age of fifty five years" with the words "Normal Pension Age"; and

1.3.3. Rule 14.1.1.1. is further amended by replacing the word "became" with "become".

1.3.4. Rule 14.2 is amending by deleting the numbers "14.2.1." and "14.2.2." such that the text of those Sub-rules becomes part of the main body of Rule 14.2.

1.3.5. A new Rule 14.3 is inserted as follows:

"14.3 Any member may opt-out of membership at any time on giving 3 months' notice in writing to the Pension Trustee, or on such shorter notice as the Pension Trustee may agree."

1.4 Rule 17.2.1 is amended by replacing the word "advise" with the word "advice".

1.5 Rule 20 is amended as follows:

1.5.1. The heading to the Rule is amended by the insertion of ": general" after the word "Retirement".

1.5.2. Rule 20.1 is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

"20.1 If,

20.1.1 before 1 January 2013, a member retires before age 65 on account of incapacity to undertake the duties of a stipendiary minister or CRCW or such similar occupation acceptable to the Committee due to ill-health duly certified to the satisfaction of the Pension Trustee in accordance with the requirements of Rule 20.2, the member shall be entitled to an immediate pension which shall be calculated as provided in Rule 18 but by reference to the member's full prospective Pensionable Service up to attaining age 65.

20.1.2 on or after 1 January 2013, a member retires before Normal Pension Age on account of incapacity to undertake the duties of a stipendiary minister or CRCW or such similar occupation acceptable to the Committee due to ill-health duly certified to the satisfaction of the Pension Trustee in accordance with the requirements of Rule 20.2, the member shall be entitled to an immediate pension which shall be calculated as provided in Rule 20A below."

1.5.3. Rule 20.2 is amended by inserting the words "appointed by the Pension Trustee (unless otherwise agreed by the Pension Trustee)" in between the words "practitioner" and "that".

1.5.4. Rule 20.5 is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

"20.5 Where a member who receives a pension under this Rule 20 either:

20.5.1 does not submit to an examination under Rule 20.3 above within a reasonable period as decided by the Pension Trustee, or

20.5.2 in the opinion of the Pension Trustee, no longer satisfies the condition described in Rule 20.2 for the payment of an ill-health pension, or

20.5.3 in the case of a member who is not a Residuary Member and is capable, in the opinion of the Pension Trustee, of undertaking remunerated employment, then the Pension Trustee may suspend the pension for any period or periods before Normal Pension Age (in which case the pension may also be reduced). The Pension Trustee shall not be required to pay any such suspended payments of pension should pension recommence but the Pension Trustee must be reasonably satisfied that the benefits (including death benefits) for a member who retires under this Rule are at least equal in value to the benefits to which the member would otherwise have become entitled on leaving the Fund."

1.5.5. Rule 20.6 is amended by inserting the words "if an ill-health pension is in payment and not suspended" at the end of the Rule.

1.6 A new Rule 20A is inserted as follows:

"**20A Ill Health Retirement from 1 January 2013**

A member entitled to receive a pension under Rule 20.1.2 on or after 1 January 2013 shall receive an immediate pension calculated as follows.

20A.1 Where a member has less than 10 years of membership in the Fund the pension shall be calculated as provided in Rule 18.1 but disregarding any pensionable service after attaining age 65.

20A.2 Where a member has completed more than 20 years' membership in the Fund the pension shall be calculated as provided in Rule 18.1 but by reference to the member's full prospective Pensionable Service up to attaining age 65. In the case of a part-time member this shall be on the basis that Pensionable Service remains part-time unless a concession has been granted under Rule 14.1.2.

20A.3 Where a member has completed between 10 years' and 20 years' membership in the Fund the pension shall be as calculated in Rule 20A.1 but the member shall be credited with an additional portion of pension benefits calculated as follows:

(Pension B – Pension A) x (C / 120)

Where:

Pension A is the pension calculated in accordance with Rule 20A.1 by reference to the member's actual Pensionable Service at the date of their ill-health retirement.

Pension B is the full prospective pension calculated in accordance with Rule 20A.2 (disregarding the requirement under that Rule that the member must have completed 20 years' membership in the Fund for that Rule to apply).

C is the number of complete months' in excess of 120 that the member has been a member of the Fund.

20A.4 Where Rule 20A.1, Rule 20A.2 or Rule 20A.3 applies in relation to a Residuary Member then the member shall receive pension benefits equal to those calculated under the applicable Rule save where the pension calculated under either Rule 20A.4.1 or Rule 20A.4.2 below is greater, in which case the Residuary Member shall receive a pension equal to the greater of those two amounts.

20A.4.1 The pension calculated in accordance with Rule 20A.2 (disregarding the requirement under that Rule that the member must have completed 20 years' membership in the Fund for that Rule to apply) but calculated as if the Residuary Member had retired due to Ill Health on 1 January 2013 (i.e. based on Pensionable Service up to 1 January 2013, prospective service at that date and the Member's Basic Stipend at that date).

20A.4.2 The pension equal to the Residuary Member's "Pension B" (as defined under Rule 20A.3 above) but multiplied by the following fraction: the Residuary Member's period of membership in the Fund prior to 31 December 2012 as divided by the Residuary Member's total period of membership in the Fund to date of retirement (or attainment of age 65 if earlier) (each period being calculated in complete months)."

20A.5 Where a member has been granted aggregated membership under Rule 14.2, Pensionable Service for the purposes of this Rule (Ill-health Retirement from 1 January 2013) shall include such periods of service whilst having an entitlement to a pension in accordance with Rule 29 (Leaving Service) as the Committee shall in its absolute discretion direct, provided that the Committee shall first have satisfied itself that such service is of an appropriate ecumenical nature".

1.7 Rule 21 is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

"**21. Early Retirement**

21.1 Save in those cases where Rule 20 applies, a member may only retire before Normal Pension Age if the member is over age 55. A member wishing to retire early will be entitled to an immediate pension based on the actual years of pensionable service and the amount of pension so calculated shall then be reduced on the advice of the Actuary having regard to the age of the member at the date of retirement, save that:

21.1.1 no reduction will be required in respect of the pension attributable to stipendiary service accrued up to and including 30 November 2006 if the member (at retirement) has completed 40 years of stipendiary service to the URC or its constituent denominations.

1.8 Rules 23.3, 29.1.1, 42.1, 42.2 and 42.3 are amended by replacing the words "normal pension age" with the words "Normal Pension Age".

1.9 Rule 29.2.2 is amended by inserting the following at the end of the Rule:

"A transfer payment can only be made under this Rule where permitted by overriding legislation and where the transfer would be a recognised transfer within the meaning in the Finance Act 2004."

1.10 Rule 41.2.3 is amended as follows:

1.10.1. in the first line of the Rule the word "is" is replaced by the words "before 6 April 2006 would have been".

1.10.2. the following is inserted at the end of the Rule:

", or since 6 April 2006, is a fund to which the Fund may make a transfer which is an authorised payment for the purposes of the Finance Act 2004."

1.11 The heading to Rule 42 is amended by deleting the words "before age 65".

1.12 The INLAND REVENUE LIMITS section is amended by inserting the following at the end of PART 1 – TAX RULES:

"**10.** **Late payment of benefits:** No provision in the Rules or Part II of the Schedule shall apply to restrict the payment of benefits after age 75 where the Pension Trustee so determines that benefits may be paid after that age."

2 **Overriding amendments**

2.1 This Clause 2 makes overriding amendments to the Rules. Notwithstanding any Rule to the contrary:

2.1.1 In any circumstance in which the Rules require the application of an early or late retirement factor to be applied to the pension payable to a member who is (or is treated as being) in Pensionable Service both before and after 1 January 2013, in relation to the period of Pensionable Service up to and including 31 December 2012, any early or late retirement factor (as applicable) will be calculated by reference to age 65. In respect of the period of Pensionable Service on and after 1 January 2013, any early or late retirement factor (as applicable) will be calculated by reference to age 68; and

2.1.2 It is the intention of the URC to make amendments to the Rules to implement the benefit changes described in The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund – Proposals for Change (the "**Announcement**") a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1 to this deed. Subject to Rule 34 of the Trust Deed and Rules and Section 67 of the Pensions Act 1995, in the event of uncertainty as to a member's entitlement to benefits under the Fund or in the event of conflict between the Rules and the Announcement, The Pension Trustee shall construe the Rules consistently with the Announcement, after consulting the URC where appropriate.

3. Rule 42.2 is amended by adding at the end of the Rule the words:

"Except that if the member was in Pensionable Service before 1 January 2013, the amount payable shall, in respect of the period of Pensionable Service up to and including 31 December 2012, be an amount calculated under Rule 23.2 as if the member had retired on the day immediately before death together with an amount representing the member's own contributions paid in respect of any period of Pensionable Service on and from 1 January 2013 plus interest as above".

4. The amendments made by this deed shall not take effect in respect of benefits deriving from periods of Pensionable Service which ended before the effective date of this deed.

5. This deed may be executed in any number of counterparts, all of which taken together shall constitute the same deed.

THIS DEED has been executed and delivered by the parties on the date written at the top of the first page.

EXECUTED as a **DEED**)

by the **UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**)

acting by the following duly authorised person)

[name])

Witness Signature: …… ……..

