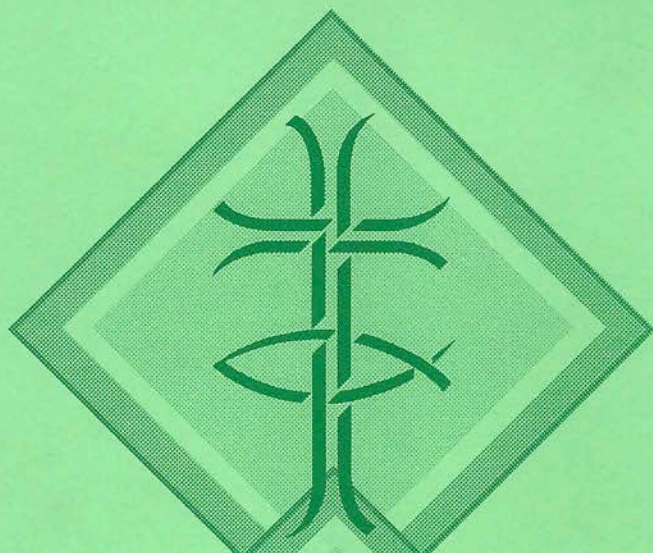


The United Reformed Church
in the United Kingdom



*Patterns
of
Ministry*

INTERIM REPORT 1994

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WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS!

We are all familiar with ministry. All of us have experienced it through the life of the local church. Some of us are ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Many church members offer their skills and daily work as their ministry, both within the church and in the world. Not many of us, on the other hand, want to spend too much time debating long reports about patterns of ministry!

Yet the issues we are seeking to address here are of immediate relevance to the life of the church, to the way it operates in the local context, to the way it understands itself ecumenically and to the way it views and tackles its mission in the world.

Every so often it becomes essential to review the patterns of ministry which have grown up around us, especially if these seem not to be meeting needs adequately or to be developing creatively. That is what this report attempts to do.

Some people would no doubt prefer these proposals to be more radical than they are. Some may feel they go too far. Some will have questions or views about where the suggestions here might lead us. Some will help us dream larger dreams and see clearer visions. Some will have helpful insights to offer from their local experience or from the life of the church in other parts of the world. All of these responses will be valuable and will help us as we seek to come to a common mind about where God's Spirit is leading us.

We have tried to focus on the needs and mission of the church rather than on financial constraints or our relative size. We have tried to take seriously the place of the ordinary member of the congregation. We have sought to come back again and again to the fundamental principles which should shape our structures and the way we work together.

We invite you now to reflect deeply, realistically and prayerfully on the principles and proposals outlined here. As this interim report goes out to the churches for wider consideration we hope that it will stimulate discussion and lead us together towards patterns of ministry more relevant and effective in the service of our Lord in the days ahead.

Malcolm Hanson
Convener, on behalf of the Working Party.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Patterns of Ministry Working Party was set up by the Ministries Department at the request of the 1992 General Assembly. It began its work in March 1993. Its members are -

Revd Dr David Cornick (Secretary), Mr John Ellis,
Revd Malcolm Hanson (Convener), Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee,
Revd Terry Oakley, Revd Graham Robson, Dr David Thompson.

Sister Lavinia Byrne of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and the Revd Philip Sheldrake of Westcott House, Cambridge, have helped the Working Party as ecumenical consultants.

1.2 The remit of the Working Party arose from the 1992 General Assembly which asked for further consideration of the themes in the Patterns of Ministry report of 1991, and specifically

- (a) reaffirmed the ministry of the whole people of God and the place of particular ministries within it;
- (b) requested the Doctrine and Worship Committee to relate '*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*' (the Lima text 1982) to paras 19-25 of the Basis of Union;
- (c) asked for further study on the Presiding Elder suggestion;
- (d) requested consultation with ecumenical partners;
- (e) asked for a review of the number of new entrants to the stipendiary ministry;
- (f) recorded its appreciation of the work of Non-Stipendiary Ministers and accredited Lay Preachers;
- (g) requested a report back to a future Assembly.

2. METHOD OF WORKING

2.1 The Working Party began by seeking to identify the issues for consideration. These were then passed to appropriate standing committees and specially formed working groups, including -

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Support Committee | Vocations Committee |
| Health and Healing Committee | Doctrine and Worship Committee |
| Christian Education Committee | Church Related Community Workers |
| Lay Preaching Sub-Committee | SPIN |

Sub-groups were formed to look at -

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Theology | Stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry |
| Oversight | Eldership |
| Other ministries | Statistics |

2.2 This report is interim in nature. It seeks to identify directions in which policy decisions might move and is offered to the councils of the church for consideration and comment. It has something of the nature of a Green Paper in parliamentary terms. The final report will be the White Paper and will contain resolutions for decision and implementation by General Assembly. The timetable for further discussions appears at **Appendix F**.

2.3 *Comments in response to this report should be sent as soon as possible, but by 14 December 1994, to the Revd Dr David Cornick, Patterns of Ministry, Westminster College, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0AA.*

3. PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The Working Party has sought to bring proposals that are theologically sound, relevant to the life of the church today, appropriate to its mission and, as far as possible, acceptable ecumenically. It has also looked for adaptability and simplicity.

3.2 The URC response to '*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*' (see para 1.2 (b) above) in 1985 included the following insight: "We believe that the pattern of ministry today should be determined by the missionary task of the Church. The commission of our Lord and the consequent enabling gifts of the Spirit produce a manifold ministry that is apostolic."

3.3 The fact that present patterns of ministry were agreed after lengthy and careful discussions which led to the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 and to union with the former Churches of Christ in 1981, has made us hesitate before making radical suggestions for change. It is important to keep in mind decisions made in the past by General Assembly, and particularly the very clear foundation statements in paragraphs 19 - 25 of the Basis of Union concerning ministry.

3.4 Congregations and their needs vary greatly. We have congregations of several hundred members, some with a handful of members; half our churches have memberships of less than 55. Some naturally relate to others in groups or joint pastorates, others - for theological or geographical reasons - stand more on their own. Patterns of ministry which seem natural to one might be quite impractical or irrelevant in another. The distribution of Non-Stipendiary Ministers, retired Ministers, Lay Preachers, as well as congregations and their financial resources is very uneven.

3.5 Changes to patterns of ministry need to be introduced gradually - more as long term policies than as instant decisions. That will not always be tidy or consistent, but proper recognition needs to be given to the people involved, to

personal sensitivities and to the learning pilgrimage in which we are all involved. No one, therefore, should feel threatened or under-valued by any of the proposals explored in this document. If any changes are agreed and accepted by the church, their implementation will need to take place through a transitional process.

3.6 We need to respond to the radical changes in church and society in Britain since the formation of the URC in 1972. The last 25 years have seen a steady decline in the membership of the mainline English, Welsh and Scottish churches. We have 42% fewer members now than in 1973 (from 192,000 to 111,000), but only 13% fewer churches (from 2,080 to 1,803). We have sought to maintain our mission in trying circumstances, and closing churches has therefore been a policy of last resort. We employ 34% fewer Stipendiary Ministers in 1993 than we did in 1974 (from 1,163 in 1974 to 772 in 1993). The implications are clear - the ratio of members to Stipendiary Ministers has decreased slightly from 161 : 1 in 1973 to 144 : 1 in 1993, but the ratio of churches (and therefore communities and centres of mission) to Stipendiary Ministers has increased significantly from 1.8 : 1 in 1974 to 2.3 : 1 in 1993. If the total number of Non-Stipendiary Ministers (201) is added, the ratio is 1.9 : 1 churches, but it needs to be remembered that the tasks of Non-Stipendiary Ministers vary as does their geographical distribution.

3.7 Nevertheless the URC has achieved much in its short history. It has maintained the front line of mission in the face of numerical decline. It has championed radical experiments in ministry, both ecumenically and denominationally. It has committed itself to paying a just stipend. It has undertaken bold initiatives in Christian education, community involvement and mission. There is much for which to give thanks as we review our pattern of ministry.

3.8 If our pattern of ministry is to be determined by the missionary task of the church it will be formed by **theological principles**, the **needs of the church**, and the **needs of the world**. These three aspects are developed in the following sections.

4. THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 The theological framework

The Working Party began its work with a study of the theological basis for the understanding of ministry. The Assembly had asked the Doctrine and Worship Committee to look at paras 19-25 of the Basis of Union in the light of '*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*' (the Lima text 1982). In fulfilling this request, the Anglican/Reformed document '*God's Reign and Our Unity*' has also been considered. The result of this work appears at **Appendix A**. In the course of

preparing the theological paper, comments were invited on an earlier draft from various ecumenical and theological consultants. Their contributions have been valued and in many instances have been incorporated in the further drafting process. Like all theological statements, this one is open to revision in the light of further discussion and reflection. It has however formed the foundation for our thinking so far.

4.2 Theological guidelines

The following are the main theological guidelines we have sought to follow:

- (a) All ministry is Christ's. Some of Christ's work in the world through the power of the Spirit is hidden from us; we may not know or recognise it until the end of the ages. Christ's work in and through the church is exercised through the varied ministries of the baptised in the power of the Spirit.
- (b) The URC is part of the **Church** catholic, the body of Christ on earth; it is **Reformed**, owing particular debts to the traditions of the Reformation; it is **united**, committed by the Basis of Union to healing divisions within the body of Christ.
- (c) Sharing that heritage, we understand ministry to be properly exercised by Ministers and Elders working together and seeking the mind of Christ in the councils of the church, from Church Meeting and Elders' Meeting in the local congregation through to General Assembly.
- (d) Our heritage also leads us to understand that the Church is local - the gathered community of believers in a particular place. Equally we acknowledge that no local church can ever be truly catholic in isolation from other local churches. We belong together with all Christ's people in mutual support and ministry.
- (e) Specific ordained ministries - in our traditions those of Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacraments - exist to build up the whole Church and equip the saints for ministry in the world.
- (f) There is one ministry of Word and Sacraments. Ministers may serve in different ways - as Ministers in a local church, in industry, as theological teachers, as Moderators of synods, etc.
- (g) With the whole Church across the centuries, we believe ordination by prayer and the laying of hands to be the solemn setting apart of those called by God and recognised by the Church to particular ministries authorised by the Church.

- (h) the conventional distinction between lay and clerical is not true to the understanding of the *laos* as the whole people of God. Therefore 'lay'/'clerical' language should be avoided (see Appendix B, paras 1 and 15).

4.3 Ministry, ministries and Ministers

The way we talk about ministry can be confusing.

- ◆ We talk of **the ministry of the whole Church**. We believe every Christian has a ministry, and we know the Spirit gives gifts to the Church in diverse ways for the work of Christ.
- ◆ The ministry of the whole Church is expressed in a **variety of ministries** within the church - pastoral care, evangelism, discernment, administration - gifts as varied as the Spirit chooses to give. That is why we sometimes speak, for example, of the 'ministry' of musicians, or Junior Church leaders, or trainers.
- ◆ Within the United Reformed Church there are also **specific recognised ministries** of the church - the ministry of Elders, the ministry of Word and Sacraments, the ministry of Church Related Community Workers, the ministry of Lay Preachers.
- ◆ We also commonly use the noun 'minister' to mean **Ministers of Word and Sacraments**.

The fact that we use the same word in these four distinct senses should alert us to the possibilities of confusion and to the need to be clear in our thinking.

