

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th



Annual Reports, Resolutions and Papers

General Assembly 2006

**Exeter University
July 7th – 10th**



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

**Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers**

Contents

STANDING ORDERS	1	CATCH THE VISION	
SYNOD REPORTS	7	REPORTS & RESOLUTIONS	128
Mersey	8	Catch the Vision APPENDICES	
North Western	10	CTV 1. Proposed model of governance	138
South Western	11	CTV 2. The Trustee Body	139
Wales	12	CTV 3. Proposed re-structuring and staffing	140
West Midlands	13	CTV 4. Changes to the Basis of Structure consequent on the adoption of resolution 40-43 of 2005	141
SYNOD RESOLUTIONS	15	CTV 5. London Synod Commission	161
CHURCHES – CHANGES	17		
SYNOD MODERATORS’ REPORT	25		
MISSION COUNCIL		Mission Council and Committee APPENDICES	
REPORTS & RESOLUTIONS	29	1. Ministerial Incapacity Procedure	164
COMMITTEE REPORTS & RESOLUTIONS	49	2. A Scheme for Ministerial Review	178
Church & Society	50	3. Charity Trusts	182
Communications & Editorial	57	4. Students sent by Synods	184
Review – Communications & Editorial	60	5. Statistics of Students in Training	185
Equal Opportunities	63	6. Reports from Colleges	186
Review – Equal Opportunities	63		
Finance	67	INFORMATION	
Ministries	69	History Society	196
Review of Ministry & Mission Fund	87	Musicians Guild	197
Nominations	93	Schools	198
Training	102	Silence & Retreats	202
Review – Training	109	Women’s World Day of Prayer	203
Youth and Children’s Work	120	Women’s World Day of Prayer (Scotland)	204
Assembly Arrangements	126		

NOTE The General Assembly in 2000 decided that from 2001, committees will report in alternate years, except where for legal or administrative reasons annual reports are required.

Resolutions Index

No	Title	Page Number
Synods		
1	Discussion and decision making at General Assembly	15
2	Housing of Non-stipendiary Ministers	15
3	Synods and CRCW management	16
4	Heritage Lottery Fund	16
5	New churches	18
6	Closure of Local churches	19
Mission Council		
7	Amendments to Section O Part II	36
8	Replacement of existing Section O, Part I	41
9	Amendments to the Structure in relation to the Section O Process	43
10	Introduction of procedure for dealing with cases of Ministerial Incapacity and approval of Part I	44
11	Taking note of Part II of the proposed Ministerial Incapacity Procedure	46
12	Amendments to the Structure to introduce the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure	46
13	Adjustment to the process for submitting nominations for the Moderator of General Assembly	47
14	To amend the Structure as regards an Appeals Procedure covering Listed Buildings	48
15	Charity Trusts	48
16	Ministerial development	48
Committees		
17	Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation	56
18	Leaflet on Church Magazines	59
19	Review of the Work of the Communications and Editorial Committee	59
20	Accounts	67
21	Appointment of Auditors	68
22	The giving of the members of the Church to central funds	68
23	United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund contributions	68
24	Revised Remit of the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee	75
25	Changes to Ministerial Service	75
26	Duty to consider extension of full-time stipendiary service	77
27	Return to work after ill-health retirement	79
28	Amendments to The Plan for Partnership	80
29	Pension Fund Changes re Civil Partnerships	81
30	Pension Fund Rule on ill-health retirement	81
31	Pension Fund Rule changes Part I	82
32	Pension Fund Rule changes Part II	85
33	Nominations	101
34	Clerk of the General Assembly	101
35	Regional Training Partnerships	107
36	Resource Centres for learning	107
37	College based training	107
38	Westminster College Principal	108
39	Lewis & Gibson Scholarship Rule change	108
40	Safe Church Declaration	125
41	CORE	125
42	Child Friendly Church Award	125
43	General Assembly 2008	126

Resolutions Index

No	Title	Page Number
Catch the Vision		
44	Resolutions returned for ratification 1	136
45	Resolutions returned for ratification 2	136
46	Resolutions returned for ratification 3	136
47	Changes to the Basis and Structure	136
48	General Trustees	137
49	The future work of Assembly	137
50	Southern Synod	137



The
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Standing Orders

General Assembly 2006
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Standing Orders of the Assembly

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

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

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

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

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

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

2. Presentation of Business

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

2b. A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.

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

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

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

3. Motions and Amendments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3k.

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

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

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

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

3k. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3f, 3g and 3h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 6. (3.9.2b)

4. Timing of Speeches and of Other Business

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

4b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly Committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular Committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (e.g. a Committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 5 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than 3 minutes.

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

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

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

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

5. Closure of Debate

5a. A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed.

The Moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 5. The decision of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

5b. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

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

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

5e. The motions described in Standing Orders 5b, 5c and 5d above are exceptions to Standing Order 3c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other of them can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

6. Voting

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

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

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

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

7. Questions

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

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

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

8. Points of Order, Personal Explanations, Dissent

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

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly

misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

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

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

9. Admission of Public and Press

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

10. Circulation of Documents

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

11. Records of the Assembly

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

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

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

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

12. Suspension and Amendment of Standing Orders

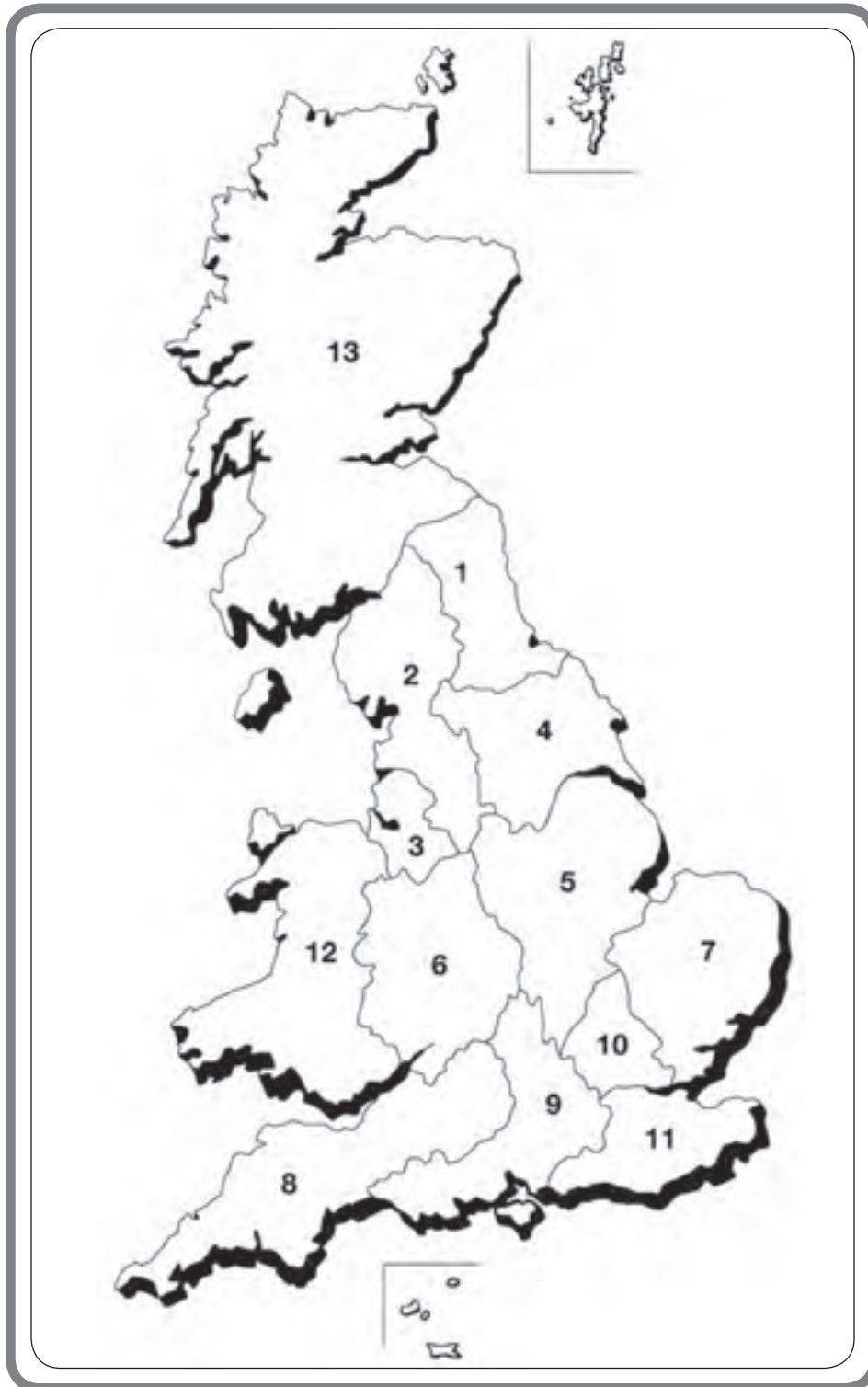
12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

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



The
United
Reformed
Church

Synods



- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Northern | 5 East Midlands | 10 Thames North |
| 2 North Western | 6 West Midlands | 11 Southern |
| 3 Mersey | 7 Eastern | 12 Wales |
| 4 Yorkshire | 8 South Western | 13 Scotland |
| | 9 Wessex | |

Mersey Synod

1 The Mersey Synod, owing to its compact geography, has a strong sense of identity and yet contains the whole spectrum of social mixes that are found in much larger areas. This identity makes the organising of Synod wide events very manageable and means that few of our churches feel isolated. Although it is almost inevitable in any organisation of reasonable size for an 'us and them' mentality to develop we are making significant efforts to help churches feel that the Synod is theirs and seeks to serve the needs of the local church as well as representing the United Reformed Church within the region.

2 The current demise of Christianity in the West is the big issue that all churches are facing and we recognise that changes in structures alone will not solve the church's basic problem. Alongside changing the structures, we recognise the need to renew faith and revitalise worship as prerequisites of becoming more mission focussed. The reality is that many of our churches have become tired, and before engaging in outreach there is a real need to draw deeply from the wells of our spirituality.

3 One of the important resources for enabling people to do this is our worship week by week which at its best can nourish, sustain and motivate faith in the God who is like Jesus.

3:1 With this in mind we have formed a Synod Worship Task Group that is aiming both to organise training events and experiences of good quality worship as well as to visit local churches to share insights, skills and good practice with elders and local church worship groups.

3.2 A Synod consultation has resulted in the production of two booklets on *Worship for Us* and *Worship for Everyone*. Our Mission Development Officer, Revd John Oldershaw, is working with local churches in planning worship as part of the mission strategy of the church.

3.3 Through the work of our Training Officer, Sandra Wellington, we continue to develop our courses on *Local Church Leadership* and *Leading Worship in your own Church*.

3.4 Our recent Synod meeting saw us adopt a new Lay Preaching Policy which both supports the ongoing training of lay preachers and encourages local churches to 'own' their worship. This 'ownership' could be by means of giving guidance to preachers whilst not necessarily expecting them to be responsible for

the whole service. We have been pleased this year to welcome four new Assembly accredited lay preachers from within the Synod.

4 One small interesting initiative taken by a group of our churches in the St Helens region was to adopt the Manchester Diocese's 'Back to Church Sunday' scheme in which, for a particular Sunday, a church contacts people who have stopped coming to church regularly and invites them back to church. Our pilot scheme saw one small church double its congregation and another welcome back eleven people. We are hoping to widen the scheme in the coming year and involve many more of our churches.

5 Our last Synod Report mentioned the emergence of clusters, small group of churches working together to plan local strategy and mission, to share fellowship and to work alongside District Councils. These have had mixed success. Where they have worked it has been due to good geographical links, and committed leadership. The relationships that have been built will continue. Yet many have not worked, perhaps because the geography was not right or leadership was not in place, so, as a Synod, we have not forced the structure.

6 The city of Liverpool is the focus of our two half time Special Category Ministries.

6:1 One of them, entitled 'The Paulden Project', focuses on the work of inner city churches and the minister, Revd John Fielding, is using his church as the base from which to do his work as research fellow at Northern College on ministry in the inner city. He has already produced two pieces of work under the title of *Paulden Papers* with the aim of looking at how small churches can creatively survive in the inner city.

6:2 Liverpool will be the European Capital of Culture in 2008 and some of the new work being undertaken by our city centre minister, Revd John Bradbury, will have that as its focus. However, John's work has a much wider brief and has strong ecumenical links. He is exploring new ways of being church in a rapidly developing city centre, a place at the moment described as 'the biggest building site in Europe'.

7 This last year has seen some important developments in our relationships overseas. Five of our churches are being twinned with congregations in the Swedish Mission Church, our European partners, and we are developing a programme of reciprocal visits with our 'Belonging to the World Church' partners, the

Churches of Christ in Malawi. We have received a visit from a choir and are hoping to send a group of five young people to Malawi later this summer.

8 Personalia. Since our last report we have said goodbye to Revd Graham Cook as Moderator and John Brown as Youth and Children's Work Training

and Development Officer, both of whom continue to serve the United Reformed Church in a wider capacity. They have been replaced by Revd Howard Sharp and Malcolm Evans, who are now bringing their own styles to bear on Synod life alongside other members of the Synod Team.



North Western Synod

1 In at least one respect the North Western Synod has grown since its last report to Assembly. In March 2005, the churches of the Cumberland District of the Northern Synod joined a new Cumbria District and the North Western Synod. The main purpose of this was to give the United Reformed Church a unit better related to our ecumenical partners and local government structures and build on existing ecumenical activity in Cumbria. Strong links with the Cumbria District of the Methodist Church are developing, with joint meetings of the United Reformed Church District Council and Methodist District Synod. The eighteen United Reformed churches of Cumbria serve a large area around the mountains of the Lake District, and even within the county have challenging distances for meetings. Cumbria presents diverse issues for Christians, ranging from severe deprivation to high priced housing and from a national park to the nuclear and defence industries.

2 Several years of discussion of how to make our structures more effective led to the report *Renewed for Witness and Service*, a set of proposals overwhelmingly approved by the Synod in October 2004. The purpose was to lighten our commitment to meetings and release time and energy for mission. Four District Councils replace the previous eight and are tasked with the pastoral care of churches and ministers and the encouragement of local activity. The Synod retains responsibility for resources and training. Churches are asked to send the same representatives to Synod and District, so that the District Councils are the Synod in dispersal and the Synod the Districts meeting together. Local churches are also asked to establish local Mission Partnerships with ecumenical or United Reformed Church neighbours. The new structures were established at Christ Church Morecambe in March 2005, at which the four new District Councils were constituted and elected their principal officers.

3 In a new training and development strategy adopted in 2003, a team of three Training and Development Officers work together, while majoring on specific responsibilities. Leo Roberts has the full time responsibility for Children and Youth work. The

Revd Carole Gotham works part time for the Synod with a primary role to advocate and arrange training and development opportunities for elders and members. The Revd Stephen Collinson joined the team in 2005 as half time Training and Development Officer (Ministries), following the departure of the Revd Martin Truscott to a pastorate in the south. The strategy provides a budget enabling people to use resources such as the Windermere Centre and the Partnership for Theological Education in Manchester. To support the strategy, the Synod accepts a deficit budget using windfall income from the sale of closed churches.

4 Two appointments have been made for special category ministry. The Revd Rachel Poolman will be Co-President of the Cumbria District, to lead the churches in ecumenical initiatives. At the other end of the Synod, the Revd Sally Thomas will facilitate the collaboration of a network of inner city churches in Manchester and Salford, to see how churches and their projects in diverse communities can gain by sharing resources and expertise.

5 The Synod is exploring potential for a Global Partners link with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. Our awareness of Taiwan has been heightened by the presence of the Revd Chang Jen-Ho as Chaplain to Taiwanese students, based in Manchester. He is returning to Taiwan after an exceptional ministry, not only serving the Christian students, but giving a social base to many young people from Taiwan studying here.

6 Gordon Eccles was appointed as Synod Treasurer from 2004, succeeding Dr Brian Woodhall. Hartley Oldham retired as Chairman of the North Western Province Trust and was thanked by the Revd Tony Burnham at the November 2005 Synod meeting for his many years of service to the United Reformed Church, in many capacities. The new Chairman of the Trust is Tony Edisbury. The Moderator's personal assistant, Sue Wilkinson, who has kept the Synod in order for nine years and served the Church in many ways for longer, retired from the Synod office in 2006.

South Western Synod

1 The South Western Synod stretches from Swindon to Land's End and includes small rural communities, idyllic holiday destinations, cathedral cities, bustling ports and metropolitan conurbations. It is not unusual for the visitor to get to Bristol believing that she is in the South West only to discover that it will take her another five hours to drive the length of the peninsula. The congregations that make up the Synod are very different but all seek to be faithful and credible witnesses to the purposes of God. It is as we seek to support and encourage one another in our common calling that we find our unity and our purpose.

2.1 The Synod Review Group undertook the challenge of looking again at the spiritual life of the Synod in order to help us discover the changes that we need to make as we face the future. We do that confidently, yet not unaware of the challenges. It would be foolish to ignore the reality of declining membership figures, ageing buildings and an increasingly hostile mission field. To be overwhelmed by our problems would be faithless and that we are not.

2.2 Each congregation is encouraged to be clear about its purpose and to develop a credible mission strategy that takes seriously the challenges and the opportunities of life in the 21st century. The appointment of Synod Evangelism Enabler, Paul Snell, to work alongside the Director of Training Peter Henderson and Ivan Andrews the YCWTD is an important resource as we grasp the opportunities that emerge as we break open the structures of the Synod to allow a new thing to happen. The Advent booklet *Living in hope for God's tomorrow* shared the experience of waiting upon God as we seek to be faithful to the past and to our future hope.

3 The ecumenical nature of that future is evident in the 40+ Local Ecumenical Partnerships in which the United Reformed Church is a partner in addition, to the two Methodist/United Reformed Church United Areas. We have already made a significant financial contribution to a new development at Locking Castle near Weston-super-Mare and a commitment to the new housing development at Cranbrook, east of Exeter and at Sherford near Plymouth. With major new housing planned for Swindon, Yeovil and Newquay, we are already in conversation with our ecumenical partners as to how we might respond to the challenge of being church in ways that are relevant to these new communities.

4 The demands of maintaining the existing witness and planting new ones could easily overwhelm us. We have found that our links to the world church have helped us to keep looking outwards. We have a long standing relationship with the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ and we look forward to exploring a possible relationship with the United Church of Jamaica and the Grand Cayman Islands. Welcoming people from other cultures helps us to grow in understanding and acceptance of the new thing that God is doing. Young people from the South West will be joining a Christian Aid visit to Senegal and sharing that experience with the rest of us through worship, drama and dance.

5 After some disappointing times we are seeing a renewed interest from children and young people in the life of the United Reformed Church. Their involvement in the life of the Synod is less our hope for the future than a pointer towards the renewal of life in the present.

6 We are a diverse Synod in many ways and not just in geography. The evangelist J John and the former Bishop of Newark Jack Spong are equally likely to be found being welcomed into our churches. We do not agree on everything, but we have learned to respect and care for one another. We believe that through our diverse body unified in Christ we can weave together a pattern of being church that will enable God's faithful people to continue as an effective witness in the South West.

7 The visitor who gets to Bristol, or even Exeter, and discovers that she has a long way to travel before she arrives at Lands End has still got a lot to learn about the South West. We too have a long way to go before we discover the fullness of God's future but like the visitor to the Peninsula we know that the journey is always worth it.

The National Synod of Wales

1 Catching The Vision

The challenges of last year's General Assembly to imagine our future is being reflected in the agenda of the Synod. In Wales *Catch(ing) the Vision* was preceded by a process we called *Re-Imagining the Future* which engaged all the churches of the Synod. Both processes have energised the church as last year's *Moderators' Report* suggested. Our experience has verified that the value of any strategy we might devise often does lie 'in the process of creating them'. Whether that has been in re-imagining deployment, or re-imagining a collaborative style of ministry as suggested by *Equipping the Saints*, the energy that flows is a result of the process of conversation and engagement with people. The expectation of 'being church differently' is not, or at least should not be, a new concept among us in the Synod but, as always, implementation is the mark the reality and depth of the vision. Three examples of our agenda that have resourcing mission in the local church at their heart will give some indication of our direction:

2 Health and Safety Roadshows

Following the first systematic buildings inspection to be undertaken across the Synod we have been concerned for the practical implications of using our buildings in ways that make them beneficial 'public spaces'. Using the skills of a team comprising Synod Officers and volunteers, 41 'Health and Safety Roadshows' were planned and delivered. Every Elder in every local congregation received a personal invitation to 'a roadshow near you,' and apart from meetings of District Council and Synod the presentation was delivered to over 580 Elders over a 3 month period. That is already beginning to have effect. From food and hygiene regulations to electrical inspections and fire safety, to the continuing importance of *Good Practice*, the presentations were a comprehensive guide essential to providing a safe environment.

3 Mission Development Fund

The financial resources available to us in order to underwrite and support mission projects are very limited indeed. This has been of real concern us for many years because it has been a significant factor restricting the ability of local congregations to engage in imaginative ways with their communities. We want to change this situation. To that end the

Synod has begun a process of consultations with every local congregation to find ways of creating a 'Mission Development Fund' – yes, we know, MDF! But that material has enabled many DIY-ers to get involved and have a go. That's what the envisaged 'Fund' will enable in the life of local churches. It does mean a very different way of approaching the way congregations, that is, 'we', perceive financial resources – that they are not 'ours' to be 'grasped', but 'God's' to be 'released' for imaginative and sustainable local mission projects and for the sake of the Gospel. We are hopeful that this vision will bring renewed energy and vision to our life. We will see!

4 Training and Development

4.1 Over a period of time the Synod has made a series of decisions out of which has emerged a team of people. Our **Training and Development Officers** have the task of encouraging and enabling people, ordained and not, to engage in personal development and theological education in a variety of ways from TLS to EM3. To date, over 50 people have trained on TLS courses and many will witness to the way those courses have given them the confidence to speak in public about faith issues. A full time **Ecumenical Officer** is essential in this Synod! He keeps before us the critical importance of unity in mission, and mission in unity, and enables us all to understand the issues in the conversations with ecumenical partners, encouraging and resourcing LEPs in the matter of Constitutions and Sharing Agreements. Over 40% of our congregations are now in some form of ecumenical partnership. 85% of Wales is rural and our **Rural Officer** not only engages prophetically with institutional organisations outside the life of the church (The Assembly for Wales, where he has sat on various Commissions, the Rural Stress Network, local farmers, the Royal Welsh Show and, early on in his appointment, in the Foot and Mouth outbreak that brought real distress to many in rural communities) but he also brings that edginess into the life of the Synod.

4.2 This is a demanding agenda. Does it present too rosy a picture? Probably, if it implies it all works seamlessly, and certainly, if we even begin to think we have arrived! But it is an attempt in our context to engage with people in that ministry of transformation, announcing and proclaiming to which we are committed as Christ's people and in which can the church can make a difference.

West Midlands Synod

1 Introduction

West Midlands Synod has a wide variety of projects and involvements in the region and throughout the world. We are proud of these contacts and strive to encourage as many people of all ages as possible to become involved in what way they feel able.

2 Cutting edge developments

The Synod is a mixture of rural, urban and inner city environments. Our Churches have a wide-ranging membership from single figures to two hundred plus members. This leads to a varied ministry being exercised to reach people within our boundaries. We have a number of Special Category Ministers in post. They fulfil the needs in areas of need such as Mission in the World of Work in Coventry and Warwickshire, urban regeneration in Brierley Hill and the Black Country Urban Industrial Mission, community projects in Longton, Uttoxeter and Tomkin (North Staffs) and Chaplaincy at Aston University. These posts give an opportunity for Christian growth in a range of different areas, among them industry and commerce, with young people and at the cutting edge of community development.

3 Church Related Community Workers

3.1 We do not underestimate the enormous support given by the Ministry of our Church Related Community Workers and are pleased to have them in place in areas of urban deprivation in Lea Road, Wolverhampton, and South Aston and Bloomsbury in Birmingham.

3.2 Work is being taken forward on the development of Cell Church by our North Staffs special projects minister, alongside research into the use of small groups in the church by a member at Oswestry.

4 Young people

Our youth continue to be seen as an integral part of our life. In August 2005, 15 young people joined other young people from the Southern Synod and South Africa for a week long camp involving worship, activities etc. In November 2005 our Synod FURY weekend happened at the Pioneer Centre near Kidderminster; a weekend looking at "God's world – Our world", great times were had by all!

5 International connections

5.1 Our International fellowship continues to flourish. Numerous individuals and churches have fostered links with countries from Africa and the Middle East and this has been enhanced by the work undertaken by support for the Commitment for Life campaign. As a Synod we have for some time been involved with churches in Germany. On a wider horizon developments have been made through the Belonging to the World Church programme to build a partnership with the Church of North India. This followed the visit to India made when our Moderator was in her General Assembly Moderatorial year. We have been fortunate to welcome our new friends to the United Kingdom in 2004 with a reciprocal visit to India last year. Plans are well underway for further visits to the UK in June and October 2006. The October visit will coincide with our Synod meeting and gives a chance for as many people to meet our new friends.

5.2 We support causes such as Commitment for Life and Make Poverty History.

5.3 West Midlands is proud to be able to declare itself to be a FAIRTRADE SYNOD. This has been some time in coming but now that more than 50% of Churches AND 50% of members support the aims of FAIRTRADE we feel able to make such claim with a degree of satisfaction, whilst realising that we can always do more.

6 Synod staff

There have been major changes within the officers of Synod and for the first time we have split the work of Synod clerk with two people now undertaking differing requirements of the role. After a period of staff shortage our office is now fully staffed. The work of the treasurer has grown over the years to such an extent (taking a volunteer more than half his time) that we are considering employing a further finance person.

7 Renewing buildings

Like other areas we are looking towards to future and are pleased that many of our Churches have undertaken substantial re-ordering of their premises to meet the new needs of the Church in current times. In the case of our Listed Buildings this has been done with great sensitivity to blend the old with the new. Examples include work undertaken in Lichfield, St Andrew's Cheltenham and Warwick Road, Coventry.

8 Deployment

Much time has been taken up with the difficult area of deployment and sharing ministers fairly around our churches. In parallel with this, we have increased training opportunities for Elders, church secretaries and worship leaders.

9 Synod vision

9.1 We do not intend to look only at the current life of the Synod. We are now entering the second phase of our Vision journey. The first phase of our Synod Vision embraced "Streams of Living Water." During this time Synod at its meetings looked at a range of areas, including spirituality, ecumenism and worship.

9.2 We are now exploring the second phase this year when we shall be developing the theme of "Treasure in Clay Jars". Themes have included the environment and creativity in worship. We are looking forward to exploring the ministry of hospitality and new possibilities for community outreach. Exploration of such subjects is essential to the continued spiritual growth of our people and churches. An important by product from elements of such work is how the shape of our meetings of Synod has changed over the years. We now have a greater mixture of pure business and opportunities to be engaged and experience different forms of Worship and development of a Christian presence in our area.



Resolution 1**East Midlands Synod
Discussion and decision making at General Assembly**

General Assembly acknowledging the importance of discerning the mind of Christ in the councils of the church and believing that the current procedures used in making decisions are not necessarily the best, instructs Mission Council

- a) **to explore consensus procedures for decision making at Assembly level and bring detailed proposals to General Assembly in 2007**
- and
- b) **to explore ways in which background information on key resolutions can be made available to local churches sufficiently in advance of Synod and General Assembly meetings to allow issues to be discussed so that representatives can be aware of the views of the wider membership.**

*Proposer: Elizabeth Nash
Seconder: Irene Wren*

1.1 East Midlands Synod wishes to raise with General Assembly the whole issue of how we discern the mind of Christ in a conciliar church, with specific reference to Mission Council and General Assembly. It

also asks Assembly to explore how information about key resolutions can best be laid before churches and members so that their views can inform the decision making process.

Resolution 2**Wessex Synod
Housing of Non-stipendiary Ministers**

General Assembly notes

- a) **that in many of our Districts we are reducing the number of stipendiary ministers and so are finding it increasingly difficult to provide leadership in all of our churches**
- b) **that the Charity Commissioners allow charities to use their assets for activities which further the aim of the charity**
- c) **that the Anglican church benefits from the possibility of finding non stipendiary ministers for churches by offering 'house-for-duty'**

Assembly instructs Mission Council to investigate the possibility of changing United Reformed Church regulations to allow flexibility in the provision and payment for housing of Non-stipendiary Ministers.

1.1 Over the last few years, Reading & Oxford District, in common with the other Districts of the Wessex synod, has been facing up to a reduction of numbers of stipendiary ministers as part of the concept of 'fair shares of ministry'. Local churches have worked together, in 'collaborative zones' and at District Council, to make changes in their sharing of resources so that churches are able to have the leadership they need to move forward in mission, service and witness.

1.2 In a number of places it would help this process of creative re-imagining of ministry and leadership if there was the option available of calling

a non-stipendiary minister or unpaid stipendiary (for example one of about retirement age) and providing this minister with accommodation in the manse, rent-free – along the lines of the Anglican scheme of 'house-for-duty'.

1.3 We realise that this would involve the synod in some loss of rental income from vacant manses and we are not proposing providing houses for all non-stipendiary ministers, but there would undoubtedly be situations where a flexible use of the synod resource that is the manse would help the local churches to find new and imaginative ways forward. Synod would, of course, retain the capital value of the manse.

Resolution 3**West Midlands Synod
Synods and CRCW management**

General Assembly re-affirms the value of the Church Related Community Work ministry and, in particular, the commitment to allocate CRCW posts in each Synod. However, recognising the important contribution of local knowledge in all deployment it asks that the Ministries / CRCW Programme Sub-Committee devolve to the Synods the task of terming and reviewing CRCW posts.

*Proposer: the Revd Ken Chippendale
Seconder: to be advised*

1.1 The recognition of Church Related Community Work as an office of ministry within the United Reformed Church first took place at General Assembly 1987. Almost twenty years later it is an invaluable contribution to our URC ministry and work. Things have changed over that period and a great deal of work has been done on the effective operation of this ministry. The management of the programme is undertaken centrally and proposals for a degree of devolution have not, so far, come to pass. The practice has been – and is – that CRCW posts, with rare exceptions, are for a maximum of two five year terms and it has thus been seen as a pump-priming, rather than really long-haul, ministry. Ten years may seem a long time to prime the pump, but the reality is that, in the kind of situation in which Church Related Community Workers often find themselves called to minister, that is not necessarily so. Clearly there are occasions when the involvement of a CRCW should be brought to an end. This includes the question of balancing needs and demands so that

new possibilities may come on stream. But it is also possible that the church should sometimes refuse to join the popular time-limiting projects culture of our day! This resolution does not suggest that the current five year terming and reviewing should be abandoned. It simply wants to open the possibility that the limit of two five year terms (not mandatory according to URC policy, but the system practiced by the CRCW Programme Sub-Committee) should not be enforced and suggests, that as with other ministerial deployment, decisions should be taken at Synod level though, of course, continuing to work in partnership with the central expertise of the CRCW Programme Sub-Committee. It is already the case that District Council has the responsibility of undertaking the review of posts. This resolution builds on that, asking that the proposal to devolve the final decision on the placing and continuance of CRCW posts to Synods, made to Mission Council in both 1998 and 2002, but so far deferred, be now effected.

Resolution 4**Yorkshire Synod
Heritage Lottery Fund**

In the light of the diminishing government funding available for the repair and upkeep of historic church buildings, especially listed buildings, and the diverse way in which the Lottery is now being used to fund other agencies and sources of financial support, the Yorkshire Synod calls upon General Assembly to reconsider its position in respect of applications for Lottery Funding.

*Proposed: Mrs Val Morrison
Seconded: Revd Arnold Harrison*

1.1 When the issue of the National Lottery was originally the subject of discussion and resolution at General Assembly in 1995 there was available more varied sources of funding to which churches could apply to support their upkeep. Eleven years on, many of these funds are now drying up and are no longer a realistic source for churches seeking to maintain old and expensive but significant buildings. At the

same time many funds which are available from local authorities and other sources for project work are indirectly funded from the lottery. So even when churches are not seeking directly to apply for Lottery money, much funding for day-centres, youth and community work etc. comes, even if indirectly and some stages back, from that source.

Churches – Changes & Synod Moderators' Report

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

Churches – Changes

Resolution 5

New Churches

General Assembly receives the Churches listed below as local churches of the United Reformed Church.

EASTERN SYNOD

Cambourne LEP, Cambridgeshire

(Church of England, Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed Church)

Cambourne is a new “village” between Cambridge and St Neots. The plan is for 4000 houses over 10 years; the scheme is now two thirds of the way through.

In 2002 Churches Together in Cambourne was received as a mission project of the United Reformed Church at the General Assembly,

The church first met in the doctors’ surgery, purchased a portacabin in 2002 (called The Ark) where services were held. It was the only community meeting place in Cambourne for some time, so is hired out to community groups during the week and still used as a venue for church social events and holiday clubs. This is great for outreach and it means that everyone is familiar with The Ark.

Our church services now take place in the new community centre, but The Ark is still used for Young Church on a Sunday and is the home of the pre-school during the week.

We are in the process of fundraising for a new church centre, having been given an acre of land at the top of the High Street, by the developers. Building is due to start this summer, funds coming from our sponsoring churches, our own church family and trust funds, etc.

To date we have around half the amount pledged and have applied for a grant from EEDA which if we are awarded, will bring us close to our £1.7 million needed. We are thrilled with and deeply grateful for a recent donation of £15,000 from St Ives Free Church. Our vision is to build a beautiful worship space, which can also be a resource for the whole community.

We have 2 services on Sunday morning, one with more of a reflective style and the later one more participatory. Young people are an important part of our church family and make up one third of the congregation here. Young church activities are offered at the 1100 service in 4 age groups between 0-12 years.

We have 40 members at present who are committed to our ecumenical approach and a wider church family of about 160.

It was a unanimous decision of the Church Council that the time is right to move on from being a mission project to becoming full members of the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 6**Closure of Local Churches**

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

NORTHERN SYNOD**Birdhopecraig**

Birdhopecraig reckoned itself to be possibly the oldest non-conformist congregation in Northumberland. It was founded in the 17th century through the activity of Presbyterian preachers from Scotland seeking refuge in the remote Rede valley, where a number of place names still testify to open-air preaching stations from the time. When Toleration allowed the licensing of buildings, the congregation erected a chapel on Birdhopecraig; but the ravages of the weather on the crag eventually drove them down into the valley to the village of Rochester, bringing the name with them.

A break-away congregation was formed in Otterburn in the 19th century; and in 1972 another first was claimed when the new minister of what was now the joint pastorate was the first to be inducted within the United Reformed Church. Some time later the Otterburn church closed, and its remaining members returned to Birdhopecraig.

In 2005 it was recognised that dwindling numbers made the cause untenable, and the reluctant decision was made to close. Most of the members agreed to transfer their membership to Thropton in Coquetdale – a considerable distance away, especially over winter roads. However, the Anglican church in Otterburn, where most of the congregation now live, saw this as an ecumenical opportunity; and at a well attended service held early in 2006 the former members of Birdhopecraig received an ecumenical welcome as members of the United Reformed Church into the life and fellowship of St John's.

Embleton

The village of Embleton on the beautiful Northumberland coast saw the foundation of a Presbyterian church in 1834. Its third minister, William Stead, is remembered as the father of the great Victorian campaigning journalist, W T Stead, who was born in the Manse, and was eventually drowned in the sinking of the Titanic.

In recent times there have been close relationships between this congregation and the parish church of Holy Trinity, who offered a home (under Canon B43) when the chapel was no longer serviceable. But increasingly there was a feeling that the cause was too

small to maintain a separate existence or to enter into any formal ecumenical partnership, and the decision was eventually taken to close.

The church secretary records that at the final service (held of course in the parish church) in October 2005 "a time of sadness and poignancy was recognised, but quickly dispelled by the ringing of the church bells symbolising thanksgiving and celebration." The vote of thanks to visitors was given by the local MP, Rt Hon Alan Beith; and it was also reported that, as the final years of the church's witness had been marked by support for local ecumenism and Commitment for Life, the remaining assets would be used as far as possible to support ecumenical projects and development work.

Norton

The history of this congregation goes back to meetings of a group known as "Reformists" in 1854. In 1874 the present church was built and known as the United Free Methodist Church. In 1885, the Church became Norton Congregational Church. Sunday School outreach was started in 1920, as new housing grew up in areas nearby and a Sunday School hall was built in 1934. Cubs, Scouts and Girls Brigade flourished, the latter for over 50 years. On the formation of the United Reformed Church, ministry was shared with other churches, and eventually Norton became part of the Teesdale Group.

In recent years the congregation had become small, with few able to take on the work of leadership and eldership, and with diminishing financial resources. The difficult decision to close was made in 2005. A service of thanksgiving for the faithful life and witness of Norton United Reformed Church was held in July, at which members, former members and friends testified to the impact of the church on their lives and on the life of the community.

NORTH WESTERN SYNOD**Preston, Grimshaw Street**

In 1807 a young Unitarian minister in Preston, Revd William Manning Walker, found himself being led to a more evangelical faith. When the trustees asked him to resign, most of his congregation built a new chapel for him in Grimshaw Street, where Mr Walker was ordained as an Independent minister. A new church

replaced the original chapel in 1859 and in 1868 a day school was built. This school had a high reputation in the town, but after expensive structural changes were required by the local education authority if the school was to continue, the church closed the school in 1993. The school premises were requisitioned during the Second World War.

The decline in church attendance in the twentieth century affected the churches in Preston as elsewhere. The oldest Congregational Church in Preston, Cannon Street, closed in 1952, the members joining Grimshaw Street. By the end of the century, the congregation was gathered from a wide area, members having generations of involvement with the church. The location at the edge of the city centre proved unattractive for mid week activities. The school buildings were used for community activities, which brought income to the church, but not enough to maintain the buildings to modern requirements. The church closed in 2005, with members transferring to other churches.

Horwich, Lee Lane

Like most of its Lancashire neighbours, this fellowship mirrors the growth and decline of local industry. It began with the struggle of independently minded artisans in the textile trades of the early nineteenth century, meeting first in hired rooms then, as numbers mushroomed, in its own gothic chapel on the main street of Horwich. Work with children and young people eventually required extra buildings which expanded magnificently over the next fifty years. The fellowship now catered for whole families from the cradle to the grave: social activities were as prominent as the twice-on-Sunday School and Chapel with sports clubs, uniformed organisations, dramatic society and dances.

The town became the home of Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway's engine works and prospered until the mid-fifties of the last century, and its subsequent decline was mirrored in the church membership. By 1980 a series of crises led to the church sharing premises and worship with the local Church Army mission, an arrangement which was regularised in an local ecumenical partnership where the former identities were fully merged. The school buildings were sold and the chapel was adapted for both social and worship activities. Falling numbers and increasing age continued to sap the enthusiasm of members despite its full part in pastorate group arrangements. Three years ago they began a long period of examination to identify a continuing rôle in the community, but finally and heroically decided that their time had come. The closing service was held in spring 2005 and the fellowship dispersed.

MERSEY SYNOD

Union United Reformed Church, Frodsham

In 1878, in an old mill room by the River Weaver, two men, Mr John Jackson, a Baptist, and Mr Thomas Rigby, a Congregationalist, started a Sunday school. The following year a United Church of Baptists and Congregationalists was formally established and over the next seven years flourished, so much so that the present building, which includes the Baptistry, had been erected and opened for worship. The site had previously held a rather unsavoury tavern, which had become notorious for its association with the men constructing the railway, and a few cottages.

The church was completed in March 1887 and on Sunday 27th, the members and Sunday School scholars assembled for the last time in the Mill Room and processed to the new church singing the hymn 'Holy, holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee'. The church was called 'Union', indicating its origins as an early LEP bringing together Baptists and Independents.

In 1886 the church was admitted to the County Union and by 1899 was strong enough to support its own pastor.

Jumping forward, in 1978, after eight years without a Minister, Union Church, together with Northwich and Moulton United Reformed Churches formed a Joint Pastorate and called Revd David Spence to be their Minister. David served for eleven years and the church grew under his leadership.

A third 'joint pastorate' ended in 2003 but by this time Moulton church had closed. Northwich was then linked with Winsford and Frodsham declared vacant with 'one quarter scoping'. The church realized however that its financial position was unsustainable, and early in 2005 concluded that it too must close.

A final act of worship and service of celebration was held on Sunday 10th July 2005, led by Revd Alan Johnston, Interim Moderator, and Revd Howard Sharp, Moderator of Mersey Synod.

EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD

Emmanuel Church, Spinney Hill Road, Leicester

With a mixture of sadness and joy, we mark the end of Emmanuel URC. In marking it, we should remember some of the extraordinary work that has come out of it.