Witness Name: …… ……..

Witness Address: ……..

…… ……..

……..

[name])

Witness Signature: …… ……..

Witness Name: …… ……..

Witness Address: ……..

…… ……..

……..

APPENDIX 1

Ministries Committee
Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee
Pensions Executive

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF)

Proposals for change

In the light of the deficiency arising in recent valuations of the Fund the Pensions Executive has been considering whether any changes should be made to the benefit structure of the Fund, and if so what these should be. This paper summarises the conclusions of the Pensions Executive which are endorsed by (MoM/Ministries). It should be noted that these proposals are based on our current understanding of the funding position and if accepted would be incorporated into the next valuation of the Fund on 1 January 2012 with a view to amending the Rules at General Assembly in 2012. Should that valuation reveal an unfavourable result compared to our expectations then further changes may need to be brought to Assembly. It should further be noted that some of the proposals are subject to a further consultation with Fund members which could lead to additional revisions.

1 Introduction

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund has fallen into deficit in recent years through a number of factors. The principal ones being an improvement in the life expectancy of our ministers, which whilst welcomed does represent a greater pension cost as pensions are paid longer, disappointing investment returns over recent years as the economic situation has deteriorated and the need for greater reserves to be held to satisfy a regulatory view of prudence.

We are not alone in facing these challenges and they are being addressed in different ways by all the major denominations in the UK, as they have been by many of the country's private sector employers and latterly by the government as an employer.

2 Over-riding context

In the light of General Assembly's recognition of the Church's responsibility towards its ministers and CRCWs and its continuing tangible expressions of support for ministers to be provided with stipends, pensions and housing at an adequate level we have assumed that this will continue to be the case.

3 Method of pension provision

In the private sector to meet the challenges of funding pension schemes many pension arrangements have now been established on a money-purchase basis. Whilst this limits the contributions to a known amount it transfers risk to individuals and so the deficiencies that we have faced as a Church by reference to

improvements in longevity and stock-market fluctuations, are borne by the individual. This does not guarantee that an adequate pension can be provided. The Church's obligation is to care for its ministers unlike those private sector employers whose duty also includes improving the position of shareholders as well as their obligations to their employees. Whilst we have considered other models of pension provision we have concluded that the present approach of providing a final salary pension scheme remains the most equitable and cost effective way of providing adequate income to our ministers and their dependants at a time when they are unable to support themselves. ***We, therefore, at this time recommend the retention of the current scheme.***

This means that a minister retiring after a full career in ministry (say 40 years) will receive a pension from the URCMPF of 50% of stipend together with a state pension comprising the basic state pension and the additional state pension. Allowing for housing we believe that this will aim to provide a total net retirement income after also allowing for tax, national insurance, pension contributions etc. of between 85% and 90% of pre-retirement disposable income. Whilst the Government at the time of writing has not clarified its intentions going forward it seems probable that changes will result in a reduction of the state element in the longer term by say 5%.

4 Cost issues

Notwithstanding the comments above the Church does face cost pressures. Much of the URCMPF liability is in respect of current pensioners for whom benefits cannot be changed unilaterally. Similarly no change in benefits can be made in respect of service already completed by current members. The only changes that can be made are to the provision of pensions for new entrants to ministry and the Fund and for the future accrual of benefits by current members. We have looked at a range of options having regard not only to the cost issues but also to the needs of the Church and those likely to have meaningful financial impact are discussed in the following sections.

5 Accrual Rate

The pension entitlement currently accrues at the rate of 1.25% (one eightieth) of stipend for each year of membership, leading to a pension of 50% of stipend after 40 years of ministry. We have considered whether this should be reduced but have concluded that the income replacement ratios described in 3 above represent a fair interpretation of the Church's obligations to its ministers. Whilst this may need to be reviewed in the future depending upon the level of State benefit and/or the Church's financial capability we have concluded and hence ***we recommend that no change should be made to the accrual rate at this time.***

6 Pension Age

The concept of a set age of retirement has now largely disappeared as the government no longer permits (*current pension regulations before parliament)* the compulsory retirement of employees at a specific age. Nevertheless the availability of pension income will remain the main driver behind the individual's choice of a retirement age.

Both the state and non-state pensions have seen the effects of rising longevity. We have seen an increase in the life expectancy of ministers retiring at age 65 of perhaps 8 years over the existence of the URC. Not surprisingly this has proved to

be a significant additional cost. The state retirement age is now due to increase for both sexes to 66 by 2020 and currently to 68 by 2046. It is our view that increase to age 68 will occur much earlier. It will certainly be at least that for younger entrants to ministry going forward.

In the past the Church has not slavishly followed the State in its Pension Age and there is no necessity to do so now. We have considered various possible pension ages for the URCMPF and have concluded that the most appropriate is age 68. This would only apply to future service and it would continue to be possible to retire at an earlier age e.g. 65 with a reduction being made in the future service element to reflect the fact that the pension will be payable for longer. This would have a minimal impact on the pension of ministers retiring in the next few years at the current age of 65.

It should be understood that the Pension Age is only the pivotal age at which benefits are calculated. As stated above there is nothing in these proposals which compels a minister to retire at that age. Under the rules a minister can retire either at an earlier age or at a later age with an appropriate adjustment to the pension payable.

For example, if we take the case of a minister who has 30 years membership at age 65 of which 5 years is after the date of change, then should the minister decides to retire at age 65 the pension calculation (using the current stipend of £ 23,232) would be

5 years at 80'ths	5/80 times £23,232 =	£1,452

This would be reduced by some 18% as it would be payable for three years longer to give:

	£1,452 times 82% =	£1,190
	plus	
25 Years at 80'ths	25/80 times £23,232 =	£7,260
	Total pension	**£8,450 per annum**

This may be compared with the current pension when no reduction is applied of £8,712 per annum.

Consequently ***we recommend that a Pension Age of 68 be adopted for the accrual of benefits in the future.***

7 Ill-health early retirement

Currently the URCMPF provides a pension on ill-health based on full prospective service to Pension Age, so that, for example, an individual awarded an ill-health pension at age 40 with 10 years membership will receive a pension based on not just the ten years completed but also the 25 years that will not be served until age 65. The pension will similarly be payable for life.

Our current rules ensure that a minister is eligible for an ill-health pension if they are permanently unable to carry out the duties of a stipendiary URC minister or CRCW.

There are provisions for the pension to be reduced or to cease if the member recovers. These eligibility rules are unfortunately difficult to follow and can be interpreted to the effect that in some rare cases ministers not in pastoral charge may not be eligible. We therefore propose to rewrite these eligibility rules for current members to make them clearer, there will be no change in their intent.

We do believe, however, that the eligibility rules should be tightened up in one respect. We believe that the URCMPF should not be required to pay an ill-health pension at the full level if the minister is able to carry out a different occupation. In practice we do not see this as materially different in intent from the present rule but will remove a perceived ambiguity. We propose this change should apply to future members only.

Whilst many ill-health retirements occur close to Pension Age a number occur within a relatively short time in ministry. We believe that it is in the interests of the Church that this particular benefit should reflect to a greater degree the experience of a stipendiary minister or CRCW within the URC.

We therefore propose that in the future this benefit shall only be calculated by reference to full prospective service once twenty years of service has been completed. Where less than ten years of service has been completed the pension would only be based on accrued service. For ill-health retirement at intermediate points a uniform sliding scale would apply, so that in the example above the ill health pension would be based on only the ten years served. If ill-health retirement occurred at age 45, i.e. with a further five years service, then a credit of half of the prospective future service would be given. In this case the pension would therefore be based on a service of 25 years being the 15 years completed and ten years being half of the future service. We also propose that in calculating the prospective service this will be not be changed but will continue to be calculated by reference to service to age 65.

This new formula will apply to existing members but they will also be provided with an underpin which will protect the accrued pension. The underpin will continue to be linked to stipend increases in the future and will be calculated as a proportion of the current full prospective pension. The proportion will be the ratio of service at the date the changes commence to the total service completed at the date an ill-health pension commences.

In relation to existing members at the date of change we also propose a further underpin that the ill-health pension will be subject to a minimum of the pension based on the current rules but with the stipend fixed at the level applying at the date of change. In this way there will be no diminution in the ill-health pension that would be payable to a minister retiring on account of ill-health on the day after the change. There would be a gradual reduction depending on service completed and the absence of future stipend increases applying to this underpin as time progresses.

Whilst this paper is primarily concerned with the Pension aspects of the Church's obligations, we note that there is a continuing obligation on the councils of the Church both locally and centrally to provide ongoing support and care to ministers to minimise the likelihood of needing to provide a pension on ill-health whilst also ensuring that in appropriate circumstances application for a pension is made.

We, therefore, recommend a modification to the rules covering eligibility for an ill-health retirement pension in respect of new members.

We further recommend a reduction in the amount of ill-health pension subject to an underpin for existing members.

8 Death benefits

In conjunction with the change of Pension Age to 68 there will be an improvement in benefit levels payable on death before age 68.

The Fund provides a lump sum on death in service before retirement of either two or three times stipend depending upon personal circumstances (three times if there are

dependants). At present, therefore, a minister who remains in contributory service after age 65 continues to enjoy this benefit. This will continue to be the case.