4.4 The ministry of the whole Church

All the baptised are called to share in Christ's ministry as they live out their discipleship in the world. Their lifting up of the world to God in intercession and their offering themselves as "living sacrifices" (Romans 12:1) is what is meant by '**the priesthood of all believers.**' This doctrine, both in the New Testament and in the writing of the Reformers, is about the whole Church ministering *together* and thus sharing in Christ's priesthood. It refers to the work of the whole Church and is not to be confused with the need for specific ministries. (See **Appendix B** for a theological commentary on the priesthood of all believers.)

4.5 Shared Ministry

Ministry, as we understand it, is shared. It is exercised collaboratively within the body of Christ. Each person is given particular gifts, all of which are to be used in the total work of ministry. We express this in two ways.

- ◆ In the local church we are committed by the Basis of Union to Elders **working together** with Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the Elders' Meeting. This can be illustrated by one strand of our Presbyterian heritage which understood Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacraments to be part of one presbyterate, although they had different functions. Elders were 'ruling' Elders - with a responsibility for spiritual leadership. Ministers were 'teaching' Elders - with the primary responsibility of educating and training God's people in the ways of Christ. These ministries were complementary, and each was incomplete without the other.
- ◆ We also listen for the Word of God and seek to discern the mind of Christ in the work of the church when we are **gathered together** in Church Meeting, District Council, Synod or Assembly.

Ministry, therefore, is more than the gifts of one individual. Its true richness and effectiveness is only seen when all the individual gifts operate together in reflecting and expressing God's love.

4.6 The importance of the local

Everyone in the United Reformed Church experiences the church first of all in the local congregation. Our understanding of 'local' is not that of the diocese under the pastoral charge of a bishop as in the Roman Catholic or Anglican churches, or even that of the circuit as in Methodism, but that of the church on the corner or the chapel in the village street. In our history, the ideal has been that the congregation serves the place in which it is set under the leadership of its own Minister. Our understanding of ministry is instinctively local, although we recognise that the local congregations belong together in Christ. That perception of the local is also reflected in our understanding of the importance of localities. What matters in community life is 'localness' and 'belonging'.

4.7 The spirit of service

Ministry is about service not status. It is about footwashing and empowering the body of Christ for its work of proclaiming and embodying God's kingdom. Ministry exists for the sake of others, not for its own sake. God's people exist, not for their own sake, but for the world's sake. The spirit of Christ, the servant Lord needs to pervade all our thinking about every aspect of ministry. (See e.g., Phil 2:5, Acts 20:24, Mark 10:43-45.)

5. THE NEEDS OF THE CHURCH

5.1 Coping with untidyness

5.1.1 The most satisfying solution to a complex problem is often the simplest and most elegant. There is in the Reformed tradition an underlying quest for simplicity and elegance in church order. That was one of the objectives of the Reformers. It is in that radical light that we wish to consider our present practice which is the result of bringing together three different traditions into one church and the accumulation of almost a quarter of a century of discipleship as a united church.

5.1.2 The United Reformed Church recognises the ministries of Elders, Lay Preachers, Stipendiary Ministers, Non-Stipendiary Ministers (in four models) and Church Related Community Workers. Alongside these specifically recognised ministries some also serve, for example, as trainers or administrators, or in some parts of the country as lay pastors, in roles which the church values but does not acknowledge as specifically recognised ministries. It is this varied pattern which needs to be reviewed.

5.2 Needs of the local church

5.2.1 We affirm the conclusion of the 1991 Patterns of Ministry report that local leadership is the central issue. That conclusion is supported by research and correspondence that has been made available to us, and by the resolutions of the Thames North Synod presented to the 1994 Assembly. As the Ministerial Resources Working Party reported to Assembly in 1990, every local church ought to have its own Minister. Local churches express a strong desire to have a Minister or identifiable leader. The Basis of Union para 24 states that the URC shall "take steps to ensure that so far as possible ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacraments are readily available to every local church."

5.2.2 We note, however, that on present numbers alone, we cannot provide more than one ordained Minister of Word and Sacraments for every two congregations. We do not believe that spreading Ministers ever more thinly in ever broadening group pastorates enables the church or encourages church growth.

5.2.3 We believe each local church has the following needs -

- ◆ the breaking open of God's Word in worship, teaching and preaching;
- ◆ pastoral care;
- ◆ leadership and vision;
- ◆ celebration of the sacraments.

5.3 Meeting the needs

These needs cannot be met by one person alone in any place. Each Elders' Meeting is responsible for ensuring that these needs are met.

- ◆ *Worship, teaching and preaching* are corporate activities. They are particularly the responsibility of Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Lay Preachers and worship leaders; in most churches there are others also involved in education - e.g., in Junior Church, through youth work, in Bible Study groups.
- ◆ *Pastoral care* is carried out in a variety of ways, by Elders and Ministers, in some churches by teams of pastoral carers, and at its most basic level, by the shared concern of church members. It is an activity of the whole church.
- ◆ *Leadership and vision* are best expressed corporately, as each congregation faces and prays about its part in God's mission in its own setting.
- ◆ *Celebration of the sacraments* is also an act of the whole congregation, though one has to preside and speak for all present. Authorisation for presidency, however, has caused much soul-searching and discussion in the councils of the church.

5.4 Presidency at the Sacraments

5.4.1 The sacraments link us with our fellow pilgrims of other fellowships, churches, countries and ages. They are paradoxically and tragically both the sign of our unity in Christ and the cause of our divisions. As a church we claim to be Reformed, and so we are. But we also claim to be united, and we are committed by our Basis of Union to do all within our power to heal the divisions between Christians. It is for this reason that we must be deeply sensitive about the convictions of the universal Church when we consider how to provide presidency in our local churches.

5.4.2 We would remind the church of the guidance offered about presidency which was 'received' by the General Assembly in 1991 (see pages 121 - 126 of the Manual). That statement sought to respect the traditions and consciences of the three traditions which have come together in our church. We believe that statement will need to be reviewed in the light of the outcome of this report.

5.4.3 The Basis of Union provides the framework for the authorisation of those, other than Ministers, who may be asked to preside at the Sacraments. The relevant part of para 24 reads -

“...(c) make provision through district councils, in full consultation with the local churches concerned, for the recognition of certain members of the United Reformed Church, normally Deaconesses, Elders or accredited Lay Preachers, who may be invited by local churches to preside at baptismal and communion services where pastoral necessity so requires. The pastoral needs of each situation shall be reviewed periodically by the district council in consultation with the local church. Apart from ordained Ministers of the United Reformed Church and of other churches, only such recognised persons may be invited.”

The words “pastoral necessity” have been interpreted differently in different Districts.

5.4.4 We believe that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are Christ’s gifts to his people. The history of the Church suggests that it was the need for eucharistic presidency which helped to define ordination. As the Church grew and spread through the ancient world, local churches needed to know if other Christian communities believed the same things as they did or if they were heretical. The mutual recognition of other churches as part of the one body of Christ was in the first instance the mutual recognition of their chosen Ministers. Those ordained were the leaders of the community and presided at communion because they were the leaders of that community. That was what constituted the call to ordination. In other words ordination was understood as a gift of God for the good ordering of church life, not as a qualification awarded at the end of a course of study, the sacred equivalent of graduation. As the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches noted in its statement on Ministry at Louvain in 1971 - “A person need not have a degree in theology or a salary from the Church in order to administer the eucharist; what he (sic) does need is the request of the Christian community and the Church’s recognition of him as a Minister. Such a person, who qualifies for ordination, even though a ‘non-professional’, may also prove effective in occasional preaching.”

5.4.5 Two principles should guide us in this perplexing and sensitive area. First, communion belongs to the whole church. It is Christ’s gift to us. Second, we above all churches should be sensitive to the ecumenical dimension of the way we order our eucharistic life. The first principle means that no congregation should ever be deprived of communion. There must always be someone available and authorised to preside. The second principle implies that those normally authorised to preside should be Ministers of Word and Sacraments.

5.5 The form of local leadership

5.5.1 The 1991 report was particularly concerned to explore ways of providing local leadership for congregations which only shared the ministry of a Stipendiary Minister. One solution proposed was the designation of a **presiding Elder**.

Whilst we wish to affirm the importance of local leadership, we think the introduction of presiding Elders would cause unnecessary divisions within the eldership and might create another 'tier' of Elders.

5.5.2 We would like instead to present a challenge to the church - that a **local leader** be found for each congregation, particularly in situations where the Minister is shared or comes from outside the immediate locality. That person might be 'grown' from within the local church or discovered in a neighbouring congregation. Logically, such a person should preside at communion within that congregation and therefore be ordained. However, we recognise that this may be neither practicable nor acceptable. We therefore suggest that two paths might be possible.

5.5.3 First, we must ask if God is calling these people to become **locally authorised Ministers** of Word and Sacraments within their local congregations. If they are so called, they should be assessed and then appropriately trained. This would lead to ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments with specific authorisation to exercise ministry in the local area concerned. This would be our preferred option. This would, as it were, be a considerable expansion of our present Non-Stipendiary Minister model 1. Such Ministers would normally be unpaid, and they would serve in the same kind of way as the former Churches of Christ Elders. This could be a potent missionary strategy for the church.

5.5.4 Secondly, however, we recognise that although some may not feel called to this ministry as such, they might still be able to offer much to the local church in leadership. We would therefore suggest that such people be recognised and authorised by the local church and district council after appropriate training, but not be ordained. These **local leaders** would normally be Elders. They would accept responsibility for personal leadership in the congregation which goes beyond that of an Elder as such. They would not normally be authorised to preside at the sacraments. They would be under the authority of the district council and would be invited to serve for a limited term which might be renewable.

5.5.5 We believe these suggestions to be both ecumenically responsible and denominationally appropriate. They are particularly relevant to Local Ecumenical Projects. Where the URC numbers are small, it is often difficult to provide visible, local URC ministry by an ordained Minister. Without this element in the leadership team, the distinctive contribution of the URC tradition to the LEP can be smothered. The alternative of a URC local leader brings some advantages, but such leadership can sometimes lead to difficulties for other denominations. The provision of a Minister, locally authorised, should ease these difficulties.

5.5.6 At the heart of our proposed pattern of ministry then, is a vision of local leadership. We hope that this leadership will emerge from those who presently

serve our church in countless ways - but particularly as Lay Preachers, Elders or Church Secretaries. Their task would be to help God's people share in the mission of God, through worship, service and prayer. It would be for the church to decide what kind of training would be appropriate for such Ministers and leaders; our hope would be that it could be nationally fashioned, but locally delivered.

5.5.7 These Ministers would belong to the one ministry of Word and Sacraments. However, the demands of that ministry are different in different places. We would hope that as far as possible all Ministers would receive training related to the context in which they will be serving.

5.5.8 At some point a locally authorised Minister (5.5.3) might wish to move to ministry which is remunerated by the church. We suggest that here we use the language of eligibility and extend the method of certificates of eligibility which we have at present. A rough analogy would be the process of licensing in the Church of England. At ordination a certificate of eligibility would be issued for the locally exercised ministry. A different certificate would be required if that Minister were to be called to exercise a paid ministry. The church would then have to decide what further training was appropriate before a new certificate could be issued.