Originally known as Newby Street Congregational Chapel, and built in the Victorian expansion of Leicester, it served a small but densely populated area. Like many non conformist Chapels, it had a very large Sunday school, and a loyal congregation.

During the 2nd World War, while Coventry was bombed, Leicester also had its share of being attacked. The original Chapel was destroyed. The school rooms continued to be used for worship, until the late 1960's.

Re-development in the early '70s saw the church re sited, only a hundred yards distant from the original site. A brand new chapel Charnwood United Reformed Church was opened in 1974. It was a purpose built premises, and had great facilities.

In the early to mid 1990's, although membership was not vast, it was a growing Church, with people making commitments to Christ almost every week. Under the leadership of Revd Richard Goddard there was a music group of over 12 (and not enough space for everyone to play!) There was also a full time Evangelist and Youth Worker, David Goddard. Sunday Worship, mornings and evenings were very well attended. There were activities everyday, and all of them connected to outreach and prayer.

There was a name change in 1994 to Emmanuel URC, to highlight the sense of calling and mission that the fellowship felt at that time.

In 1992, The Rock Coffee bar was opened, staying open till the early hours of the morning several nights a week. From here an outreach to local kids and prostitutes was very effective. Lives were changed, and up to 15 members of the Church would be out at night sharing the Gospel to people on the edge. This was a continuance of Revd David Morris' work among homeless men, which he had started from Charnwood URC in the 1970's.

It was a very young fellowship with the majority under 40, and in their 20's. Many were students, and moved on in time.

Revd Graham Knights was the last inducted Minister, and did great work continuing local community service.

Being an inner city site, very few connected to Emmanuel lived locally. The young members moved on and away.

But, from Emmanuel, have come many people who continue to serve with different forms of Christian Ministry, both lay and ordained. Emmanuel has been a very important springboard to a fuller Christian life for many people, and has served its purpose well. Thanks be to God for the legacy that remains within all of us who loved and grew there.

Moorgreen United Reformed Church

A closing service was held at Moorgreen on 11th July 2004, a celebration of all that had been done together since the congregation was established in 1662. Meetings began in secret on the site of the church building led by Robert Smalley, who was born locally in Beeston, Nottingham, ordained in 1652 and served in Greasley Church as 'minister' before being ejected under the Act of Uniformity. He lived locally until the 'Five Mile Act' was passed then moved to Mansfield but still travelled faithfully each Sunday to preach at Moorgreen. A Presbyterian Church was founded, without buildings and minute books, but with a church meeting and breaking of bread, prayer and fellowship.

In 1772 the church became Congregational and records are held from this date. Ministry has usually been shared with neighbouring congregations, Ilkeston, Eastwood (begun by members of Moorgreen) and Marlpool. The church building was erected in 1790 on land given for the purpose of worship. Links with Paton College were formed through student preachers from 1920 onwards. At the beginning of the United Reformed Church in 1972 Moorgreen was linked with Eastwood and Marlpool and became part of the Erewash Valley Group.

In 1986 the church considered closure due to few members, but there was a new lease of life for a while. In 2004, with the deteriorating state of the building, its rural setting with limited public transport and few affordable houses for young families, the decision was finally taken to close. Members have found spiritual homes in other local churches and the buildings will be sold and the sale proceeds used to benefit the Erewash Valley Group through a Charitable Trust.

WEST MIDLANDS SYNOD

West Bromwich United Reformed Church

The West Bromwich United Reformed Church was opened in 1971 after the coming together of Ebenezer and Mayers Green Congregational churches after a compulsory purchase order had been put on Mayers Green. Ebenezer's origins date back to 1662 when the Old Meeting House formed, whilst Mayers Green's origins can be traced back to 1787.

At the time of opening the church was the only Congregational church left in the centre of West Bromwich. In the past there was a flourishing congregation including Sunday School, Youth Club etc., but as young people grew up and moved away the congregation aged. When the site was acquired by

Tesco as part of the re-development of West Bromwich town centre it was decided not to have a new church built, for many of the congregation came from well outside the West Bromwich area. After many years of negotiation, during which time the congregation became even smaller, a valedictory service was held on 1st October 2005 with the final service on 6th November, 2005.

EASTERN SYNOD

Aveley

Founded in 1817, Aveley Congregational Church was one of several Independent Churches planted among the small rural communities of Southern Essex in the early part of the 19th century. Reflecting the growing influence of nonconformity at the time, the congregation erected a building and halls on grounds that straddled the village High Street.

For the remaining years of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the church membership remained stable, being drawn from a community largely unaffected by the major population movement to the cities. It retained its links to the other Congregational Churches of the area, and at various times shared ministerial oversight with them.

The Second World War brought significant change, with the nearby development of London Borough 'overspill' estates, coupled to a major development of the original village, to re-house evacuees from the East End.

In the immediate post-war years, the congregation flourished, particularly with work among children and young people. However, by late 1960's, the church was again under ministerial oversight shared with the Orsett and South Ockenden congregations.

For a while the church was linked with the South Ockenden church, together forming the 'Christ Church' pastorate. Though work with youth organisations continued to the early 1990's, the congregation had significantly declined, affected by a rapidly changing population as local housing policy changed and families moved away from the area.

In 1990 Aveley was given oversight by local leadership. In early 2002 the discovery of significant rot and beetle damage to the building led the remaining members to resolve to close the church, at a Church Meeting on 2 May 2002.

The final service of Thanksgiving for the Life and Work of Aveley United Reformed Church was held on its 185th anniversary, Sunday 20 October 2002.

Harwich Road, Colchester

The origin of the worshipping community at the site in Harwich Road can be traced back to 1840 when a Sunday School is known to have been meeting in a room close by. In 1841 Revd TW Davids, minister at Lion Walk Congregational Church, felt called to evangelism in the outlying parts of the town of Colchester and so the original church, built at Harwich Road, opened on 23rd February 1845 under the direction of Lion Walk Church. The Sunday School grew to such an extent that in 1928 a School Hall was erected on land made available by the kindness of the Diocesan Parochial authorities of the Church of England.

In 1936 the Revd A B Grosvenor, who was then assistant minister at Lion Walk Congregational Church, was specially authorised to devote himself to work at Harwich Road. At that time the area around the new church was a rapidly growing one and the church had a core membership of 60; a large number of young people; many and varied weekday activities; and the premises housed the largest Sunday School in the Colchester and District Sunday School Union.

In 1938, the new Church building was built to seat 250. The church continued to be run as part of Lion Walk, including a Church Council on which their Deacons took part until 1st April 1948, when the church accepted autonomy and became a Church in its own right. In the 1950's it became an independent body within the Congregational Union. By 1950 the church was thriving with membership increased to around 100 and a Sunday School of 150. There were many groups and clubs including Scouts, Cubs, Guides, Brownies, Sisterhood, Wives Group, Youth Club and a Tennis Club all closely associated with the church.

The Harwich Road congregation agreed to join the United Reformed Church in 1973, and became part of the Colchester Group, which comprised Christ Church, Shrub End (now known as Plume Avenue), Parsons Heath, Tollesbury and Tolleshunt D'Arcy. At that time, the Revd R Landon was called to a joint ministry at Harwich Road and Shrub End. After a number of years, the Parsons Heath church closed. The church at Tolleshunt D'Arcy remained in partnership with Harwich Road and Christ Church until its closure.

The congregation at Harwich Road have not been complacent and latterly there have been several attempts to revive the fortunes of the church at Harwich Road. Initially it was hoped that the church land would be sold to finance a rebuilding project. It was planned to share buildings with a charity for teaching those with learning disabilities, to include a cafe and community centre. Disappointment came with the news that the charity's work was to be absorbed into the NHS. Further avenues were explored, and the most recent plan would have incorporated a new smaller multi-purpose

church and hall with two flats built above: the rest of the land being sold to a developer for residential use, which would finance the new church building. Sadly, this was not to be, and the worshipping community at Harwich Road took the decision to close. They believe that God is leading them elsewhere, separately or together, to continue the work and witness that began in Harwich Road 160 years ago.

A service of thanksgiving to celebrate the life, witness and worship that has found its place in this church was held on Sunday, 10th July, 2005.

SOUTH WESTERN SYNOD

Clevedon United Reformed Church

In 1812, a group of Dissenters began meeting for worship in a cottage in what is now known as All Saints Lane, Clevedon. By 1826 they were strong enough to build their own place of worship which gave its name to Chapel Hill. At this time, the only other place of worship in Clevedon was the old Parish Church (now St Andrew's) which was well outside the village as it then was.

Accordingly the congregation grew and flourished and in 1855 it was decided to build a completely new Congregational Church in Hill Road. This was opened in 1856 and became the home of the church for the next 128 years, by which time it was part of a joint pastorate with Nailsea United Reformed Church.

In the early 1980s, the condition of the building was such that the difficult decision was taken to move out of the Hill Road premises. An agreement was reached with the congregation of St Peter's Church in Alexandra Road and the sharing of the premises began in February 1984. The formal Sharing Agreement was signed on 12th May 1985. The two congregations continued to meet separately although joint festival services were subsequently held on four occasions in the year and latterly two joint Communion services (one according to each tradition) were shared.

In early 2004, the congregation realising that numbers were in decline and the remainder were getting older began to give some thought to the future. Closer links with the Church of England congregation did not seem appropriate and eventually the decision to close as a separate congregation on Easter Day 2006 was taken. Prior to this, a special service celebrating the life of the church, at which the Moderator of the South Western Synod preached, was held on Palm Sunday, April 9th 2006. Members now worship elsewhere in the town, although some members now attend the United Reformed Church at Nailsea.

SOUTHERN SYNOD

Bosham

Enjoying a unique position in the harbourside village of Bosham, the church's original congregation comprised of mainly fishermen and boat builders who had become disenchanted with the established church. They began meeting in an oyster shed in 1812. In the Church Book of 1825, there is written "... the village of Bosham was, until the year 1812, proverbial for ignorance and wickedness, there being no Gospel either in the established church or out of it...". Their numbers grew to the extent that they needed a chapel of their own. A piece of land was subsequently purchased for £115, which included a thatched cottage, and building commenced. The present church building was opened in 1837.

By 1875 a schoolroom was added, while in 1928 a manse was purchased for the incumbent. By 1937 the Congregational Church in Bosham had a flourishing Sunday School, and indeed one of most enjoyable days of the year was the Sunday School Summer outing where horses and carts took upwards of fifty children to the surrounding countryside for a picnic. During the war years table tennis was played regularly in the hall by villagers and servicemen stationed in the area.

The 1940's were the church's heyday and since that time numbers attending Sunday services have continued to decline. One of the main achievements of Bosham United Reformed Church was that it founded the Churches Together in Bosham group. This ecumenical group has been one of the main sources of support in recent years.

At the beginning of 2005 the membership decided that the time had come to complete the mission begun nearly 193 years before, and the final service was held on the 21st June 2005.

Southfleet United Reformed Church

About 1840, some members of the Congregational Church in Princes Street, Gravesend, concerned for the spiritual condition of the outlying villages commenced Christian teaching and worship in cottages in and around the villages of Southfleet and Betsham. A more permanent home became possible with the purchase of a plot of land and the building of a chapel, completed and opened in the autumn of 1896 with a school room added in 1908 to accommodate the thriving Sunday School. Jumping ahead some generations, the church celebrated its centenary in 1996 with members of the North Kent United Reformed Church Group – of which it was by then a member and

the then Moderator, David Helyar preached. It had by then become a very much smaller church with a loyal congregation worshipping on Sunday evenings – led by their Minister and a variety of local preachers. The high point of every year has been a summer service with Strawberry Tea. Southfleet has additionally been the traditional gathering place for the North Kent Group on Good Friday each year joining the Parish Church for an ecumenical service of witness. Despite good ecumenical relations, evangelistic activities and offering the only evening service in the village, the church membership has remained static at 3 and finances have not been available to maintain the greatly treasured chapel building. On 31st January 2005 the remaining church members passed the following resolution: “With a heavy heart but with great pride in all that has been achieved over the years in the locality by the church, we agree to the closure of the Southfleet United Reformed Church in the course of 2005.” A celebratory act of worship with a final Strawberry Tea was held on 19th June 2005 and the formal closure service with representatives of Medway District Council took place on Sunday 30th October led by the Minister Revd Peter Clark, with guest preacher John Ellis. Having made the decision to bring the formal church activity to completion, the group awaits the guidance of that same Holy Spirit to see where it will call them next.

THE NATIONAL SYNOD OF WALES

Saintwell United Reformed Church

In 1889 the Saintwell/Ely district of Cardiff was relatively sparsely populated but a small group of people began meeting in each other's homes and then in a small purpose built wooden building opened as a Mission station, being formally recognised as a Congregational Church in 1892. A more permanent church was built and opened on 12th December 1907. The first service was conducted by Revd Justin Evans. Worship continued regularly until 1969 when the church was demolished to make way for the new roadworks in Ely. The congregation then took over its present premises – the former Presbyterian Church in Heol Trelai (built in 1962) and the first service was held on Wednesday 30th April 1969.

Despite being in the centre of a large housing estate, numbers of members dwindled to less than 10 and in May 2005 the remaining members voted to close the church for Sunday worship.

A service of thanksgiving was held on October 2nd 2005 when former ministers – Revd Dr Tom Arthur, Revd Dr Peter Crutchley-Jones, Revd Daffyd Jones and Revd John Joseph spoke of their ministries in Saintwell.

Zion United Reformed Church, Newbridge

The cause at Zion was begun in 1884 as a Congregational chapel that served the needs of both English and Welsh speaking worshippers. This continued for twenty years when the Welsh speaking congregation, with the support of the English speaking one, formed a separate worshipping community at Zoar.

Zion continued to flourish, particularly under the 26 year ministry of Revd Edward Vaughn.

If the fifties and sixties it was well known both for its music tradition with a succession of fine organists and for maintaining the tradition of liberal nonconformist theology.

However, in latter years a declining and elderly membership has meant that it has not proved possible to find people to take on the responsibility of local leadership and so the church decided to close.

The closing service was held on January 16th 2006.

Alpha United Reformed Church, Greenfield

Alpha was the first church founded in Greenfield – hence its name. The congregation first gathered in 1814 and the first church building was constructed in 1834. In 1895 land to the rear of the church was purchased and an enlarged church was planned and opened in 1907. Alpha was seen as very much the parish church of the community, even after the later building of an Anglican church opposite Alpha. Alpha entered the United Reformed Church in 1972 and for a time was grouped with two other congregations and two Presbyterian Church of Wales congregations. The active congregation, however, became smaller and more elderly. Following the death of the secretary and treasurer, and with the need for extensive and costly repairs the church meeting decided to close. A service of thanksgiving was held on Sunday 13th November 2005. During its life and mission the fellowship at Alpha touched many, many lives and we give thanks for its witness.

Moderators' Report

Transforming present

1 Transforming presence

The Orthodox Christians of the East have a picture parable. They recall the story of the catering disaster at the wedding that Jesus attended; they tell how it was the reflection of the face of Jesus in the jars at Cana changed the water to wine. A modern poster artist, Sieger Köder, plays with the same image as he shows the transforming presence of Jesus reflected in the dirty water in which he has just washed Peter's feet – the mark of costly and humiliating service.

The Catholic Church of Regina Mundi, Soweto was a focus of prayer and protest during the apartheid era in South Africa. It still bears some of the scars of the day a meeting was broken up by the security services. One of these scars is a statue of Jesus standing to give a blessing, from which both the hands were deliberately shot off by an officer. The statue still stands as a reminder of the troubles and as a challenge to today's people. It brings to mind words of Teresa of Avila: Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He is to go about doing good; yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now."

2 Anxiety about the future

So much of the life of today's Church seems to be characterised by an anxiety about the future.

There is a personal angle on this, probably fuelled by the traditional way in which we have talked of salvation. It is concerned with just how individuals can ensure their own certainty of a safe place after death, in heaven or whatever.

There is concern about the Church itself. Hardly a month goes by but one or another newspaper prints a projection of figures of decline in church membership and attendance; the only difference between them is when they might suggest the graph dips below the surface, indicating annihilation in 10, 20, or is it 30 years time.

There is our own brand angst that asks if there is going to be a distinctive future for the United Reformed Church? Ought there to be? If it disappears into some glorious union, or simply by withering on the vine, will it have helped shaped the future? Or should the question be – will it have ever, in any way, have shaped the present?

3 Redeem thy mis-spent time that's past; live this day as if 'twere thy last

How do we take Thomas Ken at his word and respond appropriately as individual Christians and as the people of God? When Martin Luther was asked – *What would you do if you knew the world was due to end tomorrow?* He replied – *Plant an apple tree.*

There are strong biblical images of taking the risk of sowing. We live in a time of guaranteed germination of seeds. But there are many in the world who will readily understand the tense emotions of the person who takes the grain out of the larder – the food from the children's mouths and throws it upon the ground – *Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap. They go out, full of tears, carrying seed for the sowing; they come back, full of song, carrying their sheaves.* [Psalm 126] Jesus picked this up in his parable of sower – a warning of risk but most importantly a promise of fruit for those who will faithfully engage in their calling.

4 Think not of the harvest, but of faithful sowing – TS Eliot

The challenging example of costly sowing is in the life poured out as God-with-us touched earth and shared the human life and situation to bring a harvest of hope and new life. Paul describes it when he wrote to the first church members at Philippi [Phil 2: 5-11] of the Lord who did not think that equality with God was something to be grasped at, but emptied himself – gave himself away – that a whole world of people and things might find life in all its fullness. Why did Paul quote a hymn they already knew? He set the context when he wrote: *let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.* The call to be the body of Christ in their time and place.

5 The calling of a kenotic Church – a Church that gives itself away.

We are living, I believe, in a frontier time, one of the great hinge periods in human history, in which great changes are coming about at great speed.... The frontier both shapes our character and tests our mettle. I hope we pass the test. Salman Rushdie – *Step Across this Line* published by Vintage, London, 2003.

"It must ... be questioned how many missionaries today really do cross any decisive frontiers." (Peter Beyerhaus)

One of the constant criticisms of Jesus seems to have been that he was always in one way or the other pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable in terms of culture and religion. Helping people find life in all its fullness, being a transforming presence, meant touching those who were considered untouchable and engaging with people who were beyond the pale in all manner of strange places. Wherever Jesus met Mary of Magdala, it was not at a synagogue coffee-morning. There are comparable risks for those who heed the call to be his transforming presence in each time and place. Risks in how we see and understand ourselves, and in how we are perceived – to identity and integrity; in how we decide how to use the resources we have, people, money and things; and in the ways we express and hold to our faith.

"... a real evangelist is by the nature of [his] calling something of a heretic. [He] never knows beforehand how [his] message 'comes alive' in the hearers' context." (Walter Hollenweger).

Peter and the Council of Jerusalem knew the risk to identity when they crossed the impossible frontier and acknowledged the calling of Cornelius, and millions of subsequent Gentiles. Paul described the peril to personal integrity, and also the missionary imperative of risking the frontiers when he described himself as having made himself *all things to all people, so that in one way or another some might be saved*.

There is a risk we may find ourselves facing within the Reformed tradition, and not simply to identity, especially as we engage with people in our time and place in terms of new paradigms of belonging, different understanding of membership and a new expression of calling.

6 Transforming present

Ronald Reagan wisely said: *status quo is Latin for the mess we are in*. *Status quo* describes an attitude that says this is where we are, we are comfortable with it, and therefore we are staying. There may well be a new world here demanding our attention, but we are concerned to protect what we have and what we have known.

We believe that the people of God is called to an intentional focus on the present. This is not preservation of the status quo, but a creative and faithful relationship with the present that says this is where we are – it is the basis of our reflection and preparation for where God takes us next. Therefore, we are called to a depth of quality engagement in each moment of challenge and opportunity. We cannot rest in yesterday's present. We are the servants of a purpose of love that is as old as the hills, eternal and unchanging yet new every morning as the God of that purpose seeks to bring life and hope to each new time and place. As R S Thomas observed: *Our God is a fast God, always leaving just as we arrive*.

7 Now is eternal life if risen with Christ we stand

Our call is to recognise and be prepared to enter into the eternal life into which we are invited by the gospel in terms of a qualitative depth of living that may be provisional rather than be about continuity or permanence.

– in personal terms – if the contemporary body of Christ comes and goes in order that people might find life in all its fullness, this entails a total commitment of every human relationship in which each word and action, each plan and hope aim to enable people to recognise the life of God in themselves and respond to the challenge to make a whole world of people and things reflect the purpose of love we encounter in Christ. Or, as David Peel memorably quoted Bishop David Jenkins in last year's moderatorial address: 'I cannot be fully me until you are fully you, and that means that you must be you in such a way that it enables me to be me; and similarly I must be me in such a way that it enables you to be you'.

– in terms of the life and being of a Church which reflects Calvin's marks of the true Church as where the gospel is preached, the sacraments are duly administered and the service is given. These criteria are pointing to a contingent, provisional apostolicity of being and doing, rather than a Church that identifies and celebrates its authenticity in some form of continuity of historic succession, or even just survival. This has implications for how we make and develop our strategies for mission and service:

- it helps us see how both the planting, and the closing of local churches may be to the glory of God.
- it challenges and enables us to rediscover the New Testament verbs for mission of *GO* and *SEND*, rather than (whatever can we do to make them) *COME*.
- it saves us from the heresy of a manipulative view of work among children and young people that sees them as the future of the Church, our seed-corn for survival; and helps us see it as a significant and authentic ministry in its own right to provide for their nurture and growth in faith.

– as the focus of eternity is known and felt in the passing experience of worship. This places an immense weight on the quality and consistency of our worship encounter with God as being the nurturing and equipping which enables the people of Jesus to be a transforming presence as we draw closer together, as together we draw closer to God.

Michael Harper asked: "How can you ask unrenewed people to renew the world? It is like asking non-swimmers to save a drowning person?" It may actually be precisely through the people of Jesus who know that they are unrenewed – in need of renewal – finding themselves being renewed, being made perfect, as they engage in that worship encounter which is itself transforming.

That makes demands about how we prepare and engage in worship which makes it both duty and delight. It requires that every stage of preparation, experience and reflection are of the highest quality. We want to ask if the whole of life is an offering of worship – why are we so niggardly about time – grudging giving more than the token hour. Fred Kaan invites us to sing and pray: *“Redeem us from the blasphemy of praying with lazy hands and unintending feet”*

A creative focus on the present seen in the quality of preparation – experience – reflection makes demands on all who engage in worship. It might be seen as a pressure on the minister and worship leader; and so it should be. But it challenges all who are called to support and sustain and nurture each other as together we gather in worship. The quality of our worship relates to the quality of the commitment and preparation of each person who comes and shares, and is thereby nurtured and equipped to go and be transforming presence.





The
United
Reformed
Church

Mission Council

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

Mission Council

Mission Council's task is to take a comprehensive view of the work of General Assembly; to decide on priorities; and to encourage the United Reformed Church at all levels in its engagement with the world. The scope of this engagement ranges from the local to the international arena, and includes relationships with ecumenical partners in the UK and overseas. While Mission Council services and maintains the work of General Assembly from one year to the next, it is principally concerned about the Church's future direction and the support of all its members.

Members: The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the Legal Adviser, the conveners of the Assembly standing committees (except the Pastoral Reference Committee), the synod moderators, two representatives of FURY Council, and three representatives from each synod.

In March 2006 those representatives to Mission Council which had been appointed by synods were:

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Revd Colin Offor, Mrs Susan Rand
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Mr George Morton, Revd Alan Wickens
Mersey Synod	Revd Jenny Morgan, Mrs Wilma Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands Synod	Revd Yolande Burns, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mrs Joan Turner
South Western Synod	Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Richard Pope
Wessex Synod	Mrs Glenis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe, Revd Ruth Whitehead
Thames North Synod	Mr David Eldridge, Revd John Macaulay, Revd David Varcoe
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mr Nigel Macdonald, Mrs Maureen Lawrence
National Synod of Wales	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Barbara Shapland, Mrs Liz Tadd
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Mr Patrick Smyth

1. The way it works

Mission Council acts in several different capacities, two of which are in evidence in this report:

- a) Actions on behalf of General Assembly: Mission Council is authorised to take decisions which are considered to be urgent or time-sensitive, and which need action between meetings of General Assembly. Mission Council may also be asked to undertake a piece of work on the Assembly's behalf. In such cases, the action is reported to a following General Assembly, as in this report's paragraphs 3 and 4.
- b) Actions on its own behalf: Mission Council has a number of advisory groups (e.g. Ethical Investments, Grants and Loans, Staffing Advisory, Section O) which report to its meetings, and which may bring resolutions. These groups have access to General Assembly only through Mission Council, hence the reports at paragraphs 6.1 to 6.5, and **Resolutions 7 to 14**. Mission Council may from time-to-time instigate work across the remits of different Assembly committees, and co-ordinate their response before bringing resolutions to General Assembly. It may also act as a conduit for resolutions which inter-synod groups wish to present to Assembly (as in paragraph 5.4 and **Resolution 15**).

2. Our meetings

2.1 During the year Mission Council met twice residentially and once for a one-day meeting. These occasions were enriched by the Moderator's leadership helping the Council reflect on its task, and the worship led by the Moderator's chaplain, the Revd Jill Thornton. Mission Council welcomed the Revd Sheilagh Kesting from the Church of Scotland to be a theological reflector on one occasion; and appreciated the General Secretary's presentation on the history and development of Reformed Spirituality, as background to the 'Catch the Vision' process. There was also an opportunity to receive four visitors from the Northern synod who spoke about their experience of training in the United Reformed Church.

2.2 'Catch the Vision' remained the governing theme of Mission Councils during 2005-2006. The report of the steering group appears elsewhere in the Reports to General Assembly. As staffing levels at Church House are under review, Mission Council decided that any Assembly-appointed posts falling vacant (in Church House) in the period up to March 2006 should not be filled on a permanent basis beyond Assembly 2007. For this reason, two fixed-term appointments were authorised: the Secretary for Church and Society, and the Children's Work Development Officer.

2.3 Mission Council spent one of its meetings in closed session considering a report it had commissioned from a task group on lessons the Church should learn from the case of an individual minister, arising from an historic case of alleged sexual abuse. Mission Council, in the light of its discussion, established a liaison group to relate to the minister on behalf of the General Assembly, and a steering group to raise awareness and ensure good practice in all the committees, councils and processes of the Church.

2.4 Though Assembly Resolutions 8, 9 and 10 had been referred to Mission Council by the 2005 General Assembly, the clerk subsequently advised that these matters could only be considered by Assembly itself. The resolutions therefore return this year (after alteration in some cases) as Resolutions 7, 8 and 10.

3 Action taken on 2005 Assembly resolutions which referred matters to Mission Council

3.1 Resolution 2: 'Saying sorry': 'General Assembly, noting the actions of the Methodist Church with regard to those who have been sexually abused', instructed Mission Council 'to prepare recommendations for similar actions on the part of the United Reformed Church and to bring them to the Assembly of 2006'. Investigation into this revealed that there are certain circumstances in which a senior representative of the Methodist Church invites victims of sexual abuse to a meeting of a pastoral nature, and where genuine sorrow can be expressed on behalf of the Church by sitting alongside the person. There is no implication in this apology, however, that the Methodist Conference accepts direct responsibility for causing the abuse, nor that a 'representative' apology can replace that of the guilty party.

3.1.1 Mission Council, aware of the importance of such a meeting, strongly believes that a way must be found to make it possible to respond wholeheartedly to such suffering in the life of the Church, and intends to work further on guidelines to establish how this may be done without it being construed that the Assembly accepts legal liability.

3.2 Resolution 6c: 'Declaration of a safe Church': General Assembly in 2005 urged synods, district councils and local churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work; and asked synods to report their response to Mission Council by March 2006. All synods, in their response, indicated that they had affirmed the declaration, but they were at different stages in considering its implications. Most had identified existing networks or had set up working groups to provide information, offer training and support to local churches. Mission Council undertook to convey any comments or questions received from the synods to the small working group

which had produced the original material, and asked them to consider what further advice or follow up was required from General Assembly.

3.3 Resolution 34c: Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry: Assembly instructed the Secretaries for Training, Ministries and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to evaluate the accessibility to minority ethnic people of the systems of candidacy and training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, lay preachers and lay leaders, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than March 2006. Assembly in 2005 also authorised the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry (in Resolution 34d) to conduct an audit of church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to full participation of minority ethnic people, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than October 2006.

3.3.1 Mission Council received an interim report from the Committee indicating that work was underway but that there was considerable overlap of related resolutions passed by General Assembly. Mission Council agreed that the committee should defer its report and recommendations on Resolution 34c until October 2006 when it would be considered in a broader context.

3.4 Resolution 42: London Synod Commission: General Assembly asked Mission Council to appoint a Commission of Assembly to investigate the feasibility of creating a London synod, and to report back to the 2006 Assembly. The Commission, convened by the Revd Bill Mahood with Mrs Sheila Brain as its Secretary, has drawn up terms of reference which include widespread consultation to assess the rationale for a London synod, and to see whether the advantages significantly outweigh the disadvantages. The Commission plans to consult in depth with the Southern and Thames North synods, and seek the views of the surrounding synods (Eastern, East Midlands and Wessex) whose boundaries might be altered significantly if a London synod is established. The Commission also seeks to consider the ecumenical dimensions of the proposal: the implications for future ecumenical work and mission in Greater London. It will explore alternative ways in which the United Reformed Church could relate more effectively to London in mission and service, and recommend practical ways in which any changes might be implemented. As these investigations will take time, the Commission plans to present its final report to General Assembly in 2007.

3.5 Resolution 53: Election of the Moderator of General Assembly: In 2005, for the first time in the United Reformed Church's history, no synod had nominated anyone to be Moderator of General Assembly for 2006 by the due date (31st March) set out in the Rules of Procedure. Assembly asked Mission

Council to ensure that the Rules of Procedure include a way of dealing with this situation if it should ever happen again.

3.5.1 In 2005 it became necessary to introduce a special resolution to amend the procedure, so that nominations could be received from Synod Executives after the closing date. Mission Council considered a number of options and decided to recommend to General Assembly that the form of words, found in **Resolution 13**, should create a new paragraph 3.5 of the Rules of Procedure (requiring the existing paragraphs 3.5-3.12 to be renumbered).

4 Actions taken on behalf of General Assembly

4.1 Appointments

4.1.1 Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appointed:

- a) the Revd Rowena Francis to serve as Moderator of the Northern Synod from 1st January 2007 until 31st December 2013.
- b) Mr Stuart Dew to serve as Secretary for Church and Society from 10th October 2005 until 9th October 2007.

4.1.2 Mission Council also noted the appointments of

- a) the Revd Graham Jones as joint United Reformed/ Methodist Churches' Rural Officer.
- b) Mrs Linda Mead as Programme Co-ordinator for 'Commitment for Life'.

4.2 Resolutions on behalf of General Assembly

4.2.1 Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2006 at £19,788.

4.2.2. Mission Council authorised the response from the Ministries Committee to the Department of Trade and Industry's document 'Clergy working conditions – statement of good practice' on behalf of the United Reformed Church. It is intended that both the DTI statement and the Church's response will be published on the United Reformed Church's website.

4.2.3 Mission Council agreed to the transfer of Leaside United Reformed /Methodist Church from the Thames North synod to the Eastern synod on 1st September 2006, following the agreement of the two synods concerned.

5 Other Actions

5.1 Advice to Churches on Civil Partnerships

Following changes in the law concerning Civil Partnerships, requests have been received at Church House for advice and information about their consequences for the Church. Mission Council received

a paper written by several individuals, which included an additional contribution on behalf of the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee. Mission Council authorised the document to be made available as a resource for local churches. It will be available from the United Reformed Church's Book Room, and posted on the United Reformed Church's website.

5.2 Ministerial development and appraisal (see Appendix 2 and Resolution 16)

5.2.1 In 2003 Mission Council considered a report on leadership in the United Reformed Church. The report addressed the challenge of allowing space for personal leadership, with proper accountability, whilst also honouring the conciliar nature of decision-making in our tradition. One result of debating this report was a request to the Ministries Committee, in conjunction with the Training Committee, to suggest a development policy for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers. Mission Council asked for particular attention to be given to the further development of arrangements for continuing ministerial education and for appraisal.

5.2.2 In 2004 Assembly received the new arrangements for continuing ministerial education embodied in the Education for Ministry programme (EM2 and EM3). At the same meeting and in 2005, Assembly welcomed aspects of the *Equipping the Saints* report that emphasised the need to see the leadership of the local congregation as a collaborative task, stressing in particular the role of the Elders. Ministry was certainly not just about Ministers.

5.2.3 Against this background, Mission Council now wishes to encourage the Assembly to adopt the principles of a new scheme for ministerial review which can complement Education for Ministry and recognise the collaborative nature of leadership responsibilities in the local congregation. The principles would apply to both Ministers and CRCWs, although some details of the processes used would be different.

5.2.4 Attached as an Appendix to this report (**Appendix 2**) is a paper providing some background on the existing scheme and setting out a possible new scheme. Mission Council has welcomed this as valuable work in progress. The comments of Assembly on the details would be welcome, either in open debate or by contacting the Ministries office before the end of July. Given the key role Synods would play in supporting such a scheme, and the variations in operating the existing self-appraisal scheme between the Synods, Mission Council recommends that the Assembly asks for a consultation with the Synods before final proposals are brought to the Council or a timetable for implementation agreed.

5.3 Review of the Inter-faith Relations Committee: General Assembly in 2001 (Resolution 7) agreed that the Inter-Faith Relations Committee should be extended for a further five years until 2006, with a review at the beginning of the fifth year. In view of the 'Catch the Vision' review of the Church's governance structures, Mission Council agreed to defer the review of the Inter-Faith committee until proposals on governance are brought to General Assembly.

5.4 Mission Council received a paper on Charity Trusts prepared by the Provincial Legal and Trust Officers meeting (PLATO) (**Appendix 3**), which clarifies and alters advice given to the General Assembly in 2001 and 2004. This information (for synods, synod trust companies, districts/areas and local churches) is commended to General Assembly through **Resolution 15**.

6 Reports of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

6.1 Resource Sharing Task Group

6.1.1 Work has continued towards the goal of greater inter-synod resource sharing. This includes the sharing of information between synods on various topics: finance, book grants, car loans and recently the Consumer Credit Act.

6.1.2 Two other important issues under constant review are Ministry and Mission contributions and fund raising. The Group has looked at sources of funding and how external sources may be accessed by employing a professional fundraiser. Wessex synod is looking at the possibility of sharing 'legal expertise' with other synods geographically close; consideration is being given as to whether it is possible to run a pilot scheme for a period, to be followed by a review.

6.1.3 Smaller groupings of synods will meet in 2006 as in 2005. Future arrangements will depend on the outcome of a consultation to be held in the autumn.

6.1.4 All inter-synod resource sharing meetings are held in good spirit and clearly there is greater understanding of the various problems faced by different synods. There is still work to be done in seeking to harmonise synod policies on issues related to receipts from property sale and manse funds.

6.2 Ethical Investment Advisory Group

6.2.1 In October 2005 Mission Council noted the calls from partner churches in the United States and elsewhere for possible disinvestment from companies whose activities are seen to support the occupation of Palestine. It asked the EIAG for advice on options open to the United Reformed Church.

6.2.2 The EIAG presented a report to the March 2006 Mission Council. Noting that there was no evidence of URC investments in the particular American companies most under scrutiny, Mission Council decided not to add any company to those currently avoided under the Church's Ethical Investment guidelines.

6.2.3 Mission Council did ask that the United Reformed Church should express its support for the Presbyterian Church of the USA in its engagement with several major American companies active in Israel/Palestine. It also asked the EIAG to encourage close monitoring of the situation by the ecumenical British Church Investors Group and to provide some background briefing to Synods.

6.2.4 For the longer term, EIAG was asked to consider whether the United Reformed Church's guidelines could be extended to take more explicit account of the impact of a company's behaviour on, for example, human rights. EIAG will also discuss with the Synods better systems for monitoring the investments made by different United Reformed Church entities.

6.3 Section O Advisory Group

6.3.1 Ministerial Disciplinary Process

6.3.1.1 The Advisory Group continues to keep the Ministerial Disciplinary Process under review and brought to Assembly last year a series of suggested changes to Part II, which were embodied in Resolution 8. These changes were primarily designed to improve the efficiency of the Mandated Groups which investigate cases in the Disciplinary Process and present them before the Assembly Commission. Due to pressure of business, the Resolution did not come before Assembly and was referred back. The Group has made some significant modifications to the original proposals and now re-presents them to Assembly in **Resolution 7**.

6.3.1.2 Last year the Advisory Group also brought a proposal to replace the existing Part I of Section O with a reduced Part I (see Assembly Resolution 9 of 2005). Again, this was deferred and is re-presented this year with slight modification as **Resolution 8**.

6.3.1.3 The Advisory Group also brings a proposal to amend the Structure, which is now slightly out of line with the Section O Process as it has evolved. In particular, the Group wishes to make it clear that the Process begins with the calling in of the Mandated Group to carry out its initial enquiry and that it is the Mandated Group which carries out the required actions within the Process on behalf of the Council in whose name it is acting. This proposal appears at **Resolution 9**.

6.3.1.4 If Assembly Resolution 41 of 2005 to abolish District Councils is ratified this year, the changes needed to the Section O Process will be worked out once the new structures are known and approved.

6.3.2 Ministerial Incapacity Procedure

6.3.2.1 In the Report to last year's Assembly reference was made to a new procedure (to be known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) which would enable effective action to be taken in respect of those Ministers regarded as unfit to exercise ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons. The Section O Advisory Group was instructed to carry out this task and its brief was specifically to produce a procedure appropriate to deal with the situations mentioned above. This work has now been done.

6.3.2.2 It is important for Assembly to understand exactly what it is that the Church is seeking to achieve by the introduction of the new procedure. Its purpose is to achieve 'once and for all' closure in the most extreme and difficult situations and the task of the Review Commission in any Ministerial Incapacity case will be to decide whether the name of the minister should remain on the roll.

6.3.2.3 It is absolutely clear from the wording of the Procedure that it will only be invoked as a last resort, when the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee and others involved pastorally can do no more. We have to accept, with regret, that in certain instances – thankfully rare – pastoral care will not, of itself, restore peace and harmony and that, the longer a situation remains unresolved, the greater the damage to the Church – and, probably, to the minister as well. So, if APRC can do no more and has actually said so, the Church must find another way of achieving closure. In effect, the hope of resolving the matter through pastoral means will have already disappeared by the time a minister comes into the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

6.3.2.4 So then, this will not be another pastoral measure, but a formal procedure, because it concerns the question of whether a minister's status should be terminated against his/her will, and the minister's rights must be safeguarded in those circumstances.

6.3.2.5 Mission Council therefore brings two resolutions in order to introduce the new procedure. **Resolution 10** asks Assembly to approve Part I and, as this deals with the constitutional aspects, it will, if passed, be subject to the 'two year' rule. **Resolution 11** asks Assembly to note the proposed Part II, which contains the Rules of Procedure and the Advisory Group will be glad to receive comments on Part II (see **Appendix 1**) at any time up to the end of October. The intention will be to bring the complete procedure into operation at next year's Assembly.

6.3.2.6 The comparable Resolution last year to amend the Structure in order to introduce the new Procedure was Resolution 11. The present **Resolution 12** differs considerably because in the course of its further work on the new Procedure, the Advisory Group has come to the conclusion that the initiation of the Procedure should not be through the Councils of the Church, as with Section O. Rather, the new proposal is that the Synod Moderator or Deputy General Secretary, whichever of them believes that there might be reason for a Minister to be brought within the Procedure, should consult with the other of those two and with the Convener of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee. The initiation of the Incapacity Procedure would only follow if, having consulted together, those three persons, either unanimously or by a majority, believed that this was the right course to adopt. Once the Procedure has been commenced, the case would be dealt with entirely by the Review Commission. The Advisory Group considers this approach to be in line with the non-disciplinary nature of the new Procedure.

6.3.3 Training

During the year the Group has maintained a dialogue with the Synod Moderators and has continued with the work of providing training, particularly for mandated groups. Training days are being planned for mandated groups and for the Assembly Commission later this year.

6.3.4 Personalia

We are sorry that the Revd Alison Hall has reluctantly had to resign as Secretary of the Assembly Commission. We thank Alison for her diligent work while in office, and wish her well. The Revd Tony Burnham and Mr Hartley Oldham complete their terms of office as Convener and Secretary of the Advisory Group this year and the group would like to put on record its thanks to them both for their work during this past five years and for the experience and wisdom that their many years of service to the church have brought to the group. It is particularly grateful to Mr Oldham for agreeing to remain a member of the group for a little while longer in order to minimise any disruption caused by the change of convener and secretary. We are very happy that Revd Julian Macro and Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith have been appointed to these positions. We express our very grateful thanks to them and wish them well as they assume these important offices in the service of the Church.