The level of a spouse's pension payable on death in service is based on the prospective service of the minister to Pension Age. If the Pension Age increases then this pension will also increase.

We consider the levels of benefit currently payable as doing no more than meeting our obligation to ministers to care for their dependants should they die prematurely, hence we do not advocate a change in these benefit levels.

We note that the financial implications of the small improvement in benefits for an unfortunate few are equally small and that the improvements are a logical consequence of the move to a pension age of 68.

We therefore recommend no change in the calculation of death benefits, accepting the cost of the slight additional benefit to be provided on death.

9 Pension Increase after retirement

Our current rules provide for pensions in payment to increase each year by reference to the previous year's increase in the Retail Prices Index subject to a 5% maximum. This is broadly in line with historic legislation.

The government has amended the provisions surrounding state pension increases to reflect not the Retail Prices Index (RPI) but the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). It is generally accepted that due to both the composition of this latter index and its method of calculation the result will be a lower level of increases applying to pensions going forward.

Legislation is being amended so that it will be lawful for any scheme to calculate increases by reference to CPI rather than RPI as at present.

Whilst the legislation is, therefore, permissive it is not over-riding. Each pension scheme must abide with its own constitution and rules. In our case the present rule came into force as part of a previous cost reduction exercise whereby each minister individually consented to the change and the provisions are hard-wired into our rules. Our legal advice is that we cannot change this for current members. In any event we consider it appropriate to seek to maintain an adequate pension throughout retirement and are therefore not of a view that we should seek to curtail this benefit.

10 Pensions increases between leaving the Fund and reaching retirement age (Deferred pensions)

Similar to increases to pensions in payment the government has introduced legislation changing the increase we must provide over this period to retirement to be calculated by reference to CPI rather than as at present RPI.

In practice we have relatively few deferred pensioners, representing less than 3% of our liabilities. Should any deferred member return to active membership of the Fund there are provisions in our rules permitting previous periods of membership to be re-instated, as they invariably are.

Unlike the case of pensioner members our rules are hard-wired in the opposite direction so that if we do nothing we will need to use CPI going forward.

Considering the points above ***we recommend that no action be taken in respect of Deferred pensions, in consequence the new legislative minimum will apply***.

11 Contributions

Following each of the last two valuations the Church has asked active members to increase their contribution to the Fund. This has been to share the cost of the improving longevity which directly benefits members between the Church and serving ministers. A consequence of raising the Pension Age will be that such contributions are payable for a longer period. In view of the proposed increase in Pension Age we have considered whether a corresponding reduction should be made to the members' contribution rate.

We have concluded that since the financial effects of the proposed change in Pension Age will only gradually be reflected in members' benefits, and in view of the continuing financial pressures on the Church that it would be inappropriate to adjust members' contributions for this reason as part of this review.

Similarly we have considered whether it would be appropriate to recommend an increase in members' contributions to more adequately reflect the value of the pension and to share the cost to a greater extent with the Church. At present members contribute at the rate of 7.5% of stipend compared to almost 25% of stipend being contributed by the Church.

We have concluded that a further increase should not be recommended at this time but that this may need to be re-visited depending upon the results of the next actuarial valuation.

We therefore recommend no change be made to the members' contribution rate.

12 Membership

Following a previous review driven by financial pressures it was decided not to permit membership of the Fund to ministers over the age of 55 at the date of entry. This was done since it was perceived that pensions cost more the older one is. Instead of providing scheme membership a contribution of 10% of stipend has been made to personal pension arrangements in the few cases to which this applied. The government has now introduced legislation whereby we must provide a pension arrangement of a suitable standard for every minister over the age of 22. Our present arrangements for mature entrants will therefore need to change.

We believe it is appropriate to allow such late entrants into stipendiary ministry to enter the Fund in the normal way. In so doing we;

- Meet our obligation set out in 2 above, which the present approach does not
- Reduces discrimination on the grounds of age
- Recognise the changes in work practice whereby a default set retirement age no longer applies
- Reduce the administrative burden (and associated cost) on the Church of running another pension arrangement

We, therefore, recommend that the Fund admission policy be revised so that membership is available to all stipendiary ministers/CRCWs, regardless of age

Existing ministers who have not been admitted because of age would be permitted to enter should they wish for their future service. No credit would be given for historic service covered by their personal arrangements.

13 Financial Implications

As discussed above the proposals do not in any way affect benefits which have already accrued to serving ministers or pensioners. The Fund deficit is in respect of such accrued benefits and hence the proposals have a negligible effect on the deficit.

Financial savings arise from the reduction in benefits for future service primarily in respect of the proposed change in Pension Age.

We are advised by our actuary that the proposals above will lead to a reduction in the annual contribution made by the Church to the Pension Fund in the region of £300,000 - £ 350,000. This is a reduction of some 10% in the Church's annual contribution to the URCMPF.

14 Conclusion

Whilst we are aware that more radical proposals could have been made to the nature of the scheme, the retirement age or the accrual rate, we believe the above proposals are appropriate at the present time. In particular we believe that they provide a way to reduce the Church's contribution to the Fund whilst continuing to meet the Church's moral obligation to care for its ministers when they or their dependants are not in a position to care for themselves.

We accept that it may be necessary to carry out further reviews in the future but commend the results of this review to Mission Council for their further consideration.

Pensions Executive, 10 March 2011

Summary of recommendations

1. **The retention of the current scheme.**
2. **No change should be made to the accrual rate.**
3. **A pension age of 68 be adopted for the accrual of benefits in the future.**
4. **A modification to the rules covering eligibility for an ill-health retirement pension in respect of new members.**
5. **A reduction in the amount of ill-health pension subject to an underpin for existing members**.
6. **No change in the calculation of death benefits.**
7. **No action to be taken in respect of deferred pensions, in consequence the new legislative minimum will apply.**
8. **No change be made to the members' contribution rate.**
9. **The Fund admission policy be revised so that membership is available to all stipendiary ministers/CRCWs of the URC, regardless of age.**

Proposed Change to the Rules of Procedure

When Resolution 3 (ratification of Resolution 26 of 2010) was presented to General Assembly, the Revd Professor David Thompson, speaking on behalf of the Eastern Synod, told the Assembly of his concern that if the resolution were passed it would mean that significant changes to the Basis could be made without a final scrutiny by the Assembly. Subsequently notice was given that, should Resolution 3 be passed, a resolution in the names of the Revd Clare Downing and Professor Thompson would be presented which would permit the Assembly to decide that such changes should return to the Assembly. Both Resolution 3 and this accompanying resolution (44) were passed and the then Clerk assured the Assembly that Mission Council would be asked to amend the Rules of Procedure to incorporate the decision. I therefore propose the following resolution:

RESOLUTION

Mission Council resolves to amend the Rules for Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church by the insertion of a new clause 2.5 as follows:

2.5 When an amendment to the Basis of Union is proposed under Paragraph 3.(1) of the Structure and the General Assembly gives first approval it shall at the same time decide whether or not following reference to the synods (and, where appropriate, to local churches) the change may be approved for a second time by the Mission Council. If not and providing that notice has not been received from synods (and/or local churches) as defined in clause 3.(1)(f) a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting where it shall require a simple majority to be passed.

Margaret Carrick Smith

10 September 2012

Special Category Ministry

Present Situation

Special Category Ministry is one of our denomination's "jewels in the crown" and is often envied by our ecumenical colleagues. Following the decision of General Assembly 2005 we have had the potential for up to 60 posts. These posts have been in one of 3 broad categories:

- In new or priority areas of outreach where a synod might find it difficult to provide ministry from within their deployment. Examples include at present, Nick Adlem's school based ministry in Milton Keynes, Ken Blanton's ministry in Bracknell and Fran Ruthven's ministry in Morningside.
- In chaplaincies and work place ministries. Examples include John Scott's chaplaincy in the Metropolitan Universities, Peter Noble's chaplaincy in Cardiff Bay and John Mackerness's chaplaincy at Heathrow..
- Innovative ministry in unique situations. Examples include Janet Sutton Webb's ministry with emerging churches in the South West, Suk In Lee's ministry with Koreans in Kingston, and Tricia Davies's ministry with Fresh Expressions in Mersey.
- In addition 3 posts have been set aside for Synod Evangelists, although these are proving hard to fill.

At present there are 34 posts, some of which are part-time, making 31 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). These posts are not equally shared between the synods with Eastern and Yorkshire presently having only 1 post each, whilst Thames North and East Midlands have 5 indicating the wide variance.

A local applicant group draws up a proposal for a Special Category Ministry Post, which if then supported by the synod is forwarded to the Accreditation Sub-Committee. The sub-committee considers the proposal and then sends visitors to meet with the synod and applicant group before making a final decision. If approved the immediate responsibility for the post rests with the synod but it is monitored by the Accreditation Sub-Committee. Posts are granted for 5 years, but can be renewed for a further 5 years, but with a "normal" 10 year maximum life-span, after which it is up to the Synod to provide ministry from within its own resources. Special Category Posts remain outside of a Synod's deployment quota.

General Assembly 2012

General Assembly did not accept Resolution 26 from the Ministries Committee which would have devolved the equivalent resources for an average of 3 SCM posts to each Synod along with the responsibility for their approval and management. For those Synods with more than their allotted number of SCM posts there would have been some time to allow any reduction to be phased in.