5.6 One ministry of Word and Sacraments

5.6.1 We have been saddened to learn that some ministers seem to think of the distinctions between Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers in terms of status rather than service. In order that the unity of the ministry be emphasised, we recommend that the distinction between Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers, which is based on stipend and therefore ecclesiologicaly irrelevant, be removed. The church should therefore -

- (a) combine *stipendiary ministry with non-stipendiary ministry models 2 and 3* (pastoral charge of a small congregation and service as part of a team, respectively).
- (b) develop *one form of assessment and parity of training* for Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers. It will be for the Ministries and Training Committees to work out the implications of this. We hope that each candidate will be given the most demanding and stretching training possible and we note that that could mean increasing rather than decreasing training.
- (c) consider *ways of meeting the financial needs* of "Non-Stipendiary Ministers" - i.e. meeting their full expenses and possibly other basic costs, e.g. housing, in order that they might be enabled to exercise their ministry without financial disadvantage - though we recognise that this is a complex area financially and administratively.

5.6.2 There would still, of course, be an administrative distinction between those on the payroll and those not paid by the church. Some mechanism (as in 5.5.8 above) would be needed to enable ministers to move onto the payroll at an appropriate point and to assess whether any further training might be necessary.

5.6.3 There is a great demand for Ministers. We will always need women and men who have heard the call of God to serve in full-time stipendiary ministry, and it will remain the church's responsibility to give them the best possible training, support them fully, and use them in imaginative ways that give the fullest scope for their individual gifts and skills. We have some 800 Stipendiary Ministers, and about 1800 churches. The need for more Ministers who do not rely on the church for the whole of their income, and for locally authorised Ministers is readily apparent.

5.7 Lay Preachers

5.7.1 Lay Preachers are a vital part of our patterns of ministry. They form part of our vision for the future of the URC. They bring a distinctive contribution through the insights that come through their other roles both inside the church as Elders, administrators, etc., and outside church structures in the workplace. Thus they can bring together the Word and the world and help congregations to reflect on the connections. They offer a disturbing and earthed perspective on Christian discipleship.

5.7.2 At present, between a fifth and a third of all Sunday services are conducted by Lay Preachers. About 650 Lay Preachers are nationally accredited by the URC, while others are recognised locally or by other denominations. As patterns of worship are changing, so is the work of many of these Preachers. Fewer are itinerant over large areas; many preach in a few churches which they come to know well, and where they often develop an informal pastoral ministry.

5.7.3 Because we do not find a sharp distinction between 'lay' and 'clerical' helpful in considering ministry, we suggest the title '**Preacher**' is preferable to that of Lay Preacher.

5.7.4 While many present and future Preachers will continue to focus their work on acts of worship, others are well suited to providing a more general local leadership. Within our proposals we would see Preachers as often being suitable candidates for becoming locally authorised Ministers or local leaders, either in their home congregation or in another where they have established strong links.

5.7.5 The ministry of 'lay pastors' has begun to find a place again in some Provinces. We suggest that those who are now 'lay pastors' should be eligible as potential locally authorised Ministers or local leaders. Wherever possible they would be linked with wider ministry teams.

5.7.6 Achieving a pattern of locally authorised Ministers will take some years, perhaps a generation, but it will gradually reduce the need for others to be authorised to preside at the Sacraments. However, where a district council believes that pastoral necessity requires a special authorisation, we hope they would look first to Preachers known to the relevant congregation.

5.8 The Eldership

5.8.1 The ministry of Elders is highly valued by some of our ecumenical partners. We wish to emphasise its value, and to underline the importance of Ministers and Elders working together in ministry. We recommend no changes to this part of our pattern of ministry. We considered the possibility (as have the Church of Scotland Panel on Doctrine) of replacing ordination with commissioning, but we see no compelling reason to do so, and feel it right to continue ordaining Elders as a recognition of their calling to a lifelong commitment, and as a public authorisation of their ministry within the local church and in the wider councils of the church.

5.8.2 In view of the fact that Elders are called to serve within the wider church as well as locally, it seems appropriate to ask whether the district council should not have some part at least in their ordination and induction, and possibly even concur in their appointment.

5.8.3 The eldership expresses powerfully both the corporate nature of ministry and the collaborative nature of leadership in the church. We therefore believe it right to go on wrestling with the concept of the eldership particularly in ecumenical situations where it could easily be lost, and despite the fact that it does not always fit easily with other forms of local leadership.

5.9 Group ministries and ministry teams

5.9.1 Group ministries have developed considerably in the last thirty years. Originally consisting of one or two Stipendiary Ministers serving a group of churches or a linked pastorate, they now often include Non-Stipendiary Ministers, Lay Preachers and others. We see a continuing role for such group ministries with locally authorised Ministers or local leaders also included.

5.9.2 We also see scope for ministry teams within particular congregations consisting of the Minister(s), Lay Preachers, worship leaders and Elders. In larger congregations such a ministry team might consist of the Minister(s), church/elders' meeting secretary and others appointed by the Elders and church meetings. In smaller congregations all the Elders and perhaps one or two Lay Preachers from outside the congregations might be involved.

5.9.3 In all cases the responsibility for leading the team should be clearly identified. Often this will lie with a Stipendiary Minister, but it need not necessarily do so.

5.10 Needs of the wider church

Some ministries find their focus in the wider church in such fields as

- ◆ training, including Youth Leadership Training Officers and Youth and Children's Work Trainers, theological college teachers, provincial training officers;
- ◆ administration, ecumenism and chaplaincy;
- ◆ other ministries not currently identified as such in the life of the church, such as evangelists, pastoral assistants, worship leaders and local church administrators;
- ◆ other more general work carried out by church members within the community.

It is important that those exercising such ministries should be appropriately related not only to others exercising similar ministries, but also to the councils of the URC so that they may be supported by and contribute to them.

6. THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD

6.1 Ministry for the world

Jesus came to save a world. The Church exists for the sake of God's world; its ministry is focused in the world, for the world. Every Christian is called to share Christ's priesthood, lifting the world's life to God and letting their own lives be salt, light and leaven. The Church has a public dimension. So do its specific ministries. It is important that this is acknowledged.

6.2 Identifying ministry for the world

6.2.1 We believe such ministries need to be more clearly recognised in the URC. Ministry in, with and for the world is both diaconal and prophetic. It is, in other words, a ministry both of service and of challenge. It is present in the URC in the following identifiable forms.

- ◆ Church Related Community Workers who undertake a diaconal ministry, helping communities discover themselves, giving voice to the voiceless; their ministry is difficult, radical and vital.

- ◆ Non-Stipendiary Ministers model 4 who are “a focus for mission in the place of work or leisure...”
- ◆ Church members who live out their discipleship in the world in prophetic and caring ways.
- ◆ Many of the ‘Special Category’ Ministries which are related to specific projects in response to needs in the community. (Thirty ‘Special Category’ Ministry posts and five CWM posts represent some 4.5% of our deployed Ministers.)
- ◆ Churches and Ministers who pursue a deliberate theology of community involvement and empowerment.
- ◆ Ministers who have moved from pastoral ministry to other work which they see as another form of the ministry for which they were ordained.
- ◆ Ministers who serve as chaplains to hospitals, industry, education and the armed services.
- ◆ Evangelists who carry the gospel to the world.

6.2.2 Many of these do not fit easily within our normally understood patterns of ministry, though all are diaconal in nature and all are world rather than church focused. We believe that the time is ripe, therefore, for the church to recognise all these as **diaconal ministries**. We would, of course, need to consider appropriate terminology, particularly so far as model 4 Non-Stipendiary Ministers are concerned.

6.2.3 It might also be appropriate to consider a **diaconal association** which will bring together these varied ministries. This would not be a new order of ministry, but a supportive and prophetic network of those who take the public and political ministry of the church seriously. We hope that such an association would be open to all exercising these ministries, and develop its own mode and rule of life, perhaps along the lines of the Iona Community or the tertiary Franciscans. In order to acknowledge and support such ministries, we suggest that they should be integrated into the councils of the church more strongly than at present, so that the church might further benefit from their insights in worship and decision making.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING URC MINISTRIES

7.1 We have already noted the need for change to be made gradually (see para 3.5). This section looks at what this might mean from various perspectives and where we would not envisage any fundamental changes.

7.2 Stipendiary Ministers

7.2.1 Stipendiary Ministers will be valued as at present and continue to work collaboratively with other Ministers, Elders and members, within the councils of the church. It is almost certain that we shall need to continue to recruit a good range of ages, though with an increasing emphasis on the need for younger men and women. We should also consider the possibility that at some time in the future we might need to increase the number of Stipendiary Ministers.

7.2.2 Stipendiary Ministers are in a somewhat different situation from others because they have committed themselves to lifelong paid service within the church as their sole profession. It is therefore very much more difficult for them to consider a period as Non-Stipendiary Ministers unless they have alternative means of support. This suggests that there needs to be some extra care in the assessment of those who will be supported totally and potentially for the remainder of their working life. These questions will not be about their gifts or competence, but about the appropriateness of their being supported to this extent, about the level of training to be expected and about the needs of the church at this particular time. In accepting such a call, the Minister may be making some considerable sacrifices, but the church is also making a considerable commitment.

7.2.3 The primary work of Stipendiary Ministers has always been preaching, presidency and pastoral care within local congregations. Given that such Ministers are relatively costly to train and to support, we may want to review the balance of those working in pastoral situations and those serving in other ways. It is always open to district councils to deploy Ministers in a variety of ways, both in general pastoral ministry and in more specialised roles. Some Stipendiary Ministers might be encouraged to concentrate more on their “enabling” and training roles, helping others exercise their own gifts.

7.3 Non-Stipendiary Ministers

7.3.1 We envisage Non-Stipendiary Ministers moving in any one of four directions.

- (a) Some NSMs, as now, will feel called at some point to stipendiary ministry. Because this involves long term financial and employment commitments for the wider church, the appropriateness of their being accepted onto the payroll of the church needs to be tested. Alongside that testing would be the question of relevant training. It should not be assumed that further training will be essential, but the opportunity for further development of gifts needs to be looked at seriously.

- (b) Some NSMs may become Ministers of local churches, being called and serving on much the same basis as Stipendiary Ministers (SMs).
- (c) Model 1 NSMs would continue to serve principally in a local church; they would become locally authorised Ministers and while potentially being responsible for a local church, would continue to work in a team context.
- (d) Model 4 NSMs would continue to serve in a local church in whatever ways are appropriate, but their principal ministry would be seen as a diaconal ministry into the community.

7.3.2 As far as possible, NSMs and SMs should serve on a similar basis, with appropriate expenses, terms of settlement, training opportunities, grievance procedures, etc. The stipendiary distinction would need to be retained, but it should not be used any more than is necessary and particularly not to suggest any difference in status or function. The age difference for applicants should no longer apply.

7.4 Lay Preachers

7.4.1 We visualise Lay Preachers developing in three possible directions.

- (a) Some will become locally authorised Ministers.
- (b) Some will become local leaders.
- (c) Some will continue as Preachers.

7.4.2 We offer the following further suggestions in relation to Preachers.

- (a) Preachers need to be related to and supported by district councils much more strongly than at present. Ideally this should be done by incorporation into collaborative ministry teams so that they are working fully with Ministers of Word and Sacraments and with local leaders.
- (b) The ministry of Preachers needs to be adequately resourced in training and support.
- (c) Preachers from other denominations have a place within our pattern of ministry; we encourage district councils to deepen relationships with them; preaching commissioners might also develop links with their equivalent officers in other churches.

7.5 Church Related Community Workers

CRCWs would be part of the diverse pattern of diaconal ministries. The introduction and development of church related community work has created a number of unresolved anomalies. Apart from Stipendiary Ministers, CRCWs are the only people currently paid directly from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund. In other words, the further development of their numbers is very closely and arbitrarily linked to the number of Stipendiary Ministers. This issue needs to be addressed in a total deployment context (see 8.2.6).