6.4 **Grants and Loans Group**

6.4.1 The Grants and Loans Group (GLG) administers the Church Buildings Fund, which provides grants and loans to churches to assist with improvements/modifications to church buildings, and the Mission Project Fund, which provides grants for mission work. The Group has continued its policy of giving grants only to synods and churches with the greatest need.

6.4.2 For the year 2005 the budget allocation for grants from the Church Building Fund was approx £86,000. This is the expected income from dividends, deposit account interest and loan interest. It has again been used mainly for provision of facilities for the disabled. By the end of the year £54,500 had been spent with £33,000 granted but not yet spent. There is always a problem knowing exactly when the grants will be taken up as there are often delays in building work being carried out. If the grant is not taken up within 12 months an extension has to be applied for, but will normally be granted. A loan of £50,000 has also been given for urgent remedial work on a church.

6.4.3 The allocation for the Mission Project Fund was £120,000 of which £101,800 was spent, with outstanding grants of £11,000 not yet taken up.

6.4.4 The expected large drop in the applications for grants towards costs of facilities for the disabled has not occurred. Thus other projects have not been able to be considered within the 2005 budget. It is hoped that in 2006 other uses for this fund may be examined.

6.4.5 In 2005, ten applications were received of which nine were approved, but six were for extensions of existing projects. An annual report from all the mission projects is sought, and the Group is very encouraged by the initiative, determination and commitment of the people seeking to be 'church' in their communities.

6.4.6 The Grants and Loans Group believes that the monies it makes available from Central Funds provides a real benefit, both to local churches and communities, and that without it many projects would not get started. The hope is that if the projects are successful that they would eventually become self financing; thus, any requests for continuance of funding after the initial grant are always scrutinised very carefully. However it is becoming clear that some, especially inner-city, projects, despite their success, are going to find it very difficult to become self-financing. This poses a dilemma for the group: funds are always going to be limited; and if money is tied up in existing projects, however worthwhile, there will be less money available for new projects. The Group believes that one of its main priorities is to provide money to new mission projects as a seed corn to get them off the ground. However it would be sad to see some of the very successful inner city projects being reduced.

6.4.7 Projects for which funding has been allocated in 2005-2006:

- An ecumenical project to establish Town Centre chaplaincy in Bolton
- A church worker/planter in an ecumenical project in a new community in Devon
- A youth intern for work with young people in Bridgwater
- Continued support for three community projects in inner city Birmingham
- Continued support for inner city projects in Wolverhampton and Liverpool
- Continued support for the CONTRAST project in Nottingham, which provides education in inter-cultural theology to students of all ages and backgrounds.

6.5 Listed Buildings Advisory Group

6.5.1 One of the conditions of the Church being allowed by the government to operate its own control procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption Listed Buildings procedure is that there must be an appeal process available on the occasions when a local church may wish to appeal against the decision of a Synod Property Committee. Although the United Reformed Church has, as yet, had no appeals, it is considered prudent, in view of the technical nature of the evidence in cases involving Ecclesiastical Exemption and the need for site visits, to follow the Methodist Church's decision to put a procedure in place which is separate from the general appeals procedure of the Church.

6.5.2 The Listed Buildings Advisory Group produced an appeals procedure which was accepted by Mission Council, subject to some minor alterations. General Assembly is now asked (in **Resolution 14**) to agree to amend the Structure at Section B of the Manual and the Rules of Procedure at Section C to exclude appeals which should come under the Ecclesiastical Exemption procedure from the Church's general appeals system. If passed, the resolution will fall within the procedure for referral to synods and ratification at next year's Assembly.

6.5.3 Mission Council noted the retirement of Mr Tegid Peregrine as secretary to the Group, and expressed its appreciation for the years of careful and dedicated work which he had given in serving the Church in this capacity.

Mission Council Resolutions for General Assembly

Resolution 7

Amendments to Section O Part II (replacing Resolution 8 of 2005)

(Report paragraph 6.3.1.1)

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part II of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Paragraph A.6

After the words '**... Assembly Commission...**' insert '**... (or the General Secretary in the case of Appeals, save where Paragraph G.10.5 applies)**

Section B of Part II

Section B of Part II as shown in the Appendix to this resolution shall replace the existing Section B in its entirety.

Paragraphs C.3.1, C.3.2, C.4.1, E.12.2, E.12.3, G.4.2, G.4.3, G.5, G.10.4, G.10.5

In all these paragraphs, any reference to Paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 of Part I shall be replaced by a simple reference to Paragraph 7.1 of Part I.

Paragraphs E.4.1

At the end of the paragraph add the words '**... whereupon the Secretary shall forthwith provide copies thereof for the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission.**'

Paragraph E.7.4

At the end of the paragraph add the words '**... unless the Minister shall have lodged with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, within twenty-eight days of the passing of the sentence in the criminal case, written evidence that s/he has lodged an appeal against the decision of the criminal court, whether it be against the conviction itself or the sentence imposed.**'

Paragraph E.7.6

Add a new Paragraph E.7.6 as follows:

E.7.6 'If the Minister has given to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the written evidence of appeal in the criminal case referred to in Paragraph E.7.4, it shall be his/her responsibility to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of the outcome of his/her appeal in the criminal case as soon as s/he becomes aware of it and to supply to the said Secretary a duly certified court record or memorandum of the decision on the said appeal, whereupon the Section O Process shall be reactivated and the case brought to a hearing as soon as possible. Meanwhile the Minister shall respond promptly to any requests for information from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission as to the progress of the appeal in the criminal case. If the Minister fails to comply with the provisions of this Paragraph, the said Secretary may him/herself seek and obtain the required information as to the progress and outcome of the appeal in the criminal case.'

Paragraph E.8.5

Add a new Paragraph E.8.5 as follows:

E.8.5 'Any failure, unnecessary delay or obstruction on the part of the Minister in complying with the requirements of Part II, Paragraph E.7.6.'

Paragraph F.4.3

Add the following words at the end of the paragraph ‘... and the Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.’

Paragraph G.12.5

Add the following words at the end of the paragraph ‘... and, unless Paragraph G.13 applies, the Mandated Group shall thereupon comply with Paragraph H.4.’

Paragraph H.4

Add a new Paragraph H.4 as follows:

H.4 ‘Within one month of the conclusion of each case as provided in Part I, Paragraph 17, the Mandated Group shall prepare a written report of its conduct of the case and submit it to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, who shall, in order to preserve confidentiality, remove from the report the name and address of the minister, the name of the minister’s church(es) and any other information which might lead to the identification of any individuals involved in the case. The purpose of the report shall be to help those charged with the ongoing review of the operation of the Section O Process to monitor the performance of Mandated Groups and thus to ensure that all appropriate training and assistance is provided and the highest standards are maintained.’

APPENDIX

B. APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF MANDATED GROUPS AND INITIATION OF SECTION O

B.1 B.1.1 To enable it properly to carry out its Function 2(3)(A)(xviii) of the Structure, every District Council shall act solely through a group of three persons (“the Mandated Group”) which shall have mandated authority to act in the name of the District Council in every matter requiring consideration under that Function.

B.1.2 The Mandated Group called in to deal with any particular case under Paragraph B.6.1, Paragraph B.9.2 or Paragraph B.9.3 has no pastoral role to fulfil and its precise functions are described in Paragraphs B.7 and B.8.

B.2 In cases arising under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council), the Mandated Groups charged with the responsibilities ascribed to them under these Rules of Procedure shall be constituted in the following manner:

B.2.1 Two members thereof shall be appointed by each District Council on a standing basis from a Synod Panel itself appointed and maintained by each Synod, there normally being on such panel at least one, and preferably two, persons from each District within the Synod. One such member shall, wherever possible, be appointed to the Mandated Group from the District from which the case emanates.

B.2.2 The Synod Moderator or other person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint the remaining person to the Mandated Group from the Joint Panel in accordance with the procedure set out in Paragraph B.3.

B.3 B.3.1 There shall be a standing panel (‘the Joint Panel’) consisting of a maximum of thirteen persons, of whom one shall be nominated by each Synod and selected preferably on account of some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background, which would equip them for assuming a role as part of a Mandated Group. The list of those currently on the Joint Panel shall be held by the Synod Moderators.

B.3.2 In cases arising either under Paragraph B.6.1 (District Council) or Paragraph B.9.2 (Synod) (where one member of the Joint Panel will be required to serve) the Synod Moderator or other person responsible for calling in the Mandated Group shall appoint the remaining member of the Mandated Group for that case from the Joint Panel.

B.3.3 In cases arising under Paragraph B.9.3 (General Assembly or Mission Council on its behalf) the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, shall constitute the Mandated Group by the appointment of all three persons, each of whom shall be selected

from either the Joint Panel or any of the Synod Panels (at least one from the Joint Panel and at least one from the Synod Panels).

B.4 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is a member of a local church connected with a case or has any pastoral or personal involvement in a case or is the subject of a disciplinary complaint, that person shall not form part of the Mandated Group for that case.

B.5 B.5.1 If any member of a Synod Panel or the Joint Panel is disqualified under Paragraph B.4 or is for any other reason unable to act in a particular case, the Moderator of the Synod shall appoint another member from the same panel to serve as a member of the Mandated Group for that case. The Mandated Group for all matters relating to that case shall be its remaining member(s) together with the person(s) appointed under this Paragraph. If only one such person is disqualified or otherwise unable to act, then, until any such further appointment is made, the mandate shall continue to be held by the remaining two members of the Mandated Group. If two members of the Mandated Group are disqualified or otherwise unable to act, there is no mandate for the remaining member to act alone.

B.5.2 No person shall serve as a member of or as the spokesperson for a Mandated Group in connection with any case where s/he would fall within any of the restrictions contained in Paragraph 7.1 of Part I.

B.6 B.6.1 B.6.1.1 If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or (if for any reason s/he should be unavailable or unable to act) the President of the District Council in consultation with such officers of the District Council as s/he considers appropriate believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister s/he shall forthwith in the name and on the authority of the District Council call in its Mandated Group, at the same time informing the Minister that this step has been taken. The Section O Process in the case of any Minister shall commence with the calling in of the Mandated Group.

B.6.1.2: In calling in the Mandated Group, the person so doing:

(i) shall notify those two persons who, as members of the Synod Panel, will form part of the Mandated Group by virtue of Paragraph B.2.1 that they are called upon so to participate, advising them of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point and

(ii) shall notify one person from the Joint Panel of his/her intention to invite that person to serve as a member of the Mandated Group, advising him/her of the identity of the minister but giving no further information at that point.

B.6.1.3 In the event that any of the proposed appointees on to the Mandated Group is/are unable or unwilling to act, the process(es) of appointment from a Synod Panel and/or the Joint Panel shall continue until a Mandated Group consisting of three members has been duly constituted.

B.6.1.4 As soon as the above steps have all been taken, the person calling in the Mandated Group shall issue to each member thereof a written statement setting out the reasons for the calling in of the Mandated Group, the names of possible informants and any other sources of information at that time available. To avoid prejudice, that statement must not contain any assumptions or inferences or any personal reflections or opinions.

B.6.2 In cases of extreme emergency, the Moderator or other person entitled to call in the Mandated Group under the Rules of Procedure may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing and only so long as s/he forthwith calls in the Mandated Group under Paragraph B.6.1, suspend the Minister with immediate effect either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister and written notice shall also be given to the Secretary of the District Council (see also Paragraphs B.8.2 and B11).

B.6.3 Suspension imposed under Paragraph B.6.2 shall continue during the Mandated Group's initial enquiry period referred to in Paragraph B.7.1. If at the end of that period the Mandated Group serves a Referral Notice on the Minister, it must also serve on him/her a Notice confirming the continuance of the suspension during the Commission Stage.

B.6.4 In the event that the initial enquiry period terminates without the issue of a Referral Notice, the Minister's suspension under Paragraph B.6.2 shall automatically cease on the issue of a Notice of Non-

Continuance under Paragraph B.7.2, whereupon the person imposing the suspension under Paragraph B.6.2 shall give written notice of the cessation of the suspension both to the Minister and to the Secretary of the District Council.

B.7 The functions of the Mandated Group called in by the person authorised for that purpose under Paragraph B.6 in any particular case are described in this Paragraph B.7 (as regards the initial enquiry) and in Paragraph B.8 (as regards its role during the Commission Stage):

B.7.1 The Mandated Group shall carry out its own initial enquiry with all due expedition in consultation (where practical and appropriate) with the person calling in the Mandated Group for the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the Commission Stage should be initiated. Having done so, it must bring its initial enquiry to a conclusion in accordance with Paragraphs B.7.2 and B.7.3.

B.7.2 If the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry not to proceed any further with the matter, it shall serve on the Moderator of the Synod or other person calling it in a notice to that effect (a Notice of Non-Continuance), which shall have the effect of discharging from further involvement in that case the Mandated Group itself (subject to due compliance by it of Paragraph H.4) and the Council in whose name it conducted the initial enquiry.

B.7.3 On receipt of a Notice of Non-Continuance the person calling in the Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council that the Mandated Group is not proceeding any further and if the person calling in the Mandated Group has already suspended the Minister under Paragraph B.6.2 s/he must notify the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council of the immediate cessation of the suspension.

B.7.4 If on the other hand the Mandated Group decides as a result of its initial enquiry to initiate the Commission Stage, it shall follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.8.1 and B.8.3 whereupon the Commission Stage will be initiated.

B.8 B.8.1 Whenever the Mandated Group, having become aware of any information concerning a Minister under the oversight of the District Council which might require disciplinary investigation, concludes unanimously or by a majority that this is indeed so, it shall forthwith in the name of the District Council suspend the Minister (unless s/he has already been suspended under Paragraph B.6.2, in which case the Mandated Group shall serve on the Minister a notice that his/her suspension shall continue during the Commission Stage) and initiate the Commission Stage in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I. Suspension under this Paragraph shall take effect when the Minister receives Notice thereof from the Mandated Group either orally or in writing. Suspension imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing (as to the contents of the written notice of suspension, see also Paragraph B.11).

B.8.2 Suspension, whether imposed under Paragraph B.6.2 or B.8.1, does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of any allegations made concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister's stipend nor the Minister's pension arrangements under the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Scheme.

B.8.3 The Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council in writing of the issue of the Referral Notice and the Notice of Suspension.

B.8.4 During the Commission Stage it is the responsibility of the Mandated Group to conduct the Investigation in accordance with Section D of these Rules of Procedure, to comply with all procedural matters under the Rules of Procedure and to present the case against the Minister at the Hearing under Section E and at the Hearing of any Appeal under Section G.

B.9 B.9.1 To enable them to carry out their respective functions under Paragraphs 2(4)(A)(xiv) and 2(5)(A)(xxiii) of the Structure, every Synod and the General Assembly shall act solely through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act in the name of the Synod or the General Assembly as the case may be in every matter requiring consideration under those respective functions.

B.9.2 In connection with any such steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by a Synod, if at any time the Moderator of the Synod, in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers

appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister in membership or under the authority of that Synod, s/he shall forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint two persons from the Synod Panel for that Synod and one person from the Joint Panel as provided in Paragraphs B.2 and B.3 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1.2/4. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6.1.

B.9.3 In connection with any steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf), if at any time the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of the General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister s/he shall forthwith in the name of General Assembly appoint three persons drawn from the Synod Panels and the Joint Panel as provided in Paragraph B.3.3 to constitute the Mandated Group for the particular case and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken and follow the procedure laid down in Paragraphs B.6.1.2/4. The Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6.1.

B.9.4 The preceding paragraphs of this Section B of Part II shall apply to cases falling within Paragraph B.9 with the necessary changes and in particular the following shall apply:

In Paragraph B.5.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly, the words "Deputy General Secretary" shall replace the words "Moderator of the Synod".

In Paragraph B.7.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly the reference therein to the Moderator of the Synod shall be replaced by a reference to the Deputy General Secretary.

In Paragraph B.8.1 the words "the Minister concerned" shall replace the words "a Minister under the oversight of the District Council", and the second reference to "the District Council" shall be replaced by a reference to "the Synod" or "General Assembly" as the case may be.

B.9.5 On any occasion throughout the Section O Process where notices and papers are required to be sent to the Moderator of the Synod and/or the Secretary of the District Council, then in a case proceeding under Paragraph B.9.3 they shall also be sent to the Deputy General Secretary.

B.10 To initiate the Commission Stage pursuant to Paragraph B.8.1, the Mandated Group in the name of the Council shall take the following steps:

B.10.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice which should clearly state the reasons why the Mandated Group believes that a breach of Ministerial Discipline has or may have occurred and which should also include where possible a summary of the supporting information on the basis of which the Mandated Group has issued the Referral Notice and

B.10.2 Serve on the Minister notice of the issue of the Referral Notice and of his/her suspension (or of the continuance of his/her suspension if Paragraph B.6.2 applies).

B.11 The Notice of Suspension, whether issued under Paragraph B.6.2 or Paragraph B.8.1, shall inform the Minister that, in accordance with these Rules of Procedure, any conduct on his/her part which breaches or contravenes Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I.

B.12 Once a Referral Notice has been issued by a Mandated Group in any case, no further Referral Notice shall in any circumstances be issued in respect of the subject matter of that referral, save only where the Minister has been the subject of an earlier disciplinary case in which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission issued a written warning under the provisions of Paragraph 10.2.1 or Paragraph 14.3 of Part I.

Resolution 8**Replacement of existing Section O, Part I
(replacing Resolution 9 of 2005)**

(Report paragraph 6.3.1.2)

General Assembly agrees to replace the whole of the existing Part I of Section O with the following:**SECTION O****Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline****PART I – Substantive Provisions**(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi)
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

1. 1.1 Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Section A of Part II) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the questions as to whether a Minister has committed a breach of discipline and, if the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission should so decide, whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her. The Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may also decide to make a recommendation/referral in accordance with provisions of Paragraph 1.3. Under the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (known as “the Section O Process”) the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission is also able to make recommendations (other than recommendations under Paragraph 1.3) and offer guidance but only within the limits prescribed in Section F of Part II.

1.2 Subject only to Paragraph 1.3, once the disciplinary case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Section O Process, it shall be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.

1.3.1 If it considers that the situation concerning a Minister involved in a case within the Section O Process relates to or involves a perceived incapacity on the part of that Minister which might render him/her unfit to exercise, or to continue to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission may make an Order in accordance with the Rules of Procedure referring the case back to the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary or other person who called in the Mandated Group with a recommendation that the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (as defined in Section A of Part II) be initiated in respect of the Minister concerned, whereupon the Section O Process shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of such recommendation.

1.3.2 The Rules of Procedure contained in Part II shall provide for the service of the above Order (and any accompanying documentation if appropriate) on the Synod Moderator/Deputy General Secretary or other person who called in the Mandated Group and under those Rules s/he shall be required, within the time therein specified, to notify the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in writing whether the recommendation has been accepted or rejected.

1.3.3 If the recommendation has been accepted, the notification shall specify the date on which the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure was initiated, whereupon the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall make a further Order declaring the Ministerial Disciplinary case to be concluded, subject only to the continuation of the Minister’s suspension until the issue of his/her suspension has been resolved in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

1.3.4 If the recommendation has been rejected, the notification shall state the reasons and the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall forthwith reactivate the Ministerial Disciplinary case.

2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Section O Process shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure

to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of the Section O Process, save only that, so long as it remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with this Section O Process shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church.

3. 3.1 Subject only to Paragraph 3.2, the Section O Process shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

3.2 The Section O Process may be initiated in respect of a Minister as a result of a recommendation issuing from the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, in which case there may be a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the Ministerial Disciplinary case and the conclusion of the case within the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure.

4. 4.1 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

4.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination.

5. 5.1 A Minister may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers under Section F of Part II or to issue a written warning under that Section by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure at Part II, stating the ground/s of such appeal.

5.2 The Mandated Group of the Council which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may in the name of that Council appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal. In any case where no written warning is attached to the decision not to delete, the Notice may state, if the Mandated Group so desires, that the appeal is limited to the question of the issue of a written warning to the Minister.

5.3 No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission.

6. Procedural matters shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure as contained in Part II.

7 7.1 Save only as provided in Paragraph 7.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

7.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

7.3 All such changes to the Section O Process as are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 7.2 shall be reported to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

Resolution 9**Amendments to the Structure in relation to the Section O Process**

(Report paragraph 6.3.1.3)

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 2(3)(A)(xviii)

Replace the existing 2(3)(A)(xviii) with the following:

'Where the District Council, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her Ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).'

Paragraph 2(3)(B)

Replace the existing 2(3)(B) with the following:

'Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister, whether by the District Council or by one of the other Councils of the Church, the District Council shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.'

Paragraph 2(3)(C)

Replace the existing 2(3)(C) with the following:

'No appeal shall lie against the decision by a District Council to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any Minister under Function (xviii) above.'

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(xiv)

Replace the existing 2(4)(A)(xiv) with the following:

'In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate district council and where the Synod, acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below, considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).'

Paragraph 2(4)(B)

Replace the existing 2(4)(B) with the following:

'Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister with the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process, whether by the Synod or by one of the other Councils of the church, the synod shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.'

Paragraph 2(4)(C)

Replace the existing 2(4)(C) with the following:

‘No appeal shall lie against the decision by a Synod to initiate the Disciplinary Process in respect of any Minister under Function (xiv) above.’

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxii) with the following:

‘To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process for the hearing of appeals under that Process.’

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiii)

Replace the existing 2(5)(A)(xxiii) with the following:

‘In the absence of any reference into the Disciplinary Process by the appropriate District Council or Synod (the case of any Minister who is a Moderator of Synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where the General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) acting through its Mandated Group as defined in the Disciplinary Process referred to below considers that a Minister is or may not be exercising his/her Ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to the Commission Stage of the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process (for the avoidance of doubt the calling in of the Mandated Group under that Process in order to fulfil its responsibilities marking the commencement of the Disciplinary Process).’

Paragraph 2(5)(B)

Replace the existing unnumbered paragraph immediately following the functions of General Assembly with the following paragraph to be numbered 2(5)(B):

‘Once the Disciplinary Process has commenced in the case of any Minister, whether by the General Assembly or by one of the other Councils of the Church, the General Assembly shall not exercise its functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the Process has been duly concluded.’

Resolution 10

Introduction of procedure for dealing with cases of Ministerial Incapacity and approval of Part I (replacing Resolution No. 10 of 2005)

(Report paragraph 6.3.2.5)

General Assembly resolves to introduce a procedure (to be known as the “Ministerial Incapacity Procedure”) designed for dealing with cases involving Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being incapable of exercising ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons and approves the Introduction and Part I of that Procedure in the form set out below:

SECTION P

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH CASES OF MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY

*The Introduction which follows does not form part
of the text of the Incapacity Procedure*

INTRODUCTION

The Procedure which follows allows the Church to deal with the cases of ministers of Word and Sacrament who are regarded as being incapable of exercising ministry on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons.

It is not a disciplinary process and will only be invoked in situations where the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee, if that committee has been involved, has said that it can do no more.

Whilst considered as a last resort, the Incapacity Procedure will nevertheless enable the Church to take decisive action in cases where the continued exercise of ministry would undermine the promises made by the minister at ordination to lead a holy life and to preserve the unity and peace of the Church.

PART I – subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xi) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

Note: The words and expressions marked * (the first time they appear) are defined in Part II of this Procedure.

1. Under the provisions of this Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (herein called “the Incapacity Procedure*”) a Review Commission* and, in the event of an appeal, an Appeals Review Commission* shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of considering and deciding upon cases properly referred to it in which Ministers*, whilst not perceived to have committed any breach of ministerial discipline, are nevertheless regarded as being incapable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry on account of medical, psychological or other or similar or related reasons.
2. The Review Commission, the Standing Panel*, the Appeals Review Commission, and all aspects of the Incapacity Procedure shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure* to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Incapacity Procedure, save only that, as long as that Procedure remains in force, the decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) and any orders made in accordance with the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding on the Minister and on all the councils of the Church*.
3. Subject only to Section H of Part II, when the case of any Minister is being dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure, it must be conducted and concluded entirely in accordance with that procedure and not through any other procedure or process of the Church.
4. The Incapacity Procedure shall not be initiated in respect of any Minister if his/her case is currently being dealt with under the Disciplinary Process, save only where the Incapacity Procedure is initiated as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, giving rise to a short transitional overlap between the commencement of the case within the Incapacity Procedure and the conclusion of the Disciplinary Process in relation to that Minister.
5. Although the operation of the Incapacity Procedure is not based upon the conscious breach by the Minister of the promises made at ordination, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission shall, in considering the matter and reaching its decision, in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union* and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.

6. Save only as provided in Paragraph 7, this Part I of the Incapacity Procedure is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

7. Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by a single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to any part of the Incapacity Procedure as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to the Church, required to bring that procedure into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law and any such changes as are made under this Paragraph shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

Resolution 11

Taking note of Part II of the proposed Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (also replacing Resolution 10 of 2005)

(Report paragraph 6.3.2.5)

General Assembly resolves to take note of Part II of the proposed Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Resolution 10 and requests Mission Council to bring this to General Assembly in 2007 for decision in the form attached (see Appendix 1, pp 164-177), subject to such amendments as may be recommended by Mission Council.

Resolution 12

Amendments to the Structure to introduce the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure (replacing Resolution 11 of 2005)

(Report paragraph 6.3.2.6)

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph []

The following to be introduced as a new Paragraph of the Structure to be numbered []

[].1 The Procedure contained in this Paragraph [] of the Structure (known as the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure) shall apply where those responsible for initiating it in respect of any particular Minister consider that s/he is or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union and perceive the issue as relating to the incapacity of the Minister on account of medical, psychological or other similar or related reasons.

[].2 No right of appeal shall lie against the decision taken in accordance with Paragraph [].1 above to initiate the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure in respect of any Minister.

[].3 The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding.

[].4 As soon as any Minister becomes the subject of a case under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure, none of the Councils of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that Minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this paragraph.

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)

Replace the words **‘the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xv) below’** with the words **‘the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xiv) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.’**

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xi)

Add the words **‘... and Part I of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.’**

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xviii)

Replace the words **‘the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below’** with the words **‘the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below or the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure referred to in Paragraph [] of the Structure.’**

Paragraphs 2(5)(A)(xxiv) and (xxv)

Add new Paragraphs 2(5)(A) (xxiv) and (xxv) as follows:

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiv)

‘To make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Standing Panel and to any administrative office under the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Procedure (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Procedure are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding).’

Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxv)

‘To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Review Commission in accordance with the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure for the hearing of appeals under that Procedure.’

Renumber the existing Paragraph 2(5)(A)(xxiv) as (xxvi)

Identify the Paragraph immediately after the General Assembly Functions as 2(5)(B)

Section C – Rules of Procedure on Appeals

Replace the existing Paragraph 8.11 with the following: **‘The provisions of this Section “Rules of Procedure on Appeals” shall not apply to cases which are being determined within the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure or the Church’s Control Procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations for the time being in force.’**

Resolution 13**Adjustment to the process for submitting nominations for the Moderator of General Assembly**

(Report paragraph 3.5.1)

General Assembly authorises that the following words be inserted in the Rules of procedure to create a new paragraph 3.5 (the existing paragraphs 3.5-3.12 being renumbered 3.6-3.13)

‘if after 31st March or after the period for withdrawal there shall be no nominations the General Secretary shall forthwith notify the clerks of the synods and invite them to request nominations from the executive committees or equivalent of their synods. Such nominations, accompanied in each case by a note of the consent of the person nominated and a brief biography, must be in the hands of the General Secretary by 15th May.’

Resolution 14**To amend the Structure as regards an Appeals Procedure covering Listed Buildings**

(Report paragraph 6.5.2)

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure and the Rules of Procedure of the United Reformed Church:

STRUCTURE – paragraph 5 – Appeals

Paragraph 5(2)

In the opening sentence, after **'outside paragraph 5(1)'** add **'or paragraph 5(3)'**

Paragraph 5(3)

Add a new paragraph 5(3) as follows

'Applications for consent to carry out works to buildings coming within the Church's Control Procedure under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations for the time being in force and appeals from decisions made thereunder shall be dealt with in accordance with that procedure and not under paragraph 5(2) above'.

Resolution 15**Charity Trusts**

(see **Appendix 3**, page 182)
(Report paragraph 5.4)

General Assembly notes the clarification of and alterations to the advice concerning Charity Trusts given to the General Assembly in 2001 and 2004 and asks synods, synod trust companies, district councils/area meetings and local churches to ensure that all are aware of their responsibilities

Resolution 16**Ministerial development**(Report paragraph 5.2 and **Appendix 2**, page 178)

General Assembly:

- a) **agrees in principle to replace the existing scheme for ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal with a more comprehensive review scheme which would:**
 - i) **eventually include all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers;**
 - ii) **operate biennially;**
 - iii) **be based around an agreed role description for the Minister;**
 - iv) **retain the confidential accompanied self-appraisal discussion for the Minister;**
 - v) **include open discussions involving both the Minister and the pastorate or post;**
 - vi) **would become, from a date to be agreed, a standard part of the Terms of Settlement when a Minister starts in a new pastorate or post;**
- b) **asks the Ministries Committee to prepare a detailed scheme, to consult the Synods and to report back to Mission Council; and**
- c) **authorises Mission Council to implement a scheme.**

Committees

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

Church and Society

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

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Martin Camroux*

Secretary: *Stuart Dew*

Administrator: *Wendy Cooper*

Geoffrey Duncan, Melanie Frew (convenor, Commitment for Life), Simon Loveitt (convenor elect, Church and Society), Revd Tjarda Murray, Revd Alan Paterson (co-opted member), Revd Dr David Pickering, Emma Pugh, Revd Margaret Tait.

Attending by invitation: *Revd Delia Bond, (Health and Healing network) Graham Handscomb (Free Church Education committee).*

Commitment for Life Sub-committee

Convener: *Melanie Frew*

Programme Co-ordinator: *Linda Mead*

Programme Assistant: *Alison Blick*

John Griffith, Charles Jolly, Julie Kirby, Anne Parker, (Commitment for Life advocates) Simon Loveitt (Church and Society), Nic Pursey (World Development Movement), Cordelia Moyse (Christian Aid).

1 Profile

1.1 The arrival, in October, of a new secretary, after an eight month interregnum, offered an opportunity to raise the profile of Church and Society, both nationally and locally. The latter is the more challenging task. In some synods and districts there are well-informed and energetic committees and advocates, who believe passionately (as we do!) that Church and Society should be at the very heart of church life, while in others ... we are still trying to locate these people. It is a high priority of Church and Society to encourage, resource, visit and work with local enthusiasts, to enable people in local churches to explore the relevance of their faith to the issues facing society today.

1.2 The Church and Society pages on the United Reformed Church website have been re-written and illustrated and are now regularly updated. Features include a calendar of Sundays on which churches can focus upon particular issues, with links to worship and background material. The Church and Society Hotline, published monthly, is also available on the website, as well as by electronic and surface mail. In February, the fiftieth edition of Hotline was produced.

1.3 Several news releases, put out through the Church's media office, received press and radio coverage. One welcomed a decision by the Home Office to drop provisions from proposed anti-terrorist legislation,

which would have allowed the police to apply for places of worship to be closed, if they felt that 'extremist behaviour' was taking place on the premises. In a submission on the proposal, prepared jointly by Church and Society and Inter-Faith Relations, the Church had said it was particularly sensitive to any suggestion that freedom to worship might be curtailed, because of the history of persecution of its predecessor denominations. A second news release said the Church understood the offence caused to Muslims by publication of cartoons seen as showing disrespect to the Prophet Muhammad. It supported the right of Muslims to mount peaceful protest to make clear their hurt, but condemned the use of violence, threats of violence and civil unrest. Local churches were encouraged to show solidarity with Muslims, building on the good relationships already established in many areas.

1.4 The visit to the main party political conferences by a Free Church delegation (United Reformed, Baptist, Methodist, Quaker and Salvation Army) is being re-instated this year, after a lapse in 2005. The aim of these visits is to enable church leaders to meet parliamentarians and to meet members of the Christian groups associated with the parties. This year, it is hoped that the churches will also host fringe meetings. The Moderator of General Assembly, a past Moderator, and a Synod Moderator, will each attend one of the conferences, together with the secretary for Church and Society.

2 Public Issues team

2.1 After earlier exploratory conversations, Church and Society entered into detailed discussions with Methodist and Baptist representatives in November 2005, regarding the possibility of setting up a Public Issues team, that would serve the three churches, and any others who decided to commit to it. A free-standing agency, owned and managed by the participating churches, was identified as an eventual goal, however, a number of obstacles prevent this being achieved easily. A model has therefore been produced that would enable the benefits of increased joint working to be realised quickly, with the bigger vision remaining on the agenda for the future. The team would not represent *itself* in a wider context, but would facilitate the response of the contributing traditions. Each Church would retain the task of communicating the team's work and servicing denominational structures.

2.2 It is envisaged, at the time of writing, that the Church and Society (or equivalent) department of each participating church would commit a proportion of its staff and/or financial resources, to a team that would provide a public issues service for the churches. Levels of commitment are still to be agreed, but the United Reformed Church might contribute between 50 and 60% of the time of both its Church and Society secretary and administrator.

2.3 Central to the proposal would be the appointment of a team leader (or co-ordinator). Regular team meetings would have an important function in building a common sense of purpose, and identifying and allocating upcoming work. The work of the team would be overseen by a management group consisting of a representative of each of the participating churches. For the United Reformed Church this would be the convener of the Church and Society committee.

2.4 It is important to note that this is not a way of reducing the (already small!) Church and Society budget, rather of the Church getting better value for what it spends. Benefits would include:

- Advancing ecumenical working whilst retaining denominational identity
- Increasing opportunities for churches to speak with one voice, when appropriate
- Significant reduction in duplication. One member of the team could research and produce a document on a subject. The resource produced could be issued jointly, or could be adapted by the churches to meet their particular needs, or to include a denominational emphasis. The single team member would be the identified point of contact and would be available to brief the churches
- Team members would have more opportunity to gain expertise on particular subjects rather than trying to cover an increasingly wide brief.

2.5 The Church and Society committee gave unanimous backing to the outline proposal at its meeting on 3-4 February 2006. If a more detailed plan is approved by the three denominations, the team could become operational later this year, subject to funding. The United Reformed Church would have the opportunity to review its contribution in October 2007, when the contract of the current secretary for Church and Society comes to an end.

3 Other ecumenical initiatives

3.1 **Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation.** In 2003, General Assembly asked Church and Society to prepare a report on the ethics of war for the 21st century and to work ecumenically in this task. In 2004, the Methodist Council approved a joint collaboration. A working group drew together people with diverse backgrounds – including seasoned peace activists, a military chaplain, a minister who formerly saw service on nuclear submarines, and academic theologians. The intention was to provide a study that stimulates reflection within and beyond the churches, and an ethical analysis to help support the judgement of church leaders in complex and uncertain situations, where British military intervention is proposed. The resulting document has a strong emphasis on peacemaking, thus the change of title from the original *Ethics of War* to *Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation*. It has been published separately from the Book of Reports, but the working group would like it to be seen as part of the Assembly Report. It is hoped that some kind of guide will be produced, to encourage study.

3.2 A **United Reformed and Methodist Environmental Network** has now been launched, as one way of progressing the environmental policy, approved by General Assembly in 2004. One of the network's principal aims will be to assist local churches to respond to environmental concerns in their life and mission. Co-ordinator is Gwen Jennings, whose background is in the United Reformed Church, and who is a technical advisor on waste issues for the Environment Agency. A newsletter is being launched; the first edition should be available at Assembly. It will, initially, be distributed with the Church and Society Hotline, as well as through other outlets. A reference group drawn from both churches will support and oversee the work.

3.3 The **CTBI Environmental Issues Network has adopted, in partnership with the Christian Ecology Link, the Operation Noah Climate Change Campaign**, which makes a significant Christian contribution to the Stop Climate Chaos coalition. David Pickering and George Morton represent Church and Society on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) network. Operation Noah invites individuals to sign the Operation Noah climate covenant, cut carbon emissions, and spread the word. Another environmental project which comes under

the CTBI umbrella is **Eco-Congregation**, which helps churches to consider environmental issues from a Christian perspective and to respond with spiritual, practical and community-orientated steps. While referring to these different Christian contributions to the environmental movement, **A Rocha** should be mentioned. It is an international Christian conservation organisation and produces worship material for **Environment Sunday**, the Sunday nearest to World Environment Day, which is 5 June. The United Reformed Church policy encourages churches and individuals to engage with all or any of these initiatives.

3.4 **Environmental Exchange.** Plans are advancing (brokered by International Relations and supported by Church and Society) for an exchange visit with the Protestant Church of the Kiribati islands, in the Pacific Ocean. Kiribati has a population of fewer than 100,000; the one thousand islands are mostly less than three metres above sea level and are under serious threat as climate change causes sea levels to rise. A group from Kiribati will come to Britain in October this year, possibly including a member of the Kiribati government, and will visit several synods. It will be an opportunity to bring alive the environmental policy, and to demonstrate that our environmentally unfriendly lifestyle has very real and serious consequences for our Christian sisters and brothers on the other side of the world. A United Reformed Church group will visit Kiribati in 2007, marking the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the islands (See 8.4).

3.5 Twenty years after the publication of *Faith in the City* the Church of England has convened another Commission on Urban Life and Faith. The United Reformed Church has been represented on it by the Revd Graham Cook. The commission's report *Faithful Cities – a call for celebration, vision and justice* will have been published shortly before General Assembly.

4 Other international activities

4.1 **CTBI International Affairs Liaison Group.** The last meeting of the group within the former CTBI framework was held in December. The group was handicapped in knowing how to proceed because of the uncertainty regarding new CTBI working arrangements.

4.2 **Zimbabwe.** The United Reformed Church and its partners are still mired in frustrated concern as to how to respond to the situation. Unusually, the report of the most recent visit to Zimbabwe by the World Council of Churches, in September 2005, uses outspoken language, recognising how bad the situation is – and how little prospect there is of the churches being able to do anything to change it. The United Reformed Church maintains contact with partners in Zimbabwe – the Uniting Presbyterian Church, the United Congregational Church and Commitment for Life partners (See 8.2).

5 Ethical and Moral Issues

5.1 Church and Society plays an active role in the Church's **Ethical Investment Advisory Group** (see report from Mission Council). Issues discussed include Israel/Palestine: Progressive Engagement and Investment Options (a resolution to Mission Council was supported by Church and Society) and the Church's stance on boycotting Nestlé products.

5.2 **Nestlé.** The decision by the Methodist Church, in November 2005, to allow its investment agency to invest in Nestlé, prompted Church and Society and Commitment for Life to consider whether any change should be proposed to the resolution of General Assembly in 1992, which encouraged synods, districts and local churches to boycott the purchase of Nestlé products, because of the way in which Nestlé marketed baby milk substitutes in poorer countries, discouraging breast feeding. The view of the Church and Society committee is that the Church should continue to recommend a boycott of Nestlé products; however, the committee endorses the possibility of a selective purchase of shares in companies to enable campaigning from within (See 8.6).

5.3 **Euthanasia and Assisted Dying.** Church and Society hopes to initiate a debate on euthanasia and assisted dying over the next twelve months. A Bill to allow assisted suicide was introduced in Parliament and was due to receive a second reading in May this year. Although it may fail through lack of parliamentary time, there is now some momentum for a change to legislation, with churches which oppose it being portrayed as 'party poopers'. No one can remember when the United Reformed Church last considered the issue. Although a debate would probably reveal a range of opinions, it is a debate which Church and Society believes the Church should have.

5.4 **Human Trafficking.** As this report was being drafted, Church and Society was planning to respond to a Home Office consultation on Human Trafficking. Victims – who are often young people, brought into Britain for the purpose of sexual exploitation – are currently subject to asylum law. The consultation document suggests that they could be given temporary leave to remain in Britain, and offered some support, while they consider whether to assist with bringing a prosecution against those who trafficked them. It is ironic that the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade is being celebrated in 2007 by 'Set All Free', a project to which Church and Society, Commitment for Life, Racial Justice and Life and Witness will all contribute. The campaign to abolish slavery was one in which Christians led the way – yet often modern day victims of human trafficking are effectively held as slaves.

5.5 **Civil Partnerships.** The Civil Partnership Act 2004, which came into law on 5 December 2005, enables same-sex couples to obtain legal recognition

of their relationship by signing a civil partnership document in the presence of a registrar; Churches are being approached to hold services of blessing for civil partnerships. In the United Reformed Church the decision whether or not to offer such a service lies with the Local Church. The secretary for Church and Society contributed to a paper for Mission Council jointly prepared with Doctrine Prayer and Worship, and the Clerk of General Assembly, containing advice for local churches.