The Present and the Future

During September, both the Ministries Committee and Accreditation Sub-Committee have met and discussed the present position. With the current unreached maximum of 60 posts we are currently in a "free for all" application process with no limit per synod. This gives those synods that are able to find the additional costs associated with an SCM post an advantage in creating new posts. Each new SCM post holder that is appointed means one minister less who is available

for pastoral deployment. With the possibility of SCM posts accounting for almost 13% of stipendiary ministry the committee and sub-committee believe a balance needs to be achieved.

Discussions have focussed on 4 areas

Decision Making:
Should applications continue to be determined **centrally?** This helps to achieve more consistency; there is accumulated expertise in evaluating proposals; could ensure a balance of different forms of ministry; could safeguard a valuable form of ministry or post.
Should the responsibility be devolved to **synods?** This would give them greater freedom; they should know local needs best, but they are under considerable pressure to provide pastoral ministry. If they were given the resources for a certain number of posts distinct from their deployment, they could use this as they wished to provide creative ministry

Accessibility and Fairness:
Not all synods have the same financial resources, there is a danger that unless there is some limit on the number of posts per synod the posts could become concentrated in the wealthier synods. A suggestion was made that there could be a smaller number of SCM posts but that they were fully centrally funded to cover not only the stipend but also housing and expenses. This could address the issue of fairness.

Flexibility:
If resources aren't ring-fenced to meet new and different work, pressure will increase to use those resources in 'traditional' roles thereby limiting mission and the ability to adapt to the changing nature of society. There is a tension between providing a scheme that allows for flexibility but which also weighs the value of a piece of work against the other demands on the resources,

Quantity:
There seems general acceptance that the present limit of 60 is too high when considered against total minister numbers. A lower total could lead to the process becoming competitive sooner rather than later as we would need to be deciding between applications from different synods. This would introduce a measure of 'quality control' but may lead to other complications. Introducing a maximum limit on the number per Synod might be fairer. This could be a standard figure or a proportional allocation.

Mission Council October 2012

As the Ministries Committee continues to explore how we can help the church to resource ministry that is most appropriate in each setting and doesn't become a synod-by-synod fight for resources we will present Mission Council with a number of questions to explore the current situation and the areas outlined above.

Additionally, with proposals affecting the SCM scheme included in the Ministries report to General Assembly 2012 the Accreditation Sub-Committee has not considered any new applications at its last 2 meetings. We are aware that some synods have new proposals waiting for consideration whilst others have held back. It is important that the sub-committee and Ministries Committee have some clear guidance on the immediate future and we are asking Mission Council to guide us on whether we should be considering new proposals and if so, whether there is any limit on the total number of these or a limit per synod.

(If a synod limit is ultimately accepted there could be a strong argument for allowing those synods who have not filled their allocation to be able to take some of that unused quota as a cash alternative to use flexibly to support other ministry.)

Assembly Commission (Resolution 38)

First Report to Mission Council

The Commission met for the first time on Thursday 13th September 2012 in Birmingham. We left aware of the size of the task before us but resolved to undertake it to the best of our abilities.

We are not going to be in a position "to identify any issues of a pastoral and procedural nature" until we possess an accurate story-line of the events which led up to the closed session of Mission Council in March 2012. Without such a narrative the reason for, as well as the decisions taken by, that closed session are impossible to understand fully. We have received extensive documentation from the Investigation Group, Lawrence Moore and the North Western Synod. It is clear that presently we have gaps in the story-line which need filling and contradictory interpretations of events which necessitate examination and evaluation.

In the next stage of our work we will be conducting a series of conversations with (1) Lawrence Moore; (2) the Executive Committee of the North Western Synod; (3) the Investigation Group; (4) the Assembly Officers who called the closed session of Mission Council; (5) Richard Mortimer; and (6) Roberta Rominger. We anticipate that this work will be completed by Christmas 2012.

We will welcome observations from members of Mission Council about any issues arising from the closed session of Mission Council. These should be sent to the Rev'd Dr David R Peel (david.r.peel@btinternet.com) and arrive no later the 10th November 2012. Anonymous submissions will be ignored, though all other submissions will be treated in the strictest confidence.

We are in constant touch with each other through email. At our next "face to face" meeting we will review the findings of our conversations and the submissions received. This will enable us to decide what further work we will need to carry out before reporting once again to Mission Council.

Claudette Binns
David Dadswell
David Peel

The United Reformed Church

Promoting **Safeguarding**
Preventing **Abuse**
Protecting **The Vulnerable**

Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding

Adults at risk of abuse and harm

Table of contents

Introduction....3
Statement of Safeguarding Principles....3-4
Statement of Intent....4
Discussion of the Principles.... 4-5
Discussion of Statement of Intent....5-7
Aim & Purpose of the Policy....8
Who the policy applies to....8
Ecumenical context....8
Theological approach.... 8-9
The need for a policy.... 9-10
Taking it further....10
Whose responsibility is it?....10-11
Societal context....11-12
Church Context....12
Multiculturalism & Cultural diversity....12-13
Creating a safe & welcoming environment....14-15
Definitions of vulnerability....15
What is Adult abuse?....15-16
Who might be at risk?....17.
Who may abuse?....17
When may abuse occur?....17
Responding to concerns.... ..17-18
Involving Adult Social Care or the Police....18
Action by Adult Social Care....18
Adult Protection Inquiry....18
The investigation process....19
Adult Protection plan....19
Other action....20
The involvement of relatives and carers....20
Safer recruitment and safer organisations....20
Allegations against workers....20-21
Managing those who pose a risk....21
Guidelines to those in positions of trust and providing pastoral care....21
Helpful considerations....21-22
Confidentiality.... 22-23
Self determination and independence....23
Living a fulfilled life....24-25
Inclusion....25
Essential standards of good practice....25-26
Conclusion....26

Introduction

You are here to defend the defenceless, to make sure that the underdog gets a fair break; Your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them

Psalm 82 v 3 - 4 (The Message)

SAFEGUARDING – A WHOLE CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY

The commandment to love one another[1] places a responsibility on church communities to act positively to safeguard the rights of all those who may be vulnerable within the church community. All church families share safeguarding responsibilities for the protection of the most vulnerable in our society - be they a child, young person or an adult, by providing a welcoming environment, safe and free from harm. God calls the church in particular to safeguard those at the margins and those powerless and without a voice by valuing all people and acknowledging the contribution each individual can make. This may seem obvious but safeguarding responsibilities are often designated to only the people working with children, or adults who might need protection. It is important to highlight the collective responsibility that we all have as disciples of Jesus to share in the privilege of safeguarding the vulnerable.

Statement of Safeguarding Principles

We are committed to:

- The care and nurture of all children and vulnerable adults
- The safeguarding and protection of all children and vulnerable adults
- The establishment of a loving environment which is safe and caring, and where there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.
- Building constructive links with Voluntary and Statutory agencies

The United Reformed Church accepts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which includes that

- Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status'
- Children's rights require special protection
- Childhood is entitled to special care and assistance
- Steps should be taken to 'protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child'

[1] John 13:34

Statement of Intent

We will :

- Carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, whether paid or volunteers, in line with safer recruitment principles. This includes ensuring that all workers complete application forms, have references taken up and are interviewed. CRB checks will always be carried out when legally entitled to do so and al workers will receive regular safeguarding training.

- Respond without delay to every complaint, either verbally or in writing, which suggests that a child or adult has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

- Co-operate with the Police, Children's and Adult's Services in any investigation

- Work with those that have suffered abuse, developing with them appropriate pastoral ministry

- Challenge any abuse of power, especially where anyone is in a position of trust.

- Offer pastoral care and support to those known to pose a risk to children and adults. This will include supervision and referral to the appropriate agencies.

- Follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice

- Policies will be approved by the Elders, who are trustees of the Charity, and will be reviewed annually. The Eldership will send an annual safeguarding report to the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

- Recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount[2].

Discussion of the Principles

The safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's business and a whole church responsibility. We highlight that a loving environment is not one where there is no conflict, and where nothing is challenged. Remember that Jesus was himself challenging of injustice.

Procedures and formal processes alone, though essential, will not protect children and vulnerable adults. The community, including all of its members, needs to be aware of the dangers and be prepared to report concerns and take action if necessary, ensuring a culture of informed vigilance rather than the opposite ends of the scale of either complacency or paranoia and suspicion.

[2] Children Act 1989 & advice from Charity Commission about inclusion in policies

It is a sad fact that it has been necessary to legislate to ensure that people's basic human rights are met, and of course there is much further to go in many countries. Whilst we recognise the law, the Church seeks to go beyond the minimum requirements of statute in safeguarding and to foster best practice as its working witness to God's love in action.

Discussion of Statement of Intent

We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church.

Vetting procedures and safer recruitment guidance are set out in detail in Section ... of the overall Guidance. It must be remembered that our commitment is to follow the guidance and not merely to rely on CRB checks. Someone whose CRB disclosure is clear may still be unsuitable and the other safer recruitment processes must always be used.