7.6 Elders

We suggest no major changes in the concept of the eldership. We see this as a central aspect of our pattern of ministry, with a key role in terms of pastoral care, leadership, oversight of worship and the administration of the Sacraments. Some Elders in specific situations might be called to serve as locally authorised Ministers, for which they would be recognised, trained and ordained. Some may be appointed to serve as local leaders.

7.7 Other issues

7.7.1 There are several other issues which relate to ministry which have not been directly addressed by the Working Party. Some of these are being dealt with by other committees or will need further work elsewhere. Amongst these are appraisal, authority, training and recruitment of all forms of ministry.

7.7.2 Regarding **oversight** we are aware that some further work may need to be done on this. Alongside the oversight exercised in a corporate way by the councils of the church, there is the personal oversight ministry of Provincial Moderators. We are aware that, amongst other influences, the changing nature of ecumenism is reshaping the role of Provincial Moderators. Their representational function at the regional level has expanded considerably in recent years. The stresses and strains of their work are formidable. We are impressed by the experimental ministry of district ministers/pastors as a way of sharing some of this pastoral work. In view of all this we suggest that there might be a review of our pattern of oversight ministries.

7.7.3 We are also aware that there is a concern that we maintain the **quality of ministry**. We must, of course, remain committed to excellence in training both before and after ordination. We encourage the further development of in-service training and welcome the initiatives being taken in relation to appraisal of ministers. We welcome the continuing development of forms of training for all church members.

8. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE URC

8.1 Statistics

8.1.1 For many years we have had only an incomplete picture of the statistics and numerical trends as these relate to congregations and Ministers. This has made it difficult to analyse, for instance, the changing age profile of our Ministers, the relative significance of non-stipendiary ministry, and to project with any degree of confidence our recruitment needs. In consequence we have sometimes stumbled into crises and been forced to make short term decisions on the basis of unsubstantiated impressions. In order, therefore, to aid the process of decisions about recruitment, financial planning and other policy issues, encouragement has been given to the process of gathering as much detailed information as may be relevant. Informed projections can then be looked at as decisions are made.

8.1.2 Considerable work has now been done by a specially formed statistical group which has gathered some of the relevant statistics and interpreted their implications. Some of the major facts are presented in **Appendix D**. A more complete set of statistics is available on request as a supplement to this report.

8.1.3 It is imperative that some provision be made for these statistics to be kept up-to-date and for the resulting information to be reliably interpreted to the church. The setting up of a database, the systems for keeping it updated, and the means of interpreting the results would require staff time at Church House. Not to make such arrangements, or to make them in a limited fashion, may leave us in the present difficulty of partial and inaccurate knowledge and impressions.

8.2 Deployment

8.2.1 We suggest that within a clear deployment policy, district councils should use all the ministerial resources available to them creatively and flexibly in response to the mission and outreach tasks of the church. Such a policy should not of course be limited to Ministers but should involve the whole community of the church and those with special and relevant gifts. Many local churches would need to become more adventurous in their thinking and strategies. Some would need to be prepared to "give ministry away" for the sake of others. District councils need to develop a strong and shared sense of mission within their local communities (see *The Manual*, functions of the district council, paras ix and x; and for some imaginative suggestions see "*A Plan for All Seasons*" available from Yorkshire Province).

8.2.2 Deployment is about enabling the sharing of resources, the encouragement of strategic planning and the proper stewardship of the church's money. It should take account not only of numbers of church members, finance and population, but have a strong mission perspective.

8.2.3 There are at present no controls on the numbers of Ministers who can be appointed or inducted by district councils. We suggest that control be exercised by firm adherence to deployment targets. For such a deployment policy to work effectively, it not only needs to be in place, but needs to be continually monitored and regularly updated. (The deployment of Church Related Community Workers is already the responsibility of the CRCW Central Management Committee.)

8.2.4 District councils would need to negotiate their own deployment numbers with the Province. Each District would need to be able to deploy a balance of Stipendiary, Non-Stipendiary, locally authorised Ministers and Church Related Community Workers where appropriate. Financial assessments would need to be calculated in such a way that there was no major financial advantage or disadvantage in having one kind of ministry as opposed to another. Stipendiary Ministers would need to be used in such a way that they could be supportive of other forms of ministry.

8.2.5 So far as recruitment is concerned it might be for Ministries Committee, for instance, to monitor numbers and to indicate to the church when there might be need to seek more candidates for all forms of ministry. Quotas might be applied to some of these categories and to the number of Ministers from other churches.

8.2.6 Clearly some balance must be kept between the number of those serving as Stipendiary Ministers and those serving in other capacities but still paid for by the church. The logic would seem to be that the church should define the overall numbers of those it needs and can afford to pay and decide how many may be employed within any given category. This would involve the development of an overall employment and deployment policy.

8.2.7 We offer the following proposals:

- (a) that the number of Stipendiary Ministers and Church Related Community Workers be controlled by firm adherence to *deployment targets*;
- (b) that the numbers of all others employed or deployed by the church centrally be considered in relation to an *overall deployment policy*;
- (c) that a *deployment consultation* be set up to -
establish a formula for assessing deployment needs;
negotiate current and future needs on a provincial basis;
consider the appropriateness of including part-time and
Non-Stipendiary Ministers, as well as Church Related
Community Workers and others, within the overall figures;
- (d) that a small *deployment group* be set up to discuss needs with provincial representatives on a regular, say, annual basis, on similar lines to the present practice in assessing the financial needs and responses for the Mission and Ministry Fund;

- (e) that the *deployment of Ministers* within each Province should be a matter for discussion and planning between the district councils within the Province, and that mission strategy should be a strong element in these considerations;
- (f) that the *number of pastorates* in any district or Province be a matter for local consultation, but that it be understood that no Province can actually deploy - apart from inevitable minor fluctuations - more than its quota.

8.2.8 In view of the urgency surrounding the issue of deployment policy, we suggest that Mission Council might want to begin to address these proposals immediately.

8.3 Movement of Ministers

8.3.1 Suggestions are sometimes made about the advantages and disadvantages of our present system for the movement of Ministers. Currently this depends on a local church issuing a call, over against, for instance, a stationing/appointment system. We do not recommend any change in procedures because

- ◆ the principle of the call given by the local church is a significant part of our heritage;
- ◆ local churches are not likely to welcome having Ministers directed to them.
- ◆ the testing of the call to ministry is only completed when a local pastorate issues a call.

8.3.2 Another area of difficulty is the conflict between termed appointments and the call system. A number of ministerial posts now have fixed terms, particularly in pastorates shared with the Methodist Church. It does not seem feasible to us to integrate these two systems, nor to say that all Ministers should be on termed appointments, or that none should. We recommend

- ◆ early planning and decision when an appointment is coming towards termination,
- ◆ that all agreements about the length of termed appointments are set down clearly in writing and agreed by all involved, and
- ◆ that adequate pastoral care and support is given.

8.3.3 All forms of locally based ministry need to be on a termed basis, so that there can be regular review of the rightness of continuity. It might also be right for stipendiary ministry to be subject to review at intervals. Ministries can sometimes overrun their effectiveness. We suggest therefore that after the first, say ten years of a stipendiary ministry, the district council should institute a review, and that such reviews might be repeated at, say, five yearly intervals.

8.3.4 Another aspect of this is to ask whether there is any way in which Stipendiary Ministers who have lost a sense of call or are only continuing to serve because of the dire financial implications of resigning or retiring early might be offered a financial package which might be both to their and the church's benefit.

8.4 Finance

8.4.1 There is widespread agreement that our discussion about patterns of ministry should not be dominated by financial considerations, but also that we need to be realistic about the resources needed for ministry and the resources the churches are able to contribute. Some balance needs to be found between cutting back in order to live within our means while at the same time challenging congregations about their level of giving so that the church's work and ministry may be extended. The success of the TRIO programme suggests that the financial potential of our members has not been fully mobilised. Given the choice between reducing the number of Ministers and raising the contributions, the church might decide to challenge its members to endorse the latter. These are matters for prayerful judgement, and we suggest they should be undertaken by the Mission Council on a regular basis and in the light of changing numbers, expectations and finance.

8.4.2 If we are to develop the concept of local leadership, including locally authorised ministry, further funding will be needed to cover expenses and training. This might be met by raising additional funds or by redeploying existing resources.

8.5 The way forward

At this stage we are striving for consensus about the way forward. We suggest that if the general direction of these proposals is acceptable, further work would need to be done on several of these proposals and in particular in the following areas.

- 1 Developing local ministry. This would require further work to be done on recruitment, qualities and qualifications, training, terms of settlement and procedures to be followed.
- 2 The implications of integrating Non-Stipendiary Ministry and Stipendiary Ministry forms of ministry.
- 3 Developing a new deployment concept and policy.
- 4 Developing our understanding of diaconal ministries.
- 5 Continuing to develop appropriate training.

9. SUMMARY OF REPORT

9.1 Principles for ministry

The church is called to participate in God's mission in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. We believe that -

1. every Christian is called to share in Christ's ministry as part of the whole people of God (4.4 & 4.5).
2. the shared life and sacrificial ministry of all Christians constitutes the priesthood of all believers (4.4).
3. patterns of ministry should be determined by the need to build up the life of the church for its missionary task (3.2 & 3.8).
4. mission springs out of the life of the local congregation (4.2(d)).
5. every local church should have identifiable local leadership (4.6, 5.2 and 5.5.2).
6. there is one ministry of Word and Sacraments (4.2(f)).
7. normally those who preside at the Sacraments should be Ministers of Word and Sacraments (5.4.5).

9.2 Meeting the needs of the local church

At present the church is not able to supply a minister solely for each congregation, but we believe we could meet the need felt in many local churches for an identifiable local leader by -

1. seeking to provide a local leader for each congregation (5.5.2) -
as a Stipendiary Minister,
as a Non-Stipendiary Minister,
as a locally authorised Minister, or
as a local leader.
2. developing local leadership by ordaining some to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments as locally authorised Ministers (5.5.3) and recognising some others as local leaders (5.5.4).
3. seeking this new local leadership particularly from Lay Preachers, Elders and church secretaries (5.5.6).

Both of these new forms of local leadership would be appropriately trained, but normally only those ordained would preside at the sacraments.

9.3 Other aspects of ministry

At the same time we recommend that -

1. we retain the present pattern of pastoral ministry, but seek to remove the distinctions between Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers models 2 and 3 (5.6.1).

2. we affirm the ministry of Lay Preachers and change their title to 'Preachers' (5.7.3).
3. those whose ministry is particularly directed towards the world, such as Non-Stipendiary Ministers model 4, Church Related Community Workers, chaplains, etc. (6.2.1), should be recognised as exercising a diaconal ministry and be linked through a diaconal association (6.2.2).
4. those currently serving as 'lay pastors' should become either locally authorised ~~ordained~~ Ministers or local leaders (5.7.5).
5. district councils be encouraged to deploy Ministers imaginatively and flexibly (7.2.3 & 8.2.1).

9.4 Other Recommendations

A number of other recommendations appear within the report, among them the following.

1. We should seek parity of training and, wherever possible, similar terms of service for Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers (5.6 & 7.3.2).
2. There should be continued emphasis on shared ministry (4.5 & 5.9).
3. The possibility of an 'early retirement' package might be considered (8.3.4).
4. There is need for a review of oversight ministries (7.7.2).
5. There is need to maintain accurate statistical information about the life of the church if planning and budgeting are to be based on knowledge as well as faith (8.1).
6. A new deployment policy needs now to be addressed with urgency (8.2).
7. Mission Council might be asked to monitor the needs and resources of the church on a regular basis and to judge when and how to challenge the churches or offer other relevant proposals (8.4).

10. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A wide range of questions arise naturally from the text of the report itself. Responses will be welcome on all parts of the report, but it would be particularly helpful to have responses on the following topics -

- ◆ locally authorised ministry
- ◆ local leadership
- ◆ removal of distinction between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry
- ◆ diaconal ministries
- ◆ lay preachers
- ◆ mission and ministry strategy of district councils
- ◆ deployment

APPENDIX A

THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

Introduction

Each tradition which is contained within the United Reformed Church originally justified its pattern of ministry on the ground that it reflected the pattern of the New Testament Church. The historic pre-Reformation patterns were rejected on the ground that they needed reform, and the criteria for the reformed pattern were derived from scripture, as the reformers understood it. Few today would wish to argue either that the New Testament provides a single pattern of ministry or that the patterns in the various churches can be evaluated by the extent to which they conform to a single New Testament pattern. On the other hand, there is disagreement on the relative importance of historical continuity and contemporary functionality. This issue is not addressed in the Basis of Union and only to a limited extent in BEM. It is obscured by the use of the historic present tense in both documents.

The following abbreviations are used in the text which follows:

BEM: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry; Faith and Order Paper no.III, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982. References are to the text on Ministry unless otherwise stated. The General Assembly approved a formal response to this text in 1985;

GRU: God's Reign and our Unity, the Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, London & Edinburgh, 1984. The General Assembly of 1985 asked the Doctrine and Worship Committee to prepare a response which was contained in the Committee's report to Assembly, 1986;

URC Basis and URC Structure: the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church, originally approved by the Uniting Assembly of 1972, but (except where otherwise noted) quotations are from the Basis as revised by the General Assembly of the Church from time to time and printed in the 3rd Edition of *The Manual of the United Reformed Church* 1991.

1. Ministry in the universal Church

1.1. God created the heavens and the earth, including human beings, as an expression of the divine glory: despite human resistance to God's purpose, God's grace and love are manifested in a continuing mission to reconcile humanity and the whole universe to God (GRU 25).

1.2. God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. By sheer grace God chose Israel and then in fulfilment of that purpose called the Church into being through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit: mission refers primarily to God's continuing activity in the world, summed up in the accomplished work of Christ (URC Basis I, BEM I, GRU 26).

1.3. The life of the Church is based on Christ's once-for-all victory over the powers of evil and death and comes from the power of the Holy Spirit, given to those who believe in the Risen Lord and are recreated as the Body of Christ (BEM 2-3).

1.4. The sovereign rule of God, to which the Church bears witness, is the reality underlying the world God created: the Church is the beginning of the new creation, but has only a provisional character in the service of God's rule, provisional first because it contains only part of the human family and secondly because those within it are only partly conformed to God's purpose (GRU 29, 30).

1.5. The task of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to be a foretaste of the joy and glory of God's rule by its witness and service (BEM 4, GRU 73). Christ thus continues his ministry in and through the Church (URC Basis 19).

1.6. The Holy Spirit bestows on the members of the Church diverse and complementary gifts; members should discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world (BEM 5, cf. URC Basis 19-20, where these gifts are attributed to Christ). Through the power of the Spirit members of the Church are enabled to participate in the ministry of Christ to the world (GRU 74).

1.7. The first disciples were both the first followers and the first apostles sent to call others to follow (GRU 76). Thus from very early times people were called and set apart to lead and build up the local churches in their life and service to the world, particularly in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the exercise of oversight (*episkope*) (BEM 8-9, 13).

1.8. By the third century a common pattern of ministry was emerging which involved a chief pastor in each local church who worked with a body of colleagues and a staff of helpers or assistants to forward the work of Christ in Church and world: this was the origin of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon (GRU 91, BEM 19-25).

2. Ministry in the United Reformed Church

2.1. In the later sixteenth century those who wished "to complete" the Reformation in England, whether presbyterians or congregationalists rejected the mediaeval form of the threefold ministry, expressed in the understanding of the local church as a diocese. Instead local congregations called a pastor to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, who was surrounded by a group of elders and deacons. At the regional level oversight was exercised not by a single pastor but by councils of pastors and elders (GRU 94).

2.2. Different variations of this pattern were found in the constituent traditions of the United Reformed Church - Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ. The Basis of Union states the common understanding of church and ministry underlying these traditions.

2.3. The United Reformed Church undertakes to make available, so far as possible, ordained ministers of Word and Sacraments to every local congregation, to accredit suitable men and women as lay preachers, and to recognise certain members, normally elders or accredited lay preachers, who may be invited to preside at baptismal and communion services where pastoral necessity so requires (URC Basis 24).

2.4. Within the local congregation the elders' meeting (which consists of the minister(s) and elders) is responsible for ensuring that public worship is offered, the sacraments are celebrated and the word is preached (URC Structure 2(2)). A congregation or group of congregations, with the concurrence of the District Council, calls an ordained minister or ministers of Word and Sacraments to undertake these tasks (URC Basis 21). Some ordained ministers are stipendiary and others are non-stipendiary; the difference between them relates primarily to availability for service. Many congregations, to an extent which varies significantly from place to place, also invite lay preachers to lead worship.

2.5. Responsibility for pastoral care and oversight is shared among ordained ministers and elders, who also constitute the wider councils of the Church (URC Basis 20, 21, 22). The pastoral responsibilities of elders are usually exercised through the assignment of groups of members to each elder for pastoral care. The responsibilities of elders in the government, oversight and leadership of the church are necessarily corporate or collegial in character, and by its relation to the wider councils of the Church the elders' meeting represents the whole Church to the local church.

2.6. The procedures for recognising and calling people to ministry vary according to the ministry concerned. Elders are called, elected and ordained within each congregation; ordination to the eldership is not repeated if an elder moves to another congregation, but such a person would not become a serving elder in the new congregation unless that congregation so decided. Ministers of Word and Sacraments are selected for training by a process involving several councils of the Church but the decision on eligibility for ordination is by the District Council on behalf of the whole Church. In each case ordination is to a ministry recognised throughout the United Reformed Church.

2.7. The Basis of Union (23) provides that the General Assembly shall decide what other ministries shall be exercised within the United Reformed Church and how those who are to exercise them shall be set apart. Lay preachers are accredited by District Councils but not ordained; there is also a list of nationally accredited preachers kept by the Lay Preaching Sub-Committee. The General Assembly keeps a roll of accredited Church Related Community Workers.

2.8. Other ministries are recognised within local congregations with varying degrees of formality, e.g. youth workers, children's' workers, organists and leaders of music.

2.9. The United Reformed Church recognises the work of Youth and Children's' Work Trainers and Youth Leadership Training Officers, but they are not ordained ministers.

2.10. The General Assembly appoints a Moderator for each provincial Synod, who is a minister, separated from any local pastoral charge, and appointed for a period of years, with the possibility of reappointment for further periods if the General Assembly so determines. The task of the Moderator is to preside over meetings of the Provincial Synod and exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the Province. The Moderator is involved in the process of suggesting names of ministers to vacant pastorates, and presides, or appoints a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and inductions of ministers within the Province. The Moderator is also a member of each district council in the Province and shares in the council's responsibility for oversight of local churches and ministers (URC Structure 2(4)). The Moderator

therefore exercises a personal *episkope* in a conciliar setting, but a Moderator's ministry is not understood as constituting a separate order of ministry. Constitutionally Moderators are officers of the General Assembly, though unlike other Assembly officers they have responsibilities which are primarily regional rather than national.

2.11. The current discussion requires us to clarify our understanding of:

- (a) ordained and non-ordained ministry;
- (b) stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry;
- (c) elders and lay preachers;
- (d) diakonia.

3. Ordained ministry

3.1. Christians understand the qualities of character, which enable them to live the Christian life and show forth the good news of the Kingdom of God in the service of others, as gifts from God rather than resources originating in themselves. Everyone has a unique combination of such gifts. The exercise of such gifts is what we mean by the ministry of the whole people of God. That ministry of self-offering in sacrificial service to and prayer for the world is one way in which Christ's completed work is represented to the world. (See further in Appendix B.) For the building up of the whole people of God in God's service, certain members of the Church are called to a particular ministry within this wider ministry.

3.2. In ordination certain members of the Church are designated for public ministry in the Church in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands. Such public ministry is understood as a particular gift of the Spirit, which builds upon the individual combination of gifts of the candidate concerned (BEM 39). The existence of such ministry points to the initiative of God in Christ for redemption.

3.3. Those who ordain do so not in their own right but as representatives of the Church, and the ordination prayer is a reminder that the risen Lord is the true ordainer who calls to and bestows the gift of ministry. The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit to a particular person in a particular place at a particular time and also an acknowledgement of the prior gifts and commitment which that person brings to ministry. The prayer of the congregation represents their commitment to support the one ordained (BEM 39-44).

3.4. The word "ordination" has traditionally been used to refer to the setting apart of those within the threefold ministry (see 1.8 above). It has different intentions, according to the specific tasks of the ministries concerned, which are reflected in the liturgies of ordination (BEM 39). Ordination to a particular ministry, like baptism, is not repeated: this is why ordination has been described as "for life". The Basis of Union recognises the crucial point more precisely when it says that "those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills" (URC Basis 20).

3.5. There has been much discussion over whether ordination confers a different kind of being or character, which leads into such questions as the indelibility of orders, etc. The Commentary on BEM 40 notes "a certain difference between the unspoken cultural setting of the Greek *cheirotonein* and that of the Latin *ordo* or *ordinare*. The New Testament use of the former term borrows its basic secular meaning of "appointment" (Acts 14:23; II Cor 8:19), which is in turn derived from the original

meaning of extending the hand, either to designate a person or to cast a vote... *Ordo* and *ordinare*, on the other hand, are terms derived from Roman law where they convey the notion of the special status of a group distinct from the plebs, as in the term *ordo clarissimus* for the Roman senate". Within the discussion there is a cluster of ideas, which can usefully be separated.

3.6. The act of ordination is described in BEM as involving invocation to God that the new minister be given the power of the Holy Spirit in the new relation between minister and Church, the sign of the granting of this prayer by the Lord who gives the gift of the ordained ministry, and acknowledgement by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained and commitment by Church and ordinand to the new relationship (BEM 42-44, reprinted in GRU 84). The emphasis in this description on the new relationship in which the ordained person stands is significant for the long debate over whether ministry is to be understood essentially in ontological or functional terms. Public ministry is never completely described by listing the minister's tasks: the relationship to others created by a public recognition of the minister's calling to those tasks itself reshapes the being of the minister, as those who exercise such ministry can testify. The ordinand is therefore different from those not ordained because of the new relationship. Moreover the fact that ordination to a particular ministry is not repeated emphasises the definitiveness of the act.

3.7. Although BEM and other documents use the term "the ordained ministry" as though it were a single ministry, the United Reformed Church is not alone in using the term ordination to denote the setting apart of at least two different orders of ministry. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church now use the term "ordination" in relation to bishops, priests and deacons, whilst clearly understanding that those ministries are different. Ordination has usually been linked with presidency at the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Word: these actions in worship are the way in which the whole community is especially built up in their ministry to the world. Those responsible are also those most intimately concerned in the pastoral care of the congregation. Nevertheless it is the intention of the ordination prayer rather than the act of ordination itself which defines the character of the ministry exercised.