6 Other aspects of Church and Society work

6.1 The Revd Delia Bond, co-ordinator of the **Health and Healing network**, and United Reformed Church representative (with Revd Deborah McVey) on Churches Together for Healing, reports through Church and Society. Delia Bond attended the Church and Society meeting in February to explain the breadth of what is encompassed by Health and Healing – a Bible-based ministry which represents the churches' response to Jesus's commission to preach the gospel and heal the sick. In practical terms this may embrace pastoral care, prayer, healing services, administering the sacraments, healing of memories, deliverance, forgiveness and reconciliation, preparing people for death, and being involved with vulnerable and needy groups in the community. Church and Society will help publicise a directory and guidelines for the healing ministry, which Churches Together for Healing is producing.

6.2 **HIV/AIDS Working Group.** 'I have AIDS – please hug me – I can't make you sick'; words on a poster produced by a child with AIDS from London. Fear, stigma and discrimination remain but there are signs of hope, not least in the support and care offered by the many projects and programmes working with AIDS sufferers and their families. The HIV/AIDS Working Group is seeking to build on relationships with projects in this country and internationally, with the aim of enabling churches to gain greater awareness through opportunities for closer involvement. The Group would like to thank those who responded to the request for information on existing links. In the coming months, contacts will be followed up, and resources prepared for the launch, on World AIDS Day – 1 December – of a programme which will focus, for the first year, on children with AIDS. The Revd Martin Hazell is the new Convener of the Group which also includes Methodist colleagues.

6.3 The United Reformed Church is represented on the Free Church **Education** committee by Gill Kingston, head of religious education at a boys' grammar school, and Graham Handscomb, principal education advisor to Essex local authority. Graham also represents the Church on the Churches' Joint Education Policy committee. A non-statutory national framework for religious education has been developed. Its aim will be to clarify standards for religious education, promote high quality teaching and learning and recognise the

important contribution of RE to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is hoped that this significant development will help to enhance the status of RE alongside other subjects within the National Curriculum; the Free Church Education committee welcomes this.

6.4 Through Church and Society, Graham Handscomb and Gill Kingston offered themselves as a resource for churches on Education Sunday, a national day of prayer and celebration for those involved in education, which has been recognised for more than one hundred years. This year it was Sunday 12 February; the theme was 'Prizes that last' from 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27.

6.5 **Churches' Criminal Justice Forum (CCJF)** grew out of a concern for women in prison highlighted by the Catholic Agency for Social Concern. In 2001, it was formalised as a network of CTBI. Wilma Frew represents Church and Society, bringing her twenty years experience as a magistrate. CCJF seeks to promote imaginative and innovative schemes to rehabilitate offenders, and to deflect them from re-offending. A new version of the popular *What Can I Do?* booklet, outlining volunteering opportunities within the criminal justice system, has been produced with the help of Home office funding.

6.6 The secretary for Church and Society is a member of a small committee which annually produces literature for **Prisons Week** – the third week in November, during which churches are encouraged to focus upon criminal justice issues. The theme for this year is 'They Opened the Door', using the lectionary reading for Sunday 19 November from Acts 12: 1-19. A database of United Reformed Church members involved in prison chaplaincy is being compiled, with the aim of encouraging churches to invite these people to help lead worship on that day.

6.7 One of the priorities of the **United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship** is to try to ensure that the Church's investments are ethically sound (See 5.1 and 5.2). Assembly, in 2005, recommended avoidance of investment in companies 'a significant part' of whose business is the production of military equipment, and defined 'significant' as 10-20% of total turnover. The Peace Fellowship would like that figure to be lower. Another priority is to pray and witness against Nuclear Weapons with Christian CND. The Peace Fellowship was pleased to see the signature of the Revd Sheila Maxey, past Moderator of General Assembly, on a letter in *The Guardian* advocating government compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and openness to democratic scrutiny and public debate on the future of Trident. The convener of the Fellowship, the Revd Hazel Barkham was one of the members of the Methodist and United Reformed Church group that produced *Peacemaking: a Christian Vocation*. Andrew Jack has been elected as the new convener.

6.8 Steve Pryor of FURY has represented Church and Society on **Stamp Out Poverty**, otherwise known as the Tobin Tax Network. The campaign has been focussed on lobbying government in an attempt to advance a currency transaction tax (CTT) proposal. This small tax would be ring-fenced and would be used for international aid. Whilst the ideal would be for the tax to be implemented globally, there is scope for it to be administered unilaterally, and the current campaign is for a stamp duty on sterling transactions. Stamp Out Poverty has also supported the campaign for an air ticket levy. This was approved at a meeting of ministers in Paris, in March, and could become the first ever tax levied specifically to help relieve global poverty.

6.9 The Church and Society convener elect and secretary were planning to attend a national poverty consultation organised by **Church Action on Poverty** on 29 and 30 March 2006, after this report was drafted. Consultations are held every two or three years to give representatives of church agencies the opportunity

to reflect upon social, political and economic trends, and to consider strategic and collaborative responses. The key question for the 2006 consultation was: 'How can we not just bridge the divide between rich and poor, but between the differing understandings we have of poverty, and how to respond to it within the churches?'

7 The succession

7.1 Martin Camroux completes his term as convener of the Church and Society committee after Assembly this year. He has been a great source of wise counsel, particularly to a new secretary. Martin and Wendy Cooper, Church and Society administrator, put in much extra effort to ensure that Church and Society remained open for business, during the period between Andrew Bradstock's departure in February last year and the arrival, in October, of Stuart Dew. Convener elect, Simon Loveitt, is a Church Related Community Worker in Bradford.

Commitment for Life Sub-Committee

8.1 **Overview.** Commitment for Life has seen great change over the past few months. The arrival of a new co-ordinator, administrator, convener and link person at Christian Aid has coincided with the end of MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY (MPH) year. Many of our congregations marched, wore white bands and stayed up all night to make their feelings felt about global injustice. It was a year of 'Mass Moments' but as Kumi Naidoo, head of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, said memorably at the time: 'The people have roared but the G8 has whispered'. Therefore, Commitment for Life is adapting and growing in a post-2005 environment. The lack of direction and disappointment that followed the World Trade Organisation talks in December 2005 have been replaced with new energy and focus. High on the agenda is the need to make sure that governments do not go back on their promises on trade, aid and debt. For many Churches and individuals, wearing a white band was a symbol of an awakening to justice for all God's people. Now they feel that they cannot rest, knowing that a child dies of poverty every three seconds. They want to carry on campaigning, believing that they can make a real difference to people's lives.

8.2 **Churches.** Traditional Commitment for Life churches continue to commit generously. We are able to support them throughout the year with new resources, updates on campaigning and news from our four focus countries, through Christian Aid. Our partner countries of Zimbabwe and the Occupied Palestinian Territories have needed our prayerful support through another dangerous and crisis-led year. Bangladesh has experienced many problems within its various religious communities. We were blessed to have a visitor, Daunette Wellington, from Jamaica Aids

Support for Life (JASL) with us in late 2005 helping us understand the needs of the people of Jamaica who live with AIDS. We are grateful to 'Belonging to the World Church' for its financial help in this project. The Christmas resource focused on Bethlehem, trying to understand the plight of ordinary people caught in the middle of the conflict. New Commitment for Life service outlines and PowerPoint presentations for all four partner countries have been well received. We continue to update the website with articles and up to date information. 'Prayer Partners' went out to churches at the beginning of 2006 to aid prayer for our focus areas and countries. New leaflets and posters are now available to churches and highlight many of the environmental issues affecting Christian Aid's partners. The need to support our focus countries through prayer and action remains of paramount importance. We would challenge churches not already involved in Commitment for Life to give this urgent prayerful consideration.

8.3 **Wider Role.** Emerging campaigning churches often work ecumenically, as did MPH. Our new e-mail newsletter 'Stories for Change' is now sent out to 300 churches. This seeks to educate and inspire churches to campaign on current issues as well as giving background information and stories about our partner countries of Bangladesh, Jamaica and Zimbabwe. Many who receive this do not support Commitment for Life but signed up for MPH campaign e-mail last year and were happy to continue receiving campaigning information. This newsletter was also a direct response to the resolution on support for Zimbabwe, at last year's General Assembly. We are working with FURY, supporting their resolution to campaign with the World Development Movement's

'Dirty Aid, Dirty Water' campaign. A FURY group will visit Jamaica this year and then speak at many venues around the country promoting the need for understanding, support and action. Ways of communicating to Synod meetings have been strengthened. All Synods are to be thanked for their wholehearted support of MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY through signing action postcards, leading themed worship and providing each church with a copy of 'Nine Lives', our contribution to 2005. Many churches used our literature and worship materials leading up to, and on, 1 December – World AIDS Day.

8.4 Many churches now see social justice action as part of their mission. The lines between many of our issues, those of 'Belonging to the World Church' and our lifestyles in the United Kingdom are becoming intertwined. This resonates especially with environmental issues and is one of the reasons for FURY deciding to follow the WDM campaign. Another area in which we reach out to the whole church is through HIV/AIDS, worship resources being freely available on the website. We add an international viewpoint when being active in the United Reformed Church AIDS Group.

8.5 **Trade Justice** was the hardest of the three big issues from MPH on which to bring about change, but it has the greatest potential to lift people out of poverty by their own endeavours. A shift in the government's rhetoric could be detected in a statement by Prime Minister Tony Blair following the publication of the Africa Report: 'Forcing poor countries to liberalise through trade agreements is the wrong approach to achieving growth and poverty reduction in Africa, and elsewhere'. However, at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Hong Kong in December, rich countries, including the UK government and the EU, consistently promoted their own interests over those of the world's poor. Commitment for Life continues to promote campaigning on Trade Justice through links with The Trade Justice Movement and Christian Aid.

8.6 **Fairtrade** has made a leap from an organisation supported by non-government organisations and charities into the big world of the major retail players. This was very evident at the recent launch of Certified Fairtrade Cotton where representatives from the Churches mixed with buyers from big business. Jesus said, 'He has sent me to bring good news to the poor'; Fairtrade has at its heart a just system that frees producers from exploitation, enabling them to lift themselves out of poverty. Jesus reminds us of our responsibility to make a new heaven on a new earth.

- In the early autumn Nestlé launched a Fairtrade Mark coffee called 'Partners Blend.' Whilst this could be seen as a response to consumer demand, it is only one product and we hope to see more Fairtrade products and

principles across their range. The 1992 General Assembly decision to boycott Nestlé products still stands and we would encourage members to maintain pressure on Nestlé to look at other ethical issues relating to marketing and the promotion of baby milk substitutes. That said, Commitment for Life would not be against a selective purchase of shares in Nestlé, as long as this was used to enable campaigning from within (See 5.2)

- The Fairtrade Churches Scheme is to be co-ordinated through Traidcraft, supported by the Fairtrade Foundation. This will ensure continuity and level standards across the denominations. Traidcraft also hopes to produce resources for use within churches, which will be most welcome.

8.7 **Israel /Palestine.** The repercussions from elections in Israel and Palestine are still unfolding and may have serious implications for work in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Attendance was good at the yearly meeting of activists arranged with International Relations. Dan Shaham, from the Israeli Embassy, gave a presentation which made those present aware of the wide gap which exists between our Church's position and the policy and outlook of the Israeli government. Attendees gained an insight into the genuine anxieties prevalent in Israel, but it seems that on the national political level these are fuelling a denial of human rights and justice. The need for an ecumenical response from the Churches has been led by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and taken forward by EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel), Christian Aid and Pax Christi who have set up ecumenical dialogue and action. We continue to support the work of Christian Aid through their partners in both Israel and Palestine. Parents Circle, a new focus partner, working for dialogue and reconciliation from both sides of the divide, have offered us greater insight into the situation. 'Moving Stories,' our e-mail newsletter continues to expand and now reaches over 300 homes. Work on disinvestment and progressive engagement is continuing through the Ethical Investment Advisory Group (see report from Mission Council).

8.8 **Administration.** The programme remains vibrant and evolving. Thanks must be given to Alison Blick for all her support, the hard working committee members, Melanie Frew, convenor, and the loyal, enthusiastic advocates who have been most welcoming and supportive during this time of change. Commitment for Life's success is due in large measure to Anne Martin, who moved on at the end of October 2005. We thank her for her enormous contribution, dedication and determination to bring justice to all God's people. Helen Warmington's role as MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY campaign officer for six months added much to the high profile placed on the

Resolution 17

issues by the Church. We thank Church and Society for supporting this venture financially. Thanks must also be expressed to Revd Neil Thorogood for his enthusiasm for the scheme whilst serving as convener until August 2005. We wish to acknowledge, with appreciation, the special link with Christian Aid and the help we receive from them. It has been good to see even stronger links now forming with the World Development Movement.

8.9 The number of **participating churches** remains steady at around 611, the biggest area of growth being in the Scottish Synod. The income for 2005 of £555,966 was slightly down on the previous year. This was due, in part, to generous giving to the many emergency appeals of 2005. After administration costs and 10% of income going to the World Development Movement for their political advocacy. Christian Aid received 75%, which is divided equally amongst the four partner countries. We continue to support complementary charities. Grants in 2005 went to the Trade Justice Movement, People and Planet, Baby Milk Action, EAPPI, Banana Link, Jubilee Dept Campaign, Fairtrade Foundation and Landmine Action. Kees Maxey represents Church and

Society and Commitment for Life on the board of Jubilee Debt Campaign; Revd Paul Dean represents Commitment for Life and International Relations on the EAPPI board.

8.10 **Ecumenical** links are increasing, especially since the end of 2005. Churches are working ecumenically to promote social justice issues. Joint mailings from Commitment for Life and the Methodist Relief and Development Fund go out regularly to joint United Reformed and Methodist Churches. We continue to build stronger co-operation through links on our respective web pages. Fairtrade continues to be viewed as promoting strong ecumenical links, as does our support of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme for Palestine and Israel.

8.11 **Conclusion.** Jim Wallis, author of *God's Policies*, spoke recently about how the prophets appeared in the Bible when there were huge disparities in living standards. Today, Commitment for Life seeks to be prophetic in enabling churches to respond, both financially and by social action, to expose the unjust systems that favour the rich and keep the majority of God's people poor.

Resolution 17

Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation

General Assembly adopts the Report 'Peacemaking: A Christian Vocation' and commends it for study by Synods and local congregations, and as a helpful guide for church leaders who may be called upon for comment on the ethical considerations relating to war and peace.

Communications and Editorial

The committee is responsible for the setting and maintenance of standards of all publications. It acts as the Management Board for Reform and is responsible for all media relations.

Committee Members

Convener: *The Revd Martin Hazell*

Secretary: *Mrs Carol Rogers*

Ms Julia Wills, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith, Mrs Valerie Jenkins, Revd Janet Sutton, Revd Paul Snell, Revd Martin Whiffin, Mr Richard Lathaen, Mr Ron Sweeney & Mr Philip George

1 Publishing

Since the committee last reported to General Assembly in 2004, there have been 12 titles published by the United Reformed Church, in addition to the annual publications of the Prayer Handbook, the Year Book, the Pocket Diary and the Reports to, and Record of, General Assembly. These are:

A Study Guide to Being Biblical by John Campbell and Paul Whittle;

Wholly Worship Too edited by Rosemary Johnston

A Road to the Garden, pictures and poems for Lent, by Robert Harvey and Neil Thorogood;

Dancing on Slaves – a contribution to the Make Poverty History Campaign edited by Geoffrey Duncan and Martin Hazell;

Shaping Up: Reforming Reformed Worship by Ernest Marvin

and the first seven titles in a series on bereavement edited by Tony Tucker:

Ever in my heart by Sarah Brewerton

Is it alright to listen to me as well? by Shirley Farrier

Living with Alzheimer's disease by Margaret Ashby

Losing a parent by Susan Durber

Plunged into bereavement by Graham Long

Walking in the valley by Elizabeth Kemp and Paul Floe

When a marriage ends by Sue Wilkinson

In addition one title has been added to the list of books published under the Granary Press Imprint:

A Knock at the Door by Colin Evans.

It is anticipated that there will be several new titles available for the meeting of General Assembly in 2006.

2 Graphics and Production

Each title published by the United Reformed Church involves the skills of the graphic artist and her assistant. In addition they are responsible for the design and production of all TLS related material and that of other committees. There has also been involvement in the production of ecumenical materials. The number of items now including a CD ROM is increasing.

3 Bookshop including Books on Line

The bookshop continues to serve the church, both by mail order and with those calling at Church House. Bookstalls at synod meetings and other events are regularly supplied by the bookshop and it is now the main stockist for TLS courses. It is a matter of satisfaction that titles that are not regularly stocked can usually be obtained speedily, often from overseas, and that orders are processed quickly. It is also gratifying that the range of titles carried has received positive comment from many visitors. The Books on Line service is proving to be popular and staff endeavour to keep the information on titles available as up to date as possible. It has never been the intention that the web site should list all the titles carried by the bookshop, but rather those that are new, or are likely to be popular together with those that are considered to be essential reading and appear on various booklists.

The United Reformed Church is the distributor for the books, cds and tapes published by the New Zealand Hymn Book Trust.

4 Reform

The magazine continues to be the most effective method of communication within the church. It is estimated that there are about 50,000 readers within local congregations, although there are still a few places where it appears to be unknown. Those who loyally distribute Reform each month are its great strength and the magazine owes much to them, but in some places they are also its weakness when dealing with the monthly distribution becomes a chore rather than a service. Enthusiastic distributors grow new readers! The regular columns continue to be well received. The United Reformed Church is grateful to the Congregational and General Insurance Company for continuing to support the Community Project Awards which are now a highlight of Reform. Whilst awaiting the appointment of a new editor Reform is being well served by a number of guest editors. It should be realised however that the regular

appearance of Reform is due in no small part to the hard work put in by the editorial assistant and part time graphic artist.

5 Web site

Whilst the web site is well received and is kept as up to date as possible it has not continued to develop as swiftly as the committee would have wished. This is due in part to lack of staff but there have also been constrictions imposed upon both content and further development by the insurance company. It is hoped that the site will be able to be further developed very shortly. It is also planned to use a section of the site for "on line" publishing for various titles.

6 Press and PR and Media Relations

As a general rule the United Reformed Church, whilst receiving coverage at a local level, rarely attracts the attention of the national press. Most of the work in this area comes under the heading of crisis management, and means a considerable time spent in the background in order to be prepared for any possible interest from the media. One of the main problems encountered by the Media Officer is that the structures of the church make it difficult for a single person to make a statement on any subject on behalf of the church without wide consultation, when what is required by the media is an instant response.

7 Ecumenical Involvement

- a) **Roots:** The Secretary continues to be a member of both the board of Roots for Churches Ltd and of the Roots Management Group, which she presently serves as convener.
- b) **Church Publishers Network**
The United Reformed Church is a member of the Church Publishers Network and is represented by the Secretary for Communications.
- c) **CTBI Publications**
The Secretary is a member of the (CTBI) Publications Management Group
- d) **Churches Media Trust**
The United Reformed Church continues to support the Churches Media Council which seeks ways of working effectively with the media on behalf of the churches of all main denominations.

8 A leaflet on the subject of Church Magazines is in preparation.

9 The routine work of Communications includes the entering of data from church returns forms on to the main data base and dealing with queries on a wide variety of topics including copyright and data protection.

10 CTV Resolution to General Assembly 2005

The committee continues to explore the possibilities of creating a mass communication church.

11 Consultation

In September 2005 a consultation was held to discuss the future of the work of the Communications and Editorial Committee. Those who attended included past and present members of the committee together with others who are involved in communicating the work of the church at various levels. We are grateful to them for their enthusiasm and insight. Their discussions form the basis of the report *Catch the Vision for the Future of Communications in the United Reformed Church*.

12 Personalialia

12.1 The membership of the committee has changed since the last report in 2004. Revds Martin Truscott, Bob Maitland, Peter Moth, Mr Peter Knowles, Mrs Melanie Frew and Ms Eleri Evans have completed their service and the United Reformed Church is grateful to them.

12.2 The Revd David Lawrence

David Lawrence was appointed as Editor of Reform and Media Officer in 1995. During the ensuing 11 years the United Reformed Church has been served by and editor who has been able to ensure that the theological diversity found with the United Reformed Church has been fully represented in the pages of Reform thanks to his understanding of many deep and complex issues. The establishing of the Community Project Awards in partnership with the Congregational and General Insurance Company has been much appreciated. Local churches have been particularly well served by David in the editing and production of the Assembly Hotline, which ensures that every congregation is able to have some sense of sharing in the event. As media officer David's work has often meant working quietly in the background dealing with crisis management. Many have reason to be grateful for his sound and considered advice. Thanks to his knowledge and enthusiasm the URC Website was set up. He returns to pastoral ministry with our best wishes and profound gratitude for all that he has done.

12.3 Mrs Carol Rogers

It has been a huge honour for the present convener of the Committee to work closely with Carol over the last few years. Her dedication and knowledge is formidable and her presence in Church House is a given. For nearly

two decades she has been 'Communications' for a great number of people. She has overseen vast changes and most, if not all, have been down to her foresight and imagination. Her pride and joy, the bookshop, has provided an excellent service to probably millions over the years from those within the United Reformed Church to those from without, including abroad. Assemblies and Synod Meetings would be incomplete without the provision of the mobile bookshop – Carol has ensured this specialist service is provided to as many meetings as possible. In the area of publications, Carol has developed and maintained the standard that is now taken for granted; she often challenges others to meet her high benchmark.

12.3.1 She has overseen the management of Reform, ensuring that the editor and staff are equipped to bring the best of the United Reformed Church to our members.

12.3.2 However it is her care, over the years, of the communications staff that is so impressive. The fact that so many have been part of Church House for nearly as long as Carol; is witness to the happy relations she has with them all. She has encouraged and supported each and everyone to play a full part in the work that they do together. In addition, each year in December, Carol has led a lunchtime concert of Carols and Christmas Music, rehearsing the choir made up of staff from the whole of Church House, often from as early as September so that what they sing on the day is of the highest standard. She plans the concert, plays the piano and rehearses the choir.

12.3.3 We thank you, Carol, on behalf of the many who have known and loved you over these many years. You will be missed hugely. It is truly said that Church House will never be the same again.

Resolution 18

Leaflet on Church Magazines

General Assembly commends the leaflet on Church Magazines to all local congregations.

Resolution 19

Review of the Work of the Communications and Editorial Committee

General Assembly receives and accepts the review carried out by the Communications and Editorial Committee and instructs it to continue to explore the proposals to:

- a) **develop an effective and more professional website**
- b) **appoint a new editor to work with an editorial board to oversee the final months of Reform and to develop a new URC journal**
- c) **develop new ways of improving the bookshop service**
- d) **concentrate on publications of a worship/spiritual nature**
- e) **explore ways of providing a professional Press Office service to deal with the media at national and local levels**
- f) **explore and develop new ways of promoting the role of the United Reformed Church in extending Christ's kingdom to the world.**

Catching the vision for the Future Work of the Communications and Editorial Committee – Review

1 Introduction

1.1 For too long the church has operated with the assumption that everyone knows who we are, what we stand for and where we can be found. The church is now in competition with a commercial world that includes sport, shopping and home entertainment. People have become accustomed to a high standard of communication, reading their newspapers on line, communicating with their friends and family through 'texting' and watching thousands of channels on their high definition TV. The screen in the corner, and soon to be, if not already, on the wall, may well become the provider of everything.

1.2 Even the endless delivery of leaflets advertising everything from home cleaners to the local pizza shop are on good quality paper, in colour, and produced to a high standard. What chance the note from the local church, sometimes photocopied in black and white on poor quality paper?

1.3 This crisis of identity and relevance provoked the 'Catch the Vision' project. Others have explored how to be church in this new world. In communications, where technology has grown and developed at a pace many thought impossible, our review has become most urgent. It is a world of new opportunities and challenges.

2 Communications

2.1 For communications, with its small staff and limited resources, the task of keeping up with the explosion of technology has been a struggle. The forthcoming retirement of Carol Rogers and the need to consider the future direction of the section prompted the Communications and Editorial Committee to review where we were and where we might be in five years time. We have been radical. We neither have the money nor the expertise to do all the things we would like, including many of the things that we have done in the past. We need to prioritise and finesse what we can do; we need to make some hard decisions. The recommendations are our suggested ways forward in the long term – a plan for the next few years.

2.2 Effective communications build communities. Putting messages across, sharing information and challenging each other can only be effective if it is put across in such a way that the recipient can receive it and understand it. Today people receive information in small bites, through images rather than words and at a time when it is convenient to them.

2.3 It is important to recognise the huge strides that have already been accomplished by the present staff. The church owes a huge debt of gratitude to them all. They produce a high standard way beyond the resources given to them.

3 Website

3.1 The website is where our thinking begins. Present resources have not allowed us to implement the changes it needs. It does not keep up with daily updates. It is difficult to navigate. The committee recommends that we employ a Website manager who can redesign the whole site, edit the information provided on it and keep it up-to-date with daily updates. It could provide a continuous flow of worship material, sharing ideas and best practice, conveying important information, running campaigns, a decent 'chat room' for discussions, mediated by the editor, an attractive advertising programme for anyone looking for a local United Reformed Church, and links to other sites, eg Christian Aid. Individuals should be able to sign up to a mailing list and be sent emails with encouragement to revisit the main website for the latest news from the other committees and from other churches struggling with the same issues.

3.2 There are great opportunities that could be explored with an effective and professional website. Critics will say that members of churches do not have a computer resource to access this way of communication. Up to a point that is true but increasingly families have at least one member who has a computer and soon the technology that we associate with computers will be available through the TV. The committee is sensitive to the present membership profile and will continue with other, more traditional, forms of communication but the ambition is that most of our communications in the future will be channelled through the website. As with *Reform*, the committee will appoint advisory Editorial Boards for the Website.

a) Recommendation: to develop an effective and more professional website

4 Reform

4.1 The committee is keen to re-shape the journal of the United Reformed Church. During the last ten years, *Reform* has played a crucial role in challenging and informing members. The committee will continue with 'guest' editors until the end of the year/early 2007, and once a new Secretary is in place, wishes to pursue appointing a new editor who will be given a free hand to explore and experiment with different ideas for *Reform*.

4.2 Although valuing the present, we need to begin making the journal one that all our members can enjoy. Members of the committee would like to see more 'good news' stories, regular Bible studies and a journal that can be given to interested lay people who might be thinking of joining the United Reformed Church. It might be more 'Daily Mail' and less 'Guardian' in style (although not in politics). The new

journal could also in future be downloaded from the website. The committee commissioned 'focus groups' to explore how a new journal might be re-shaped and the results will help shape Reform's future.

- b) Recommendation: to appoint a new editor to work with an editorial board to oversee the final months of Reform and to develop a new United Reformed Church journal**

5 The Bookshop

For as long as many members of the committee can remember the United Reformed Church has provided a bookshop – many of us order all our books through it and it provides an excellent service with reductions on most products. We may in future offer the same service through our website or by joining forces with another supplier, like Amazon. Before we take any action on the bookshop the committee is clear that we need to discover other possible ways of providing the same service without ending the much appreciated "face-to-face" service of the bookshop.

We know how much our membership appreciates the bookshop service we provide at special events, like Synods and National Assemblies, and we aim to look at ways of continuing and improving this service.

- c) Recommendation: to develop new ways of improving the bookshop service**

6 Publications

6.1 At present, we produce a number of products, including the Year Book, the United Reformed Church Diary, United Reformed Church goodies, and major publications. We do not market any of these products extensively and consequently many remain unknown to a wider public. It is the intention of the committee only to continue publishing 'spiritual' and 'worship' materials and those specific to the United Reformed Church. Major books on 'reformed' themes will in future only be printed "on demand". We have identified a specialist firm who will produce books if and when needed, single copies if required.

6.2 The department also produces materials for other committees within the United Reformed Church. Providing a good standard of design and presentation has been a major factor in the editorial work of the department. The design team spend a great deal of time ensuring that what comes out of the Church is of a high standard. At present, the cost of design comes under the Communications and Editorial budget. In future the committee will look at ways in which that cost can be passed on to the originating committee. It is essential that we do not produce sub-standard work (to remain unwanted in the depths of Church House) and a more robust attitude to work produced is needed. Again, greater use of the website with downloading facilities may be a cost-effective way of encouraging individual committees in presenting their material.

- d) Recommendation: to concentrate on publications of a worship/spiritual nature**

7 Press Relations

Until recently, the work of Press Officer, or media relations, was performed in conjunction with the role of editor of Reform. The committee wishes to separate these two roles. It is debatable how much we should have a national profile. There are some who believe that this work is best done at the local level and we should seek trainers to encourage Synods and local churches to be the face of the United Reformed Church to the media. Equally, because of the need for immediate press statements when ministers have been accused of criminal activity Moderators especially need the professionalism of a journalist to deal with the media. Undoubtedly this does not come cheaply. But it is also a very necessary role and assists in helping the world understand what the United Reformed Church stands for. One piece of negative reporting can undermine all the good work that the church does. It hardly needs saying but the damage done by the scandals within the Catholic Church has had very serious implications for the whole Christian institution.

- e) Recommendation: to explore ways of providing a professional Press Office service to deal with the media at national and local levels**

8 Marketing

The word 'marketing' sounds very commercial and not like the United Reformed Church at all. But it should be seen as a modern understanding of evangelism – promoting the work we do and encouraging others to commit to Christ. Recently, it has been heard that the United Reformed Church is 'worthy but dull' and that we 'rent out our halls and hope'. In other words, we are not an attractive church to join and, perhaps because, we sit back thinking the little we do (ie allow our halls to be used by the community) is enough to bring about God's Kingdom on earth. As a church we are no longer confident in ourselves or our message. We do not properly engage with the world because we perhaps fear ridicule (apologies for the massive generalisations and sweeping statements here). However if we think what we are and do is important, then we must tell the world about it. The Moderators' Report to General Assembly 2005 shared the work of the Uniting Church of Christ in the US and how their 'God is still speaking' campaign has revolutionised local churches there. To be clear about what we believe in, and to promote it, is what marketing is about. This work is a new area of work and will bring together several areas of Assembly work and needs the expertise of a professional. The Convenor of the Communications and Editorial Committee believes that this work needs a base in communications but is not just the work of that committee. We will seek to develop a policy and training programme to improve the professionalism and consistency across Church House and all Assembly

Committees to make us all better communicators As part of the ongoing work in next few years, a set-up aspect must be included in the budget.

f) Recommendation: to explore and develop new ways of promoting the United Reformed Church to the world

9 Staffing

It cannot be said enough times that the present staff are to be congratulated and thanked for their dedication, imagination and hard work. Change for us all is difficult and exhausting. The committee hopes that each member of staff feels valued and can still play their part in a new look communications department. We anticipate offering retraining to those who wish to develop new skills.

10 Secretary

10.1 The committee is absolutely clear that the work of Communications is essential to the inner workings of the church and vital to its outreach. The Committee therefore has requested Staff Advisory Group to put

in train the task of appointing a new Secretary as a successor to Carol Rogers who will be retiring on 30th September 2006. In future, the Secretary will manage and lead the department and also be responsible for one of the major portfolios of the department (i.e. Press Relations, Marketing, Web or Journal Editor).

10.2 Having looked at the 2007 budget, the committee believes that a reduction of £40K is achievable and will aim to reduce the budget further to £65K. However, we note that Assembly agreed the Catch the Vision belief that becoming an e-church is essential to our further development and notes that there will inevitably be a cost to making this possible which is not so far in the budget.

10.3 Through this review the committee is offering the church a new way of bringing the best to the fore, of building a stronger church by strengthening the links between us all, of reaching out to a rapidly changing world in ways the world understand and, by doing this, offering new hope.



Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Committee was formed in 1994 to:

- a) **develop detailed equal opportunities policies**
- b) **have oversight of training programmes in equal opportunities**
- c) **monitor the implementation of the equal opportunities policy**
- d) **report every 2 years to the General Assembly on the implementation of the policy.**

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Wilf Bahadur*

Secretary: *Revd Derek Hopkins*

Mr Derek Estill, Revd Kate Gartside, Mr Alan Hart, Ms Michelle Marcano (staff link), Revd Susan Macbeth, Dr Ruth Shepherd

1.1 Since we last reported to Assembly we have updated our leaflet incorporating some of the suggestions we had received from different people. We are seeking, as we say on the leaflet, to create an inclusive vision, through practical action, transforming the Law to love. We are very thankful to the Graphics Team for producing the new leaflet for us with its graphics depicting the areas of our responsibility. The outside of the leaflet can also serve as an A4 poster. This leaflet is available in alternative formats.

1.2 Monitoring

Part of our remit is to monitor where we are as a church in accordance with our policy. Monitoring regularly does enable us to measure changes in the life of our church. Thanks to all those who have completed monitoring forms for us over the past 2 years. The results from the 4 yearly monitoring of churches show that: 1) as expected perhaps, many of our churches have been able to improve their disabled access and

facilities and 2) that we are, if only by a small degree, becoming a more multiracial church.

1.3 Policy Review

We are currently undertaking a total review of our Equal Opportunities Policy in the light of current and proposed changes in the law. Our proposals are currently being considered by the Moderators, after which we will present the proposal to Mission Council in October.

1.4 Committee Changes

This year our Convener Wilf Bahadur ends his term of office and will be replaced by Ms Morag McIntoch. Derek Estill and Alan Hart also end their appointments. We thank them all for their dedicated and loyal service to the committee. Alan Hart has agreed to be a co-opted member of the committee until December 2006 in order to help with our policy revision work.

Equal Opportunities monitoring review of churches 2005

1.1 The Equal Opportunities Committee is very grateful to all the churches which responded to the questionnaire.

1.2 The accumulation of the data is listed on the following pages and gives the following information:

- a) details of the churches submitting data
- b) details of church membership and eldership by gender
- c) details of church membership by ethnic origin and the same data for the 2001 survey
- d) details of disability access and aids.

Comparisons with the figures from the 2001 returns are included in parentheses where possible.

Responses from churches

Synod	Nr of churches based on figures from 2005 Yearbook	Nr of churches reporting	%	Churches not giving gender information	Churches not giving ethnic origin
1 Northern	101 (102)	97 (91)	96 (89.2)	8	8
2 North Western	144 (151)	138 (150)	95.8 (99.3)	3	5
3 Mersey	95 (96)	90 (91)	94.7 (94.7)	1	3
4 Yorkshire	115 (119)	109 (117)	94.7 (98.3)	4	4
5 East Midlands	151 (156)	122 (135)	80.8 (87)	1	6
6 West Midlands	143 (149)	131 (129)	91.6 (86.5)	8	12
7 Eastern	149 (152)	145 (137)	97.3 (90.1)	3	3
8 South Western	132 (135)	118 (125)	89.4 (92.5)	3	5
9 Wessex	151 (162)	141 (149)	93.4 (91.9)	14	15
10 Thames North	148 (158)	114 (122)	77 (77.2)	3	5
11 Southern	175 (179)	164 (161)	93.7 (89.9)	8	10
12 Wales	125 (139)	97 (109)	77.6 (78.4)	1	5
13 Scotland	56 (56)	49 (42)	87.5 (75)	3	5
Total	1685 (1753)	1515 (1556)	89.9 (88.7)	60	86

Details of church membership and eldership by gender

¹ Some churches included non URC members ² Some churches listed both serving and non-serving elders

Synod	Members ¹		Female		Male		Elders ²		Female		Male		%	
	Total	Male	Female	%	%	Total	Female	%	%	Total	Female	%	%	
1 Northern	4707	1429 (1808)	3278 (4466)	30.4	69.6	769	315 (432)	454 (501)	41	59				
2 North Western	7996	2333 (2828)	5663 (6503)	29.2	70.8	1249	442 (553)	807 (943)	35.4	64.6				
3 Mersey	5571	1746 (1912)	3825 (4470)	31.3	68.7	789	346 (415)	443 (523)	43.8	56.2				
4 Yorkshire	6369	1907 (2072)	4462 (4971)	29.9	70.1	971	377 (443)	594 (619)	38.8	61.2				
5 East Midlands	5474	1777 (2076)	3697 (4214)	32.5	67.5	811	332 (403)	479 (540)	40.9	59.1				
6 West Midlands	7462	2335 (2537)	5127 (5556)	31.3	68.7	1018	412 (584)	606 (719)	40.5	59.5				
7 Eastern	6690	2163 (2381)	4527 (5081)	32.3	67.7	923	377 (443)	546 (588)	40.8	59.2				
8 South Western	5943	1875 (2108)	4068 (5211)	31.5	68.5	676	298 (375)	378 (547)	44.1	55.9				
9 Wessex	9226	3040 (3392)	6186 (6969)	33	67	1034	437 (680)	597 (691)	42.3	57.7				
10 Thames North	7085	2268 (2550)	4817 (5285)	32	68	973	380 (452)	593 (629)	39	61				
11 Southern	10735	3432 (3832)	7303 (8349)	32	68	1292	569 (754)	723 (973)	44	56				
12 Wales	3811	1027 (1254)	2784 (3224)	26.9	73.1	683	265 (334)	418 (426)	38.8	61.2				
13 Scotland	5198	1515 (1359)	3683 (3281)	29.1	70.9	614	263 (294)	351 (322)	42.8	57.2				
Total	86267	26847 (30300)	59420 (67699)	31.1	68.9	11802	4813 (6159)	6989 (8014)	40.8	59.2				

Details of church members by ethnic origin 2005

Synod	All white congregations	% of reporting churches with all white congregations	Members White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other
1 Northern	71	73.2	4507	3	7		4			9	6
2 North Western	102	73.9	7721	54	42	7	10	2		9	12
3 Mersey	67	74.4	5112	2	18	5	3			1	4
4 Yorkshire	74	67.9	6160	96	15	1	1	2		1	5
5 East Midlands	89	72.9	5308	35	27	4	13	1		7	8
6 West Midlands	107	81.7	7413	262	28	2	9	5		3	7
7 Eastern	106	73.1	6510	18	39		9			5	27
8 South Western	90	76.3	5865	26	15	3	27			4	11
9 Wessex	85	60.3	8943	46	59	14	5			14	28
10 Thames North	33	28.9	5852	322	591	62	36	4	6	32	70
11 Southern	75	45.7	10166	245	284	14	26	2		38	56
12 Wales	86	88.7	3655	2	6	1				1	2
13 Scotland	41	83.7	5066		5	1	1			3	1
Total	1026	67.7	82278	1111	1136	114	144	16	6	127	237

Figures for the 2001 survey are included for comparison purposes. There has been a small, but significant, increase in the non white membership of the church. In 2001 this was 2556 people, 2.7% of the overall membership, in 2005 this had grown to 2891 people, 3.5% of the overall membership. The % of all white congregations has decreased from 68.3% to 67.7%.

Some churches objected to supplying this information.