It is our policy that all those who regularly work with children or vulnerable adults who are entitled to Enhanced CRB checks should have them and those in Regulated Activity should have Enhanced CRB + barring check. See Section ... for detailed description of entitlement to CRB checks

We will respond without delay to every complaint, made verbally or in writing which suggests that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Church accepts that, through its workers and members, it has a duty of care in the church building; on church property and other premises being used; and during church activities. Responsibility extends to travel between places, when it is organized by the church. However, a church is not responsible for private arrangements made by parents.

The term 'complaint' can cover an allegation, disclosure or statement - something seen or something heard. The complaint need not be made in writing but, once received, it must be recorded and acted upon.

We will co-operate with the Police, Children's and Adult's Services in any investigation

This means that we will share all information that we have and follow multi agency decisions. We will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We will work with those that have suffered abuse, developing with them appropriate pastoral ministry.

The Church does not investigate allegations of abuse or neglect itself but refers them to the appropriate statutory agencies.

If a child or vulnerable adult comes to notice as having suffered abuse in the past, church officers will notify the appropriate authorities to ensure that the matter is on record and able to be investigated if this is appropriate.

Support will be offered to adult survivors of child abuse, who will also be encouraged to make a statement to the police if they have not done so before.

We will challenge any abuse of power, especially where anyone is in a position of trust.

Power is present in all relationships. We have the important duty therefore of exercising that power wisely. It has been said that the responsible use of power is perhaps the ultimate challenge of leadership and it is of course not simply ordained Ministers and Elders that hold positions of power and authority in the Church – many do, and even those that do not have specific roles can be invested with trust by children and adults.

Allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff - either paid or volunteers - by church officers, either lay or ordained, will be taken very seriously. In accordance with our duty[3], we will refer all concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

We will offer pastoral care and support to those known to pose a risk to children and adults. This will include supervision and referral to the appropriate agencies.

If a member of a church community comes to notice as having a conviction, caution, reprimand or warning for offences against children or vulnerable adults; has been barred from working with children or adults, or is considered to present a risk to children or adults, we will offer pastoral care to them. In order that any risk to the vulnerable can be managed we will require safeguards to be put in place, which will include implementation of a contract regarding church attendance. Breach of this agreement, or other concerns, may lead to a referral to the statutory agencies. Please see Section ... for details of procedures. It is recognised that those who pose a risk may themselves be vulnerable and it is crucial that pastoral care is given.

We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice

As detailed above we will seek to go beyond simply adhering to legislation and government guidance. To assist Churches we will seek to provide up to date information on statutory guidance and legislation. We will also seek to encourage learning lessons from serious incidents that affect both the secular and faith communities.

Policies will be approved by the Elders, who are trustees of the Charity, and will be reviewed annually. The Eldership will send an annual safeguarding report to the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

A template for the annual Church report is found at ... . The Synod safeguarding officer will summarise reports received and send a report of any relevant incidents to Church House.

[3] Working Together 2010

The welfare of the child is paramount.

The child's welfare is the paramount consideration in matters of private or public law affecting children which come before the family courts. The Church accepts and extends this principle to all areas of its work with children. This may involve a difficult balancing of need between children and adults who pose a risk. In this instance the welfare of children is paramount. Care will also be provided to those who pose a risk. For details of how this can be done as safely as possible please see section....

Aim and purpose of Policy

The purpose of this document is to provide information about the United Reformed Church's policy and procedures in safeguarding vulnerable people who are part of our Churches or places of worship, or who we might meet in our Mission and outreach work. The various policies, of which this is one, help to detail not only what is good practice but include our aspiration to ensure a safe culture that permeates throughout the Councils of the Church and within each church or place of worship.

In the same way that we are committed to going beyond the mere letter of the law, we did not want to provide Churches with a set of documents that merely informed them about policy and procedure. Our aim in producing this Manual is that churches are supported in their work in practical ways. So, for instance, they are not merely advised to have a church policy but a model one is provided for use.

Who these policies apply to

These policies apply to everybody in the United Reformed Church including the Councils of the Church, all Church members, adherents, trustees, paid and volunteer staff, lay and ordained Ministers.

Ecumenical Context

The United Reformed Church is committed to working ecumenically in the best interests of children and vulnerable adults.

Working ecumenically is vital to safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults, and to this end we will work with the Christian Forum for Safeguarding (CFS) to ensure that churches views are represented in the wider field of safeguarding. Our membership of the CFS ensures our contribution and ability to influence government departments and agencies in the field of child protection. It also provides opportunities to learn from each other when things go wrong. A failure to learn from past mistakes would be an indictment on the Christian principles we extol.

Under the sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) can opt to use the safeguarding policies of any member denomination involved in the LEP

Theological approach

Every human being has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of male and female in God's own image and likeness. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

Christ saw children as demonstrating a full relationship with God. He gave them status, time and respect. St Luke tells us that the people brought infants to Jesus that he might touch them. (St Luke 18:15ff). When his disciples tried to stop this practice Jesus called for the children saying,

'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these the Kingdom of God belongs.'

Not only did Jesus encourage children to come to him but they were manifestly safe in his company. All contemporary safeguarding policies and procedures in the Church should be response to what we learn and see in Jesus himself. Children are meant to be safe in the care and company of the Christian Church. In witness to this faith and to our sense of obligation to children who are brought to Jesus through the life of the Christian community, the Church should set for itself the highest standards of care available to our society today. If that is true especially in relation to children, it ought also to be true for the care we offer to some of the most vulnerable adults in the modern world (see St James 1:27).

The need for a Policy

Churches and places of worship reflect society as a whole, with children and adults coming together to share in the services and activities that take place there. Until recently there has been more attention paid to protecting children. However, our understanding of safeguarding has developed over the years as people have become more aware of how adults may experience harm, whether that be in institutions, in their own homes or in the community.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) all state that adults should be free from abuse. Sadly the reality can be very different to this mandate and it is important therefore to raise awareness through policies and procedures of the issues, and what needs to be done to ensure that our Churches are as safe as possible

All adults (people over 18 years of age) can be at risk of abuse and adults who are vulnerable face particular and increased risk. Every person is equally precious to God and we need to ensure that adults at risk of harm and abuse are safeguarded, cared for and protected.

The term vulnerable adult has previously been used to describe adults who are either vulnerable or in need of protection. However this term has been strongly criticised by those to whom it might apply. Labelling people as vulnerable because of, for instance, their age or disability is felt to be a little insulting. You only have to think about the competitors at the recent (2012) Paralympics to understand that although they are disabled in some way we would be highly unlikely to label them as vulnerable.

Safeguarding adults incorporates the concept of prevention, empowerment and protection to enable them to retain independence, well being and choice and to ensure that they can access the support necessary to live a life free from harm and abuse.

Having safeguards in place not only protects and promotes the welfare of those who may be vulnerable but also enhances the confidence of trustees, staff, volunteers, parents/carers and the general public. Safeguarding is beneficial to a charity in many ways, apart from the primary motive of protection. It protects reputation, helps to effectively meet its Mission and protects its finances.

Churches must therefore have proper policies, guidelines and procedures in place:

- to protect from harm
- to ensure we meet our duty of care
- to protect the reputation of the Church
- to comply with insurance requirements and protect church finances

Although on one level it seems unattractive to include anything other than the protection as a reason to have a policy it is vital that public perception of Church is not tainted by negative press. Proper procedures are essential to ensure public confidence in the Church. Although insurance companies differ in their requirements, there is a general requirement to take reasonable steps to ensure the beneficiaries of the charity are safeguarded. Not complying with insurance requirements could therefore have an impact on the Churches' finances which could threaten its overall ministry. Negative perception or experience of Church would of course be counterproductive to being able to encourage people in their journey of faith and be very damaging to their personal, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual development.

This policy forms an integral part of our commitment to protecting adults who are vulnerable and incorporates our vow that anyone seeking nourishment in their Christian pilgrimage does so in safety in our church.

Taking it further.

However, safeguarding is not just about reading a policy and ticking boxes. This policy sets out guidelines and standards that must be put into practice. These include, amongst other measures: safer recruitment procedures; developing a culture where people can contribute and be taken notice of, and training for those who work with, or come into contact with any who are vulnerable.

Above all, however, it must be remembered that it is the people, not the policies and standards, that are sacrosanct and that, although abuse must never be tolerated, policies and standards are no more than a tool in the service of promoting the welfare of those who are vulnerable.

Whose responsibility is it?

Everyone has the responsibility for the safety, well being and protection of others. This is underpinned by scripture as a command to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34-35). A policy about the protection of adults should therefore be the concern of the whole church and should be presented to a church meeting for adoption and be reaffirmed annually. This is an opportunity for church members to remember their commitment to one another.

Every Church is a deemed charity, irrespective of income, and are therefore under the regulatory direction of the Charity Commission who state that:

'*Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. They have a legal*

duty to act prudently and this means that they must take all reasonable steps within their power to ensure that this does not happen'.

The Elders and Minister at each Church are charity trustees and have the privilege, and what the Charity Commission term 'primary responsibility', for safeguarding in their church. This includes a duty to ensure that legislation, policy and procedures are complied with.

The Charity Commission have developed a strategy for dealing with safeguarding vulnerable adults[4] and require trustees to protect the charity and it's beneficiaries, by

- Awareness raising,
- Reporting concerns,
- Responding appropriately to issues of abuse and exploitation and
- Preventing harm through sound recruitment and safe programming.