3.8. What ordination does in a particular way is to point beyond itself and the person ordained to the initiative of Christ. A person may feel called by Christ to ministry, but that call has to be tested and recognised by the Church: ordination is the solemn ratification of that call by the Church as it prays that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, will enable the ordinand to use and develop his or her gifts for the public ministry to which he or she is called. It is in this sense that the United Reformed Church can endorse such statements in BEM as "In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity" (8) or "Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ" (12). The idea that the minister is a pointer to Christ is perhaps more helpful than the commoner view that the minister is the representative of Christ, a view which tends to lead implicitly to the idea that there can be only one minister in a congregation. Moreover there are some who are called to special ministries such as hospital or industrial chaplaincies, etc., which cannot be understood in the same way as ministry within a local congregation.

3.9. The United Reformed Church can readily accept the statement in BEM 13 - "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry". The question of the difference which ordination makes tends to be focussed on the extent to which such responsibilities are exclusively those of the ordained ministry - a point which is not adequately met in the Commentary on this paragraph "These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way", even though that was presumably its purpose. What can be said firmly is that ordination is a matter of authority rather than power: it is concerned with relationships (compare 3.6 above) and particularly the relationships between congregations in different places, since the mutual recognition of those authorised embodies the links which bind the Church together and manifest its unity (GRU 82). Furthermore, whilst it can be said that ordination confers status, in a Christian context that is the status of the servant of all, following the example of Christ himself. The fact that ordination is understood as primarily a matter of authority explains why Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ have all had procedures which enabled those responsibilities entrusted to the ordained to be exercised by those not ordained on occasions. In each tradition the argument for the normal exercise of such responsibilities by the ordained is one of order in the sense of orderliness, not because they have exclusive powers or rights.

3.10. If ordination is understood as the process of authorisation, rather than the conferring of power, the question as to which ministries in the Church are to be the subject of ordination is raised more acutely. Why does the United Reformed Church ordain elders as well as ministers, but not, for example, lay preachers or Church Related Community Workers? Historically, the answer to this question for the Church as a whole is largely pragmatic and traditional. However, there is a sense in which ordination has been reserved for those ministries which most closely recall us to the foundational ministry of Christ himself. The ministries of Word and Sacraments are linked because each amplifies the significance of the other. The ministry of oversight and pastoral care is linked to Christ as king and shepherd. The diaconal ministry is linked to Christ as servant. A case could therefore be made for ordaining Church Related Community Workers as deacons. A case could also be made for ordaining lay preachers to the ministry of the Word if they were regular rather than occasional preachers, and in view of the link between Word and Sacraments it would seem logical to ordain those who regularly conduct worship to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, particularly if their ministry is exercised in several congregations. The important point here is that made in GRU 83 when the advocacy of "lay celebration" on the ground that it witnesses to the priesthood of all believers is shown to be self-contradictory since it implies that the president alone is the priest. It is important that the theology behind ordination is understood, since an extension of ordination might be opposed both by ministers concerned to defend their clerical status and by lay people who wished to reject that same clerical status.

3.11. The practice of the United Reformed Church in the ordination of ministers is that this is an act of the District Council, in fellowship with the local church. The Provincial Moderator or his/her deputy presides, and will be assisted in the laying on of hands by at least two other ministers and often one or two elders appointed by the District Council (unlike the Church of Scotland where elders do not lay on hands at the ordination of a minister).

3.12. The practice of the United Reformed Church in the ordination of elders is that this is an act of the local congregation which elects them. The minister (or interim moderator) presides and will normally be assisted in the laying on of hands by at least two elders (as suggested in the Service Book rubric). Although responsibility for conducting ordinations of ministers is specified as a function of District Councils, a similar responsibility for conducting ordinations of elders is not assigned to either the Church Meeting or the Elders' Meeting in the URC Structure. In view of the fact that one of the functions of elders is to represent the congregation in the wider councils of the Church, particularly the District Council, it would be appropriate for the District Council to be formally represented at the ordination of elders and for the Council to provide appropriate training.

3.13. The following statement to explore the relationship between ordination and the ministry of the whole people of God, the links between spiritual gifts, patterns of ministry and experience, and the relationship between servanthood and leadership is offered for consideration:

The Church embodies an upside-down reflection of the world - the first shall be last and the last shall be first, the greatest among you shall be your servant, etc. Secular leadership models, whether based on ancient kingship or modern business practice, will always need to be transformed in a Christian context to embody this reversal of worldly values. This means that the authenticity of ministerial leadership will be experienced in the minister's service to the congregation and to the world in which it is set. It is as a servant of God to the people of God that a minister preaches, presides or takes the chair. More particularly the minister has a responsibility to interpret the Gospel for today and to pray for the Church and the world. This helps to make sense of ordination, because ordained ministry points beyond itself to Christ, upon whose reconciling work all ministry depends. Ordination to representative servanthood emphasises identification with rather than separation from. It involves the recognition of gifts given by God, which can be nurtured by appropriate training or experience. Ordained ministry does not therefore detract from the ministry of any Christian, but it adds an availability to all which is costly service. It is essentially reciprocal in character, depending on the wider community in which it is set. In sum, therefore, the distinctive identity of the minister is created by relationships rather than tasks.

APPENDIX B

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

1. God's people are on pilgrimage, caught up in adoration, spent in joyful and sacrificial service to one another and all people everywhere, all the time growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. By sharing in the life of the local church, they enter into the life of the Church throughout the world and in all ages, being made part of the communion of saints (URC Basis 16; cf BEM 2-40). The church meeting is the place where the priesthood of all believers is gathered to confess the Lordship of Christ. It is through this whole people (the *laos* of God), not through clergy alone, that the Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry (URC Basis 19). (It cannot be too often emphasised that the clergy are part of the *laos*, which has a more all-embracing meaning than the popular connotation of the "laity".)

2. In the Basis of Union (20) the role of those who exercise particular ministries in offices recognised within the Church is understood as the equipping of the whole people of God for their total ministry. This total ministry is sometimes referred to as "the priesthood of all believers". That phrase in turn is sometimes misunderstood as implying that "anyone can do anything". Since it is important that the calling of ordained ministers is affirmed in a way which does not derogate from the calling of the whole people of God, the relationship between "lay" and "ordained", "priesthood" and "ministry" needs to be explored and placed in the context of Scripture and our traditions.

3. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers finds its principal New Testament support in 1 Peter 2:9 and occasional references in Revelation - 1:6, 5:10. 1 Peter 2:9 is a notoriously difficult verse to translate and interpret; but however it is translated, it is the Church as a corporate body which shares in the high priesthood of Christ. The verse is not speaking about the ministry or priesthood of Christians as individuals. Priesthood is a corporate description not an individual mandate. It is a function of the community of believers, derived from their participation in the high priesthood of Christ.

4. "The priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the baptised have in their respective ways the function of sacrifice and intercession. As Christ has offered himself, Christians offer their whole being "as a living sacrifice". As Christ intercedes before the Father, Christians intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Nevertheless the differences between these two kinds of priesthood cannot be overlooked. Whilst Christ offered himself as a unique sacrifice once and for all for the salvation of the world, believers need to receive continually as a gift of God that which Christ has done for them" (BEM 17 Commentary).

5. Christ's sacrifice has broken down all barriers both between God and humanity and between peoples, so the Christian priestly community is inclusive, not exclusive. It is the whole people who are called and sanctified by the Spirit to share Christ's ministry (1.2; 1.5). All ecclesiology is ultimately an expression of God's self-revelation in Christ, which is another way of saying that its focus must be a missionary focus.

6. The New Testament doctrines of the high priesthood of Christ and the priestly function of the believing community undergird the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers properly belongs in that

context. There is little evidence in the New Testament of a doctrine of the ordained ministry being built on the foundations of the priesthood of all believers. There is no clear link between the two concepts in the New Testament.

7. Although the New Testament speaks of an exciting and creative diversity of ministry in the primitive communities, it is equally clear that most (if not all) of these churches had a ministry which was less than the sum of its members (eg 1 Cor 12:27-30; Eph 4:11-12). Ministry in some form (rarely Ignatian orthodoxy, cf 1.8) was pervasive, its purpose to enable the ministry of God's people, not to usurp it, "to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

8. The traditions belonging to the United Reformed Church derive their emphases on the priesthood of all believers from Scripture and the writings of the reformers of the 16th century. It is therefore important that their understanding of the doctrine is appreciated. The agenda of the reformers was to recover that set of relationships between Christ, his people and the ministry, which they perceived to have been lost. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were not against the ministry but against a particular view of the priestly office. They did not intend to wreck the unity of Christendom. They have surprisingly little to say about the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Their attention was focussed primarily on the relationship between God and humanity, on sin and forgiveness and the workings of the penitential system. Ministry was a secondary concern.

9. Luther is regarded as a champion of the doctrine. However, although it is a necessary consequence of his conviction of the free availability of God's grace, his treatment of it is ambiguous and frequently polemical. Luther's first discussion of the doctrine was in his polemical writings of the early 1520s in which he attacked the privileges of Roman clergy and criticised Roman ordination. The radical logic of his rhetoric was tempered by his innate conservatism - elsewhere he claims the parish to be a divine institution, and in 1532 loudly insisted on the need for an official ministry in the face of the number of self-appointed preachers who were over-running Saxony. In some places he seems to build his understanding of the ministry on the priesthood of all believers, but elsewhere he argues that the ministry is dominically appointed and of the *esse* of the Church. By the Diet of Augsburg of 1530 Melancthon could dismiss the priesthood of all believers as of secondary importance, and it is passed over in silence by the Augsburg Confession.

10. Calvin was logical and clear on the subject. Ministry was derived from the universal priesthood, which in turn was dependent upon the priesthood of Christ. He was equally clear that the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the ordained ministry were distinct. Ministry was essential to the life of the Church - "neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolic and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth" (*Institutes* 4.3.2). Ministry was not priesthood, a point made with admirable clarity by the Second Helvetic Confession:

"Accordingly, there are great differences between a priesthood and a ministry. For the former is common to all Christians... but the same is not so with the latter, and we have not removed the Ministry out of the midst of the church when we have cast the papistical priesthood out of the Church of Christ".

In other words, by denying a separated priesthood and affirming the priesthood of all believers, it was possible to base the theology of a separated ministry on a different foundation.

11. It should now be abundantly clear (in Gordon Rupp's words) that the priesthood of all believers did not mean for the reformers what it tends to mean for us, "an otiose ministry and an omnicompetent laity". The reformers did not think that anyone could do anything in church, far from it. They had discovered something much more exciting - that the whole people of God participated in the intercessory priesthood of Christ.

12. The blurring of the doctrinal boundaries between the priesthood of all believers and the doctrine of the ministry is a relatively recent phenomenon. Early Congregationalists and Presbyterians did not doubt the truth of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, or the calling of some to ministry.

13. The Evangelical Revival and explosion of church planting and building which followed, increased the demand for ministry and hastened the breaking down of prejudice against lay preaching - most clearly evidenced by "Mr. Wesley's preachers". It was the occasion of little theological comment because the right of the believer to preach was part of the English dissenting tradition. The theological difficulties began when English dissenters (particularly Congregationalists and Baptists) reacted against the sacerdotal emphasis of the Tractarians and their successors in the mid-nineteenth century. Ministers strove to become as un-priestlike as possible. Amongst the leaders of this movement (like R.W.Dale) distinctive clerical dress was rejected along with the title "Revd". Ordination fell out of favour and testing of calls became much less stringent. It was in this context that Dale asked the Carr's Lane, Birmingham, church meeting to allow a layman to preside at communion once a year as a reminder of the priesthood of all believers. Such a view prevailed for some thirty years, when it was severely criticised by such leaders and scholars as J.D.Jones and P.T.Forsyth.