Details of church members by ethnic origin 2001 Survey included for comparison purposes

Synod	All white congregations	% of reporting churches with all white congregations	Members White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other
1 Northern	73	80.2	6203	57	36	1	0	0	0	1	6
2 North Western	121	80.6	9199	59	17	5	3	1	3	4	7
3 Mersey	74	81.3	6115	3	13	1	4	2	0	1	4
4 Yorkshire	88	75.2	6824	114	13	7	0	0	0	1	4
5 East Midlands	89	65.9	6421	41	31	5	4	3	4	8	13
6 West Midlands	80	62	7731	232	18	1	4	4	0	5	7
7 Eastern	110	80.2	7546	12	9	5	1	0	1	4	6
8 South Western	93	74.4	6696	22	13	5	27	0	0	1	5
9 Wessex	91	61	9873	158	16	5	2	2	0	4	25
10 Thames North	40	32.7	6365	278	436	78	40	2	0	20	56
11 Southern	78	48	11526	192	277	23	16	2	0	24	29
12 Wales	89	81.6	4114	2	1	3	3	0	0	0	0
13 Scotland	38	90.4	5038	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	1064	68.3	93651	1170	882	139	104	16	8	73	164

Wheelchair access to churches and aids for the disabled

Synod	Churches reporting	Wheel chair access to church	% with wheelchair church access	Access to other	% Access to other parts of Building	Disa bled toilet	% Disabled toilet	Large print hymn Books	% Large print hymnbooks	Loop system	% Loop
1 Northern	97 (91)	85 (67)	87.6 (73.6)	75	77.3 (65.9)	70	72.2 (48.3)	79	81.4 (74.7)	79	81.4 (58.2)
2 North Western	138 (150)	122 (114)	88.4 (76)	110	79.7 (70.6)	101	73.2 (45.3)	133	96.4 (91.3)	109	83.2 (69.3)
3 Mersey	90 (91)	83 (78)	92.2 (85.7)	73	81.1 (72.5)	72	80 (57.1)	78	86.7 (86.8)	75	83.3 (75.8)
4 Yorkshire	109 (117)	88 (87)	80.7 (74.3)	86	78.9 (75.2)	84	77.1 (53.8)	91	83.5 (86.3)	81	74.3 (67.5)
5 East Midlands	122 (135)	110 (104)	90.2 (77)	99	81.1 (74.8)	92	75.4 (49.6)	90	73.8 (83.7)	89	72.9 (57.7)
6 West Midlands	131 (129)	112 (98)	85.5 (75.9)	109	83.2 (72.8)	98	74.8 (51.9)	111	84.7 (85.2)	101	77.1 (62)
7 Eastern	145 (137)	130 (121)	89.6 (88.3)	127	87.6 (78.8)	107	73.8 (64.2)	124	85.5 (81.7)	97	66.9 (57.6)
8 South Western	118 (125)	107 (102)	90.7 (81.6)	97	82.2 (71.2)	83	70.3 (48)	112	94.9 (87.2)	98	83 (68)
9 Wessex	141 (149)	123 (124)	87.2 (83.2)	114	80.8 (83.2)	100	70.9 (55)	117	83 (83.2)	113	80.1 (68.4)
10 Thames North	114 (122)	107 (105)	93.9 (86)	99	86.8 (77.8)	101	88.6 (68.8)	107	93.9 (84.4)	100	87.7 (78.6)
11 Southern	164 (161)	155 (135)	94.5 (83)	142	86.6 (80.7)	130	79.3 (57.1)	150	91.5 (91.9)	106	64.6 (72.6)
12 Wales	97 (109)	77 (64)	79.4 (58)	56	57.7 (48.6)	48	49.5 (30.2)	67	69.1 (55.9)	60	61.8 (29.3)
13 Scotland	49 (42)	35 (19)	71.4 (45.2)	31	63.3 (35.7)	27	55.1 (26.1)	35	71.4 (59.5)	34	69.4 (47.6)
Total	1515 (1556)	1334 (1218)	88 (78.2)	1218	80.4 (72.5)	113	73.5 (52.1)	1294	85.4 (82.9)	1142	74.5 (63.9)

Finance

The Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church under the overall authority of General Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are in place for the maintenance of accounting records, the safe custody of assets and the preparation of financial statements, for giving financial advice to other councils of the Church as appropriate, and for taking such decisions with regard to the finances of the Church as are necessary within the policies set by General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: *Mr Eric Chilton (Honorary Treasurer)*

Secretary: *Vacant*

Revd David Dones, Revd Richard Gray, Mrs Alison Holt, Mr John Kidd, Mr Graham Law, Mr Errol Martin, Mr Graham Morris, Revd John Waller (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust), Mrs Marie Whitman, Mr John Woodman (co-opted)

1 Our remit

1.1 The review of governance by Catch the Vision has proposals which, if agreed, will affect our remit.

2 Personalia

2.1 We have been well served by the members of the Finance Committee, the United Reformed Church Trust, the Retired Ministers' Housing Society and the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Limited. There are increasing demands being made upon them by improvements in accounting standards and reporting, and changes in legislation, which place added responsibility on charity trustees and members of their committees. This year we particularly thank those who have completed their term of service, Alison Holt on the Finance Committee and the Revd Leslie Watson on the United Reformed Church Trust.

2.2 Again we must thank the staff, who have had another year of considerable change. At General Assembly last year we said farewell to the Financial Secretary, Avis Reaney. It was decided not to replace her immediately to see if substantial savings could be made. By job reallocation and considerable dedication by all the staff this has proved possible. Additionally a new computerised accounts systems has been installed which should provide much needed management accounting information leading to better control of budgets. In particular we should thank Andrew Grimwade who only joined us last year as Chief Accountant and has provided excellent management and leadership throughout the year.

Resolution 20

Accounts

General Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2005.

1 2005 Accounts

1.1 The 2005 accounts are set out in the Financial Report and Accounts and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31 December 2005.

Resolution 21**Appointment of Auditors**

General Assembly resolves that PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP be appointed auditors of the United Reformed Church, to hold office until the conclusion of the next meeting at which accounts are laid before General Assembly and that their remuneration be fixed by the Finance Committee.

1 Appointment of auditors

1.1 The United Reformed Church is required to appoint auditors at each General Assembly at which accounts are laid before the members. The auditors

are appointed from the conclusion of the forthcoming General Assembly until the conclusion of next year's General Assembly.

Resolution 22**The giving of the members of the Church to central funds**

General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 2005 to the Ministry and Mission Fund and the work of the local church, district and synod treasurers.

1 The giving of the members of the Church to central funds

1.1 The financial operation of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration could not happen if each Church Treasurer did not make very great efforts to ensure that the money required for this part of the work is in the local bank account on 20th of each month, for collection by direct debit.

1.2 That this system runs very smoothly is evidence of much hard and devoted work, and in thanking the Church for its response to the appeal for Ministry and Mission, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

Resolution 23**United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund contributions**

General Assembly resolves that the total contribution to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund should be increased to 23% with effect from 1 January 2007. This will be made up of a Church contribution of 17.25% (increased from 15.65%) and Ministers' contributions of 5.75% (increased from 4.5%).

1 United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund contributions

1.1 The triennial valuation of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund has shown a deficit of £7.3 million. There are two main reasons for this. First, the life expectancy of ministers has increased and this has to be factored into the funding requirement.

Secondly, the fund's investments have under-performed against their benchmark and the market. The principal cause has been the pursuance of the Church's ethical policy by the fund managers which has resulted in a loss of capital of £1.4 million.

Ministries

The Committee is responsible for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Work and Lay Preaching. It is concerned with central care and conditions of service, chaplaincies in industry, higher and further education and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry. It has concern for the pastoral support of ministers, church related community workers and lay preachers, including supervision, appraisal, self-evaluation and counselling. It oversees the work of the Assessment Board. It is assisted by five sub-committees.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Maintaining the roll of ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment. It also deals with applications for Special Category Ministries.

Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee

It is responsible for supporting the Church Related Community Work Ministry and Programme under the terms agreed in the Church Related Community Work Covenant. This includes the accreditation of Churches-in-Community

Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee

It is responsible for the advocacy of lay preaching and support of lay preachers in the United Reformed Church.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' conditions of service through the Plan for Partnership. It is also concerned for pensions through its associated Pensions Executive.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Works in Association with the United Reformed Church Ministers Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr John Ellis

Secretary: Revd Christine Craven

Members: Mrs Joanna Morling, Mrs Joan Trippier, Revds Pauline Barnes, Alan Evans, Terry Oakley, Paul Whittle, Prof David Cutler (Convener of the Assessment Board)

The Big Picture

1 After the Committee's last general report to Assembly in 2004, our initial focus was on the report *Equipping the Saints* and the feedback received. We were delighted with the response from the 2005 Assembly to the proposals we formulated. The Assembly took bold decisions in favour of spreading best practice amongst all Elders' Meetings, deploying ministers (paid and unpaid) with imagination and creativity, and expanding the Special Category Ministry scheme.

2 Of course the Assembly was not talking to itself. These challenges are actually for the Church at local level to tackle. We observe that in some places they appear not yet to have been noticed. We would urge all members of Assembly to play their part in ensuring that these ideas become embedded in the life of the United Reformed Church. Meanwhile we are exploring what additional resources the Committee might produce to help the process.

Forecasting Minister Numbers

3 Our more recent contributions to the *Catch the Vision* process have included detailed work on minister numbers. Although the name of our committee underlines that we are not just about ministers, there are some key issues about paid ministers that the Church has to face. The current Assembly policy is to change paid minister numbers in line with the trends in membership, which at the moment means a decline of 3% a year, but this may not be sustainable.

4 Predicting paid minister numbers in the future is not a precise science, but the main factors are clear. Changes in overall numbers are mainly driven by the number of ministers retiring, the numbers coming out of training, and the amount of money local churches are willing to give via the Ministry and Mission Fund (the M&M assessment) to pay for training, stipends and pensions.

5 All the current trends suggest that over the next ten years the number of paid ministers will decline markedly. It is quite possible the numbers could almost halve from around 550 today to about 300. This underlines the importance of taking seriously the challenges in *Equipping the Saints* about the ways we ask our ministers to work.

6 If the Church wants a significantly larger number of ministers in the future than we currently predict, then two trends will have to change. First, the financial giving of our members needs to rise nearer to the standard set by Assembly: a norm of giving 5% of take home pay to the Church. This standard is derived from the Biblical principles of tithing by cheerful givers.

7 The second necessary change would be that either far more of our members hear a Call to enter the ministry or we attract into United Reformed Church work large numbers of ministers from other denominations. But perhaps first we need to ask what God is saying to us in the low number of ministerial candidates.

Honouring Retired Ministers

8 A different major challenge facing the Church is to maintain our record of providing housing for ministers in retirement. Over the years the number of houses under management for retired ministers and their widow(er)s has increased from less than 200 in the late seventies to 372 at the end of 2005. This increase was financed partly by transfers of houses and funds from Synods and The Memorial Hall Trust but most significantly by legacies and donations from individuals. Many of these were inspired by a major appeal launched in 1980, which has been repeated in reports to Assembly ever since.

9 In the period of five years up to 2000 the number of houses stabilised, although the cost of purchasing new houses tended to exceed the proceeds of house sales. In this situation the income from legacies at about £500,000 per annum was sufficient to finance the gradually increasing investment in houses. However, since 2001 the proportion of retiring ministers who require assistance with housing has increased and, with ministers and their spouses living longer, the number of houses for sale has diminished. This change in the pattern of purchases and sales resulted in an increase of 35 houses which, at an average cost of £125,000, created an additional financing requirement of over £4m which has had to be met by loans from general United Reformed Church funds.

10 Forecasting future housing requirements is very difficult but calculations based on the numbers of retirements expected over the next ten years and continuing increases in house prices suggest that the extra funding requirement over that period will

continue at about £1m per annum. With the finances of the Church at full stretch, it is not realistic to expect to meet the whole of this financing requirement by way of further loans from general funds. We have considered approaching external financial institutions for loan finance but have, at this stage, rejected this course as the rental income from properties would not cover the interest cost on additional borrowings.

11 We have concluded that the time has come to raise the profile of the Retired Ministers' Housing Society and its need for extra support. We are delighted that the Revd Bill Wright has accepted an invitation to assist in the advocacy of the financial needs of the retired ministers housing operation. It is planned that this advocacy will be targeted at individuals with a particular emphasis on the value of legacies, which have been such a significant source of support in the past.

Responding to the Government

12 Over the past year, a large amount of staff time has been devoted to responding to requests and concerns from the Government. This seems likely to continue to be a demanding part of the Committee's work. While the Government's objectives may often be in line with Church priorities, their style and timetables do not always fit easily with other Church work.

13 Some of the Resolutions we offer to Assembly are in response to Government policies. In addition we have prepared, and Mission Council has agreed, a summary of United Reformed Church policies to assist the Department of Trade and Industry in its consideration of the terms and conditions under which clergy work. The full document is available on the Church's website.

Maintaining the Machinery

14 A glance at the Resolutions that follow this report will show that not all of the Committee's work is glamorous. In addition to the work covered there, a new document called *The Movement of Ministers* gathers into one place guidance and advice for Elders, Interim Moderators, District Pastoral Committees and others involved in the practical processes when churches find themselves in ministerial vacancy. This is available on the Church's website or in hard copy on request from the Ministries office.

15 Behind these projects, and many other tasks not mentioned, are the hardworking staff of the Ministries office, the sixty people who give their time to the work of the Committee and its Sub-Committees, and the unnumbered colleagues in Districts, Areas and Synods who implement faithfully the Assembly policies in relation to all our recognised ministries. We record our gratitude to them all.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Gwen Collins

Members: Mrs Judith Booth, Mr Rod Morrison, Mr Simon Rowntree, Revd Howard Sharp, Revd Tony Wilkinson

Secretary: Revd Christine Craven

Certificates of Eligibility

1 The 2003 General Assembly asked the Ministries Committee to track the number of Ministers in stipendiary service so that the trend was in line with the current rate of increase or decrease in membership figures for the United Reformed Church. One consequence is that a decision is taken each year as to whether the Accreditation Sub-Committee may issue Certificates of Eligibility to Ministers of other Churches so that they may serve in the United Reformed Church and transfer onto our Roll of Ministers, thereby adding to our Minister numbers.

2 Membership continues to decline at an average rate of 3% per annum. This has left no room for adding extra numbers onto the Roll of Ministers from outside the United Reformed Church. Therefore during the period since our report to Assembly 2004 the Accreditation Sub-Committee has issued no Certificates of Eligibility either for stipendiary or non-stipendiary service. One Certificate of Eligibility issued pre-2002 received an extension and three Certificates of Limited Eligibility were granted. This last category of certificate gives permission for Ministers of other Churches to serve in a United Reformed church for periods up to twelve months whilst retaining their status as a Minister of another Church.

Special Category Ministry (SCM)

3 Since General Assembly 2005 agreed to expand the SCM scheme, two appointments of Ministers of other Churches have been made. These have been to posts that would not otherwise have been filled. It is too early to report anything further on the impact of the extension of Special Category Ministry.

The Roll of Ministers

4 Admissions to the Roll of Ministers (from 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006)

By Ordination and induction: –

Sarah Hall, Timothy Richards, Alison Termie, Peter Lyth, Richard Bradley, John Cook, Kay Cattell, David Morgan, Elizabeth Shaw, Lucy Brierley, Yvonne Tracey, Claire Callanan, David Moss

By reinstatement:- Phillip Jones.

5 Changes within the Roll of Ministers (from 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006)

Non-stipendiary to stipendiary service:-

Sue Macbeth, John Piper

6 Deletions from the Roll of Ministers (from 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006)

by Resignation and/or Transfer to other Churches:

Martin Knight, Christian Vermeulen (to Church of Scotland), Richard West (to Church of Scotland), Geoffrey Rodham, Gillian Jones, David Dean (to USA), Martha McInnes (to USA)

Church Related Community Workers

7 Admission to the List of Church Related Community Workers

(from 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006)

By Commissioning:- Alison Dalton

Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers

8 The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been accredited between 1st April 2005 and 31st March 2006.

Northern Synod:- Christine Eddowes

North Western Synod:- Sally Watson, Joanne Shaw

Mersey Synod:- Sally Buttifant, George Ryan, Wilma Prentice

Yorkshire Synod:-

East Midlands Synod:- David Todd, Jonathan Parish-West

West Midlands:- Peter Murphy, John Desmond

Eastern Synod:- Daphne Savage, James Taylor

South Western Synod:- Michele Gard

Wessex Synod:- Elaine Wood, Philip Maddocks



Assessment Board

Convener: Professor David Cutler

Secretary: Revd Christine Craven

Members: Mr Hugh Abel, Mrs Tina Ashitey, Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Peter Clarke, Revd Diana Cullum-Hall, Miss Sarah Dodds, Revd Roy Fowler, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mrs Judy Harris, Revd Tom Heggie, Revd Dr Irene John, Mrs Barbara Lancaster, Mrs Pat Poinen, Revds Peter Poulter, Edward Sanniez, Nigel Uden, Simon Walkling, Hilma Wilkinson, Dr Cameron Wilson

1 The Board provides the Assessors for the Assessment Conferences held for candidates for the ministry. In 2002/3 the number of candidates attending these Conferences dropped and the numbers have remained fewer than those prior to 2002. Although one reason for the reduction in numbers may be the increasing age of many congregations who therefore have no members who could be challenged to consider ministry, there is a continuing need for

ministerial vocation to be identified and encouraged. Such encouragement begins naturally in the local church where people are known and their gifts first recognised.

2 Six Assessment Conferences were held during the academic years 2003-5. The table summarises the attendance and outcomes.

	2003/2004		2004/2005	
	Applied	Accepted	Applied	Accepted
Training for Stipendiary service	19	15	8	7
Training for Non-stipendiary service	7	3	10	7
Training for Church Related Community Work	2	2	3	2
Transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service	4	4	7	7

3 The annual November consultation at Windermere organised by the Ministries office on behalf of the Assessment Board continues both to provide training for those involved with the interviews of candidates in Synods and from the Assessment Board. It also provides a valuable point of contact between the Board and the Synods.

4 There continues to be concern about the financial difficulties experienced by some students. The Board wishes to repeat the recommendation made in 2004, that each Synod appoint a person who could have an informal discussion with each candidate about his/her financial obligations in order to try to avoid problems during training.

5 The whole Board meets together annually and at the meeting in 2004 began to research the reasons why some students withdraw or are withdrawn from ministerial training. The Board was concerned to know whether such termination of training indicated a lack of rigour on the part of the Board at the assessment Conference or in the assessment process as a whole. In pursuing this matter the research was extended to

those who had resigned from ministry during the first three years after ordination or commissioning. In 2005 the Board discussed the findings of this research. By and large the results showed few common factors. However, in some cases the assessment process had been pushed through with some sense of urgency. The Board is of the opinion that a sense of vocation that will sustain an individual in long term ministry is one that persists for years rather than months and so a hasty response to the request to become a candidate for training is neither necessary nor desirable. The Board also decided that changes should be made to the question asked of medical referees. What the Church really needs to know is whether a person is medically strong enough for the task of ministry not just a period of training.

6 As a result of the resolutions on restructuring passed at General Assembly 2005, the Convener and Secretary of the Assessment Board met with Synod representatives in January 2006 to discuss the future pattern of the assessment process should the Church ratify the resolution to dissolve District Councils. Ideas exchanged were helpful to all concerned and will be valuable in the planning of procedures after 2007.

Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee

Convener: *Revd Bob Day*

Secretary: *CRCW Development Workers*

Members: *Revd John Burgess, Mrs Janet Holden, Revd Tracey Lewis, Mrs Maureen Thompson, Mr Peter Twilley*

1 The Church Related Community Work (CRCW) programme provides a valuable ministry but remains small and still has capacity for expansion. We are glad that several Synods with little experience of CRCWs have been proactive in exploring opportunities for new posts. This contributes towards the target of having at least two CRCWs operating in each Synod. The CRCW pages of the URC website provide information about the programme.

2 We need more people to hear God's Call to this work in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity. An attractive new publicity leaflet about the **Faith in Living** programme at the Partnership for Theological

Education in Manchester is available. It can be used to raise awareness of the training opportunities for CRCW ministry. The **Assets for Life** resources are proving popular and are still available.

3 **Valuing Community Experiences** is a new Training, Learning & Serving (TLS) programme designed for the committed volunteer who works in a church or community context. It will value and develop the participants' community work skills and knowledge and enable her or him to explore the faith-based motivation for this work. The first programme will be offered from January 2007 and hopes to provide a bridge to further training.

Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee

Convener: *Dr Phil Theaker*

Secretary: *Miss Jenny Andrews*

Members: *Mr Bernard Bentley, Mrs Jan Harper, Mr Derek Marsh, Miss Ann Simcock*

1 Over the last two years the Committee has organised two Lay Preaching Commissioners Consultations and considered issues related to Lay Preachers and the local leadership of worship. We share one issue here and the Ministries Committee is bringing a resolution on another.

Lay Preachers' Expenses

2 It has long been a concern that Lay Preachers are not all recompensed on the same basis across the United Reformed Church. The covering of expenses for Lay Preachers ranges from nothing to a realistic reimbursement of travelling expenses and a gift. A number of schemes exist within the United Reformed Church involving Districts, a Lay Preachers' Association and most commonly on a personal basis with the local church. We have concluded for a number of reasons that no one system will fit all situations. However, whilst we realise that some churches are better able to reimburse expenses than others, we consider it a matter of principle that out of pocket expenses should be offered by the churches Lay Preachers serve. It is proper that each Lay Preacher should be reimbursed for the entire amount of the travelling expenses incurred.

3 The expenses incurred by Lay Preachers are not just travelling expenses specific to a particular service but also longer term expenses relating to the purchase of materials and books. The latter add a significant outlay for a Lay Preacher. We recommend, therefore, that each church should offer each Lay Preacher expenses that generously cover travelling expenses and in so doing offset an average portion of their other expenses.

4 Adopting this approach might mean that total payments of £20 and more would be appropriate in many cases where substantial journeys are involved. Such sums are already paid out frequently by many churches.

5 We of course assume that all Lay Preachers are open with the Inland Revenue in dealing with all aspects of their personal finances, including declaring any payments they receive which are not clearly attributable to relevant expenses.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Convener: *Revd Geoffrey Roper*

Secretary: *Mr David Taylor*

Members: *Mrs Lyn Allford, Mr David Hayden, Mr Maurice Dyson (Convener of Pensions Executive), Mr Eric Chilton (Honorary Treasurer)*

1 This Sub-Committee does not deal with the Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund but with the terms and conditions of service of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers. Individual concerns are addressed. In addition, the Sub-Committee deals with policy matters relating to stipends, the Plan for Partnership and Ministers' pensions. There are Resolutions this year on the latter two areas.

2 Mr David Taylor was appointed Secretary to the Sub-Committee as from January 2006. He works two days a week and deals with all enquiries connected with the Plan for Partnership. Mrs Judy Stockings remains the staff member dealing with all queries on ministerial pensions.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Convener: *Revd David Bedford*

Secretary: *Mr Tony Bayley*

Members: *Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Mrs Pauline Mewis, Revd Michael Spencer, Mrs Liz Tadd*

1 This committee is responsible for policy in matters of the provision of retirement housing for ministers and their spouses. It uses the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited as its agent for the implementation of policy and the practical steps associated with the provision of housing.

2 During 2005 20 properties were acquired and 13 were sold increasing the number of properties under management to 372 at the year end.

3 The properties are normally purchased in the name of the Society, but in all cases are managed by the officers of the Society. Where tenants have a financial stake in the property this is recognised by means of a Declaration of Trust.

4 The maximum contributions made by the Society are determined annually on a county by county basis by reference to average semi-detached house prices during the preceding year.

5 In 2005 the standard rent payable was £100 per calendar month. Existing tenants will pay £105 per calendar month in 2006, while new tenants since the beginning of 2004 will pay between £105 and £175 per calendar month depending upon the amount of capital employed by the Society. Widows/widowers are in receipt of a rent reduction (usually £10 per calendar month).

6 The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year which amounted to approximately £475,000.

7 It is expected that during 2006 assistance will be required for 15 retiring ministers. After allowing for re-housing and the needs of widows/widowers it would be prudent to anticipate up to 22 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to £2.5million and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.

8 During 2005 visits were made by the officers of the Society to 95 applicants, tenants and other properties. In addition, we continue to rely heavily upon, and are grateful for, the commitment of those members of local congregations who generously give oversight to our retirement properties and who assist those who live in them. We would like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to volunteer their assistance in this respect.

9 Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre by Ministries. In 2005 two courses were run and three more are planned for this year. The housing sessions are designed to be of benefit to all, regardless of whether or not financial assistance with housing will be needed. In addition, private discussions on individual needs are provided.

Resolution 24**Revised Remit of the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee****General Assembly**

- i) **agrees that the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee should be renamed the Leadership in Worship Committee and be given the following remit:**
 - a) **To support Lay Preachers**
 - b) **To support other lay people involved in leading worship**
 - c) **To encourage members of congregations to become more involved in leading worship**
- ii) **requests the Nominations Committee to propose, as soon as possible, an initial list of names to serve on this Sub-Committee, including at least one Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher.**

1.1 One of the main topics of discussion at the 2005 Lay Preaching Commissioners Consultation was how Lay Preachers fit in to the wider vision of *Equipping the Saints*. Following the Consultation, the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee has come to the view that its present remit will not serve the best interests of the United Reformed Church in the future. While continuing to support Lay Preachers, the Sub-Committee also wants to encourage collaborative forms of worship leadership. In particular, it wishes to provide resources for those engaged in leading worship without any formal training. The Sub-Committee wants to remove any lingering sense of Lay Preachers being defensive about their traditional role and instead see them contribute joyfully, with others, to the many patterns of worship within the Church.

1.2 The Ministries Committee therefore proposes that the Sub-Committee be renamed the **Leadership in Worship Committee**. We propose that the Sub-Committee should have a widened remit to support all lay people involved in leading worship alongside Ministers of Word and Sacrament, eg Lay Preachers, worship leaders and worship teams. It would then promote good practice in all aspects of leading worship.

1.3 At present members of the Sub-Committee are elected by the Lay Preaching Commissioners. With a wider remit, we believe that in future the Nominations Committee should select the committee members as it does for all other standing Sub-Committees of the Ministries Committee.

Resolution 25**Changes to Ministerial Service**

General Assembly approves the following procedures in respect of changes to ministerial service:

1 Statement of Reasons

A Minister/CRCW who decides to move or resign should be asked by the Synod Moderator to make a written statement about the reasons for that course of action. A copy of this statement should be sent by the Moderator to the Secretary for Ministries.

2 Move from one pastorate or post to another within the United Reformed Church

- a) **Where a Minister is moving from one pastorate or post to another, they should discuss with the Moderator whether there are particular reasons behind the move which should be shared with the local church/post that is entering a vacancy.**
- b) **In the case of termed appointments for CRCWs and those in Special Category Ministry, most moves come at the recognised end of that appointment. The same procedure should nonetheless be followed to help with reflection on the ministry.**
- c) **When a Minister is changing pastorates because of difficulties, some form of counselling or debriefing should be offered through the Moderator.**

3 Move away from ministerial service in the United Reformed Church without resignation from the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs

- a) **Some Ministers and CRCWs move out of posts under the auspices of the United Reformed Church in order to exercise another form of service. If the Minister/CRCW wishes to remain on the Roll/list, their move should be subject to the concurrence of the Church.**
- b) **In such a case, the Minister/CRCW should provide a copy of their stated reasons for wishing to move out of URC ministerial service to the appropriate Council of the Church (currently District Council) and seek concurrence with the proposed move.**
- c) **If concurrence is granted, the Minister/CRCW would remain on the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs and his/her name would continue to appear in the Yearbook. He/she would be under the oversight and care of the Synod in which they reside. The Minister/CRCW would be eligible to seek a future pastorate/post within the United Reformed Church upon request to the Moderators.**
- d) **If concurrence is not granted and the Minister/CRCW proceeds with the move, the District should send a report of the District decision to the Accreditation Sub-Committee. This report should:**
 - i) **set out details of the post the Minister/CRCW has accepted;**
 - ii) **the reasons why the District did not consider it appropriate to give concurrence.**

If the Accreditation Sub-committee gives approval for the move, the Minister's/CRCW's status would remain as in (c) above.

If the Accreditation Sub-Committee upholds the decision of the District, the Minister/CRCW would be deemed to have resigned from the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs. His/her name would no longer appear in the Yearbook. If a Minister/CRCW does not receive concurrence and was removed from the Roll/list, he/she would have the right of appeal to the Ministries Committee.

- e) **The Ministries Committee copy of the Minister's/CRCW's statement should be added to their file, together with a record of whether the move was with or without the concurrence of the Church.**
- f) **If a Minister/CRCW is already outside a post under the auspices of the United Reformed Church and moves to a fresh sphere of service, the same procedure should be followed if they wish to remain on the Roll/list.**

4 Resignation from the Roll of Ministers/list of CRCWs

- a) **When the resignation of a Minister/CRCW from the Roll/list is accepted, his/her written statement should be added to his/her Ministries Committee file.**
- b) **This statement should be consulted if the former Minister/CRCW seeks reinstatement to the Roll/list at some future date.**
- c) **If a Minister/CRCW were not prepared to give reasons for their resignation this fact should be noted on their file.**

1.1 At the end of a piece of ministerial service, Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) may:

- a) move from one pastorate/post to another within the United Reformed Church;
- b) move into secular employment or other appointment not funded by the Church but without resigning from the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs;

c) resign from the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs.

1.2 There is no call for a procedure for moves and resignations that would in any way mirror the elaborate procedures for assessment, call or reinstatement. But whilst the United Reformed Church has taken great care over beginnings, it has spent less time considering endings – even though these will affect the next beginning for local churches and for individuals. Concern

has been expressed to the Ministries Committee that the standing of Ministers moving in situation (b) becomes unclear and that generally the Church is not learning all that it should from the experiences of those moving. The Ministries Committee agrees that clearer procedures should apply to changes in ministerial service.

1.3 Behind each ending is a story of successful or difficult ministry, joys and problems. Currently, the reasons for the move do not reach the Ministries Committee, which therefore has no overview of emerging trends or any common factors which lead to moves and resignations. Such an overview might help the Church to address problems before they lead to the emotional and financial costs that flow from people ending ministerial service prematurely. It would also highlight examples of good practice.

1.4 When a Minister or CRCW leaves the direct service of the United Reformed Church, we believe a conscious decision needs to be made about their future status. This has not always been satisfactorily addressed in the past. There should be an option to remain on the Roll of Ministers or list of CRCWs when the individual and the relevant Council of the Church share a conviction that the new work continues to be an expression of the person's ministry. Equally, names should not remain on the Roll when, for example, key personal convictions expressed at ordination have disappeared.

1.5 Explanatory Notes to Paragraphs in the Resolution:

Para 1:

Accompanying most, if not all, moves and resignations there will already be a conversation with the Synod Moderator.

Para 2(a):

There is no presumption that a move hides a problem. The reason for the move might be the recognition that it comes at the right time for Minister and church so that new gifts and visions can be explored; or the Minister may simply have felt an overwhelming, unexpected Call to move elsewhere. Where the ministry has been harmonious and effective the Minister may wish to offer insights upon which the church might reflect. It might be, however, that some difficulty has prompted the move and therefore the local congregation and the wider Church should reflect on the outgoing Minister's perspective.

Para 2(c):

The Committee suggests this is good practice that should always be followed since such support might prevent eventual resignation from ministry. The Ministerial Counselling Service can provide expert help.

Resolution 26

Duty to consider extension of full-time stipendiary service

General Assembly approves the adoption of the following procedure for the duty to consider extension of full time stipendiary service by a Minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker beyond the retirement age set by the United Reformed Church.

- 1 In the month of a Minister's 64th birthday the payroll office shall confirm the expected date of retirement as the end of the month in which he/she is 65.**
- 2 If a Minister does not wish to retire on that date he/she must apply for an extension of full time service for a maximum of three years.**
- 3 He/she shall speak to the Synod Moderator and thereafter submit an application for an extension of full time service to the appropriate Council of the Church (currently District Council).**
- 4 On receipt of the application, the Council shall consult with the Minister, Moderator, Elders of the Church/es/post and the Church Meeting(s), where the Minister is in a pastorate, to see whether or not the individual circumstances warrant an extension of full time stipendiary service. The circumstances to be considered shall include:**
 - a Minister drawing near to the end of a particular project or piece of work who might need to spend a year or two to bring it to a conclusion;
 - plans for a new grouping of churches in a particular area where it is felt desirable for the Minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition;
 - a Minister, coming into ministry later in life, who might have just a short time to go before qualifying for retired ministers' housing;
 - a Minister whose spouse has a short period to go before retirement.

- 5 If the Council agrees with the request, the Minister’s application, together with an account of the particular circumstances and a record of both the local church’s/post’s support and that of the appropriate Council, will be sent to the Secretary for Ministries for a decision by the Accreditation Sub-Committee. In reaching this decision the Accreditation Sub-Committee shall consider the individual circumstances alongside the overall responsibility of the United Reformed Church to monitor Minister numbers so that:**
- a) the financial responsibility to support the ministerial work force is not threatened; and**
b) the introduction of newly ordained and commissioned ministers is not curtailed.
- 6 The Secretary for Ministries shall inform the appropriate Council and the Minister of the decision of the Accreditation Sub-Committee. If the decision is to accept an extension then a new date of retirement shall be agreed.**
- 7 A year before the revised date of retirement, the payroll office shall once again write to the Minister and if a further extension of full time stipendiary service is requested the United Reformed Church must consider the request. The procedure set out above will therefore be repeated.**

- 1 The General Assembly in 1997 resolved that:-
- Ministers should normally retire from full time stipendiary service not later than six calendar months from the date on which they attain the age of 65.
 - In exceptional circumstances a minister may remain in full time service for a maximum of three years beyond the age of 65. The application shall be supported by the pastorate, and receive concurrence of District Council before the agreement of the Accreditation Sub-Committee is sought. Ministers should make application for such an extension by the date of their 64th birthday.

- 2 In 2002 General Assembly resolved that;
- Full time stipendiary service for Ministers and CRCWs should cease at the end of the month in which a person reaches her/his 65th birthday.

However the option to stay in full time service for a maximum of three years beyond the age of 65 remained.

The ‘exceptional circumstances’ were set out in Reports to Assembly 1997 (Paragraph 3.7) as follows:

As we bring this resolution however we are aware that there are sometimes circumstances in which it may be desirable for a minister to continue, albeit for a limited period. For example a minister might be drawing near to the end of a particular project or piece of work and need to spend a year or two to bring it to conclusion; or a District Council might be planning a new grouping of churches in a particular area and it might be felt desirable for a minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition; or a minister, coming into ministry later in life, might have just a year to go to qualify for retired ministers’ housing; or a minister’s spouse might have a short period to go to retirement.

3 Under the draft Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 the United Reformed Church is expected to have a duty to consider applications to remain in paid service after the Church’s normal retirement age. In addition, the 2005 Assembly asked for attention to be given to issues relating to age discrimination in the policies of the Church and the proposers of the relevant Resolution specifically referred to the age of ministerial retirement. The Ministries Committee therefore proposes a revision of the existing procedure.

4 It is proposed that any Minister/CRCW who so chooses may apply to continue in full time stipendiary service after their 65th birthday and receive sympathetic consideration. We also propose the removal of the upper age limit for final retirement. The factors set out in 1997 will still be deemed relevant. We believe however that the Church should also have regard to the impact of requests for later retirement on its finances and the potential opportunities for Ministers and CRCWs preparing for service. A very large surge of requests for later retirements could potentially have significant impacts in these areas.

5 Some former Congregational Union of Scotland Ministers have different retirement arrangements from other United Reformed Church Ministers and these would remain in place.

Resolution 27**Return to work after ill-health retirement**

General Assembly adopts the following procedure for return to work after ill-health retirement of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers.

When a Minister or CRCW who has previously retired on grounds of ill-health wishes to return to work:

- i) The Minister/CRCW will inform the Moderator of the Synod in which they are living.**
- ii) The Moderator will:**
 - a) Inform the Secretary for Ministries**
 - b) Arrange for a Synod interview with the Minister/CRCW to assess personal and spiritual readiness to return to work and assess any further training needs. The council of the Church that gave concurrence for retirement of that Minister/CRCW should be consulted, as well as the Moderator of the Synod.**
- iii) The Secretary for Ministries will arrange for medical references to be gathered. These will include a report from the Minister's/CRCW's own doctor and if applicable his/her consultant and an independent medical/psychiatric assessment paid for by the United Reformed Church. The United Reformed Church's medical referee, or whomsoever the referee names as a specialist in each individual case, will conduct this assessment.**
- iv) A recommendation will be sent by the Synod to the Secretary for Ministries following the Synod interview.**
- v) The Secretary for Ministries will take the medical and Synod reports to the Accreditation Sub-Committee who will then take the decision as to whether the Moderators may introduce the Minister's/CRCW's name to a local church or post, subject to the completion of any agreed training programme.**
- vi) The local church or post will be made aware by the Moderator that the individual is returning to work after retirement on the grounds of ill health.**
- vii) The Minister will remain in receipt of the pension and, where applicable, in Church housing until he/she receives a call.**
- viii) If there has been no call by a local church after a year the situation will be reviewed. This review will involve a meeting between the Minister and the Moderator in the first instance. Following that meeting the Moderator will advise the Accreditation Sub-Committee as to whether the Minister's name should remain available for introduction to a pastorate.**
- ix) Should the original health problem recur to the point where early retirement on the grounds of ill health becomes necessary, there should be a streamlined procedure for approving retirement on the grounds of ill-health. There will normally be no further opportunity to return to ministerial service.**

1.1 A number of Ministers and CRCWs retire from stipendiary service early on the grounds of ill-health. Some may request a return to work because they have recovered from the illness and believe themselves fit for work. At present there is no procedure to deal with such a request.

Resolution 28**Amendments to The Plan for Partnership**

General Assembly agrees the following changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration.

Deletions are shown in [square brackets] and additions are shown in *italics*.

5.4.1 Those in full-time service over the age of 65 years [and 6 months], except those approved by the Ministries Committee (para 5.2.2)

6.1.3 Maternity/*Adoption*/Paternity provisions: details of arrangements for [maternity pay and] parental leave *and pay* can be obtained from the MoM office.

6.1.4 *Jury Service: ministers who are called for Jury Service should inform the MoM Office as soon as possible to enable the loss of earnings declaration to be completed in advance.*

6.1.[4]5 Pulpit supply fees: when the MoM Office has been advised that a minister remunerated under the Plan in unable to work due to ill-health or is on [maternity] *parental leave or is on Jury Service* or is absent on a sabbatical term which lasts for a period of more than four weeks or is suspended under the Section O Process or is the Moderator of the General Assembly, the actual pulpit supply costs incurred by the church arising because of the absence will be reimbursed to the limit shown in Appendix A. In group pastorates and part-time pastorates, reimbursement will only be in respect of services which would have been conducted by the absent minister. Claim forms for the reimbursement of pulpit supply costs can be obtained from the MoM Office.

Existing Paragraphs 6.1.5, 6.1.5.1, and 6.1.5.2 are re-numbered 6.1.6, 6.1.6.1, and 6.1.6.2 respectively.

Existing Paragraphs 6.1.6 and 6.1.6.1 are re-numbered 6.1.7 and 6.1.7.1 respectively.

7. HOLIDAY [PROVISION] ENTITLEMENT

7.1 Ministers/CRCWs are entitled to 5 weeks holiday in each calendar year and one further Sunday away from the pastorate. When a minister/CRCW only serves for part of a year the holiday provision should be pro rata. One week of holiday may be carried forward to the following year. Holiday entitlement is not affected by sick leave, *parental leave, Jury Service*, in-service training courses or sabbatical leave. Such periods of leave/absence may result in more than one week's holiday being carried forward into the following year.

APPENDIX A – APPROVED RATES UNDER THE PLAN

6.1.1	[Maximum part-time stipend	75% of full time]
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1.1 The Plan for Partnership is a substantial document which sets out the entitlements of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers, as agreed by past Assemblies. This Resolution tidies up some drafting and updates the Plan for existing practices, including the new eligibility of Ministers for Jury Service.

Resolution 29**Pension Fund Changes re Civil Partnerships**

General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 5 December 2005, so that the following definition is added to the definitions section of the Rules:

'Civil Partner: in respect of a member, a person who has entered into a civil partnership with the member which is recognised under the Civil Partnership Act 2004 (and which has not been dissolved or annulled by a court).'

The following Rule is also added as a new Rule 49:

'A member's Civil Partner shall be treated for the purposes of the Rules as if he or she were the member's spouse but only in respect of:

benefits that are attributable to Pensionable Service from 5 December 2005, including that day, or, in the case of money purchase AVCs, to contributions payable on or after that date; and

benefits that are not attributable to Pensionable Service and are payable as a result of the member's death on or after 5 December 2005.

The pension sharing appendix shall be deemed to be amended to the extent required to comply with the Civil Partnership Act 2004.'

1.1 This amendment to the Pension Fund rules reflects the changes introduced under the Civil Partnerships Act 2004. These require pension schemes to treat civil partners in the same way as spouses in respect of benefits attributable to pensionable service/

contributions made since 5 December 2005. The proposed wording reflects the statutory requirement in full but does not go beyond it. Mission Council has discussed and endorsed this approach.

Resolution 30**Pension Fund Rule on Ill-health Retirement**

General Assembly resolves to amend the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from the date of this resolution, so that the Rule 20 is deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following:

'Ill-health Retirement

1.1 In the event that a member retires before normal pension age on account of incapacity to undertake the duties of a stipendiary minister or CRCW due to ill-health duly certified to the satisfaction of the Pension Trustee in accordance with the requirements of Rule 20.2, he/she shall be entitled to an immediate pension which shall be calculated as provided in Rule 18 but by reference to the member's full prospective Pensionable Service up to normal pension age.

1.2 An ill-health pension shall only be put into payment if the Pension Trustee has received evidence from a registered medical practitioner that the member is, and will continue to be, unable to carry on his or her occupation because of physical or mental impairment.

1.3 The Pension Trustee shall review the state of health of any member who receives a pension under this Rule 20 at regular intervals and at least once every five years, except where the Pension Trustee considers this inappropriate (for example, in cases of severe ill-health or when the time for review is within twelve months of the member reaching normal pension age); and the member shall submit to any medical examinations which the Pension Trustee may require in order to carry out such a review.

Resolution 30-31

1.4 If any member who has been granted an ill-health pension recovers sufficiently and undertakes remunerated employment, that member must advise the Pension Trustee accordingly.

1.5 The Pension Trustee may vary or suspend any pension payable under this rule if the Pension Trustee considers that the member no longer satisfies the condition described in sub-rule 20.2 for the payment of an ill-health pension.