Each Church is encouraged to appoint a Safeguarding co-ordinator, and deputy that has expertise in dealing with adults at risk or who are vulnerable, or who are prepared to receive training if they are not confident to carry out that role without it. Every Church should have a safeguarding adults policy and a policy statement displayed (Copies of a model policy and statement can be found at Appendix...)

Of course our motivation to ensure that adults who are vulnerable receive the best possible experience of life in our churches is not purely dependent on legislation, policy and/or guidance, but on modelling Jesus' ministry in challenging the outlook of his day and society that left vulnerable people on the edge. We do not want to ignore injustice and want to speak up for those that do not have a voice. We are called to stand alongside anyone who is vulnerable as part of Gods mandate to be on the side of the powerless, vulnerable, voiceless and marginalised. The church will therefore want to act to prevent people who are vulnerable from being oppressed or abused in any way.

Societal context

Work in this area has been framed by government guidance (No Secrets, Department of Health, 2000). Subsequently it was amended by the review of that guidance published in 2009 and by standards and guidance published by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, together with nation specific legislation such as the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. In 2011 the Department of Health published a Statement of Government Policy on Adult Safeguarding which states as follows:

The Government's policy objective is to prevent and reduce the risk of significant harm to vulnerable adults from abuse or other types of exploitation, whilst supporting individuals in maintaining control over their lives and in making informed choices without coercion.

The Government believes that safeguarding is everybody's business, with communities playing a part in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. Measures need to be in place locally to protect those least able to protect

[4] available at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Our_regulatory_activity/Our_approach/safeguarding_strategy.aspx

themselves. Safeguards against poor practice, harm and abuse need to be an integral part of care and support. We should achieve this through partnerships between local organisations, communities and individuals.

Church context

Places of worship and faith based organisations provide many activities for their congregations and communities. These may bring them into contact with adults who may be at risk, in situations such as:

- Luncheon clubs for older people
- Working with homeless people
- Food banks and debt advice
- Pastoral care
- Working with those known to the justice system, including acting as an 'Appropriate Adult', for example supporting an adult with learning disabilities
- Working on the streets providing assistance to those who are situationally vulnerable (due to intoxication or substance abuse)
- Supporting those who are subject to domestic abuse (for more information about domestic abuse please see section ....)
- Working with refugees or asylum seekers
- Mission projects
- Day to day contact with people we meet within our churches or faith communities

Multiculturalism & cultural diversity

In the context of growing diversity as our reality, we need to emphasise that behind every person is a long journey - and that a significant part of this is their culture. As cultural beings, cultural influences largely shape everything we do - including the ways we both understand and respond to what it means to be vulnerable. This is why it is important to deepen (and provide the opportunities to deepen) our cultural awareness and competences so that our policy to safeguard vulnerable adults will be most effective. Cultural awareness is about understanding how a person's culture may inform their values, behaviour, beliefs and basic assumptions. It is a recognition that we are all shaped by our cultural background, which influences how we interpret the world around us, perceive ourselves and relate to other people.

You do not need to be an expert in every culture, or to have all of the answers to be culturally aware. However, it is essential to inform ourselves in order to prevent assumptions that we may make from turning into prejudices that affect our behaviour – for instance in some cultures it is considered unacceptable to give eye contact, and even a sign

of aggression, whereas in other cultures negative assumptions can be made about lack of eye contact.

It is important to be aware that not every issue around cultural difference is obvious and we must remember that no individual can be reduced to a set of cultural norms. Within any culture peoples' values, behaviour and beliefs can vary enormously. Even two persons from the same ethnic and cultural background may be dissimilar. It is because we are different that each is special. Generalizations about people from similar ethnic backgrounds may not always give the most accurate understanding.

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2001 and is a legal instrument that recognises cultural diversity as “the common heritage of humanity”. It considers it “as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature” and makes its defence an ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity. Understanding cultural factors and influences will help build relationships and will hopefully lead to more life giving and life affirming outcomes for adults who may be vulnerable, which accords with our commitment to respect each person’s dignity and human rights.

Some Awareness Tips

- Be aware of your own cultural influences.
- Be aware of judging other people's behaviour and beliefs according to the standards of your own culture.
- Be mindful of making assumptions about cultural influences and applying generalisations to individuals.
- Note that the behaviour and beliefs of people within each culture can vary considerably.
- Understand that the extent to which people adopt practices of their new country and retain those from their cultural background can vary within communities, even within families.
- Be mindful that not all people identify with their cultural or religious background.
- Understand that culture itself is fluid undergoing transformations at various levels
- Increase your knowledge about different cultural practice/issues through background information sessions and/or resources and cultural awareness training.
- Understand the importance of appropriate communication

Creating a safe welcoming environment

Many people consider that good practice is common sense. However, we all have different views about how best to do things, which are often governed by our own experiences and value systems. Because some think that their way of doing something is obvious, it can be assumed that of course everyone is doing what is obvious and this is not always the case. It is for this reason that we thought it would be useful to set out what to some will be obvious and what to others may be useful new ideas.
We want our Churches and faith communities to be safe places where everyone is made to feel welcome, valued, respected and cared for. We can do this in a variety of ways:

- by ensuring that our buildings are accessible, recognising the limitations that the design of some buildings can cause and addressing them if reasonably practicable;

- being mindful of acoustics and having a hearing loop installed if practicable;

- being aware that negative and uncaring attitudes can also be major barriers to people accessing Church. We need to be careful to use appropriate language and suitable vocabulary. We also need to be aware of our own underlying values and attitudes to ensure that any preconceptions, assumptions or prejudices we have does not translate into behaviour that discriminates in any way.

It is important that Churches have an equal opportunities policy. A model one can be found at Appendix ....

A safe church is one in which:

- The dignity of each person is respected

- Verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, racial and spiritual harassment or abuse is challenged

- Allegations of abuse are taken seriously and the appropriate authorities contacted

- Every effort is made to ensure that sufficient support is available to those in need.

- We educate ourselves about harassment and abuse in all their forms

- We inform ourselves about support agencies available locally, and publicise that information

- In all areas of our life, by teaching and example, emphasise that harassment and abuse is wrong

- We challenge our own, and others, underlying values and beliefs

- We welcome those who have experience of harassment or abuse into the church

- We help those who are abused to receive help and support

- We help those who have perpetrated abuse to get help and support

- We report concerns to the appropriate agencies

Definitions of vulnerability

Various pieces of legislation give different definitions of who is vulnerable, or who is an adult at risk and some definitions are relevant when, for instance, dealing with whether a person is eligible for a Criminal Records Bureau check. This is dealt with below but the following is a simple, all encompassing, definition:

Any person aged 18 or over who, due to disability, mental function, age, or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves against the risk of significant harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, mistreatment or exploitation.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines an adult at risk as someone who is:

• unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests
• at risk of harm, and
• because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

An adult is at risk if another person's conduct is causing (or is likely to cause) the adult to be harmed, or the adult is engaging (or is likely to engage) in conduct which causes (or is likely to cause) self-harm.

What is adult abuse?

Adult abuse is defined as the mistreatment and violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Such abuse can take many forms, from treating someone with disrespect with the effect that this significantly affects his or her quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological; it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act; or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded or coerced to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur within any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Abuse can take many forms. The following are those listed in the Government Guidance 'No Secrets' :

Discriminatory abuse is the inappropriate treatment of an adult because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality, or disability. Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals

Physical abuse is to inflict pain or physical injury, which is either caused deliberately, or through lack of care. Examples include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, hair pulling, misuse, or using inappropriate restraint or sanctions

Psychological or emotional abuse is acts or behaviour which causes mental distress or anguish or negates the wishes of the adult. It is also behaviour that has a harmful effect on the adult's emotional health and development – or any other form of mental cruelty. This includes verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying, blaming, the use of threats of harm or abandonment, being deprived of social or any other form of contact, or being prevented from receiving services or support.

Financial or material abuse is the inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property or possessions including theft, fraud, exploitation, applying pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Sexual abuse is the involvement in sexual activities to which the person has not consented, or does not truly comprehend and so cannot give informed consent. Or it may occur where the other party is in a position of trust, power or authority and uses it to override or overcome lack of consent or to which they felt pressurised into consenting such as rape, or sexual assault.

Neglect or acts of omission are the repeated deprivation of help that an adult needs which, if withdrawn, will cause them to suffer. This includes failing to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the adult, or to others

Institutional abuse, which may happen in nursing and residential homes or hospitals, is the mistreatment or abuse of an adult by a regime or individuals within an institution (e.g. hospital or care home) or in the community. It can occur through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect, or poor professional practice, or ill treatment.

Within a faith context the following definition is also useful:

Spiritual and ritual abuse. This is where something is said or done in the name of God or religion which manipulates or coerces a person into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose. Another form of spiritual abuse is the denial of vulnerable people the right to faith or the opportunity to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

Within faith communities, harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice including oppressive teaching, misuse of leadership or penitential discipline, intrusive healing or deliverance ministries, - any of which may result in vulnerable people experiencing physical, emotional or sexual harm.