14. This was at best an aberration in the history of Congregationalism. It is ironic that Dale's real aim, the spiritualisation of the laity, led only to the debasing of the ministry. In any doctrine of ministry within the Reformed tradition, a distinction between the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the ministry must be maintained (as in the New Testament and the writings of the reformers) or else neither will be honoured.

15. *God's Reign and our Unity* provides an attractive snapshot of ministry in the early church, when it observes that "the company gathered behind their closed doors on that first Easter evening was the church in embryo" (para 74) and "also the ministry in embryo" (para 75). To extend that image, the infant church's DNA included a patterning of "calling and sending" so that the church always had a structure of leadership. "Ministerial leadership in the church may therefore be defined as following Jesus in the way of the cross so that others in turn may be enabled to follow in the same way" (para 76). Although it is true that different accounts of Easter evening (e.g. Luke 24:33 and Acts 1:14) present a different theology of the relationship between church and ministry, the emphasis in John 20:19-23 is paralleled elsewhere: those whom Jesus called, he also sent to proclaim God's word of peace and forgiveness. This strand in early Christian experience echoes our own experiences of ministry under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that we remain uncomfortable with the language of "clergy" and "laity". Ministry is Christ's gift to the whole *laos*.

APPENDIX C

HISTORICAL NOTE ON ORDINATION

1. The constituent traditions of the United Reformed Church had different practices in relation to ordination. Congregationalists ordained ministers but not deacons (elders having disappeared quite early on in the history of English Congregationalism). Presbyterians ordained ministers and elders, but not usually deacons (although the United Presbyterians did prior to 1876). Churches of Christ ordained ministers, elders and deacons.

2. Calvin (*Institutes* 4.3.8) regards bishops, presbyters or pastors (the terms are equivalent) as exercising the ministry of the word in local churches, and sees two other ministries as of perpetual duration - viz. government and care of the poor. "By these governors I understand seniors selected from the people to unite with the bishops in pronouncing censures and exercising discipline". The care of the poor was committed to deacons, among whom Calvin distinguished two distinct classes: those who administered alms, and those who actually took care of the poor (3.9). In discussing the appointment of ministers he emphasised that "if any one would be deemed a true minister of the Church, he must first be duly called; and secondly, he must answer to his calling (3.10). The choice of ministers lay with the people, though the fact that this was accompanied by prayer and fasting showed the serious nature of the action (3.12-15). Calvin understood ordination by the laying on of hands to have apostolic precedent for pastors, teachers and deacons. He acknowledged that there was no fixed precept concerning the laying on of hands but said that it would be regarded "in the light of a precept" because of its careful observance by the apostles. He added that it was useful "that by such a symbol the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church" (3.16).

3. Within the Reformed tradition there have been different approaches to the office of elder in different countries. The evolution of the office in Scotland in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century is a complex one. The Scottish Book of Discipline of 1560 made elders and deacons offices to which election was made annually, and they were clearly understood as lay offices. The Second Book of Discipline (adopted by the General Assembly in 1578 but rejected by parliament) reflected the triumph of presbyterianism both in its rejection of the principle of diocesan episcopacy and in its stipulation that elders were to be elected for life. The development of the elders' role in discipline was a threat to the powers of the ecclesiastical courts in this area, and also indirectly to the powers of the civil magistrate, given that the Church of Scotland was established. Towards the end of the sixteenth century elders also tended to assume the functions of deacons in relation to the poor, thereby rendering the specific ministry of the diaconate less clear. The revival of this model of eldership by Thomas Chalmers at the beginning of the nineteenth century reinforced the problem and led indirectly to the development of managers as a distinct group from the elders concerned with matters of church finance and fabric.

4. Elders and deacons are mentioned in *The Form of Church Government* of 1645, when the English Parliament passed an ordinance regulating the election of elders. But ordination was not a central issue, and indeed the opposition of independents to presbyterianism at this point was based mainly on the fear that the Church would henceforth have an authority which would come into conflict with that of the state. Ironically the *Statement on The Institution of Churches* annexed to the *Savoy Declaration* of 1658 specifies ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands for pastors, elders and deacons (para 12), probably because its authors were clearer in their minds that these were officers of a congregation rather than a civil parish. (The Savoy Declaration omitted the Westminster Confession's paragraph on Church Censures.) Nevertheless it was within presbyterianism rather than congregationalism that the practice of ordaining elders and deacons persisted. In congregationalism deacons became the primary group of lay church officers, and ordination was dropped.

5. The United Secession Church (and later the United Presbyterian Church after 1847) whose formularies on the relation between church and state and on the ordination of ministers and elders were reflected in those of the Presbyterian Church of England and the United Reformed Church, was clear that elders and deacons should be ordained, and as a non-established church had a congregational, rather than a parochial, view of the extent of their responsibilities. This was the source for the views of Alexander Campbell on church government, who grew up in the Secession tradition, when he specified them in *The Christian System* for Disciples or Churches of Christ in the 1830s. Campbell distinguished three ministries - of bishops, deacons, and evangelists - and argued that all should be set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands (*Christian System*, xxv, 6, 16-17). He was also clear that "it is, indeed, the Holy Spirit and not the congregations which creates Bishops and Deacons" (*ibid*, p 185). Churches of Christ in Great Britain, where full-time ministers have always been few, placed much more emphasis on the ordained eldership in the leading of worship, than Disciples of Christ in the USA, where full-time ministers have been more plentiful. Within Churches of Christ, in fact, elders tended to have a more important public role in the leading of worship, preaching and pastoral care, while deacons (though ordained) tended to be more like Congregationalist deacons and Presbyterian elders. The mid-twentieth century practice in Churches of Christ was determined by the Reports of two Commissions approved by the Annual Conference, that on Ordination approved in 1942 and that on the Ministry approved in 1954. The Report on Ordination proposed forms of service for the ordination of ministers, elders and deacons, and for services in which voting on the election of elders and deacons took place. The emphasis, however, was on the divine action: "It is Christ himself, through the Church, who appoints, ordains, and sends His Ministers forth" (*Year Book* 1942, p 134). Also ordination has been the mark of those called to ministry rather than paid service.

6. Interestingly, the question of the length of tenure has tended to influence attitudes to ordination. Mention has already been made of the shift between the First and Second Books of Discipline in the tenure of elders in Scotland. After reunion in 1929 the Church of Scotland specified that elders would always be ordained, as would deacons if elected to office for life. However, it is open to congregations to elect deacons for a term of years, and if this happens they are not ordained. The same provisions existed in the Presbyterian Church of England before union, except that the option of election for a limited time was mentioned before the option of election for life. No provision was made for deacons in the United Reformed Church. In Congregational Churches it was customary for deacons to serve for a specified period of years; in Churches of Christ it was customary for elders and deacons, once elected, to serve for life.

Appendix D

SELECTED STATISTICS

A Statistical Supplement containing a full range of tables is available from The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT. The information given in this appendix is a small extract from the supplement.

1. All statistics need to be used with care; these statistics concerning the United Reformed Church have been collected with care, but inevitably have shortcomings. In the URC we have been slow to realise the importance of keeping accurate, full and careful records. In the main report there are suggestions about how to improve this in the future (see para 8.1.3) but this will not help with information that is now either lost or very difficult to obtain.

2. **Membership.** As **diagram 1** shows, our total membership has been in decline. While membership numbers from different churches are not fully consistent and are never a perfect measure of a church's vitality, the overall trend is clear. If the trends of the last 21 years continue, then for every ten members today we shall only have nine by the year 2000.

3. **Size of Churches.** In considering patterns of ministry, we have to take account of the wide variety of churches within the URC. One aspect of this variety which can be captured statistically is the number of members. **Table 1** shows the proportion of small, medium and large churches in each Province. It will be noted that some Provinces have a larger share of small churches than others.

TABLE 1

| Province | Number of Churches | % of Small Churches | % of Medium Churches | % of Large Churches |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Northern | 117 | 43 | 49 | 8 |
| North Western | 161 | 44 | 49 | 7 |
| Mersey | 104 | 31 | 62 | 7 |
| Yorkshire | 132 | 46 | 46 | 8 |
| East Midlands | 158 | 53 | 43 | 4 |
| West Midlands | 152 | 40 | 54 | 6 |
| Eastern | 161 | 50 | 43 | 7 |
| South Western | 142 | 54 | 40 | 6 |
| Wessex | 169 | 44 | 47 | 9 |
| Thames North | 163 | 40 | 55 | 5 |
| Southern | 190 | 41 | 50 | 9 |
| Wales | 154 | 71 | 27 | 2 |
| Total | 1,803 | 47 | 46 | 7 |

Note 1. "Small" = 49 or fewer members
 "Medium" = between 50 and 199 members
 "Large" = 200 or more members

Note 2. Figures from 1994 Year Book

4. **Number of Ministers.** Table 2 shows the total number of ministers directly serving the URC. It excludes retired ministers. Since 1982, some have been ordained to what is now called the Non-stipendiary ministry; even including these ministers, the overall numbers are falling.