1.6 Provision for dependent children may be payable (see Rule 48).'

1.1 The proposed new Pension Fund rule provides that all ill-health pensions shall be calculated to include prospective pensionable service. This reflects the decision of the 2005 Assembly.

1.2 It also reflects the requirements of the Finance Act 2004 in relation to the payment, and cessation, of ill-health pensions.

Resolution 31

Pension Fund Rule changes Part I

General Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from 6 April 2006.

1. Early Leavers

To add the following definition to the definitions section of the Rules, as follows:

'Cash Transfer Sum: means the cash equivalent of the member's benefits calculated by the Actuary in accordance with the statutory provisions prevailing from time to time.'

Rule 29 shall be amended so that the words 'If a member leaves the qualifying service of the URC' are deleted and replaced with: 'If a member leaves Pensionable Service'.

In addition, Rule 29.1.1 shall be amended so that a further sentence is added, as follows:

'Where a member has at least three months but less than two years qualifying service he/she shall also be entitled to the option of taking a Cash Transfer Sum which may be transferred to any other pension scheme or arrangement duly authorised by law to receive such payment provided that such a transfer would not be an unauthorised payment. A receipt from the receiving pension scheme or arrangement shall be a full discharge of the Pension Trustee's liabilities in respect of the pension.'

A new sub-rule 29.1.3 shall be added as follows:

'The Pension Trustee must notify the member of the right to make an election for a Cash Transfer Sum and must inform the member that if he or she does not make an election by the reply date specified in the notification, the Trustee will pay a cash refund (as described in sub-rule 29.1.1). If the member makes an election for a Cash Transfer Sum before the reply date (or any later date allowed by the Pension Trustee), the Pension Trustee must give effect to it. Otherwise, the Pension Trustee must pay a cash refund (as described in sub-rule 29.1.1) to the member.'

2. Commutation

Rule 17.3 (prohibiting the commutation of pension attributable to AVCs made on or after 8 April 1987) shall be deleted, and sub-rule 17.4 shall be renumbered 17.3 and any references to it shall be replaced accordingly.

Rule 26.2 (also prohibiting the commutation of any pension attributable to AVCs made under arrangements first entered into by the member after 7 April 1987) shall be deleted sub-note 26.3 shall be renumbered 26.2 and any references to it shall be replaced accordingly.

3. Pensions for dependent children

Rule 48 shall be amended so that the words 'PROVIDED THAT a pension shall be paid only until the child attains age 23 if the pension would otherwise be an unauthorised payment under the Finance Act 2004' are added immediately after the words 'whichever is the earlier' at the end of the first paragraph.

In addition, Rule 48 shall be amended so that the first line of the third paragraph shall be deleted and replaced as follows:

'From January 2006 the initial level of the pension in respect of a dependent child or children shall be £929pa for the first dependent child and £471pa per child for any further dependent children.'

4. Other Dependants

The definition of 'Dependant' in the definitions section of the Rules shall be deleted and replaced with the following:

'Dependant: a person who:

- (a) was married to the member at the date of the member's death; or
- (b) is a child of the member as described in rule 48; or
- (c) in the opinion of the Pension Trustee, at the date of the member's death, was financially dependent on the member, had a financial relationship with the member of mutual dependence or was dependent on the member because of mental or physical impairment.'

5. General Finance Act 2004 amendments

The schedule summarising the Inland Revenue limits shall be amended so that it is in two parts, with the wording in the current schedule being entitled 'Part II' and the following wording added as an introduction to the schedule and as Part I:

'This schedule is divided into 2 parts:

Part I sets out the overriding tax rules that apply to the Fund with effect from 6 April 2006, and Part II summarises the Inland Revenue Limits that applied to the Fund before 6 April 2006, and which shall be deemed to continue to apply on and after 6 April 2006, subject to the modifications described in Part I.

Part I – Tax Rules

1. **Definitions:** In this Part I the following words and phrases have the following meanings:

A-Day: 6 April 2006

Authorised Payment: a payment authorised in accordance with section 164 of the Finance Act 2004 (an authorised member payment) or section 175 of that Act (an authorised employer payment).

Finance Act: Finance Act 2004

HMRC: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Inland Revenue Limits: the limits which in the opinion of the Pension Trustee would have applied to benefits and contributions, if the tax regime in force before A-Day had continued to apply on and after A-Day, in order not to prejudice the Fund's exempt approved status under that tax regime, assuming that HMRC practice (as summarised in the practice note IR12 and in HMRC Updates) and any concessions granted in relation to the Fund by HMRC would have continued on the same basis as applied immediately before A-Day. Inland Revenue Limits are summarised in Part II of this schedule.

Unauthorised Payment: an unauthorised payment as defined in section 160(5) of the Finance Act.

2. **Overriding effect:** This Part I of the schedule overrides any other provisions of the Trust Deed and Rules of the Fund that are inconsistent with it except clause 9 of the Trust Deed (power of amendment) and any other provision conferring a power to modify the Fund.
3. **Registered pension scheme:** The Fund is intended to be a registered pension scheme for the purposes of Part 4 of the Finance Act. The Pension Trustee shall not be required to take any action if in its opinion doing so could jeopardise the status of the Fund as a registered pension scheme.
4. **Unauthorised Payments:** Any provision of the Trust Deed and Rules which would require the Pension Trustee to make an Unauthorised Payment shall be construed as conferring discretion upon the Pension Trustee or managers to make that payment. However, if immediately before A-Day, the consent of the URC, a Participating Body, or any other person, would have been required before the Pension Trustee could make a payment, then the discretion conferred by this paragraph to make a payment of that type may be exercised only with the consent of that person.
5. **Pension for life:** A pension payable to a member under the Fund must be payable for life and must not reduce in payment, except in circumstances permitted under paragraph 2(4) of schedule 28 of the Finance Act 2004.
6. **Inland Revenue Limits:** If in the opinion of the Pension Trustee a payment otherwise due from the Fund would cause Inland Revenue Limits to be exceeded, it shall be reduced to the extent necessary to prevent it from doing so in the manner decided by the Pension Trustee. Accordingly, benefits shall not unless the Pension Trustee decides otherwise with the consent of the Assembly exceed the Inland Revenue Limits as summarised in Part II of this schedule. If a combination of payments would cause Inland Revenue Limits to be exceeded, the Trustees shall reduce all or any of them in any manner which they think fit but only to the extent necessary to satisfy the Pension Trustee that Inland Revenue Limits are not exceeded.
7. **Approval:** Any provision of the Fund that refers to a requirement that Approval must not be jeopardised or prejudiced (whether expressed in those terms or not) or to a requirement that consent or approval must be obtained from the Board of the Inland Revenue as a condition of any payment or action shall be interpreted as follows. The Pension Trustee shall decide whether in its opinion the condition would probably have been met had similar circumstances arisen before A-Day, and if so, the condition will be treated as met. Otherwise, the condition will be treated as not met.
8. **Cash sums:** The Pension Trustee shall have the power to permit any member or a dependant (including members whose pensionable service ended before A-Day and their dependants) to exchange the whole or part of any benefit otherwise payable under the Fund (including, in the case of the member, benefits payable in respect of his/her dependant) for a lump sum, on terms decided by the Trustee having consulted the Actuary (except to the extent if any) that the Rules provide, separately from this Schedule, for a cash sum to be payable in the circumstances that apply to the member, whether of the same or a different amount, and for a method of determining the terms on which pension is exchanged, in which case the relevant provisions of the Rules shall apply), so long as:
 - 8.1 the cash sum is an Authorised Payment (see in particular Schedule 29 to the Finance Act 2004);
 - 8.2 the exchange is not prohibited by section 91 of the Pensions Act 1995;
 - 8.3 the exchange does not cause a breach of the preservation, revaluation or contracting-out requirements of the Pension Schemes Act 1993.

Subject to paragraphs 8.1 and 8.3, the Pension Trustee may decide to pay benefits as a cash sum without the member's or dependant's consent, if it would have had the power to do so under the

Rules as they applied on 5 April 2005 or the pension is attributable in the opinion of the Pension Trustee to qualifying service on or after 6 April 2006.

Any restriction in the Rules on the amount of benefit that may be paid as a cash sum shall be ignored and this provision overrides paragraph 6 (Inland Revenue Limits) and paragraph 7 (Approval).'

1.1 These amendments to the Pension Fund rules arise from recent legislation and particularly the Finance Act 2004, which changed the tax rules for pension funds with effect from 6 April 2006.

Resolution 32

Pension Fund Rule changes Part II

General Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, with effect from the date of this resolution.

1. Participating Bodies

The current definition of 'Participating Bodies' in the Rules shall be amended by the words:

'in accordance with rule 14A', after the words:

'means such United Reformed Churches or any other body admitted to membership of the Fund'.

A new Rule 14 A shall be added as follows:

14A Participating Bodies

14A.1 A church or other body may participate in the Scheme and so become a Participating Body if it agrees by deed to be bound by the Definitive Deed and Rules as a Participating Body. Participation may take place only if Approval is not prejudiced and with the consent of the Assembly which must also execute the deed. Participation shall start when the deed is executed or on such earlier or later date as may be specified in the deed. The new Participating Body must, unless the URC directs otherwise, agree to nominate the Principal Employer to make decisions for it which relate to the Pensions Act 1995 (in particular the operation of section 16 to 21 and section 35) or to the Pensions Act 2004 and any regulations made under either of those Acts under which it is envisaged that one employer in a multi-employer scheme may act for all the employers participating in the scheme.

14A.2 A PARTICIPATING BODY (OTHER THAN THE URC) WITHDRAWS FROM THE FUND ON THE WITHDRAWAL DATE WHICH IS THE EARLIER OF THE FOLLOWING DATES:

14A.2.1 the date specified in a written notice from the Participating Body to the Pension Trustee that the Participating Body is terminating its liability to contribute to the Fund and withdrawing from membership of the Fund;

14A.2.2 the date specified in a written notice from the URC to the Trustees, copied to the Participating Body, that the Participating Body is to terminate its contributions to the Fund and to withdraw from the Fund; or

14A.2.3 the date that the Participating Body goes into liquidation, is dissolved or ceases to carry on business.

14A.3 If there is any doubt if and when the Withdrawal Date has occurred, this is decided by the Pension Trustee. The Participating Body has no further liability under the Trust Deed and Rules of the Fund after the Withdrawal Date (except for paying any arrears of contributions due before the Withdrawal Date) but this does not affect any continuing liability imposed by the Pension Schemes

Act 1993, the Pensions Act 1995, the Pensions Act 2004 or the Finance Act 2004 or any other legislation or legal requirement.

14A.4 Effect on Members in Pensionable Service: Each Member employed by the withdrawing Participating Body and who is in service in membership of the Fund on the Withdrawal Date is deemed to have left service on the Withdrawal Date and his or her benefits are calculated accordingly under the Trust Deed and Rules.

14A.5 Pension Trustee's powers: On, or at any time following, the Withdrawal Date, the Pension Trustee may make a transfer payment under Rule 36 to secure benefits from an Assurance Company for all or any of the Members who are or were employed by the Participating Body which has withdrawn from membership of the Fund. Otherwise, benefits are payable under the Fund in accordance with the Trust Deed and Rules.

Rule 15.2 shall be amended by the addition of the following words after the first sentence:

'The Participating Bodies shall contribute to the expenses of administering the Fund including such share of the Fund's Pension Protection Fund levy as the Assembly shall determine from time to time on the advice of the Actuary.'

2. Winding-up

Rule 35.1 shall be amended so that the following words are added at the end of it as follows:

'On the determination of the Fund, the Fund shall be wound up in accordance with Rule 35.2 except if, and to the extent, any statutory priority order overrides it.'

1.1 These changes clarify some aspects of the Pension Fund rules in ways that are consistent with current legislation.

Review of Ministry & Mission Fund

1 Remit

1.1 In July 2005 General Assembly considered the Catch the Vision report and passed the following resolution "General Assembly instructs the Treasurer to conduct a review of the Ministry & Mission Fund and report to the 2006 Assembly".

2 Conclusion

2.1 This review has attempted to identify the present problems with the Ministry & Mission Fund and establish a more satisfactory way going forward. There is a need for strategic planning and a better understanding of what the fund is for and how it is spent. Several matters, that are being addressed elsewhere, have an impact on future budget requirements and how Synods raise their contributions. Thus this review ought properly to be seen as an interim report until these are resolved and the recommendations of this report are brought to fruition.

3 Summary of Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that

1. The process of setting the budget in consultation with Synods should follow the principles originally outlined in the Plan for Partnership with a revised timetable.
2. Communication generally should be improved and, in particular, local churches reminded that Ministry is the first call on their funds.
3. Synods investigate ways to improve their method of raising their Ministry & Mission Fund contribution.
4. All who consider this report be invited to add their active support to give 5% of their take home pay to the Church.
5. Advocacy should have a higher profile within the Church and that a Stewardship Sunday should be introduced.
6. The Church develops a five-year Strategic Plan with an annual plan for the coming year which will help the budget process.
7. There should be a system monitoring the deployment allocation and M & M Fund contribution across Synods.
8. All CRCW's, Special category ministers and staff employed locally, except for General Assembly appointments, should be accountable to Synods or local boards of management.
9. An attempt should be made to establish a common two-tier scheme with guidelines for dealing with non-ministerial costs for general application.

4 Reason for the review

4.1 The recent pattern of setting the Annual Budget has placed a target requirement of income

to be raised by the Church through the Ministry & Mission Fund. This has been represented by a percentage increase on the previous year's pledge from each Synod. However the experience over recent years has been that many Synods have not been able to pledge their target figure. Furthermore some Synods have then been unable to meet their pledge although it must be recognised that they may still be net contributors to the cost of ministry. The overall result has had the following outcome:

	2003 £'000	2004 £'000	2005 £'000
Target	19,454	20,077	20,375
Pledge	19,305	19,843	19,903
Actual	19,312	19,691	19,878

Shortfall of actual against target

	2003	2004	2005
	142	386	497

Clearly this is unsatisfactory and underlines the ineffectiveness of the present process.

4.2 The effect of the shortfall would have been to deplete the balance of the general funds of the Church in these years had it not been for legacies and other income, which it is not possible to anticipate or budget for accurately. The balance of these funds in 2004 was £14649k., but £4958k. was invested in property and £4557k. lent to Retired Ministers Housing. After some other dispositions only £5741k. remained, which would have been available from the sale of short-term investments to meet immediate cash flow needs. This is just three months requirements for revenue expenditure and excludes any capital needs.

4.3 Looking longer term it is necessary to increase our giving or face a reduction in expenditure. Although this could be achieved by savings in the central costs of Administration, Assembly Programmes and Training, there is a limit to this. Eventually a reduction in the number of stipendiary ministers would be necessary over and above any adjustments made by General Assembly through maintaining the ratio of ministers to membership.

5 How is the Ministry & Mission Fund spent?

5.1 Although there is some income from other sources, including legacies and from restricted funds, nearly 90% of expenditure of central funds must now be met from M & M Fund contributions. A summary of this expenditure for the last four years shows:

	2002 £'000	2003 £'000	2004 £'000	2005 £'000
Ministry	15,575	15,626	16,167	16,209
Training	1,760	1,658	1,777	1,626*
Programmes	1,334	1,319	1,307	1,526*
Administration	1,644	1,447	1,437	1,619
Totals	20,313	20,050	20,688	20980

- £225k. being the central cost of Youth and Children’s Work Trainers in 2005 is shown under Programmes. The equivalent cost in previous years being under shown under Training.

6 Communication

6.1 It has been obvious for some time that the understanding of how the Ministry & Mission Fund is spent should be improved. The format of the Annual Accounts has been changed a little but this falls a long way short of meeting the requirement. This has already been recognised by General Assembly in 2005 by passing Resolution 31 “General Assembly resolves that a report showing how the Ministry and Mission Fund contributions have been spent should be sent to each year to every local church.”

6.2 In the meantime several Synods produce a “simple guide to M & M” to help local churches. Hopefully this report will give a further insight into several of the essential aspects of the finances of the Church prior to the production of the report envisaged by Resolution 31.

6.3 There is always the opportunity for individuals (with the gift aid possibility) and local churches to make one off contributions to the M & M Fund when they are able. However this is not widely known and should be communicated. There is also the need to produce new Stewardship material, see Section 11 Advocacy and Stewardship below.

6.4 Although the remit is a review of the Ministry & Mission Fund it is worthwhile going back to the main guiding principle of the Plan for Partnership. That is that Ministry is the first call on the funds of local churches. This needs fresh emphasis.

6.5 The information flow between Church House and Synods could be improved especially in relation to the budget setting process, see Section 9 below, where a better dialogue with Synods is envisaged with a revised timetable.

6.6 It is vital, of course, that the correct vision behind the M & M Fund is communicated. The United Reformed Church has always set its face against any idea that stipendiary ministers should be deployed on the basis of which congregations can pay the most. Instead in the community of the Church we follow the New Testament principle that each Christian gives, not least financially, according to their means. They give in gratitude for the overwhelming love of God not in order to secure some particular benefits. Such giving by individuals will mean that some congregations will be in a position to give very much more than others to the M & M Fund.

6.7 The local councils of the Church, where every congregation is represented, have the responsibility for seeing how the resources made possible through the M & M Fund, including the valuable resource of our stipendiary ministers, are best employed. In thinking about ministerial deployment, the report Equipping the Saints stressed the need to look at all available resources, including Non-stipendiary Ministers and recognised Local Church Leaders, and not to behave as if paid ministers are the only proper form of congregational leadership. In its response to that Report, General Assembly endorsed this. It underlined the need for decisions about deployment of paid ministers not to be made on the basis of history or on the basis of every congregation having a proportionate share of a diminishing number of paid ministers; instead deployment decisions should be made on the basis of current and future mission opportunities.

6.8 **It is, therefore, recommended** that Communication generally should be improved and, in particular, local churches reminded that the Ministry & Mission Fund is the first call on their funds.

7 The true cost of Ministry

7.1 It will be seen that the majority of spending is on Ministry which is currently running at 75% of all expenditure. The bulk of this relates to supporting the stipendiary ministers.

7.2 The direct cost of stipendiary ministry for 2006 is:

Stipend	£19788	
National Insurance		1908
Pension contribution		3097
Total		£24793

7.3 The true cost of ministry borne centrally should include the remaining costs of Ministry, Training, and the majority of the cost of the Finance Office. In 2004 these amounted to £3,419k or £5036 per minister bringing the cost from the M & M Fund to £29829 per annum. In addition there are those items of expenditure borne by the local church – the manse, car or car allowance, book allowance etc. – which probably makes the full cost of ministry £36000 per annum.

7.4 Using £30000 as a guide figure for the costs borne centrally, it will be seen that the shortfall of £445,000 in 2005 is the equivalent of 15 ministers. However in the short term only the direct cost of ministry of £24793 can be saved, and thus the shortfall is the equivalent of 18 ministers or about 1 1/2 per Synod.

8 Training

8.1 After Ministry, Training is the next highest individual spend. Whilst the training of stipendiary ministers for pastorates still dominates there are many other requirements. These are illustrated by the growing number of the people employed by the Church in other tasks. Lay leadership, pastoral assistants, youth ministry, schools ministry are all emerging and may be more relevant in many local situations.

8.2 The need to be clear about the various types of ministry which are now required in the changing world is obvious. Perhaps an answer to the question – what is Church today? – will help. Certainly it is not just found in church buildings.

8.3 There is a current review of the training needs of the Church and how these should be met. It is to be hoped that this will, in the longer term, reduce the current level of expenditure incurred centrally.

9 Historic approach and current methodology

9.1 There are two aspects which we have attempted to cover in the review

- The Plan for Partnership, which sets out our agreed basis for Ministerial support
- The Ministry & Mission Fund including Advocacy, which aims to raise the money from local churches through Synods.

9.2 The Plan for Partnership, when it was first agreed by General Assembly in 1980, gave a summary of the principles and process of the Ministry & Mission Fund. Looking at these there are several points worth noting:

1. The total requirement of the central fund shall be placed before Provinces (now Synods), a Provincial contribution accepted, and each Province will then be free to determine in its own way the contributions required from its local churches in order that the provincial total shall be guaranteed. In using the word “guaranteed” it is meant that each Province will do everything within its power to meet the agreed financial contribution. In this context it should be noted that the church “guarantees” the stipends of ministers, and must therefore have assurances that the funds are available. It has always been the policy of the United Reformed Church that the provision of stipends shall be the first charge upon the finance of the local church.
2. Central Maintenance of the Ministry Committee will make available guidelines and figures to show how the total requirement could be apportioned amongst the Province.
3. Possibly by July and certainly by September in each year, the MoM Committee would consider the first draft of the budget for the year after next.
4. The total requirement of the central fund would then be placed before the Provinces.
5. The Provinces would be asked for their preliminary response and then further discussions would take place during the autumn.

6. By March/April, on the basis of the guaranteed contributions from the Provinces, the budget for the next year would be completed and the General Assembly asked to approve it.

7. It would be understood that the Provincial total for each year would be freely renegotiable rather than, say, having to accept a percentage increase on the previous year.

9.3 Since 1980 both the process and timetable have changed. The concept of agreeing the budget by consultation has been largely lost and replaced by an expenditure driven process with the setting of a target for “the total requirement” adjusted by a percentage increase over the previous year for each Synod. This has led to the impression in some places that the Ministry & Mission Fund is a tax. A more important reason may be the way Synods sometimes make allocations insensitively or without understanding the local situation, giving the impression that the concept is numbers led.

9.4 It is anticipated that in the new governance arrangements the new Council meeting between the biennial General Assemblies will have the power to set the budget each year. On this basis the timetable could be improved if the budget were agreed in the autumn immediately prior to the actual year. This would enable much more up to date figures to be used when budgeting for expenditure. It would also enable a more meaningful dialogue between Church House and Synods based on the best information available on the contributions to be expected. The current situation suffers because of the extended timescale resulting often in very imprecise figures on both income and expenditure.

9.5 Although it was envisaged that each Synod would be responsible for making the offer of its contribution, the principle of apportionment has been there from the outset. Historically, the figures produced for sharing the overall costs between Synods have normally been on the bases of membership, ministerial deployment and population. From these Synods have, through a consultation process, been able to determine what they believe to be a fair offer. In 2002 the then current basis was re-examined and various ways of assessing the apportionment were considered. The conclusion was reached that the basis used was sound and did not require adjustment. However the responses by Synods since that time has not been consistent with the target set by General Assembly. This means that the apportionment has now become skewed.

9.6 **It is, therefore, recommended** that the process of setting the budget in consultation with Synods should follow the principles originally outlined in the Plan for Partnership with the revised timetable suggested.

10 Methods of raising the Ministry & Mission contribution

10.1 Synods use various methods to raise their M & M contribution. Most rely on the work of District Treasurers and M & M conveners. Thus the approach can vary considerably within the Synod. When the United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 churches were generally assessed based on their income and expenditure accounts. To an extent this has remained the system in some Synods. Although this could be said to follow the principle of "ability to pay" it really only mirrors the historic giving pattern of that congregation. It has the disadvantage that churches can fail to show some income because they consider it is not for revenue expenditure. This difficulty in obtaining full financial information means local funding from investments and other income is not always being taken into account, resulting in an inequality in the challenge offered to churches. This is further distorted by the degree of importance placed upon personal giving within different churches. Some churches may have adopted TRIO and the call from General Assembly to give 5% of net take home pay whilst others may only be raising their minimal requirements.

10.2 Some Synods have introduced a Synod wide system for M & M, generally based on membership figures. This, of course, is a disincentive for making church members which can be seen in some churches where the number of adherents is considerable and average church attendance is higher than membership. However there is anecdotal evidence from the sample of church accounts obtained in 2003, that where a Synod wide system is used there is a better understanding of the cost of ministry, the average giving per member is higher and Synod pledges are met.

10.3 In the light of Resolution 41 passed at General Assembly in 2005, "General Assembly resolves, subject to any legal constraints, that as from General Assembly 2007, there shall be one level of council between the General Assembly and the local church, the thirteen 'new Synods'." it would be beneficial for Synods to have discussions together on the alternative approaches to raising M & M and their relative effectiveness.

10.4 **It is, therefore, recommended** that Synods investigate ways to improve their method of raising their Ministry & Mission Fund contribution.

11 Advocacy and Stewardship

11.1 It is considered that Advocacy is not being taken seriously enough within the Church. General Assembly resolved in 1979, and has subsequently reaffirmed on more than one occasion, that members should give 5% of their take home pay. However the Church Life Profile in 2001 indicated that only 38% of regular church *attenders* gave 5% or more. From this it is estimated that the average level of giving in the Church is probably in the region of 2% of net income.

11.2 The review group feel strongly about their personal commitment to giving at least 5% of their take home pay to the Church and would like to invite members of each Council as the report is discussed to give it their active support. If the estimate that the average level of giving in the Church is only 2% is correct, the potential for resources for both additional Ministry and enterprising Mission projects is enormous.

11.3 The Advocacy courses, funded at Windermere by the generosity of some Synods, have not been well attended and one had to be cancelled through a lack of response. Perhaps this suggests that courses in the South are needed too. Or is this confirmation of the need for greater understanding of advocacy and stewardship and commitment to it?

11.4 Furthermore a gathering of over 100 delegates at a Swanwick Consultation in February 2005 were asked two questions. "Did they recall a sermon on stewardship" and "How many present belong to churches which regularly engage in a Stewardship Campaign". There was a minimal response. Yet this is a constant theme in the gospel where the proper use of all God's gifts is core. Whilst it might be considered that the best advocates of giving, both financial and in service, are ministers it is a shared leadership task with the elders too having a key role. Ministers and elders together are best placed to influence directly the responsiveness of local congregations.

11.5 There is plenty of evidence of generous giving at the prime festivals when the need is well expressed. To give advocacy and stewardship adequate attention it is proposed that there should be a Stewardship Sunday throughout the Church to remind congregations of their response to the gospel in the use of their gifts and money. To this end it is also proposed that suitable worship and discussion material should be produced.

11.6 All other initiatives are less immediate and a matter of choice. Whilst there is an attraction in having a fundraiser to focus attention on the importance of giving at the end of the day it is the regular advocacy at local congregation level that alone will sustain giving. The question does, of course, arise about the potential for further giving as congregations get smaller and more and more are pensioners. The diminishing membership of local churches throws a greater burden on the remaining members even when there is no overall increase in the central budget. Moreover, the pattern of less regular attendance results in lower giving unless members and adherents use the envelope scheme or contribute by standing order. Yet again, it is appropriate to point out that a much slower decline in the number of church buildings in use in the United Reformed Church than in numbers of members leads to an increasing burden of maintenance costs on the remaining members.

11.7 As the Church undertakes more community based mission work it requires additional funding. The nature of these projects means that they are often too specialised and time consuming for many of our local churches to undertake. They require the use of particular skills for which an employed person is needed. Initially they are not self-funding, and may never be so, yet they are part of the vital outreach of the Church. It is in this area that we do see the benefit from a fundraiser so that resources from outside agencies may be attracted to support the work.

11.8 **It is recommended** that all who consider this report be invited to add their active support to give 5% of their take home pay to the Church.

11.9 **It is also recommended** that Advocacy should have a higher profile within the Church and that a Stewardship Sunday, with suitable worship material, should be introduced.

12 Strategic planning

12.1 The Plan for Partnership envisaged a framework within which the M & M contribution should be considered. This would demonstrate the needs over the next period and the immediate requirement for the coming budget year. However this would be predicated on the initial offers made by Synods prior to any expenditure being budgeted. As already noted this practice has not been followed in recent years.

12.2 The production of a strategic plan was thus envisaged as an essential element. In the absence of a current strategic plan, we give some estimated figures of what the immediate future requirements might be, assuming the only increases would be in stipends and salaries with no inflation of other costs. This hardly captures the imagination and suggests very much a business as usual approach based just on financial needs. Catch the Vision anticipates a much more positive future and this should be reflected in our plans.

12.3 **It is recommended** that the Church develops a five year Strategic Plan with an annual plan for the coming year which will help the budget process.

13 Accountability and Value for money

13.1 There is a concern in local churches over the ever increasing amount expected to be contributed to M & M. This leads many to question central spending and whether we are getting value for money. Inevitably this raises the additional question of accountability generally for the use of resources in the church.

13.2 With regard to pastoral ministry accountability is achieved to an extent now by the sharing of leadership with elders. There are more formal review procedures in place in many situations – that is both of ministerial and church performance. Additionally the present ministerial self-appraisal system leaves a lot to

be desired because it lacks objectivity. However this is being addressed and proposals will be brought by Ministries in due course.

13.3 Given the principles behind the M & M Fund, there is no expectation that every church ought to be giving a sum in line with the costs of the particular form of ministry it is receiving at the time. When a District or Area Council provides high quality ministry to a congregation through a Non-stipendiary Minister, for example, that congregation's reasonable contribution to the common fund is likely to exceed the direct cost of their minister. Nevertheless where churches contribute much less to the M & M Fund than the true costs of the minister they receive, other churches are effectively subsidising them and can feel a sense of unfairness. If not addressed, this can lead to resentment and damage to the peace and unity of the Church. It can be a particular problem where bigger churches are contributing large sums to the M& M Fund but do not see the reasons behind the deployment of ministers locally. The accountability for decisions about ministerial deployment needs to be clearly established between local churches and their District/Synod.

13.4 It is difficult to determine the correlation of the M & M contribution to the level of ministry received in every case. However from an analysis of the M & M pledges for 2006, only 236 churches will contribute over £25,000 making a total of £8.5 million or over 42% of the M & M Fund. One would have expected more churches/pastorates to at least meet the cost of ministry.

13.5 Additionally many churches employ workers alongside their stipendiary ministry for which they, presumably, have a support and review structure. This wider use of skills locally, such as Youth Leaders and Pastoral visitors, should be encouraged. However the employment of other workers should be on the proviso that the local church makes its full contribution to the M & M Fund.

13.6 It would be an advantage to link the deployment allocation, the actual number of stipendiary ministers serving and the contribution to the M & M Fund at Synod level. This would enable Synods to be aware of their overall position in terms of the cost of ministry, their M & M contribution, and the extent of resource sharing amongst them. Furthermore within Synods there would be recognition of the resource sharing amongst churches/pastorates undertaken in order to meet the obligation to provide ministry.

13.7 **It is, therefore, recommended** that there should be a system monitoring the deployment allocation and M & M Fund contribution across Synods.

13.8 On the assumption that churches will increasingly exercise accountability over the use of their resources locally there remains the need for this

to improve elsewhere in the Church. Accountability is easier to achieve when it is close to the activity. This suggests that responsibility for all non Church House based staff, other than those appointed by General Assembly, should be with Synods or local boards of management. For CRCW's and Ministers in Special Category Ministry posts this principle is already recognised through the work of local management committees and Synods, although central bodies remain involved to promote best practice across the Church and help with quality control. Generally none of these roles is income generating and are currently costs on both Synods and the M & M Fund. Whilst some could be classed as the mission element of the Ministry & Mission Fund many are really administration. For all of these roles there should be adequate oversight and accountability locally. Those responsible should agree the work programme with its budget requirements; support the activity and assess results; counsel and encourage. Exceptionally, the stipends for the ministers concerned and for CRCWs would still be paid centrally.

13.9 It also has to be recognised that although the allocation of CRCWs and Special category ministers is within agreed formulae by General Assembly, the need is determined locally. Furthermore, apart from the reserved two places for CRCW's in each Synod, their numbers appointed reduces the overall available number for stipendiary ministers for deployment by Synods in pastoral ministry. Thus there is the potential for tension between the claims of local churches for pastoral ministry and the need for mission in the community. This can only be satisfied by local dialogue and agreement.

13.10 The advantages of this whole approach to accountability are:

- members are more directly involved in what they pay for
- results and performance, and thus value for money, can more easily be identified.

13.11 **It is, therefore, recommended** that all CRCWs, Special category ministers and staff employed locally, with the exception of General Assembly appointments, should be accountable to Synods or local boards of management.

14 Paying for non ministerial costs

14.1 It is suggested that a different approach would be sensible for those costs currently borne by the M & M Fund that are not directly attributable to supporting the Church's recognised ministries. Clearly every church should make some contribution to

belonging to the wider Church. How this is determined then becomes an issue. A distinction could be drawn between the cost of providing ministry and the other costs and the M & M contribution seen as a two-tier obligation. Membership is used in many Synods as the basis for the M & M allocation and this could be the formula for non-ministerial costs.

14.2 The M & M contribution in LEPs can be a complex issue especially bearing in mind the great variety of arrangements that exist. It does cause some dissatisfaction and frustration locally and often makes the agreement of a satisfactory figure for M & M difficult.

14.3 Again the one issue that always emerges in LEPs is the cost of providing ministry as opposed to other costs. Generally there is a distinction between them as the Church providing ministry expects a full contribution for doing so. However other costs are shared. How the other costs relating to belonging to the denomination are met seems to vary. If the M & M Fund is seen as a two-tier obligation, i.e. the contribution to pastoral ministry and to other expenditure, this should help resolve the situation especially if a similar view is taken by other denominations. Then the other costs could be borne in proportion to the respective memberships.

14.4 A two-tier common scheme would have several advantages

- a uniform approach throughout the Church to shared responsibilities
- it should lead to better understanding generally
- individual issues could be dealt with in a common structure to maintain consistency
- it should help address the migration to a single system in Synods where individual Districts have enjoyed their own approach
- it should facilitate a solution for LEPs

Against this there are some disadvantages which would need to be overcome

- where local churches are currently accessed on their ability to pay
- where ministry is provided on the basis of requirement without any expectation of an ability to contribute
- the transition might be difficult.

14.5 **It is, therefore, recommended** that an attempt should be made to establish a common two-tier scheme with guidelines for dealing with non-ministerial costs for general application.

Nominations

This committee nominates to General Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It suggests names of the United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It also recommends the people to make up appointment groups for synod moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006]*
*Revd Malcolm Hanson#** [2010]*

Secretary: *Revd Elizabeth J Brown [2009]*

Synod Representatives:

<i>I Revd Kevin Watson</i>	<i>II Revd Ruth Wollaston</i>	<i>III Revd John Oldershaw</i>	<i>IV Mrs Val Morrison</i>
<i>V Mrs Irene Wren</i>	<i>VI Dr Tony Jeans</i>	<i>VII Revd Richard Church</i>	<i>VIII Revd Roz Harrison</i>
<i>IX Mr Peter Pay</i>	<i>X Revd Martin Hazell</i>	<i>XI Dr Graham Campling</i>	<i>XII Dr Jean Silvan-Evans</i>
<i>XIII Dr Jim Merrilees</i>	<i>with the Immediate Past Moderator and General Secretary.</i>		

1 ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

- 1.1 **The Nominating Group**, convened by the Revd Dr Susan Durber, recommended the appointment of the Revd Rowena Francis to serve as Moderator of the Northern Synod from 1 January 2007 for a period of seven years, subject to review before the end of that period.
- 1.2 **The Nominating Group**, convened by the Revd Deborah McVey, met in April to recommend an appointment to the position of Children's Advocate at Church House.
- 1.3 **The Group for the Role of Treasurer** continued to meet.

2 RESPONSE TO 2005 GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 16 AND 36

The Committee had set up a process for consultation with the Equal Opportunities and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministries Committees. Records were being kept of those approached to serve on committees and monitoring of appointments to committees would take place in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Committee.

3 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES and Sub-COMMITTEES

Notes:

- 1 The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
- 2 Officers and members appointed since Assembly 2005 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 2006 is invited to appoint for the first time (#) indicates a **Convener Elect** who will become Convener in 2007.
- 3 The date in brackets following the names indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
- 4 Many committees have cross-representation [e.g. the Ecumenical Committee has representatives from Doctrine, Prayer & Worship, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work etc.,] These are internal appointments and are not listed here.
- 5 In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations have been made by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.

3.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Mr William McVey [2008]

Secretary: Mrs Ann Barton (Central Secretariat)

Synod Representative for forthcoming Assembly

Synod Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting by Synod Representative for Assembly two years hence.

Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

3.1.1 Tellers for Election of Moderator for 2008

Mr Peter Pay [Convener], Dr Graham Campling, Dr Jim Merrilees**

3.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Mr Simon Loveitt [2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Revd Tjarda Murray [2007]

Miss Emma Pugh [2007]

Revd David Pickering [2009]

Revd Margaret Tait [2009]

Mrs Susan Clarke** [2010]

Revd Michael Jagessar** [2010]

Mr Themba Moyo** [2010]

3.2.1 COMMITMENT FOR LIFE sub committee

Convener: Mrs Melanie Frew

3.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Martin Hazell [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Communications

Revd Kirsty Thorpe*** [2011]

Revd Martin Whiffen [2007]

Revd Paul Snell [2008]

Revd Janet Sutton [2008]

Ms Julia Wills [2008]

Mrs Valerie Jenkins [2009]

Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith [2009]

Mr Ron Sweeney [2009]

Mr Richard Lathen [2009]

Mr Jerome Whittingham** [2010]

3.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Susan Durber [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Prof Alan Sell [2007]

Revd Geoffrey Clarke [2007]

Revd Hilary Collinson [2007]

Miss Sarah Lane [2007]

Dr John Turner [2007]

Mrs Chris Eddowes [2008]

Revd Jason McCullagh [2008]

Revd Peter Trow [2008]

Revd Gordon Smith [2009]

Miss Suzanne McDonald [2009]

Mrs Jill Jenkins [2009]

3.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Mrs Ann Shillaker [2007]

Mrs Pat Gurr [2008]

Revd Graham Maskery [2009]

Revd Anthony Howells [2009]

Revd Sarah Moore** [2010]

vacancy [2010]

Revd Stuart Jackson representing the National Synod of Wales

Revd Mary Buchanan representing National Synod of Scotland

3.5.1 ECUMENICAL – INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Chris Baillie [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for International Relations

Revd Linda Elliott*** [2011]

Mrs Eileen McIlveen [2007]

Mrs Sylvia Jackson [2009]

Revd Nigel Uden** [2010]

Dr Harry Potter** [2010]

vacancy [2010]

3.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Ms Morag McLintock [2010]

Secretary: Revd Derek Hopkins [2008]

Revd Sue MacBeth [2007]

Dr Ruth Shepherd [2008]

Revd Kate Gartside [2009]

Revd John Macaulay** [2010]

Revd Pam Ward** [2010]

vacancy [2010]

3.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: *to be advised*

Revd David Dones [2007]

Mrs Marie Whitman [2007]

Mr Errol Martin [2008]

Mr Graham Law [2008]

Revd Dick Gray [2009]

Mr Graham Morris [2009]

Mr John Kidd [2009]

vacancy [2010]

Convener of the URC Trust

Financial Secretary

3.8 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Dr John Parry [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Jean Potter [2008]

Revd Peter Colwell#** [2011]

Dr Iain Frew [2008]

Revd Tim Clarke** [2010]

Revd Helen Pollard [2008]

Mr David Jonathon [2009]

3.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Peter Ball [2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mrs Sheila Brain [2007]

Revd Michael Hodgson [2007]

Revd Simon Walking [2009]

Mr Colin Ferguson [2007]

Revd Kate Gray [2008]

Mr Patrick Smyth [2009]

Revd Ian Fosten [2007]

Mr Emmanuel Nkusi [2008]

Revd Patricia Davis** [2010]

3.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS – STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Ray McHugh [2008]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mrs Jackie Haws [2007]

Mr Gareth Curl [2009]

Mrs Susan Wilkinson [2007]

vacancy [2010]

Revd John Durrell [2008]

3.9.2 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Revd Bernard Collins [2009]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Mrs Irene Wren [2008]

Convener of Windermere Management Committee

Representative of Carver URC

Revd Carole Allison [2009]

Convener of Life and Witness Committee

Revd Jan Berry [2009]

3.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Peter Poulter [2010]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Joan Trippier [2007]

Revd Alan Evans [2009]

Convener of Assessment Board

Revd Paul Whittle [2007]

Mrs Joanna Morling [2009]

Revd Terry Oakley [2008]

Mr Roger Allen** [2010]

3.10.1 MINISTRIES – ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Gwen Collins [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Tony Wilkinson [2007]

Mr Rod Morrison [2009]

Revd Howard Sharp [2009]

Mrs Pat Evans** [2010]

Mr Simon Rowntree [2009]

3.10.2 MINISTRIES – CRCW Programme Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Bob Day [2008]

Secretary: The CRCW Development Workers

Mr Peter Twilley [2007]

Mrs Shirley Rawnsley** [2010]

Revd Tracey Lewis [2008]

vacancy [2010]

Mrs Maureen Thompson [2009]

3.10.3 MINISTRIES – LAY PREACHING Support Sub-Committee

Assembly Lay Preaching Advocate: Dr Philip Theaker [2007]

And four members elected by the Lay Preaching Commissioners Consultation

3.10.4 MINISTRIES – MAINTENANCE of the MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Geoffrey Roper [2009]

Secretary: Mr David Taylor [2010]

Mrs Lyn Alford [2008]

vacancy [2010]

Financial Secretary

Mr David Hayden [2008]

The Treasurer

vacancy [2010]

Convener of Pensions Executive

3.10.5 MINISTRIES – RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd David Bedford [2010]

Secretary: Secretary Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd

Mrs Liz Tadd [2009]

Revd Elizabeth Caswell [2008]

Revd Michael Spencer* [2011]

Revd Nanette Lewis-Head** [2012]

The Treasurer

Note: Properties are managed by a Company viz: **RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY LTD** Details of the Members of the Board etc may be obtained from the Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley at Church House

3.10.6 ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Prof David Cutler [2009]

Retiring 2007 Revd Diana Cullum-Hall, Miss Sarah Dodds, Revd Roy Fowler, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mrs Pat Poinen, Revd Nigel Uden, Revd Simon Walkling

Retiring 2008 Mrs Judith Harris, Mrs Barbara Lancaster, Dr Cameron Wilson

Retiring 2009 Mrs Tina Ashitey, Dr Peter Clarke, Mr Hugh Abel

Retiring 2010 Revd David A L Jenkins, Revd Dr Irene John, Revd Edward Sanniez, Revd Lesley Charlton

Retiring 2011 ** Revd Wilf Bahadur, Revd Jan Adamson, Revd Sian Collins

3.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Malcolm Hanson [2010]

Secretary: Revd Elizabeth Brown [2009]

Synod Representatives: Revd Kevin Watson [1], Revd Ruth Wollaston [2], Revd John Oldershaw [3], Mrs Val Morrison [4], Mrs Irene Wren [5], Dr Anthony Jeans [6], Revd Richard Church [7], Revd Roz Harrison [8], Mr Peter Pay [9], Revd Martin Hazell [10], Dr Graham Campling [11], Dr Jean Silvan-Evans [12], Dr James Merrilees [13], with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.