Churches need to be sensitive so that they do not, in their pastoral care, attempt to "force" religious values or ideas onto people, especially those who may be vulnerable to such practices. If such inappropriate behaviour appears to be harmful, advice should be sought from Adult Social Care.

Who might be at risk?

Vulnerability is part of being human and we can all be vulnerable at different times in our lives. However, vulnerability can be increased by, for example:

• Learning, sensory or physical disability
• Old age and frailty, especially if either creates dependency on or needing help from others
• Mental health problems
• Dementia or confusion
• Severe illness
• Addiction to alcohol or drugs

In addition adults may be made vulnerable by means of a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events - for example an illness, bereavement, past abuse or trauma.

Who may abuse?

• A partner, child, relative or friend
• A paid or volunteer carer
• A health, social care or other worker
• A church worker either lay or ordained
• Anyone else

Where may abuse occur?

Abuse can happen anywhere, for example:

• In the home
• In supported housing
• At a carer's home
• Within a nursing home, hospital, residential care or day care
• At work or in educational establishments
• In places of worship
• Anywhere else

Responding to concerns

You may suspect abuse because:

• You have a general concern about someone's well being
• You see or hear something which could be abusive
• Someone tells you that something has happened or is happening to them which could be abusive

In these circumstances, do not delay. Pass on your concerns to your Safeguarding Adults Co-ordinator in your Church. If the situation is not sufficiently urgent to warrant immediate action, discuss your concerns with them and you can decide together what action to take.

Make sure that you take notes if you are told anything or observe anything, ensuring that the notes are accurate and use direct quotes rather than your interpretation.

Involving Adult Social Care or the Police:

Adult Social Care should be contacted immediately if there is concern that an adult may have been, or is, in danger of being abused

If unsure whether an official referral is warranted, but you nevertheless have legitimate concerns, you should still contact Adult Social Services to discuss the matter. You may also contact the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service who, in addition to having expertise in dealing with safeguarding children is also experienced in issues relating to safeguarding adults (Contact details can be found at page)

The primary responsibility for managing any investigation process rests with the managers of Adult Social Care social services teams. When the concern involves someone in residential care, the Care Quality Commission will be involved. Where a crime may have been committed, the police will investigate

Adult Social Care Teams operate Emergency Duty Teams (EDT), outside regular office hours, at weekends and over statutory holidays. They are available to offer advice and will also take action to protect a vulnerable adult, including arranging emergency medical treatment and, where appropriate, contacting the police.

Action by Adult Social Care

Once a referral is made to Adult Social Care they will check to see if the adult or alleged abuser is known to them. If they know the adult, details of the referral will be passed on to the social worker involved. The worker and a team manager will then decide if an Adult Protection Inquiry should begin. If the individual is not known to Adult Social Care, it is likely that a duty worker and manager will make that decision.

The following information is given so that Churches can be aware of the process that Adult Social Care will follow [NB This could be an appendix and would then include everything from adult protection inquiry up until the section that begins discussion of recruitment]

Adult Protection Inquiry

The first step in an Adult Protection Inquiry is to convene a strategy meeting with all the appropriate agencies. Much emphasis is now placed on not working in isolation and the strategy meeting, by its very nature, facilitates communication and joint working between the various groups. If a crime is believed to have been committed, the police will also be included. The aim of the meeting is for the agencies involved to reach a consensus on planning and co-ordinating the investigation. Ultimately they will produce an Adult Protection Plan. Information is shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

The Investigation Process

The purpose of any investigation is to:

• Protect the adult from serious harm

• Establish and record the facts about the circumstances giving rise to the concerns

• If appropriate, establish evidence for formal proceedings (i.e. criminal, registration or disciplinary)

• Establish with the adult whether they feel that their personal safety is at risk, whether they want professional intervention and what their views are on sharing information about the incident with other staff that need to know

• Decide if protective or other action is needed for the vulnerable adult or others

• Identify the sources and levels of risk

• Decide whether actual or suspected abuse has taken place and record the reasons for these conclusions

• Ensure that appropriate action is taken in respect of any perpetrator

• Consider the communication needs of the adult and ensure that an appropriate service is offered (this includes people with dementia, those whose first language is not English, people with sensory impairment, or people who have learning difficulties)

These matters will be considered at a case conference attended by all the professionals and agencies involved in safeguarding the adult. Decisions will be taken and a plan of action formalised in light of the information gathered at the case conference. This is called an Adult Protection Plan.

Adult Protection Plan

The Adult Protection Plan sets out:

• The steps to be taken to assure the future safety of the vulnerable adult

• The treatment or therapy they may access

• Any changes to the way the services they receive are provided

• Support they may get from any legal action they may take, or otherwise seek redress for what has happened to them

• Putting in place an on-going risk management strategy, if appropriate.

Other Action

If there is a concern that an adult may be subjected to violence or sexual harm the Police may become involved. In circumstances involving domestic abuse, for example, the perpetrator may become subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)[5] or Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC).

Where the concern is about the quality of care provided by a nursing home, residential home, or domiciliary provider, contact the Care Quality Commission on 0300 061 6161. See the Care Quality Commission website for more information: www.cqc.org.uk

The involvement of relatives and carers

Generally, families are informed of an allegation of abuse and the action being taken. However, this may not happen if:

- The adult is able to give informed consent and does not wish their family to be informed.

- The alleged perpetrator is a member of the family

- Where a police investigation is likely and the rules of evidence apply. End of appendix?

Safer recruitment and safer organisations

Churches and faith-based organisations have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding and setting an open, positive culture through their recruitment practices. These are essential in setting the foundations for safer organisations. Legislation and best practice specifies what measures should be taken to ensure that recruitment processes for both paid staff and volunteers are robust and effective in deterring and detecting unsuitable individuals from working with vulnerable people.

The key point to remember is that the recruitment process provides an ideal opportunity to safeguard adults. It should therefore be seen as part of your mandate as a Christian to ensure that the vulnerable are protected as far as possible. For detailed information about safer recruitment for paid staff and volunteers please see Section ... which includes information about the changes in legislation as a result of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

Allegations against staff.

No one really wants to consider the possibility that someone working with adults who are vulnerable would harm them or put them at risk of abuse and, fortunately, allegations of abuse against workers are comparatively rare. The procedure to follow is that a referral must be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer. Full details for the criteria for doing this, and information about the process, is contained in Section .. .

[5] For more information about MAPPA please see section …

The **duty** to refer is in respect of Lay, Ordained, Casual, Agency, Self Employed, paid and volunteer staff.

Managing those who pose a risk

Faith communities open their doors and offer a warm welcome to all who come to participate in services, meetings and other activities. Those welcomed into the faith community week by week will include those who are considered to pose a risk to vulnerable adults. For details as to how those risks can be managed please see Section ...

Guidelines for those in positions of trust and those who provide pastoral care

It should be recognised that being in a position of providing support of a practical nature or pastoral care for an adult who may be vulnerable puts you in a position of power. Care should be taken to ensure that this power is not abused in any way to coerce or manipulate an adult into doing something that is not in their interests. It is important that anyone seeking pastoral care should know exactly what to expect in terms of good conduct, that those caring for them are accountable and that any boundaries set are respected at all times.

There should be clear guidelines therefore about what to do if someone is unhappy about something and who to report to, which should be visible to all who attend Church or place of worship. There is no such thing as 'Childline' for Adults who are vulnerable. One useful organisation that could be advertised is Action on Elder Abuse. However, it must be remembered that not all adults who are vulnerable are elderly and that term in itself can cause offence.

Helpful considerations when working with adults who may be vulnerable

- Establishing at the outset the nature of the meeting, confidentiality and duration, the appropriateness of initiating and receiving any physical contact which may be unwanted or misinterpreted

- Avoid any behaviour that may give the impression of favouritism or the encouragement of special relationships

- Be aware of the limits of your own abilities and competencies and seek further help when dealing with situations outside your expertise

- Have clear guidelines in place where workers are involved in any aspect of personal finance, to ensure financial integrity. This is important when, for example, collecting the benefits or pension of, or doing the shopping for, an adult who is vulnerable

- Ensure that language and behaviour is appropriate. For instance remember that sexual comments and innuendos are always inappropriate and should never be used

- Never undertake pastoral care whilst under the influence of drink or drugs

- Consider issues of culture, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

- Encourage self determination, independence and choice

- In most circumstances it is prudent for there to be two workers present at all times. However in exceptional circumstances where this is not possible or appropriate endeavour to ensure that conversations take place in a room with a door open where other people are in the building. This is for the protection of the adult and the worker

- Carry a mobile phone at all times to ensure that you can ring for emergency help if necessary

- Always ensure that a colleague knows where you are going and arrange to ring or text them when you have arrived home.

- Be mindful of the place and time of meeting, arrangement of furniture and lighting

- Dress appropriately to the circumstances of the work. This should include the use of sprays - perfume or after shave for instance when working with asthmatics, and use of jewellery when undertaking work on the streets (to protect workers from potential robbery and injury). Dress modestly and appropriately at all times.