TABLE 2

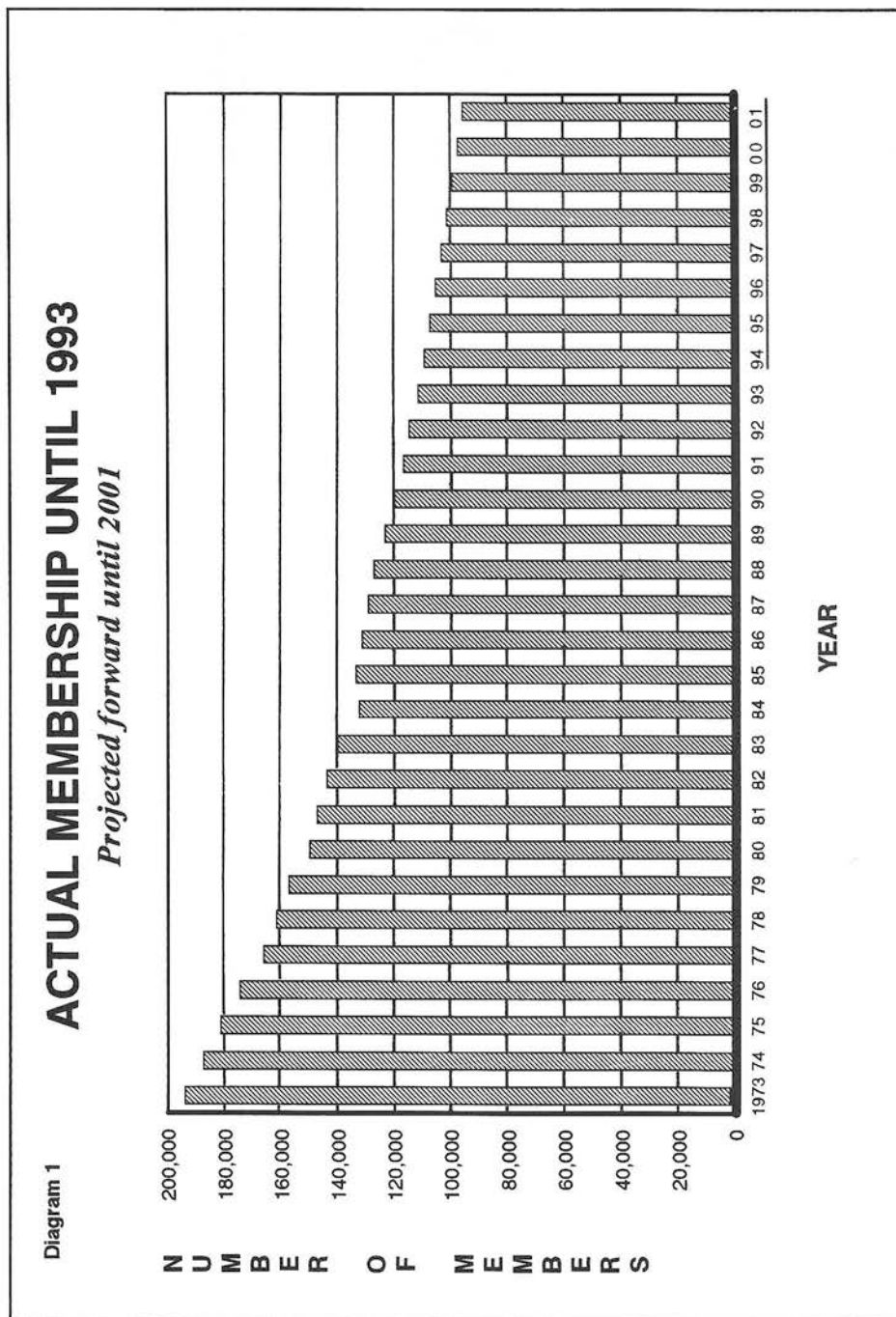
| Year | Stipendiary Ministers | Non-Stipendiary Ministers | Total |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| 1974 | 1,163 | 0 | 1,163 |
| 1975 | 1,110 | 0 | 1,110 |
| 1976 | 1,069 | 0 | 1,069 |
| 1977 | 1,001 | 0 | 1,001 |
| 1978 | 1,002 | 0 | 1,002 |
| 1979 | 1,009 | 0 | 1,009 |
| 1980 | 960 | 0 | 960 |
| 1981 | 1,001 | 0 | 1,001 |
| 1982 | 1,024 | 83 | 1,107 |
| 1983 | 994 | 103 | 1,097 |
| 1984 | 959 | 121 | 1,080 |
| 1985 | 948 | 145 | 1,093 |
| 1986 | 944 | 162 | 1,106 |
| 1987 | 917 | 176 | 1,093 |
| 1988 | 878 | 189 | 1,067 |
| 1989 | 862 | 196 | 1,058 |
| 1990 | 856 | 198 | 1,054 |
| 1991 | 830 | 186 | 1,016 |
| 1992 | 799 | 196 | 995 |
| 1993 | 772 | 201 | 973 |

5. **Number of Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs).** CRCWs were first appointed in 1982. As Table 3 shows, their numbers remain small.

| Year | CRCWs in post |
|------|---------------|
| 1982 | 3 |
| 1983 | 3 |
| 1984 | 2 |
| 1985 | 3 |
| 1986 | 4 |
| 1987 | 5 |
| 1988 | 2 |
| 1989 | 5 |
| 1990 | 6 |
| 1991 | 6 |
| 1992 | 7 |
| 1993 | 7 |

TABLE 3

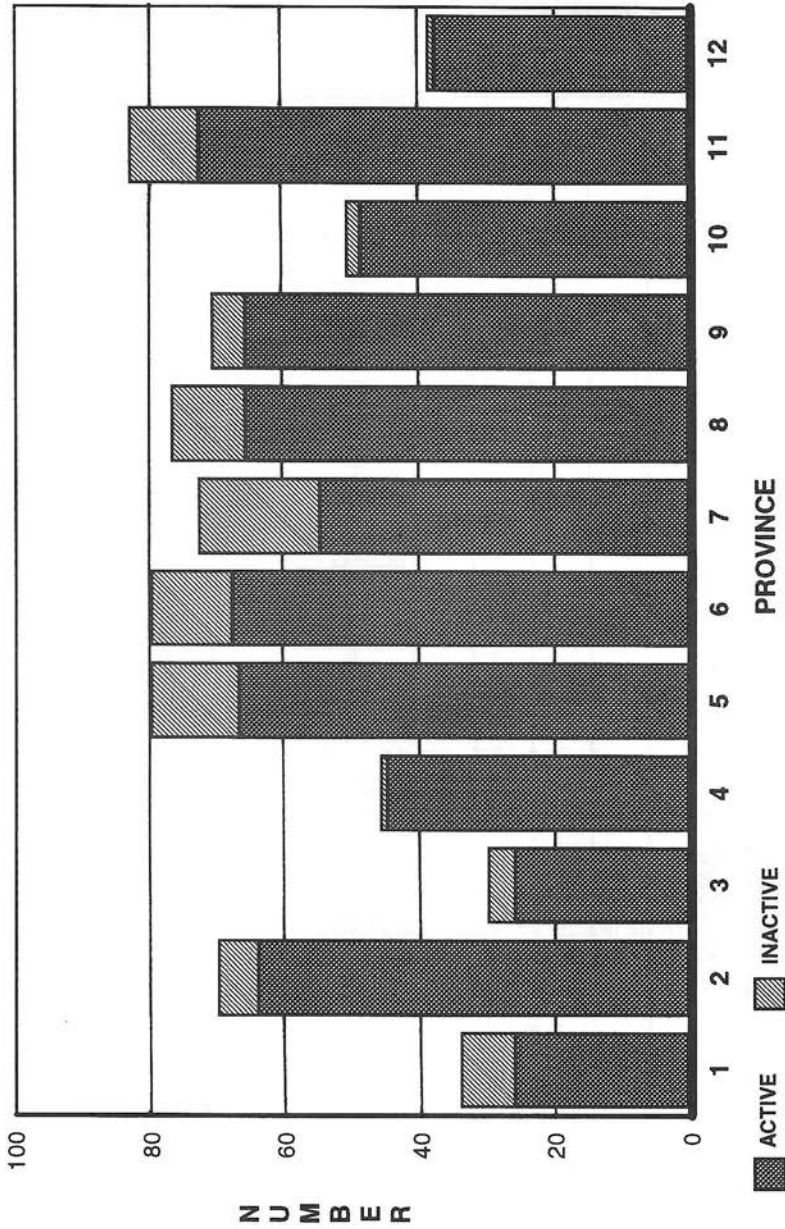
6. **Number of Lay Preachers.** Although figures for the total number of Lay Preachers with national accreditation have appeared in the Year Book, there were serious problems with the statistics. **Diagram 2** presents the results of a recent survey. For the URC as a whole it showed a total of about 650 active nationally accredited Lay Preachers.



NUMBER OF NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAY PREACHERS BY PROVINCE

Active and inactive at March 1994

Diagram 2



APPENDIX E

A list of some of the main **resources** on the theme of ministry - books, reports, articles, etc, - is available on request from the Revd Dr David Cornick at Westminster College. Please send SAE.

APPENDIX F

PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR DISCUSSIONS

The timetable for the next stages in these discussions is as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Sept - Dec 1994 | Councils and churches have opportunity to consider this report; |
| 14 Dec 1994 | Responses to report from councils, churches and others to be received by the Working Party; |
| 6/7 Jan 1995 | A broadly representative consultation to review responses and shape the final report; |
| 31 March 1995 | Final report of Working Party completed; |
| May/June 1995 | Councils and churches have further opportunity to consider the report in its final form; |
| July 1995 | Final report and proposed resolutions presented to General Assembly; |
| July 1996 | General Assembly ratifies any decisions which affect the Basis of Union. |

Comments should be sent as soon as possible, but by 14 December 1994, to the Revd Dr David Cornick, Patterns of Ministry, Westminster College, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0AA.

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The United Reformed Church

Patterns of Ministry 1994



WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS!

We are all familiar with ministry. All of us have experienced it through the life of the local church. Some of us are ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments. Many church members offer their skills and daily work as their ministry, both within the church and in the world. Not many of us, on the other hand, want to spend too much time debating long reports about patterns of ministry!

Every so often it becomes essential to review the patterns of ministry which have grown up around us, especially if these seem not to be meeting needs adequately or to be developing creatively. That is what this report attempts to do.

9. SUMMARY OF REPORT

9.1 Principles for ministry

The church is called to participate in God's mission in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit. We believe that -

1. every Christian is called to share in Christ's ministry as part of the whole people of God (4.4 & 4.5).
2. the shared life and sacrificial ministry of all Christians constitutes the priesthood of all believers (4.4).
3. patterns of ministry should be determined by the need to build up the life of the church for its missionary task (3.2 & 3.8).
4. mission springs out of the life of the local congregation (4.2(d)).
5. every local church should have identifiable local leadership (4.6, 5.2 and 5.5.2).
6. there is one ministry of Word and Sacraments (4.2(f)).
7. normally those who preside at the Sacraments should be Ministers of Word and Sacraments (5.4.5).

9.2 Meeting the needs of the local church

At present the church is not able to supply a minister solely for each congregation, but we believe we could meet the need felt in many local churches for an identifiable local leader by -

1. seeking to provide a local leader for each congregation (5.5.2) -
as a Stipendiary Minister,
as a Non-Stipendiary Minister,
as a locally authorised Minister, or
as a local leader.
2. developing local leadership by ordaining some to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments as locally authorised Ministers (5.5.3) and recognising some others as local leaders (5.5.4).
3. seeking this new local leadership particularly from Lay Preachers, Elders and church secretaries (5.5.6).

Both of these new forms of local leadership would be appropriately trained, but normally only those ordained would preside at the sacraments.

9.3 Other aspects of ministry

At the same time we recommend that -

1. we retain the present pattern of pastoral ministry, but seek to remove the distinctions between Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers models 2 and 3 (5.6.1).
2. we affirm the ministry of Lay Preachers and change their title to 'Preachers' (5.7.3).
3. those whose ministry is particularly directed towards the world, such as Non-Stipendiary Ministers model 4, Church Related Community Workers, chaplains, etc. (6.2.1), should be recognised as exercising a diaconal ministry and be linked through a diaconal association (6.2.2).
4. those currently serving as 'lay pastors' should become either locally authorised Ministers or local leaders (5.7.5).
5. district councils be encouraged to deploy Ministers imaginatively and flexibly (7.2.3 & 8.2.1).

9.4 Other Recommendations

A number of other recommendations appear within the report, among them the following.

1. We should seek parity of training and, wherever possible, similar terms of service for Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers (5.6 & 7.3.2).
2. There should be continued emphasis on shared ministry (4.5 & 5.9).
3. The possibility of an 'early retirement' package might be considered (8.3.4).
4. There is need for a review of oversight ministries (7.7.2).
5. There is need to maintain accurate statistical information about the life of the church if planning and budgeting are to be based on knowledge as well as faith (8.1).
6. A new deployment policy needs now to be addressed with urgency (8.2).
7. Mission Council might be asked to monitor the needs and resources of the church on a regular basis and to judge when and how to challenge the churches or offer other relevant proposals (8.4).

10. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A wide range of questions arise naturally from the text of the report itself. Responses will be welcome on all parts of the report, but it would be particularly helpful to have responses on the following topics -

- ◆ locally authorised ministry
- ◆ local leadership
- ◆ removal of distinction between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry
- ◆ diaconal ministries
- ◆ lay preachers
- ◆ mission and ministry strategy of district councils
- ◆ deployment