3.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Keith Forecast [2007]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd Alasdair Pratt*** [2011]

Revd David Grosch Miller [2007]

Revd Meryl Court [2008]

Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith [2009]

Mrs Delyth Rees** [2011]

Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee

The Treasurer

3.12.1 PASTORAL WELFARE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Alan Wharton [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

Mrs Delyth Rees*** [2011]

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, The Treasurer, Convener Pastoral Reference Committee]

3.13 RACIAL JUSTICE and MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd [2007]

Mrs Elaine Patrick [2007]

Revd Carla Grosch Miller# [2011]

Mr Iain Bhagwandin [2008]

Revd Helga Cornell [2008]

Mrs Pat Poinen [2009]

Revd Rosemary Tusting* [2009]

3.14 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Humphreys [2007]

Secretary: The Secretary for Training

Professor Malcolm Johnson***

Mrs Valerie Burnham [2007]

Dr Ian Morrison [2007]

Revd Rachel Poolman [2008]

Revd Richard Church [2008]

Revd Dr John Campbell [2009]

Mr John Saunders* [2009]

Revd John Smith** [2010]

Revd Ruth Allen** [2010]

Mr Clive Parsons** [2010]

3.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Neil Thorogood [2010]

Secretary: Revd Steven Faber [2008]

Mrs Doreen Watson [2007]

Mr Augustus Webbe [2007]

Revd Tim Meachin [2008]

Revd Sian Collins [2009]

Revd Robert Weston [2009]

Miss Rosemary Simmons [2009]

Ms Ruth Hezlett [2009]

Mrs Rita Griffiths [2009]

Revd Heather Whyte** [2010]

FURY Chair

FURY Council Member

3.15.1 PILOTS MANAGEMENT Sub Committee

Convener: Revd Pamela Smith

Member: *vacancy* [2010]

3.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS – Commission Panel

Convener: Mrs Helen Brown [2009]

Deputy Convener: Revd David Helyar [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Wilma Frew** [2011]

Members:

Mr Martin Ballard	Miss Ina Barker	Revd Wendy Baskett	Revd David Bedford
Revd James Bolton	Revd Jim Brown	Revd Ken Chippindale	Mrs Janice Cockcroft
Mr Des Colechin	Revd Meryl Court	Mr Derek Craig	Miss Kathleen Cross
Revd Alison Davis	Revd John Du Bois	Mr David Eldridge	Mr Colin Ferguson
Revd Joan Grindod-Helmn	Mr Peter Jolly	Mrs Barbara Lancaster	Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC
Revd Nanette Lewis-Head	Dr Fiona Liddell	Revd Daphne Lloyd	Revd Julian Macro
Mrs Barbara Madge	Revd Nicholas Mark	Revd Ted Marley	Mrs Jean McAslan
Revd Denise Megson	Dr Jim Merrilees	Revd Sandra Pickard	Revd Shelagh Pollard
Mrs Sheila Pratt	Mr Nicholas Pye	Revd Michael Rees	Mrs Pamel Sharp
Revd Raymond Singh	Mr Alan Small	Mr Patrick Smyth	Revd Dr David Thompson
Mrs Lynne Upsdell	Ms Elizabeth Whitten	Revd Joan Winterbottom	Mr Ken Woods
**Mr Geoff Milnes	Mr Neil Robinson	<i>vacancy</i>	

3.17 PANEL FOR THE APPOINTMENT AND REVIEW OF SYNOD MODERATORS

Mrs Sally Abbott, Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd Craig Bowman, Mrs Helen Brown, Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton, Revd Dr Susan Durber, Dr Jean Silvan Evans, Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Alun Jones, Revd Nanette Lewis-Head, Mr John Lumsden, Mr Okeke Azu Okeke, Mr Simon Rowntree, Revd Raymond Singh, Mr Ron Todd, Revd Cecil White, Mrs Irene Wren

4 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Provincial Moderators and three representatives from each Synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Revd Colin Offor, Revd Peter Poulter
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Revd Alan Wickens, Revd Rachel Poolman
Mersey Synod	Revd Jenny Morgan, Mrs Wilma Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Irene Wren, Mrs Margaret Gateley, Revd Yolande Burns
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Anthony Howells, Mr Bill Robson
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mrs Joan Turner
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Richard Pope
Wessex Synod	Mrs Glenis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe, Revd Ruth Whitehead
Thames North Synod	Revd John Macauley, Mr David Eldridge, Revd David Varcoe
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Mrs Maureen Lawrence, Mr Nigel MacDonald
National Synod of Wales	Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Liz Tadd, Mrs Barbara Shapland
National Synod of Scotland	Miss Irene Hudson, Revd Alan Paterson, Mr Patrick Smyth

5 TRUST BODIES

5.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Chairman: Revd John Waller [2011]

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors:

Mrs Fiona Smith [2008]

Dr Geoffrey Sides [2009]

Mr Ernest Gudgeon [2010]

Mr Donald Swift [2010]

Mrs Jill Stidson [2011]

vacancy [2012]

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, General Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary-Retired Ministers' Housing Society]

5.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD

BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Mr Brian Moere

Secretary: *to be advised*

Members of URC:

Mr Brian Moere [2008]

Mr Michael Goldsmith [2009]

Mrs Hilary Reynolds [2011]

vacancy [2011]

Members of Fund:	Revd Gwen Thomas [2007]	Revd Michael Davies [2008]
Revd Graham Spicer [2009]	Revd Ivor Rees* [2011]	
[<i>ex officio</i> Financial Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Convener MoM sub-committee, Convener MoM Pensions Executive]		

5.2.1 PENSIONS EXECUTIVE

Convener: Mr Maurice Dyson [2010]

The Pensions Executive reports to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Board, the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee and to the Finance committee.

5.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp	Mr Hartley Oldham	Mr Graham Stacy
Dr John Thompson	Dr Elaine Kaye	<i>vacancy</i>

5.4 THE AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER SERVICES CHARITABLE TRUST

Mr Clem Frank

Mr Brian Wates – joint appointment with Uniting Church in Australia

6 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Dr David Peel, the General Secretary
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Fleur Houston
Methodist Conference	Revd Richard Mortimer
Congregational Federation	<i>vacancy</i>
General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note5]	Revd Dr David Peel, Revd John Humphreys, Revd Jill Thornton
United Free Church of Scotland [note5]	Revd John Wylie
Scottish Episcopal Church [note 5]	Revd John Humphreys
Methodist Church in Scotland [note 5]	Revd Mary Buchanan
Baptist Union of Scotland [note 5]	Revd John Humphreys
Presbyterian Church of Wales [note5]	Revd Dr David Peel
Union of Welsh Independents [note 5]	<i>vacancy</i>
Church in Wales Governing Board [note 5]	Revd Stuart Jackson
Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	Revd David Bunney

7 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ON ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as URC representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of representatives to other ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, will be distributed to all members of General Assembly. Additional copies are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

7.1 Council for World Mission Assembly

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Olive Bell, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith, Secretary for International Relations

7.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting 2006-09

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Ann Shillaker, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith, Secretary for International Relations, Deputy General Secretary

7.2 WARC General Council

Ms Sarah Hall, Ms Emma Pugh, Revd David Pickering, Secretary for International Relations, General Secretary

7.3 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

This body is currently undergoing re-organisation.

7.3.1 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Environmental Issues Network

Revd David Coaker, Revd Dr David Pickering, Mr George Morton

7.4 Churches Together in England – Forum 2006

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations,
Miss Alison Micklem, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Andrew Prasad, Mrs Helen Renner, Revd Elizabeth Nash,
Mrs Wilma Frew, Mr Stuart Dew, Mr John Brown, Ms Suzanne McDonald

7.4.1 Churches Together in England – Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.4.2 Churches Together for Healing

Revd Delia Bond, Revd Deborah McVey

7.4.3 Free Church Education Committee

Mr Graham Handscomb, Mrs Gillian Kingston

7.5 ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) [see Note 5]

Forum: Revd John Humphreys, Revd Mary Buchanan

7.6 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland [see note 5]

Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd John Humphreys

7.7 CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales) [see Note 5]

Council: Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Eileen McIlveen

7.8 FREE CHURCH COUNCIL for WALES [see Note 5]

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson

8 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES AT FORMAL BI-LATERAL AND MULTI-LATERAL COMMITTEES

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations together with: Revd Roy Fowler, Revd Roberta Rominger, *vacancy, vacancy, vacancy*

8.2 Anglican/Moravian Contact Groups

Revd David Tatem

8.3 Tri-lateral Conversation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church

Revd Mary Buchanan, Revd John Humphreys, Revd John Young

8.4 The Commission of Covenanted Churches within CYTUN [see Note 5]

Revd Peter Noble, Revd Stuart Jackson, Mrs Ann Shillaker

9 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES ON GOVERNING BODIES OF THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES ETC

9.1 Mansfield College

Ministerial and Educational Training Committee:

Revd Fiona Thomas [2009]
Revd Nigel Appleton [2010]
Convener of the Training Committee
Secretary for Training

9.2 New College London

Foundation Trustees:
Mr Graham Stacy [2007]
Mr Philip Wade [2007]
alternate Mr Colin Howard [2008]
Mr John Smethers** [2009]

9.3 Northern College

Secretary for Training [2009]
Revd David Jenkins [2009]
Mr Bill McLaughlin [2009]
Miss Margaret Atkinson [2007]
Mrs Helen Brown [2007]
Revd Dr Robert Pope [2007]

Luther King House Educational Trust

Secretary for Training

9.4	Westminster College: Board of Governors	Convener: Revd Dr David Thompson [2008] Clerk: <i>vacancy</i> Revd Craig Muir [2009] Mr John Kidd [2009] Mr Brian Long [2010] Revd Fleur Houston [2010] Mrs Sally Abbott** [2012] Secretary for Training
9.4.1	Cheshunt Foundation	Mr David Butler
9.4.2	Cambridge Theological Federation	Convener Westminster College Governors
9.5	Homerton College Trustees	Lady Sally Williams [2007] Revd Dr David Thompson [2008] Mr John Chaplin [2009] Mrs Elisabeth Jupp** [2010]
9.6	Queen's College, Birmingham	Revd Elizabeth Welch, Mr Simon Rowntree* Secretary for Training in attendance
9.7	Aberystwyth (Memorial College)	Mr Leslie Jones
10	GOVERNORS OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS WITH WHICH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IS ASSOCIATED	
10.1	Caterham School	Revd Nigel Uden [2007] Mr John Mathias [2008]
10.2	Eltham College	Revd Derek Lindfield [2007]
10.3	Walthamstow Hall	Mrs Margaret Abraham
10.4	Milton Mount Foundation	Mr Graham Rolfe [2008] Mr Brian West [2008] Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2008] Ms Hilary Miles [2010] <i>vacancy [2010]</i>
10.5	Silcoates School,	Prof Clyde Binfield [2007] Dr Peter Clarke [2009] Dr Moira Gallagher [2009] Mrs Valerie Jenkins [2009] Mrs Val Morrison** [2010] Revd Alan F T Evans** [2010]
10.6	Taunton School	Revd David Grosch-Miller
10.7	Wentworth College	Revd Daphne Hull
10.8	Bishops Stortford College	Revd Nigel Rogers

11 MISCELLANEOUS:

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund	Mr Ken Meekison Mrs Jill Strong Revd Julian Macro
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Churches Main Committee	<i>vacancy</i>
Congregational Fund Board	Mr Hartley Oldham Revd Margaret Taylor Revd Eric Allen Revd John Taylor Mr Anthony Bayley Revd David Helyar
Guides' Religious Advisory Panel	Mrs Susan Walker
Samuel Robinson's Charities	Mr Tony Alderman
Scouts' Religious Advisory Group	Revd David Marshall-Jones
United Reformed Church History Society	Mrs Mary Davies Revd Michael Hopkins Mrs Carol Rogers Revd Kirsty Thorpe Revd Dr David Thompson
Wharton Trust	Dr John Thompson [2009]

Resolution 33

Nominations

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp 93-101 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary report before Assembly.

Resolution 34

Clerk of the General Assembly

General Assembly agrees to re-appoint the Revd James A Breslin as Clerk of the General Assembly from the close of General Assembly 2007 to the close of General Assembly 2012.

Training

The Committee will encourage and enable the integration of the training of the whole people of God and to this end will seek to influence the philosophy and methodology of learning; the core content of courses; and the development of resources. It gives direct support to, and acts in partnership with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship; Life and Witness; Church and Society, and Youth and Children's Work Committees and synods and districts, as they respond to the needs of local churches in training matters. It collaborates with Ministries Committee in the training of ministers of Word and Sacraments, CRCWs and Lay Preachers. It also supports all other committees and task groups, in particular the Ecumenical Committee. It also gives advice to the YCWT programme.

Convener: *Revd John Humphreys (2007)*

Secretary for Training: *Revd Roy Lowes*

Mrs Susan Brown (2006), Mrs Valerie Burnham (2007), Revd Dr John Campbell (2009), Revd Richard Church (2008), Revd Sue Henderson (2006), Dr Ian Morrison (2007), Revd Malachie Munyaneza (2006), Revd Rachel Poolman (2008), Mr John Saunders (2010)

(Readers wanting more detail on some of the terms used in this report might refer to Training Review Appendix One (page 113) that includes a list of Terms and Explanations)

1 The moving tectonic plates of change

1.1 In the first five years of this millennium the work of education and training in the main stream churches has moved into creative, dynamic and yet difficult days. This is a period of seismic change. In the 1990's the Training Committee talked of and made some moves towards integrated education for the equipping of all the ministries of the church. It worried at the surplus capacity of places for the initial training of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and made unsuccessful proposals to change the institutions it uses. Then since the late 1990's across the denominations in England particularly there has arisen a serious movement to realign training provisions to actually realise this goal of training that brings learners together across a range of ministries. Resolution 51 of last year's Assembly, generated by the Training Committee, reinforced the United Reformed Church's intent. The committee now seeks to deal with where ministers train initially as part of the developing strategies that flow from these intentions and not just as a separate problem. The Church of England and Methodist Church are larger players in these same processes and the United Reformed Church has been influenced by and played its part in their work. But the intentions are ones which these churches all share. The 'Training Review' (pages 109-119) expresses our proposals.

1.2 This time of review and change is putting a huge amount of stress on staff and students of many types. It's not just that institutions which the United Reformed Church uses have to cope with United Reformed Church changes and review. Because they all work ecumenically they are also affected by policy developments in the other denominations (the Church of England and Methodist Church most especially) with whom they work closely. Those in higher education also have to cope with the demands of the government's quality assurance processes. Altogether these produce real pressures.

1.3 In the meantime the rest of the committee's core work is not immune from change and review. Indeed the committee wants to ensure that the changes on the larger scale spoken of in its review are reflected in the rest of its life and work.

1.4 In light of that the committee has:

- worked at the implementation of the immediate post ordination stage of ministerial training (Education for Ministry 2) where Assembly staff member Elizabeth Gray-King has been able to bring to the programme a consistency of administration and support.
- decided that the time was right to review the rest of ministerial training formerly called Continuing Ministerial Education and now Education for Ministry 3. The conclusions are referred to below in 7.4.
- concluded that the way students for stipendiary ministry are financially supported needs attention – see paragraph 9.

- overseen the period in which Training for Learning and Serving has undergone a significant period of transition and is now moving into a new chapter of its life.
- continued to run Refresher Courses, the two 'Ethos and History' courses, the Summer School for Ordinands on Courses and the New Ministers' School.
- engaged ecumenically in partner denominations' discussions and shared in the ecumenical validation and inspection of our higher education institutions.

What follows is a summary of some of that work.

2 Training for Learning and Serving

2.1 Stanley Jackson has been Co-ordinator of Training for Learning and Serving (TLS) since September 2004 and was introduced to Assembly in that year. Working with other key members of staff, under the guidance of the Training for Learning and Serving Management Group, he has introduced new developments. Training for Learning and Serving organisation has devolved more authority out from the 'centre', has changed its ethos with a movement from the programmatic to the experiential. It has evolved a new 'strap line:' "Not so much a programme, more an experience". Its appearance has moved from solid and static to liquid and dynamic which the new livery expresses. In strategy it has moved from church maintenance to discipleship. We warmly welcome Stanley's energy and innovation.

2.2 It seems clear that while the majority of students still have lay preaching as their stated area of service, an increasing number are looking for TLS to equip them for more effective discipleship within the context of the world, not primarily the church.

2.3 An area which, with further attention, Training for Learning and Serving staff believe would pay dividends is giving encouragement to the churches to make proper use of those who complete Training for Learning and Serving. This is especially so for those gaining a certificate from the process. It is in service that the learning bears fruit and reaches its fulfillment.

2.4 There is also discussion about the ways local churches need to be prepared for the way in which TLS becomes more a spiritual journey than a training course. It can be a journey that changes the student in ways not shared by other members of the congregation. Positive acceptance by the home church is important not just for those who become lay preachers, but for those who take Training for Learning and Serving units such as that on pastoral care. In this way too the learning of the student stimulates the learning of the whole church.

2.5 Training for Learning and Serving is currently well advanced in developing a new community work one-year course in both full TLS and LITE formats and has begun the process of developing a one-year evangelism module.

2.6 Training for Learning and Serving LITE enrolled 271 students on LITE courses during 2005, of which 64 did the Leading Worship course. A large proportion of these were progressions from those who had studied other LITE courses in 2004. A small revision of the material was undertaken in 2005 and more recently the administration of LITE has been reviewed. It is clear that LITE is appreciated and a significant learning tool for those with no prior or recent formal learning. But arrangements are in hand to make the accessibility of the material much easier through the summer of 2006. LITE was called for to provide some initial education especially (but not only) for those who wanted to train as preachers (without Assembly accreditation) but who did not want to undertake the full Training for Learning and Serving programme. LITE seems to have led to some reduction in the number of those doing TLS Foundation and one-year courses. However it has provided formal theological education for many who might not otherwise have undertaken it and evidence is now emerging that it is also provides a stimulating taster following which people are moving into the Foundation course.

2.7 The interrelation of the Training for Learning and Serving Management Group and the University of Wales, Bangor, its validating University, has been strengthened and clarified in the last two years. The Training for Learning and Serving's Standards Board has been reconfigured as a Board of Studies.

2.8 TLS Management Committee Convener Carole Ellefson-Jones came to the end of her period of service in the summer of 2005. She had overseen the transition from a highly successful organisation and training provider dependent largely on the skills and capacity of David A L Jenkins, its first coordinator, to an organisation with an infrastructure now capable of taking on new leadership and new leadership dynamics. She has been warmly thanked for her careful and skilful work

2.8.1 The committee is pleased to say that her successor as of the summer of 2006 will be (another!) David Jenkins, recently retired from ministry in Wilmslow. We look forward with much enthusiasm to David's service on Training for Learning and Serving where his vast experience (which includes being a trainer and Synod moderator) will be most welcome.

2.8.2 The committee is very grateful to Janet Tollington who in the interim between these two appointments has been holding the fort and steering Training for Learning and Serving wisely and carefully.

3 Inspection and validation processes

3.1 An important part of the Committee's responsibility is receiving ecumenical validation and inspection reports on training institutions used by the United Reformed Church for Education for Ministry 1. In the past two years the committee has ensured United Reformed Church representation on a range of inspections/validations. It has studied and agreed to accept the reports and recommendations of Inspections/Validations for:

- the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training (OPTET) including Mansfield College and what was then the St Albans an Oxford Ministry Training Scheme,
- the Cambridge Federation including Westminster College and the Eastern Region Ministry Course (formerly the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course),
- the South East Institute for Theological Education and
- the North East Ecumenical Course.

3.2 This ecumenical inspection process covers the institutions that we use in England and Wales. The committee has now agreed that, as it is over five years since Union, an inspection of the Scottish College is appropriate. To that end preparation is being made to define the nature of inspection for this particular institution, given its particular context.

4 Church of England 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' – the Hind report

4.1 The Church of England's process has continued since the committee's report of 2004. A brief summary of the nature of the process is given in the Training Review's Appendix One (p 113). In the summer of 2005 the General Synod of the Church of England agreed to continue the developments to form Regional Training Partnerships (RTP) across England. They are now working on the details of the nature of these partnerships and each is proceeding at a pace determined by local or regional factors and the approach of the diocesan bishops. The centre of gravity within the process has certainly moved from the centralised, formative stage to the embryo Regional Training Partnerships themselves. As these all work on an individual basis it is inevitable that considerable variations will appear.

4.2 A key element in the proposals is the attempt to make a more integrated whole of the delivery of the curriculum both sides of ordination (i.e. in Church of England terms initial training and curacy). Learning outcomes had been agreed ecumenically for this whole period with the result that RTP curricula will be structured to achieve them. Nevertheless, there are problems in relating the United Reformed Church

structure for the training and ordination of ministers to that within the now accepted agreed learning outcomes for the RTP's. This concern stimulated the need for the United Reformed Church curriculum consultation referred to briefly under the Education for Ministry 2/3 committee section below. This has clarified the United Reformed Church position though not erased the potential difficulties in practice. What has been highlighted is that, whilst the United Reformed Church agrees with the required learning outcomes, its students need to achieve these by the time of ordination. The Church of England and the Church in Wales and Methodists need them to be achieved by the time students take up posts of responsibility, which could be two or three years after ordination. Accommodating these different patterns and expectations is one of the difficult tasks facing the RTPs and the parent denominations supporting them.

4.3 The Training Committee has been represented on the Hind Steering Group and on the implementation groups for various parts of the process. It has submitted a document prior to the General Synod of 2005 reflecting on the process. The Training Committee called a meeting in September 2005 of United Reformed Church English synod representatives (Wales and Scotland sent observers) involved in the formation of the RTP's. Its aim was to strengthen their hands and enable some coordination across United Reformed Church synodical approaches. It is planned that this should be an annual consultation.

4.4 One consequence of the formation of Regional Training Partnerships with each one including a part time training course provision has been the need to realign some part time Courses. This has particularly affected the St Albans and Oxford Course, which has effectively spilt into two. Half of it has joined with what was the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course which has been renamed the Eastern Region Ministry Course.

4.5 A further piece of 'Hind' work currently underway (and on which the Training Committee is represented) is consideration of the Quality Assurance processes that will best serve the Churches and the Regional Training Partnership's. This seeks to identify the Inspection/Validation processes most suited to the emerging ecumenical training scene. It appears at the time of writing that the inspection process will change to embrace a system that encourages internal audit.

5 Counseling Service for Students

5.1 The Committee has worked with others to ensure that since the autumn of 2004 ministerial students and their families have access to the Churches Ministerial Counseling Service. We seek to regularly inform students and their families of this.

6 Research

6.1 Though the Training Committee has ceased to judge it affordable to continue to offer a research bursary to ministers it notes with pleasure that by various means research is being engaged with and some of it supported directly or indirectly by the Training Committee. Some ministers have used their £700 Education for Ministry 2/3 allocation towards part time research at masters or doctorate level. The last minister to benefit from a Training Committee bursary has yet to complete the doctorate but the study achieved has already been of benefit to that person's ministry and to the wider church. The committee is aware that church members other than ministers undertake research and is glad to note that a Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer has gained a doctorate in the last two years. Two student ministers are completing doctorates partly sponsored by the Training Committee and another minister has completed a doctorate supported by the Congregational and General Millennium Bursary Trust. The committee is delighted that a further such bursary has become available. This has been advertised in April's Reform. The Training Committee continues to monitor the use of and application of these bursaries.

7 Education for Ministry 2/3 Committee (formerly Continuing Ministerial Education)

7.1 In 2004 the review of the Education for Ministry 2 phase of ministerial training (for the first three years after ordination) was reported and agreed by Assembly. The part time EM2 staff member, Elizabeth Gray King, who was appointed in the immediate aftermath of that review, has since then pressed on with the review's implementation. She has especially sought to improve the quality of provision in the residential weekend element of the EM2 programme and clarify the new flexibility within its provision. There is evidence to suggest that her work is much appreciated.

7.2 She has also been able, after consultation with the sub committee and within the bounds of confidentiality and anonymity, to relay to Ministries Committee and Moderators concern at the levels of stress which EM2 ministers have indicated that they experience.

7.3 Education for Ministry 3 Review: in 2005 the sub committee decided that it was an opportune time to review Education for Ministry 3, (formerly Continuing Ministerial Education) which had never been reviewed as an entity. The review aimed to establish whether the Church was receiving value for the investment it has made since 1998, and which it continues to make.

7.4 The Education for Ministry 3 Review's context included these sub committee understandings:

That the learning for discipleship of the whole people of God is vital

That the demands on contemporary ministry require fresh understanding, skill and flexibility

That there is growing recognition of the connection between reflection and planning about ministry and about the process of learning

That there is a desire to be a more purposeful, intentional church

That there now exist more prevalent notions of accountability.

7.5 The review's principle conclusions, which require no change to Assembly policy,

- 1 affirm the programme as a whole "as a valuable and necessary contribution to the life and mission of the church and the prospering of its ministry" and note the evidence of significant levels of satisfaction, both of the programme as a whole and the learning that participants have accessed as a result.
- 2 welcome the contribution of self-appraisal scheme developments to integrate learning with broader processes of development, both personal and organisational.
- 3 note that there remain significant numbers of ministers outside recognised continuing education, and encourage continuing efforts to extend participation.
- 4 recognise that there is considerable diversity in the education undertaken by participants. While the scope of the scheme is 'education for ministry', we affirm a broad understanding of this. We affirm the importance of the individual participant taking, in consultation with others, informed decisions about their learning plans.
- 5 note the evidence that ministers themselves feel that their learning through the programme has positive impact on the effectiveness of their ministry. We propose that grant proposal forms should incorporate some comment on how the planned learning will impact on ministry and might be shared with others.
- 6 retain the annual nature of the scheme but encourage participants and those who support them in their learning planning to look beyond the single, next learning experience and to build coherence across their learning.
- 7 seek new ways of encouraging participants to follow a systematic process in planning and reflecting upon their learning.
- 8 maintain General Assembly provision of refresher courses and support for synod schools and note that the General Assembly also makes other provision, e.g. courses for ministers nearing retirement.
- 9 affirm the educational value of a range of learning activities, and not merely formal course provision, and encourage greater use of these often more experiential learning opportunities.

- 10 note that though current budgetary provision has been adequate to meet demand, that the promotion of the scheme and its adoption as a more normal pattern within ministry life may increase demand.
- 11 revise the administration processes to support informed decision making about learning, to gather and collate information more efficiently and, where possible, by means of IT and to ensure that data is used more effectively.
- 12 affirm the importance of partnership within the scheme:
- (a) at the local level between minister and pastorate/ Church Related Community Worker and project or equivalent relationships
 - (b) in the pivotal role of synod training officers
 - (c) through education and training partnerships, particularly involving recognised colleges which are being encouraged to continue in extending their role beyond a focus on initial ministerial education.
- 13 welcome the potential of the RTP's in England and ecumenical collaboration in Scotland and Wales to be a resource for continuing education.

7.6 The sub committee will work on implementing the review's conclusions.

7.7 The committee has been consulted by Ministries Committee about the inter-relationship of practical ministry development and a mandatory appraisal, which will have implications for EM3. It is happy that such a development will key in with its own conclusions about the importance of learning and its relation to the practice of ministry.

7.8 Education for Ministry 1/2 Curriculum consultation: the committee sponsored a consultation in September 2005 to consider the interrelation of the learning undertaken by ministers pre and post ordination. A key conclusion was that the distinction between the two periods of learning lies in the new context of ministerial service for learning post ordination.

8 Training in the national Synods of Wales and Scotland

8.1 The Training Committee continues to pay attention to the developments in Scotland and Wales where those national synods carry particular responsibility for leading the United Reformed Church's training development and ecumenical engagement.

8.2 The English Hind proposals have been noted in Wales with interest where similar proposals have been discussed but not proceeded with. Informal discussions between the denominations are to continue.

8.3 In Scotland an ecumenical core Ministerial Formation Group to deal with initial ministerial education had been established, and is being facilitated by Action for Churches Together in Scotland.

8.4 The Scottish synod has published 'Managing to Change' and a resource pack associated with the bi-centenary of Hans Christian Anderson entitled 'Once upon a Time'. Both are available from the synod or through the United Reformed Church bookshop

8.5 In November 2005 the United Reformed Church Secretary for Training, the Synod Education Officer and Moderator met with key figures from the Church of Scotland to reflect on areas of work and responsibility which might provide opportunities for cooperation in Scotland. This was a particularly apt time for such a conversation given the restructuring that has taken place in the Church of Scotland where new 'councils' have been adopted in place of its former departments and committees.

8.6 Conversations begun in 2005 between the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church have placed co-operation in training and theological education on the agenda.

9 Finance

9.1 The Training Finance sub committee has undertaken a review of the process by which students are supported financially. Apart from the need to review processes on a regular basis the varied patterns of training now emerging mean that a maintenance grant system based on a small grant with additional payments for student dependents is being swamped by a proliferation of 'exceptional' or 'unusual' cases. The committee has been particularly concerned to ensure that any revised process has simplicity in application and administration, and clarity in advocacy. It is moving strongly in the directions of a higher allowance with a minimal top-up element. It is envisaged that the new system will be discussed this autumn with relevant financial officers of the institutions where full time students are trained to ensure that all understand the system. The aim is to have it operating for the 2007/2008 academic year. Particular care will be taken to ensure that those involved in transition from one system to another are not disadvantaged.

9.2 As well as its usual business which includes receiving student hardship claims and reflection on the Training Committee budget the sub committee has also devoted much time to preparing papers to support the Training Committee's review.

9.3 The sub committee is grateful to the finance office for their support and the greater degree of accessible financial information that is being made available.

10 Personnel

The committee is also grateful for the wisdom and commitment of those who have served on it but left since 2004, Kate Breeze, Sue Brown, Sue Henderson, Malachie Munyaneza and Craig Jesson as the student representative. We are equally grateful for and delighted at the energy, commitment and wisdom of those who have replaced them, Richard Church, Rachel Poolman, John Campbell, John Saunders and Caroline Andrews as student representative. We also note especially the work of Sue Henderson who has acted as Convener of the Studies Panel and Nigel Watson who has brought much skill and experience to bear as convener of the Finance sub committee. We also note the end of service of Jack Dyce. Jack has been on the committee since before 2000 and his wisdom, educational expertise and readiness to travel significant distances to facilitate attendance at a range of meetings has been remarkable. His presence has not only helped to develop the union of 2000 in key areas of the church's life but also brought to reality the contribution of the Scottish Congregationalists to the new church.

11 Keeping the show on the road

The concentration of time and energy needed for work on the Training Review and to take the first steps and decisions to begin implementing the principles agreed by Assembly in 2005 (along with illness) has meant that some of the ongoing work of training has been placed 'on the back burner'. Neither staff nor committee (despite its 'extra' meetings) has been able to respond as swiftly to all matters on its agenda or brought to its attention, as it would like. Staff and the committee are grateful for the understanding and patience they have received. They are eager to progress the 2005 principles, as Assembly directs, as a vital contribution to fostering a learning church as well as aiming to increase their responsiveness to other matters.

Resolution 35

Regional Training Partnerships

General Assembly in pursuance of the Training Committee's report urges:

- a) **Training Committee to continue promoting the development of partnerships in pursuit of Assembly's commitment to integrated and dispersed Christian education, nurture and training for the whole people of God in line with the principles agreed by Assembly in resolution 51 of 2005.**
- b) **the Synods in England to participate as proactively as possible in the development of the ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships for the training and nurture of the whole people of God in line with the policies agreed by General Assembly and specifically resolution 35 of 2005.**

Resolution 36

Resource Centres for learning

General Assembly in line with the Training report, welcomes the commitment of the Northern, Scottish and Westminster Colleges to act for the United Reformed Church in a new role as resource centres for learning and to undertake dispersed, integrated training and Christian education for the whole people of God. The Training Committee agrees to keep its relationship with them under ongoing review and report to the General Assembly of 2012.

Resolution 37

College based training

- a) **General Assembly agrees that Northern, Westminster and the Scottish Colleges acting as resource centres for learning, are to have sole responsibility for ensuring the delivery of initial ministerial education (Education for Ministry 1). Northern College will continue to have sole responsibility for initial training of Church Related Community Workers. This will apply to all candidates recommended for training in the 2006/7 candidating process and thereafter.**
- b) **General Assembly instructs the Training Committee to work with those Synods which have students currently training in institutions affected by resolution 37a (including those sent by the 2005/2006 candidating process) in order to secure their continuing care and the satisfactory completion of their ordination (Education for Ministry 1) training.**

Resolution 38**Westminster College Principal**

In light of General Assembly's decisions about the Training Committee's 2006 report it instructs the Training Committee and the Governors of Westminster College to proceed with the appointment of a Principal for Westminster College.

Resolution 39**Lewis & Gibson Scholarship Rule change**

General Assembly resolves to amend the Lewis and Gibson Scholarship Regulations, approved by Resolution 40 of General Assembly 2000, by inserting a new regulation (vi) as follows, and numbering (vi) to (x) as (vii) to (xi):

- (vi) Scholars shall be elected for one year at a time, and, subject to satisfactory reports on their progress being received by the Electors, may be re-elected for a total period not exceeding four years.**

1.1 The original Will provided for scholarships to be held for three years' undergraduate study and for three years at Westminster College. The Presbyterian Church of England General Assembly used to specify 'undergraduate scholarships' when confirming them, but the majority of scholarships have been held for up to three years at Westminster College. For some time the standard length of the Westminster course has been four years. Moreover, graduate

study programmes (for M.Phil and PhD) are now also typically four years. Thus the scholarships are not attractive to overseas students unless a guarantee can be given that they may be held for four years. The Electors and the Governors therefore consider that the period for study at Westminster College should now be extended to four years, and recommend General Assembly to change the regulations accordingly.

Training Committee Review

The Assembly 2005 principles: Stage One.

The goal – a church committed to life-long learning where there is integrated education and training offered to the whole people of God.

The next steps

- make fuller use of the church's current concentration of valuable training resources for the good of the whole church.
- develop partnerships between all the many disparate sources of education and training in the church in order to serve the whole church better.
- Engage whole-heartedly, but realistically, in the changing ecumenical training scene in order to serve the whole church better.

1 Introduction

1.1 There has been a major shift in the approach of all the historic churches in England, Scotland and Wales to education and training. Although the challenge of numerical decline is forcing the pace, at the heart of this shift is a conviction that life-long learning for the whole people of God is essential to the mission of the Church and that the training of ministers of Word and Sacraments, vital though that is, must take its place within this new integrated approach.

1.2 The Training Committee's aim is to enable all the variety of education and training within the United Reformed Church to take its proper place in this new ecumenical landscape. The committee believes that a move from the present fragmented patterns of training to an integrated pattern will best serve the present and future needs of all the people of God as they engage in mission. An integrated pattern will also assist a more coherent ecumenical engagement. The committee is clear that, as a minority player in the ecumenical scene, the United Reformed Church needs to prioritise carefully the use of its resources in order to be able to contribute to and benefit from the new situation.

2 The 2005 principles

2.1 The 2005 General Assembly agreed the education and training principles set out below. They were formulated by the Training Committee but presented as part of the Catch the Vision report. Assembly determined that:-

In United Reformed Church educational provision there shall be:

- integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission – promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the Equipping the Saints and Catch the Vision reports.*
- ecumenical engagement at every stage*
- the presentation of a distinctive Reformed ethos and history in that ecumenical engagement*
- the delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.*

2.2 The pattern of training and education in the United Reformed Church for the coming decade which the committee seeks to set before this 2006 Assembly and the proposed ways of bringing this about are rooted in these principles.

3 The background

3.1 Since January 2003 the committee's main task has been to review the whole range of training in the United Reformed Church in order to bring proposals to General Assembly for ways forward in these changing times. There has been wide consultation and careful listening. In 2004 the committee sponsored two consultations with representatives from synods, theological colleges and courses, and ecumenical partners. When an earlier version of this report was brought to Mission Council in March 2005, the committee paid careful attention to that council's comments. The Secretary for Training has discussed the committee's emerging proposals with close partner churches such as the Church of England and the Methodist Church and also more widely through the Churches Together in England Ecumenical Strategy Group for Ministerial Training. Since the autumn of 2005 the committee has been in communication about its proposals with the synods, colleges and courses which would be most affected by them.

3.2 The membership of the committee has changed during the three year period but it has throughout been well served by people with expertise in lay training and adult education, as well as personal knowledge of the synod training scene and the theological colleges and courses. It has also had the benefit of a representative of the Methodist Church who has kept the committee's discussions in touch with similar developments in that church.

4 The present context

4.1 The United Reformed Church, along with most of the historic churches in these islands is in a period of decline in membership. This has led to a significant reduction in financial contribution to central funds and therefore in the ability to pay ministers of Word

and Sacraments. There has also been a decline in the number of suitable candidates for such a ministry. This situation has challenged all the historic churches to review the role of their ordained ministry and to re-discover and re-value the ministry of the whole people of God. The Ministries Committee's report, "Equipping the Saints", and the Training Committee's principles are part of the United Reformed Church's response to this situation. Both committees are urging the church to see the situation as a God-given opportunity to renew the life of the United Reformed Church. But both recognise that means some radical changes.

4.2 In response to the same issues, the Church of England is setting up eleven Regional Training Partnerships in which the training for all the different kinds of ministry to which the people of God are called and the different bodies providing the training (training colleges, courses, diocesan training programmes, and the training resources of other churches) are brought into partnership with each other. The review which led to this development was called "Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church." The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church were invited to participate both in the review process and in the regional partnerships themselves. In some regions they are already fully involved in their development. These regional partnerships open up new ecumenical opportunities, and a wider range of training opportunities, but also challenge the two smaller churches as to how to contribute coherently from their particular ethos and tradition.

4.3 For both the Church of England and the Methodist Church these changes in approaches to training provision mean they are re-configuring their relationships with existing training institutions and part-time training courses.

4.4 In Wales and Scotland the United Reformed Church's ecumenical training partnerships are differently expressed. There are also significant differences of history, culture, language and, in the case of Scotland, legal system as well as the relatively new situation created by the existence of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. All these factors have to be taken into account in providing training which is both appropriate to the national context and yet allows ease of movement throughout the three nations in the exercise of any of the various ministries.

5 The proposal

5.1 The principles adopted by the 2005 Assembly commit the Training Committee to bringing proposals to subsequent Assemblies which will, step by step, put those principles into practice. Therefore at this Assembly, as the first step in implementing the 2005 principles, the committee proposes:

5.1.1 that Northern College, Westminster College and the Scottish College should, in future, become resource centres for learning in the United Reformed Church. These resource centres will be expected to offer their Reformed, theological, biblical, historical and educational expertise to the whole training scene.

5.1.2 that the Training Committee will work to support and develop partnerships between all the various sources of education and training for lay and ordained throughout the United Reformed Church. These partnerships will include Training for Learning and Serving and – beyond the Training Committee's present remit – the variety of training in the synods, the courses offered by certain central committees and the programme of the Windermere Centre. This 'joined-up-working' will not only benefit the United Reformed Church as it seeks to become a learning church, but will also help the synods to play their full part in their ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships.