- Be aware that people's boundaries about personal space can be different. Wherever possible observe body language and if someone seems uncomfortable with how close you are draw back. If in doubt ask in a way that encourages an honest response. This sort of conversation may be governed by how well you know the person and vice versa. Be aware that someone may have suffered abuse or harassment in the past and that a need for distance may not be personal to you

Be informed and respond appropriately

Part of working safely involves providing an inclusive and open environment which recognises differences and does not disempower or discriminate. For example, older children and young adults with learning disabilities should not be placed in the Sunday School, rather than the main church service, because they understand the material better there. Instead, support should be given to enable the individual concerned to participate in the church service itself. It would in this example be prudent to bear in mind any potential safeguarding issues this may have for children as the adult in question would not have benefited from any safer recruitment procedures but would be likely to be seen by the children as a trusted adult. Whether looked at from a safeguarding children perspective or ensuring that the dignity of the adult is preserved careful thought obviously needs to be given to decision making in this, and other, areas.

Confidentiality

This is not to be confused with secrecy, although they are linked. Confidentiality means that someone's personal business is not discussed with others, except with their permission. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is preserved although it is not always possible to give assurances of total confidentiality when there is n overriding need to protect someone who has been abused, or is at risk of being abused.

Everyone working with adults who are at risk of abuse must be clear that it is not possible to keep information about suspected or actual abuse confidential. For the protection of the adult, and where there is concern about a potential risk to others any concern must be reported to the Church Safeguarding Adults Co-ordinator immediately, and/or Adult Social Care who can advise whether a formal referral is warranted.

To avoid potential hurt and misunderstanding it is good practice to ensure that everyone is aware of the bounds of confidentiality so that if it were considered necessary to report concerns people are already aware of the criteria that would dictate this necessity.

Self-determination and independence

Many adults are prevented by some form of impairment from being able to live a life that is completely independent from the help of others. However, it is useful to bear in mind that because people need help in one area it does not necessarily mean they need help in others. To ensure that we do not overdo our offers of help it is often wise to ask what help we can provide. It may be, for instance, that instead of having someone do their shopping for them it would be more empowering for someone to go with the person to perhaps reach shelves that could not otherwise be reached.

Adults have a right to self-determination and independence. The law assumes that adults are able to make their own decisions, unless proved otherwise. So, as long as an adult can understand the information relevant to the decision, retain the information relevant to that decision, have the ability to use the information in order to make a decision and have the ability to communicate that decision - then the decision is theirs to make. An adult therefore has a right to follow a course of action that others may judge unwise or eccentric, including one which may lead to them being abused.

Exceptions to allowing a person to make choices about their safety from abuse and neglect include:

• Where the person lacks mental capacity to make such a choice

• Where the rights or safety of others would be compromised in allowing the person to exercise their right in making choices about their safety from abuse and neglect

Issues of capacity and consent are key elements in adult protection work. Capacity refers to the ability to make and understand a decision, act, or transaction. However, there remains a fundamental duty to balance the person's right to autonomy with their need for protection. Where a vulnerable adult lacks the mental capacity to protect themselves or other vulnerable adults from abuse, it may be necessary to take action on their behalf, in their (and possibly other's) best interests. In such instances Adult Social Care should be informed so that they can put in place a safeguarding plan, proportionate to the level of risk, so that, as far as possible, the adult continues to be protected.

Any decision concerning mental capacity will follow an assessment carried out by doctors and/or Adult Social Care. When making a decision the following factors are taken into consideration:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health

- Cognitive Functioning
- Communication Problems
- Suggestibility, Conformity, Compliance, Acquiescence
- Sensory Impairments
- Cultural and Religious Views
- Power and Status
- Gender

If the adult is proven to lack mental capacity, there will be a person authorized to make decisions on their behalf. Guidelines are laid down about how they should exercise that role and they should:

- Act in a way that promotes health and well-being, and prevents deterioration in quality of life
- Ensure that any interventions are as limited as possible and carried out in a manner that is the least restrictive of freedom of action
- Ensure that any decision is made with due regard to the law
- Make every effort to establish the past and present wishes and desires of the person concerned, as well as any other factors he or she would consider important were they not incapacitated
- Include the person in any decision or action affecting them as fully as possible
- Consult the views of appropriate people concerning the individual's wishes and what actions would be in his or her best interests

Any decisions taken that are deemed to be in the person's best interest should be clearly documented to show how the decision was reached.

Adults who have any form of vulnerability are often deprived of choices – what to wear, where to sit, what to eat and what TV they can watch. Choices can be offered to most people in ways that even the most impaired can understand – for instance do not offer too may choices. A choice between two things will be much easier to decide upon than a whole range of choices. Common sense for some maybe, but perhaps not all.

Living a fulfilled life

Of course not all ambitions can be fulfilled – some remain pipe dreams for a variety of reasons. However, it is crucial for all of us to live a fulfilled life where we can enjoy comfort and stimulation and to be able to give pleasure, care and love. Being fulfilled is not just

about receiving, and can in fact have more to do with what we are able to give to others. There is a danger that if we see vulnerability in people we become so keen to help that we prevent them from helping others and thereby deny them the opportunity to feel fulfilled by giving.

People are becoming a little nervous of showing physical affection. Of course we want to be sure that hugs are given and received in an appropriate way – not misunderstood self motivated or considered an imposition. Life without a hug can feel very empty but we must not assume that everyone wants hugs all of the time! If in doubt it is always possible to ask.

Inclusion

It is important to bear in mind that we may sometimes have to alter the way things are done to ensure that everyone is included. It is important to find ways that everyone in our communities can play an active part in worship within the parameters of their abilities and strengths. You might consider for instance whether all could be involved ion leading worship. If someone cannot climb steps and worship is usually conducted on a platform it may be necessary to move everything down to ground level. Also if people cannot stand is their view of projection screens or the worship leader obstructed by people that are standing.

Essential standards of good safeguarding practice

An Independent Enquiry Report (2003) into the death of a patient[6] recommended ten essential shared capabilities (ESC) for all staff working in mental health services, a time when adults are indeed vulnerable. Although they apply to the statutory services the majority are equally relevant to volunteers and workers in the faith community and have been adapted for reflection and review of how we can best serve those who may be experiencing a period of vulnerability. [NB this could also be an appendix]

The Department of Health (2004) guidance[7] confirmed the importance of the following criteria:

- Working in Partnership
- Respecting Diversity
- Practicing Ethically
- Challenging Inequality
- Promoting Recovery
- Identifying People's Needs and Strengths
- Providing Service User Centred Care
- Making a Difference
- Promoting Safety and Positive Risk Taking
- Personal Development and Learning

[6] Independent Inquiry into the Death of David Bennett (2003) Norfolk, Suffolk & Cambridge Strategic Health Authority HSG (94) 27

[7] Department of Health (2004) The ten Essential Capabilities (London: HMSO 2004)

Working in Partnership includes developing and maintaining constructive working relationships with individuals, carers, families, colleagues and wider community networks while working positively with any tensions created by conflicts of interest or aspiration that may arise between partners. Working in partnership is a complex process. Partners may bring very different expectations, goals, cultures, worldviews, skills, powers and resources to the process**.**

Respecting diversity means working with individuals, carers and families in ways that respect and value diversity, including age, ethnicity, race, culture, disability, gender, spirituality and sexuality.

Practising ethically recognizes the rights and aspirations of individuals and their families, acknowledging power differentials and minimizing them whenever possible while allowing individuals to make their own choices.

Challenging inequality and Promoting Inclusion means enabling people to fulfil their discipleship and calling and address the causes and the consequences of stigma, discrimination, social inequality and exclusion on individuals, carers and families, while creating, developing and maintaining valued social roles for people in the communities they come from. This includes ensuring church buildings and practices allow inclusion. Premises should be assessed for reasonable adjustments, as recommended under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended[8], to check that they are as accessible as possible and that aids and adaptations such as use of ramps and loop systems are used as appropriate and where possible. The worship and other activities within the church should also be as accessible as possible. Inclusion may mean that the church needs to consider making services available to particular groups, such as worship specifically for those who are frail or have dementia or have learning disabilities

Promoting recovery is working in partnership to provide help that enables and empowers individuals, families and carers to tackle problems with hope and optimism and to work towards a valued lifestyle within and beyond the limits of any problem.

Identifying people's needs and strengths means working in partnership in the context of the preferred lifestyle and aspirations of the individuals, their families and carers. Materials provided for activities should be available as widely as possible. Within worship, material should be provided in large print (at least 18 font) and material provided by power point should be supplemented if necessary.

Promoting safety and positive risk taking means empowering the individual to decide the level of risk they are prepared to take with their lives. This includes working with the tension between promoting safety and positive risk taking, including assessing

---

8

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005. From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act 2010 replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

and dealing with possible risks for individuals, carers, family members and the wider public.

Conclusion

'Arthur brought so much to our Church. He had poor eyesight and needed help with crossing the road from the community home in which he had lived for many years. He had some learning disabilities but if he had had more opportunities in his early life and had not been for many years in what was then called a "mental hospital" he would have managed normal living without much trouble. A warm and friendly individual, Arthur was sensitive to the needs of others, always asking about people's health and happiness, more concerned about others' needs than his own. Although he knew many of the stories of Jesus from his youth, Arthur's faith deepened so much over the years he spent in the Church. Two years ago, when he was well into his 70's, he was baptised. The service was one of the most joyful and moving that any of us had ever experienced'

As we either build on existing good practice or find ways to include adults who may be at risk we will also no doubt find untold rewards for us and them.