5.2 The proposal involves more than a change of description for Northern and Westminster Colleges. The pace of change already taking place there will increase as initial training for ministry (Education for Ministry 1) becomes only part of their core business and as they contribute more significantly to the life-long learning of the whole people of God. The Training Committee has confidence in the capacity of the resource centres for learning to develop further their resourcing of lay training and their expertise in distance and dispersed learning. They will be supporting groups and individual ordinands in all parts of England and Wales, providing and designing programmes, sometimes delivering them in the local context and, at other times, negotiating and arranging for local provision through the appropriate ecumenical Regional Training Partnership.

5.3 All initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1) will be provided by or arranged through those three centres. Northern College, which already provides this pattern of education for all Church Related Community Workers, will continue to do so. The Scottish College already practises an integrated, individually tailored approach to the training of lay and ordained over a wide geographical area, currently enabling the education of four EM1 students within a community of learning of more than 500, most of them from the United Reformed Church.

5.4 The main immediate consequence of this proposal is that the United Reformed Church would cease to use Mansfield College, Oxford, the Queen's Foundation, Birmingham and the eight part-time courses currently recognised for the initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1). Continuing conversations will be held with Mansfield College and the Queen's Foundation about other ways in which they might continue to be a training resource for the whole church. For example, the Queen's Foundation

has notable expertise in Mission Studies and in Black and Asian Theology. The Committee also notes that the Ecumenical Committee intends normally to use the Queen's Foundation for induction courses for the mission partners we receive and those we send overseas.

5.5 New relationships with a variety of learning providers will develop. The new resource centres for learning in England (Northern and Westminster Colleges) might, for example, require local components for the dispersed learning needs of some of the ordinands in their care. In Wales, St Michael's Llandaff – now incorporating the South Wales Ordination Course – will continue to be a resource for training and education (other than EM1). Currently this will be in their development of EM3 resources, chaplaincy specialisms and other provisions.

6 The reasons for the proposal

6.1 The United Reformed Church currently recognises five colleges and 8 part-time courses for the initial training of ministers (Education for Ministry 1). All Church Related Community Workers are trained at Northern College by a combination of six five-day residential teaching gatherings per year and local placements. In October 2005 only 17 new students began ordination/commissioning training. One part-time course, the Southern Theological Training Scheme (STETS), enrolled two of those students: the rest of the part-time courses enrolled one or none. Training Committee policy has been to maintain a minimum of 30 students over all years in both Northern and Westminster Colleges. In October 2005 there were 26 and 18 respectively. A declining number of students are being spread across a fixed number of colleges and courses.

6.2 Ministers who are going to serve in United Reformed local churches, or represent the United Reformed Church in ecumenical churches or in the ecumenical life of our cities, towns and villages, need confidence in their own tradition and a peer group of United Reformed Church students to develop a fuller understanding of the church into which they are to be ordained. Where there are only a small number of United Reformed Church ordinands among a much larger number of Anglicans and Methodists, the curriculum and learning experience is less likely to give adequate emphasis to Reformed history, ecclesiology or liturgy. There are very few United Reformed Church tutors on the courses, no full-time United Reformed Church tutor at the Queen's Foundation, and one full-time and one part-time United Reformed Church tutor at Mansfield College. In both Northern and Westminster Colleges United Reformed Church ordinands train in an ecumenical setting with a wide range of denominational partners, but are in sufficient numbers and have the support of sufficient United Reformed Church staff (four at Northern and five at Westminster) to enable them to enter into the give and take of ecumenical learning with confidence. In Scotland, its distinctive

education system means that ordinands from various traditions, but largely from the Church of Scotland, work for their academic qualification together in a Scottish university. This means that the small number of students training through the Scottish College have both ecumenical and additional Reformed exposure. In addition, mutually enriching United Reformed Church links are being developed between the Scottish and Northern Colleges.

6.3 The three colleges, in their different ways, are already a resource for the whole church. The Principal of the Scottish College is responsible for the whole range of training within the synod and currently serves the wider church through the Training Committee and its various sub-committees. Many of the present teaching staff in Northern and Westminster Colleges already, for example, lead study days and conferences both at the colleges and around the country. They offer their expertise to various Assembly and synod committees, represent the United Reformed Church in ecumenical and international dialogues, and lead Assembly Bible studies. They have, between them, a wealth of scholarship and experience in educational methods, including dispersed learning, on which the whole church could call in a more planned and integrated way than at present.

6.4 An important part of the Reformed tradition for centuries has been its emphasis on an educated ministry. If that is to continue, and if the United Reformed Church is to be able to grow and employ another generation of biblical scholars, theologians, liturgists and church historians it needs to keep one or two centres of learning where their expertise can be drawn on by the whole church. The committee proposes two centres in England rather than one so that the variety and breadth of the United Reformed Church, which is one of its strengths, can be the better maintained. This will also mean that, if increased capacity is needed for training the ministries of the United Reformed Church that capacity will be available.

7 Financial considerations

7.1 The driving force behind the Training Committee's proposal is not financial, but educational and ecumenical. Nowhere is the fragmented, uncoordinated nature of education and training in the United Reformed Church more obvious than in the financial sphere. The Training Committee has been working closely with the Finance Office to try, for the first time, to produce a clear picture of the real costs of the whole range of training currently taking place. Some of it is funded centrally, some of it by the synods. It is not yet possible to compare like with like, but Appendix 2 (p 115) is a significant first attempt at a comprehensive picture. An example of the difficulties is that the financial agreements with the present five colleges are all different and so comparison of costs is not easy. However, the committee's long term aim, as far as the English resource centres for learning is

concerned, is to remove all subsidies and replace them with financial support for the services provided. A broader, long-term concern is to ensure and make explicit an appropriate balance between the resources spent on ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and those spent on training for other ministries and on the life-long learning of the whole people of God.

8 Is this proposal true to the 2005 principles?

8.1 *In United Reformed Church educational provision there shall be: integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission?*

This is a major thrust of both the move to resource centres for learning and involvement in the Regional Training Partnerships in England. Scotland has embodied this principle for some time.

8.2 *ecumenical engagement at every stage*

The effect of the proposals is to develop and co-ordinate the United Reformed Church's existing ecumenical engagement, firstly through continuing to urge the synods to play as full a part in the ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships as possible, and, secondly, through concentrating resources in the new resource centres for learning at Northern and Westminster Colleges where there is already substantial ecumenical engagement. The resource centres are giftings to RTP's as indeed is Training for Learning and Serving, and more besides. The Scottish College is also a gifting to the ecumenical scene in Scotland.

8.3 *the presentation of a distinctive Reformed Ethos and History in that ecumenical engagement.*

The proposal to develop the two English resource centres for learning where there is both the greatest concentration of United Reformed Church staff and students and a very significant, established and developing ecumenical partnership will enable just such a presentation.

8.4 *the delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.*

The clear but realistic commitment to the ecumenical Regional Training Partnerships in England is in keeping with this principle as is the proposal to include the Scottish College with its distinctive ecumenical links as one of the resource centres for learning. Conversations with the National Synod of Wales in order to meet its particular training needs are ongoing.

9 For all that has been – thanks! To all that is to come – yes! (from Markings by Dag Hamerskjold)

9.1 The Training Committee gives thanks to God for all the dedicated and formative teaching offered over many years to students, lay and ordained, by United Reformed Church tutors and by those from other churches. It also gives thanks for the nurturing of their faith and the pastoral care. It gives thanks for the ecumenical friendships formed among tutors and among students which are a foretaste of that time when 'all may be one'.

9.2 The Training Committee is not proposing a return to denominational colleges: rather it is proposing an educationally and ecumenically sound way for the United Reformed Church to take its place in today's fast-flowing ecumenical stream. It will not wait for us.

TRAINING APPENDIX ONE

‘EXPLANATORY NOTES AND KEY IDEAS’

- 1 Cohorts of students.** This term describing a group of students training together is usually used in relation to discussions about the numbers needed for effective training for ministry in the URC. The Methodist Church’s draft report printed in February 2006, ‘Future use and Configuration of Training Institutions 2006’ indicates that concern for denominational student cohort size is an issue for them too. In the section 3.4.3 they say that ‘The nurturing of Methodist identity calls for all Methodist students to have the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of their training from a Methodist perspective, both with their peers and with tutors and supervisors. This does not have to take place in the traditional setting of the full-time formational community...’yet’... there is something stubbornly formational and incarnational about the group in which actual human bodies encounter one another from time to time.’
- 2 Dispersed learning.** This is perhaps best explained by using an example. A person studying for the ministry but living some way from Manchester could have their course determined and supervised by the Northern College, which they would visit on a number of occasions each year. In addition they could go to particular courses/tutor groups nearer to their home and have a United Reformed Church tutor locally. Church Related Community Workers are already trained at Northern College in such a way, as indeed are some ministers. One advantage of this model of learning is that dispersed learning encourages the wider and the more local perspective to be held together. Dispersed learning is about using the person’s home context as a learning resource rather than suggesting that the ‘localness’ of the training institution’s base is in some way to be the dominant perspective.
- 3 Distance Learning.** Similar to dispersed learning, this means that you live some way from the base educational institution. There is usually some opportunity for a form of face-to-face meeting, either by tutorial (not always local) or by an IT based medium. However distance learning, sometimes called flexible or open learning, is a programme of study that consists of video, workbook or online materials that allow students to study at home. It does not imply no meeting with fellow students but that this is not the main mode of learning.
- 4 Education for Ministry 1, 2, and 3.** These terms have already been adopted by Assembly as a way of distinguishing, yet holding together, training before ordination/commissioning (EM1), post-ordination/commissioning training over the first three years (EM2), and continuing training and sabbaticals thereafter (EM3).
- 5 Five colleges.** *Mansfield College, Oxford*, is an independent college of the University which runs a ministerial training programme for United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation students in conjunction with Regents Park College (Baptist). *Northern College, Manchester* is an independent college mainly for United Reformed Church students but also Congregational Federation students, which works in partnership with Baptists, Methodists and Unitarians. Some Moravians also train there. Rapid developments in the establishment of the Southern North West Training Partnership mean that Northern will now be working more fully with the Church of England. *Queens Foundation, Birmingham*, is an independent but organically ecumenical foundation which prepares people for ministry in the Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The *Scottish College, Glasgow* is an independent college which is the educational deliverer, broker and resource for ministers and lay people in Scotland as well as being available to Congregational Federation students. The United Reformed Church owns *Westminster College, Cambridge* (though it would not benefit financially from ceasing to use it), and the Assembly appoints its staff. It is part of the Cambridge Federation, which prepares people for ministry in the Church of England, Methodist and United Reformed Churches, and is also in association with the Orthodox and Roman Catholics.
- 6 Integrated provision.** For historical reasons, at the moment the educational and training provision of the United Reformed Church is offered in a fragmented way. There are boundaries between what is offered to one group of people and what is offered to another. This is more an accident of history than the expression of educational philosophy. The Training Committee has in recent years received the consent of the Assembly to move towards an integrated provision for all the people of God (Resolution 51; Assembly 2005). Integrated learning is where a diverse range of learners:

- follow a common curriculum, or at least a common core of learning
- belong to a cohort that is mixed in terms of role/function/ status
- learn together rather than separately so that the different perspectives of their different proposed forms of discipleship and service are an enrichment.

6.1 *In simple terms this means that when we speak of people serving together they need to learn together (e.g. elders and ministers). This ties in with the work done by the Ministries Committee on Equipping the Saints. Their policy for example to end the NSM/SM distinction encourages the integration of NSM and SM education. Previously the United Reformed Church has trained them separately, NSM's part time (normally on courses) and SM's full time (normally through a college).*

7 Part time courses. There are eight of these (seven in England, one in Wales) which are recognised for EM1, mainly for non-stipendiary candidates who require local training. The programmes use residential weekends together with an annual week long school and tutor groups. They are Anglican founded and sponsored courses but are used by the Methodist church as well as ourselves. Their organisation has changed over the years and some are now ecumenical in governance.

8 Ethos and History. Whilst this means the wide picture of being aware of and challenged by the particularities of the reformed expression of the faith it also refers to two short courses with this subtitle which have been established for a number of years. One of them meets a felt need for those starting to train for ministry. Students all train in an ecumenical environment. For many they are in a (small) minority of United Reformed Church students. In preparation for that training the course gives an understanding of the particular ethos and history of the United Reformed Church. The other course with the same essential content is for people coming into the United Reformed Church's service from other traditions (ministers in ecumenical appointments, synod and church house staff).

9 Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs).

9.1 In March 2000 the Church of England embarked on a review of the structure and funding of its ordination training under the leadership of Bishop John Hind. The resulting report, 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church', proposed a radical restructuring which would encompass the whole range of educational needs of the Church – for example, Sunday School teachers, youth workers, lay readers, as well as post-ordination (EM2) and

continuing ministerial (EM3) training. It was finally adopted by the General Synod of the Church of England in July 2003 and, as a result, eleven Regional Training Partnerships are being established throughout England. The principle of integrated training for the whole people of God, which underpins these RTPs, also underpins the Training Committee's work and was adopted at the 2005 General Assembly.

9.2 The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church were invited to be partners in the review and subsequently to participate in the Regional Training Partnerships as they felt able. In 2005 the Assembly agreed that the Training Committee should continue its involvement with 'Hind' and its subsequent implementation. It also asked the Committee to be sure to safeguard the aims and parameters of its own programmes and the financial commitments and resources needed to sustain them.

9.3 A key element in the Church of England proposals is the mending of fractures between training for different ministries, between different stages of training and between different training providers. A key tool in this mending process is the establishment of these Regional Training Partnerships between dioceses, colleges, courses, other providers and their ecumenical equivalents in each English region. This is intended to facilitate a church-based education programme directly related to the mission policies and strategies of the church.

9.4 The development of RTPs is far from complete. They are developing in different ways and at different speeds. The Training Committee is committed to supporting the synods as they seek to play their part in and benefit from their particular Regional Training Partnership.

10 Synod training. Each synod has a Training Committee or equivalent and most employ one or more people in the role of Training Officer (though there is a variety of titles). At the present time the Synods make the final decisions about where ministers and Church Related Community Workers will train, in consultation with the Training Committee. Training Officers are involved in Education for Ministry 2, 3 and lay training in their regions and some are involved in part time courses there.

11 Training for Learning and Serving. This well-established course for all in the United Reformed Church wanting to learn more about their faith is also the main route for training lay preachers. It is administered by a management group and staff appointed by and responsible to the Training Committee.

TRAINING APPENDIX TWO

BECOMING A LEARNING CHURCH – FINANCING THE OPERATION

1.1 The Training Committee, encouraged by the Catch the Vision group, is advocating the best culture and arrangements for education that the United Reformed Church needs. Although aware of the need to be careful of the church’s resources it is not aiming to save money in the first instance but to operate good stewardship once it has discerned what will best equip the church for today’s mission.

1.2 This appendix outlines current expenditure and the financial implications of what is contained in the body of the report. These figures do not appear to have been brought together like this before and whilst we have confidence in them and know that they are well researched, exploration of the scene is still continuing.

1.3 Our conclusion is that we are a church whose financial and educational systems are not transparent in that they do not reflect the value of different forms of training. For example you can read the figures as saying that the training budget spends £87,000 on lay training and £1,386,000 (2005 figures) on training ministers (including Church Related Community Workers). This is clearly a massive disproportion of spending – over 15:1 in preference to ministers overall. This is without referring to the relative proportion of the numbers of ministers and lay people in the church (including elders) which makes the differential even greater. Similarly the apparent balance of resources towards pre ordination (Education for Ministry 1) rather than post ordination training (Education for Ministry 2/3) looks massive: £1,210,000 against £176,000 (2005 figures)

1.4 However a range of things illustrate that this is neither the whole picture nor a very clear picture:

- Ministers are trained partly in order themselves to be educators of others
- Other appointments in which the church invests (e.g. Synod Training Officers) give time and skills to lay training and Education for Ministry 2/3 – and the Training Committee supports these appointments by servicing their networking and in other ways
- Subvention money given to theological colleges subsidises lay training and Education for Ministry 2/3 training as well as providing for ordination training. The staffs of theological colleges contribute as tutors on Training for Learning and Serving, in doing local lay training, in contributing to Synod Schools and in all sorts of other ways. There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is greatly appreciated in the life of the church.

- The proportion of money spent on Ministerial training reduces dramatically when set against the estimated £2.5 million that the whole church spends on training (including synod training costs, Windermere Centre, Youth and Children’s Work Training and Development Officers etc). (See 2.1 below)
- It is also the case that Westminster’s and Northern’s resources and specialisms (the Reformed Studies centre at Westminster, its increasing role as the repository of the church’s archives and records, Northern College’s specialism in community work, other faiths and dispersed learning) remain resources for the church above and beyond their importance for EM1 pre ordination training.

2 TRAINING FINANCE

2.1 How much has the United Reformed Church been spending on training?

Training Committee expenditure	2004	2005
<i>Training for stipendiary ministry of Word and Sacraments</i>		
Student Maintenance	£402,548	£408,588
Fees & subsidies	£623,109	£622,931
	£1,025,657	£1,031,519
<i>CRCW Training</i>		
Student Maintenance	£31,944	£51,740
Fees	£30,306	£35,706
	£62,250	£87,446
Total College Training Costs	£1,087,907	£1,118,965
<i>NSM student training costs</i>		
	£118,866	£90,915
<i>NSM Church Related Community Workers costs</i>		
	0	0
<i>EM3 costs</i>	£198,083	£176,003
Other Training Costs	£316,949	£266,918
Training for Learning & Serving	£75,415	£87,626
Training Office & Committee	£127,470	£152,369
Grand Total	£1,607,741	£1,625,878

2.2 Synods also spend on training (between £5,000 and £49,000 each). Synod Training and Education spending estimates for 2006 are:-

Ministerial	£228,577
Lay	£ 75,517
Synod training staff	£310,000
Total	£614,094

(These figures have been supplied from original research on church costs undertaken in 2003 by the Church's Treasurer as part of the Catch the Vision process and more recently updated)

2.3 Other

As indicated above, significant elements of training expenditure (in synods, YCWTDs, the Windermere Centre) are not under the auspices of the Training Committee. However there is further spending on training that cannot currently be quantified. This includes the service of many ministers (and many are paid from M&M) as Training for Learning and Serving tutors.

The total United Reformed Church expenditure on training is probably therefore in the order of £2.5 million.

3 How much does Education for Ministry 1 (pre ordination/commissioning) Training cost?

3.1 This depends on the number of students, but the amount spent is not proportional to the number of students. There are 3 elements to the cost: (a) student maintenance for full-time students (depends on numbers and family circumstances), (b) fees (depends on numbers) & (c) subsidies paid to colleges.

3.2 Subsidies

Each college has a certain level of fixed costs (plant and staff) that has to be covered if it is to continue offering the courses the United Reformed Church needs. For colleges which are wholly or largely dependent on United Reformed Church students it has been accepted that the United Reformed Church has to cover these costs. As student numbers at a college fall, the average cost per student rises (though the marginal cost of an additional student is low). Subsidies were introduced in addition to per capita fees in the aftermath of the decision of the 1999 Assembly of the United Reformed Church in the UK to continue with four English colleges. This was in order to give the colleges an assurance of the United Reformed Church's commitment to them. Subsidies are the result of reduced student numbers spread over an unchanged number of colleges and courses.

3.3 Course length

The part-time courses undertaken by students, who in the main are preparing for part-time ministry, are typically no longer than the full-time courses in terms of the number of years for which fees have to be paid. This being so, no distinction need be made between part-time and full-time students when analysing the fees paid.

3.4 Maintenance support

Part-time students are largely self-supporting and receive modest expenses. Substantial maintenance grants are paid to full-time students.

3.5 *An analysis of fees paid to Westminster College*
Westminster College has estimated an allocation of its income by area of training activity for 2006: -

EM1	£230,000	
EM2	£46,000	
EM3	£15,000	
Lay	<u>£15,000</u>	
	£306,000	(2005: £298,000)

3.6 Assuming a fixed cost of £230,000 for EM1 training, cost per student depends on numbers, and may be reviewed on the basis of alternative assumptions: -

Number of Students	Cost per student	Explanation
14	£16,429	No change in student numbers
29	£7,931	Number currently at Northern
33	£6,970	Half of 2005/6 English students
45	£5,111	Half of 2003/4 English students

If 32 students were sent to Westminster for EM1 the fee per student (with no subsidy paid) would drop below the present fee charged by Queens.

3.7 Fees at present

The analysis of Westminster College's fees above illustrates how much better the scene could look than the current situation. The United Reformed Church pays the fees of both part-time and full-time students. Though the fees over the first three years of training are broadly similar, the fees for the fourth and final placement year of a part-time student can be significantly lower.

3.8 The fees the United Reformed Church has paid can be analysed for academic years.

The table below shows the number of students at each training institution together with the fees and subsidies paid:-

	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No.	Fee	No.	Fee	No.	Fee
<i>Colleges</i>						
NORTHERN						
Number & Fees	35	£185,700	25	£148,950	29	£168,795
Block grant		£71,811		£103,857		£105,876
		£257,511		£252,807		£274,671
<i>Fees per student</i>		£7,357		£10,112		£9,471
WESTMINSTER						
Number & Fees	22	£144,909	18	£121,767	14	£97,591
Block grant		£108,263		£171,619		£202,409
		£253,172		£293,386		£300,000
<i>Fees per student</i>		£11,508		£16,299		£21,429
MANSFIELD						
Number & Fees	8	£44,790	6	£35,451	6	£31,523
Additional grant		£17,613		£18,225		£18,814
		£62,403		£53,676		£50,337
<i>Fees per student</i>		£7,800		£8,946		£8,390
QUEENS						
Number & Fees	5	£32,649	6	£43,056	6	£43,920
<i>Fees per student</i>		£6,530		£7,176		£7,320
SCOTTISH						
Number & Fees	5	£13,800	5	£18,700	4	£13,730
<i>Fees per student</i>		£2,760		£3,740		£3,433
COLLEGE totals	75	£619,535	60	£661,625	59	£682,658
<i>Fees per student</i>		£8,260		£11,027		£11,570

COURSES	2003/04		2004/05		2005/06	
	No.	Fee	No.	Fee	No.	Fee
<i>Regional Courses</i>						
NEOC	2	£7,272	2	£7,272	2	Information not available
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,636		£3,636		
STETS	9	£29,790	7	£21,480	6	£20,700
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,310		£3,069		£3,450
SWMTC	3	£16,190	3	£16,839	1	£5,427
<i>Fees per student</i>		£5,397		£5,613		£5,427
EMMTC	3	£12,762	1	£4,645	0	
<i>Fees per student</i>		£4,254		£4,645		
SEITE	2	£6,660	3	£12,753	3	£12,771
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,330		£4,251		£4,257
St Michael's	1	£3,465	0		0	
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,465				

EAMTC/ERMC	0		2	£8,590	2	£8,910
<i>Fees per student</i>				£4,295		£4,455
COURSES totals	20	£76,139	18	£71,579	12	£47,808
<i>Fees per student</i>		£3,807		£3,977		£3,984
GRAND TOTALS all students	95	£695,674	78	£733,204	71	£730,466
		£7,323		£9,400		£10,288

3.9 Observations:

3.9.1 The cost of fees per student increases as student numbers fall, because of the commitment to cover the fixed costs of some colleges with subsidies. Student numbers in recent years have been:

	Feb-99	Feb-00	Feb-01	Feb-02	Feb-03	Feb-04	Feb-05
SM of Word and Sacraments	72	74	76	68	66	63	54
NSM of Word and Sacraments	36	42	41	38	32	31	19
CRCWs	7	6	5	6	6	5	5
	115	122	122	112	104	99	78

Please note that these figures are taken from the Student statistics in the Assembly Year Book. They do not entirely agree with the figures above of student fees paid which were supplied by the finance office. There is a range of reasons for this. Finance figures do not include students on 800 hour placements managed by synods and are for a whole academic year. Assembly statistics are a February snapshot. Taken together, they illustrate costs of fees paid and trends in student numbers.

3.9.2 College fees (for mostly full-time students) are markedly higher than course fees (for mostly part-time students). It is likely that there are hidden subsidies to the courses in the form of tutor time given.

3.9.3 Fees per student at Westminster and Northern are high in this analysis. This is not only the result of the commitment to cover fixed costs when student numbers are down. It is clear that our payments to these colleges (and the Scottish College) buy us much more than just Education for Ministry 1 training. College staff contribute extensively to Education for Ministry 2, (post ordination training) Education for Ministry 3 (formerly Continuing Ministerial Education) and Lay training as well, but the way in which the numbers have been presented in the Training Committee accounts make it appear that the United Reformed Church pays a high price for Education for Ministry 1 and gets other training for nothing.

4 What are the consequences of implementing the proposals?

4.1 For a range of reasons other than finance and spelt out in the main report, the Training Committee suggests concentrating Education for Ministry 1 students through three colleges designated as Resource Centres for Learning. An immediate effect of this would be to reduce the subvention to Northern and Westminster. Effectively on the 2004/5 figures over £168,000 in student fees and Mansfield subvention would be available to offset Northern and Westminster costs. The extra costs to cope with additional students at those institutions would be minimal. There is likely to be some expenditure needed to purchase local components for the dispersed learning needs of some of the ordinands. However the major part of that figure above would be available to lower the Training budget or reinvest in the provisions being encouraged for a learning church.

5 **The alternative** would be using only the part time courses for part time training and would on the face of it save a good deal in terms of fees and would do away with any subsidies entirely. The Training Committee's argument is that the Church needs to distinguish between what are costs to the church and what the Church values. Its ability to be ecumenically engaged and yet distinctive in its understanding of church and ministry is of high value and would be diminished by this route. Such a route would also have other costs or consequences. These include:

- Westminster (the only institution the United Reformed Church 'owns') cannot have its financial value released for the church due to its trust deeds.
- Westminster, Northern and the Scottish Colleges generate income or contribute Trust income to the work of the church that would be lost if the colleges were not used.
- If the colleges were not available then the United Reformed Church would still need to provide staff in the 11 English synods, Wales and Scotland to be a significant resource for ordination students who would be training in the regions. There would also need to be staffing resources for the training of Church Related Community Worker students. This would be in addition to current synod staff and would need to be financially supported. Even one member of staff to cover two synods would be six staff members and a possible cost of £180,000 for salaries and on costs alone without calculating office and other necessary resources.
- There would also be a need to hold somewhere else some library resources and the reformed study centre resources currently based at Westminster. Whilst not a major factor for the report it is significant as a financial consideration. Additionally the use of Westminster especially as a place of repository for significant denominational archives would mean that that problem will have to be tackled by other routes
- The church's wider programmes of education such as Training for Learning and Serving, Lay preachers in service training, Education for

Ministry 3 would still require contribution from those qualified and able to tutor. This would mean employing United Reformed Church staff in other places for these purposes.

6 Implications for Training Committee's recommendations

6.1 Our General Assembly policy is to develop and value learning for the whole church, to encourage collaborative and flexible forms of ministry, to value the education and contribution of all and mend the fractures that exist between lay and ministerial training and pre and post ordination training. The Training Committee believes that this needs to be undergirded and reinforced by the way training is organised and paid for.

6.2 In working through the implications of the 2005 principles, the committee is committed to seeking further developments that will better express the church's need for good stewardship and be a better expression of the importance of training for the whole church. It will thus work to reduce the sense in which Lay and Education for Ministry 2/3 provisions are only offered as a spin off from what seems to be the main work of training Ministers for ordination. Noting that the present proposal will reduce subventions paid to Northern and Westminster Colleges by up to £168,000 the committee will still explore as a matter of urgency reducing and removing such subsidies as remain. As resource centre for learning it will encourage them to work in partnerships with other providers to arrange and charge the Church for the range of education which the church needs.

Youth and Children's Work

This Committee supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people, including the policy and oversight of the YCWT Programme, giving oversight to Pilots, and relates to FURY Council. It also ensures that its concerns are fully taken into account in Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, Church and Society, Life and Witness Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: Kathryn Price

Secretary: Steve Faber

Convener elect: Neil Thorogood

Huw Morrison, Gus Webbe, Tim Meachin, Doreen Watson

to 2005: Daphne Clarke, Lorraine Downer, John Sanderson, Elaine Thomas, Anthea Coates (Training committee rep)

from 2005: Rosemary Simmons, Sian Collins, Rita Griffiths, Ruth Hezlett, Robert Thomas, Sue Brown (Training committee rep)

FURY rep: Helen Honess (2004-5), Jen Wilson (2005-6)

FURY chair: 2004 Amanda Wade, 2005 Gareth Jones, 2006 Isobel Simmons

1 Introduction

The breadth of youth and children's work in the United Reformed Church is hard to contain in one report. Across the Synods dedicated people give time, energy and talents to a variety of after-school clubs, Sunday Schools, Girls and Boys Brigades, Guide and Scout units, youth activities, Pilots, and so on and so on. As a committee we are tasked with supporting this work and offering direction. In 2004 General Assembly supported our strategy for developing youth and children's work at the local church level. The last two years have seen this pursued in a variety of ways . . .

2 Network and communications

2.1 The reverse of the annual returns form a couple of years ago was dedicated to information about children and young people in the church. This information has been analysed and stored appropriately with a number of results:

- We now have the ability to send material to a designated person in a local church. This has ranged from sample copies of URCHIN to an information sheet on Belonging and the f2 pull-out from Reform.
- The biggest issue indicated was the lack of volunteers. In response to this, the Youth and Children's Work Training (YCWT) team put together a training pack for churches to help them recruit and then support new volunteers. This resource is appropriate for volunteers in all aspects of church life, not just youth and children's work.
- A database of people offering to share their skills more widely is in preparation.

2.2 Using money from the DfES, a publication on youth work, similar to URCHIN (for children's workers) and The Bridge (for Pilots companies), is being developed.

2.3 Regular mailings to Synod and District youth and children's work secretaries continue, as do the synod and district children's work meetings. A special addition last year was 'A Bit of Bling', which brought together synod and district youth and children's work secretaries, Regional Pilots Officers and Scout chaplains. The event proved most useful and another is planned for this autumn.

3 Programme

The five year plan began in 2005 with 'Belonging' and featured a worship pack from Pilots, suggestions on developing the theme in Reform and a range of more local events. The theme for 2006 is 'Worship' and has been promoted with a further worship pack from Pilots, articles in Reform and an information and resources sheet. The YCWT team will be leading events in their synods in September. Both themes were further explored in different events in Districts and Synods. The programme will continue with the focus for 2007 and 2008 being Discipleship and Evangelism respectively.

4 Training

4.1 We have been particularly concerned with training for youth and children's work and a task group has drawn up a list of core competencies for workers. The new ecumenical material CORE Skills for Children's Ministry is the most up-to-date available for children's workers. Other opportunities are also available.

4.2 We have continued to monitor the training offered to ordinands and ministers post-ordination in the field of youth and children's work and are delighted that Westminster College, Cambridge, now includes this.

5 Youth and Children's Work Trainers

5.1 The number of YCWs has risen from 7 to 11. We have been sorry to see Andrew Micklefield and Howard Nurden go, but have been just as delighted to welcome Chris Burgham, Ruth White, Stewart Cutler, Malcolm Evans and Nick White to the team.

5.2 With the changes in youth and children's services throughout the country and the introduction of 'Every Child Matters' the team has been involved in helping churches develop new and exciting work in partnership with other organisations and the statutory services. Other development work has helped churches address their ministry among children and young people, exploring issues of faith and spirituality and the inclusion of children and young people in the whole life of the church.

5.3 The range of work of the team is broad and includes writing training material for youth and children's workers, such as Spectrum and CORE, providing support for national events, such as FURY Assembly and What do you think?, offering training for Pilots officers and other leaders and setting up youth exchanges and youth councils.

6 DfES grant

We continue to receive money from the Department for Education and Science (DfES) and in recent years the focus has been on involving young people in the structures of the church. This has included 'What do you think?', Pilots Voyagers and Navigators events, multi-racial youth event, as well as events and new ways of communication in the synods. We continue to include in our budget an equivalent amount for the synods of Wales and Scotland and also offer funding for children's work events at synod level.

7 Theological reflection

7.1 Our worship is led each time by a different committee member and our meetings are enriched by the variety of reflections that have been offered. Other reflections have been prepared on the Year of the Family, on volunteering, on worship and have appeared in the different publications.

7.2 Rosemary Johnston, Children's Advocate (1995-2006), took sabbatical leave to explore children and pastoral care and has prepared a stimulating paper and led events that will encourage further thought and reflection and hopefully lead to better practice.

8 Events

John Brown, Secretary for Youth Work, has been involved in international ecumenical events that have brought young people together from across the world. Amongst these have been an international youth

exchange with Palestine and support of the CWM working trip to Orkney.

9 Work with other committees

9.1 We continue to work extensively with other committees, particularly Church and Society on Commitment for Life, Doctrine, Prayer & Worship on a range of issues, particularly baptism and membership, Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry, and Ecumenical and International Relations.

9.2 Pilots and FURY have their own reports, but are part of the regular agenda. We have been particularly interested in the information that the fastest growing sector of Pilots is the Voyagers and Navigators, 11-18s. We were pleased to welcome the new convener of the Pilots Management Committee, Revd Pamela Smith, to our February meeting.

9.3 The reorganisation of FURY was the final part of the 2002 Youth and children's work review to be finished and this year's FURY Assembly agreed to experiment with a new way of working. We hope that synods will respond well to the encouragement to set up youth executives to involve young people at a local level.

10 Ecumenical connections

All the staff, those based in Church House and the YCW team, maintain strong ecumenical links and are actively engaged with colleagues from across the denominations. Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer) and Rosemary Johnston value meeting and work regularly with ecumenical colleagues in the four nations through the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children (CGMC). Karen is the current Moderator of CGMC and is one of the two representatives for the United Kingdom and Ireland on the steering group of the European Conference on Christian Education. The Churches Network for Non-Violence provides a good support for continuing work on preventing violence against children. A handbook for local churches, Respecting Children, was launched this spring. Rosemary shared the staffing of a display area and presenting of a workshop at the World Council of Churches in Brazil.

11 People

11.1 We are enormously grateful for the work of the staff in Church House Office and the YCWs in the synods. Rosemary Johnston retired at the end of March and will be much missed. Many folk around the church will have their own good memories of Rosemary's visits and encouraging comments. We are currently in the process of appointing a Children's Work Development Officer and remain committed to the continued support of children's work and the advocacy of children.

11.2 At the end of four and a bit years as convener and seven in total on the committee, I wish to add my personal thanks and admiration for all the splendid and committed people that have shared that time with me, both staff and fellow committee members. It has sometimes been hard work, but it has always been worthwhile.

Fellowship of United Reformed Youth – FURY

Our mission is to discover God, to help each other grow in the Christian faith and, through our lives, reflect God's love to all.

FURY Chair 2006: Miss Isobel Simmons

FURY Chair Elect 2006: Mr Andrew Littlejohns

FURY Chair 2005: Mr Gareth Jones

1.1 Since the last report in 2004 there have been a lot of things going on within FURY, much of it concerned with finding our place within the wider church.

1.2 FURY Council have worked extraordinarily hard over the past two years and effectively planned and led the hugely successful FURY Assembly 2006. There is an enormous amount of talent, passion and spirituality among the young people in the United Reformed Church, and FURY Council are no exception.

1.3 This talent and passion led FURY Council, facilitated by Gareth Jones, FURY Chair 2005 to re-evaluate FURY's place within the United Reformed Church and submit a set of proposals to FURY Assembly 2006 aimed at streamlining FURY Council and sub-committees so they can work more effectively.

1.4 Whilst these changes, unanimously accepted by FURY Assembly 2006 and reprinted at the end of this report, are mainly structural; the aim behind them is to enable FURY to engage with and empower young people within the United Reformed Church.

1.5 FURY has already caught its vision for God's tomorrow – a church which young people feel part of and engage with on a local, Synod and Assembly level. Young people are a fantastically vibrant part of the United Reformed Church and we urge the church to recognise and value young people whether they attend a Sunday morning service, a Pilots company, a uniformed organisation, or a youth group.

1.6 General Assembly has decided that the focus of youth work should be in the local church, and FURY accepts and supports this and so urges all Synods to

consider setting up a Synod Youth Executive. There are already successful examples of these in several Synods, and several more are in the process of setting them up. FURY Council and the Youth and Children's Work Committee are working together on this goal of a Synod Youth Executive in every Synod.

1.7 In an attempt to complement local youth work, FURY Council are running two Assembly level youth events this year, which offer a contrast to the business weekend of FURY Assembly; spirit based forums in autumn where young people can come together from across the United Reformed Church to explore their faith.

1.8 The Secretary for Youth Work and the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Team with FURY Council will also continued the success of preparing the under 26 delegates to General Assembly with 'What Do You Think?' 2006.

1.9 FURY Assembly continues to be a popular event, and from 2006 it is open to any young person within the United Reformed Church who wants to attend – there is no longer the limit of three per district. This is an exciting opportunity for more young people to engage with youth work and the United Reformed Church on an Assembly level and we hope as many people as possible will take advantage of this.

1.10 Young people are one of the great strengths of the United Reformed Church and we urge you to recognise this and continue to work with us.

FURY Assembly 2006

MOTION B – FURY Restructure Proposals

Motion B1: FURY Council shall be disbanded and replaced by the FURY Advisory Board. This shall consist of two bodies: the FURY Executive and the FURY Task Group. As such, from here on, no one shall be elected or appointed to FURY Council. The only exception to this is that in 2006 a FURY Chair Elect should be elected who will at Assembly 2007 become the first FURY Moderator.

Motion B2: The FURY Executive shall be convened by the FURY Moderator. Upon election they shall complete a year as Moderator elect, then a year as Moderator and an optional third year as past Moderator in a supporting role but with no voting rights. Their job shall be as described in the FURY Restructuring Task Group report to FURY Assembly 2006. The first Moderator Elect shall be elected at FA 2006.

Motion B3: Positions on the FURY Executive other than those of Moderator, past moderator and moderator elect shall be the Treasurer, Secretary, Communications Representative and the National Synod Representative. There shall also be 5 co-opted positions, of which one shall be the Secretary for Youth Work and another a chaplain (in accordance with the FURY Restructuring Task Group report to FURY Assembly 2006). These co-opted positions shall be selected by the FURY Executive as and when they are required.

Motion B4: The Task Group, whose sole purpose shall be dealing with the work of the main Assembly of FURY, shall not have a fixed membership. Proposers shall have to find people willing to sit on the task group before submitting a motion, along with FURY representatives from relevant URC committees. Meetings shall be held as laid out in the FURY Restructuring Task Group report to FURY Assembly 2006.

Motion B5: FURY Assembly shall remain as FURY Assembly, although it shall not be a representative event any more. It shall be open to anyone that wishes to come, regardless of how many are already coming from each district.

Motion B6: FURY Assembly accepts the report from the FURY Restructuring Task Group as guidelines but accepts that job descriptions, positions, practices etc will evolve over time. They are not rigid as they stand.

Motion B7: FURY Assembly encourages synods that do not currently have a synod youth executive to investigate the possibilities of starting such a group, and asks that action be taken to set one up as soon as possible, utilising the strengths and skills of the current Synod rep on FURY Council, should there be one.

Proposer of motions: Gareth Jones (FURY Chair)
Seconder: Linda Kemp (FURY Council)



PILOTS: GOOD NEWS FOR THE CHURCH!

The aims of the Pilots organisation are:

- To enable children, young people and those working with them to grow physically, mentally and spiritually through a programme of discovery, play, activities and projects.
- To help children and young people to feel part of the church locally, nationally and internationally.
- To lead children and young people towards commitment to the Christian faith.
- To encourage self-respect and personal development.
- To nurture loving concern for other people and the whole world.

Convener: Revd Pamela Smith

Treasurer: Revd Martin Truscott

Mrs Marilyn Armstrong, Revd Mark Evans, Revd Stephen Haward, Mrs Marion Hornby, Mr Huw Morrison, Revd John Sanderson

1 Good news from the last two years

1.1 "V&N Reloaded" (2004) followed, one year later, by "V&N WotEva" (2005) are two of the ways in the past two years that Pilots has worked towards achieving its aims. V&N Reloaded gave Voyagers (11-14) and Navigators (15-18) the opportunity to have their say about the Pilots programme as well as a lot of fun. Some of the comments they made about the events included:

'V&N was excellent. I got to meet new people from around the country.'

'I had a great time at V&N. I would really like it to be on again next year and I can't wait to go again to meet all my friends.'

'I loved it, I want to go again to meet all my mates. Thanks to everyone involved.'

1.2 "Pilots of the Caribbean" will take place in July 2006, another opportunity for Voyagers and Navigators to get together.

2 Good news now

2.1 Pilots is passionate about all that we do. Children and Young People matter and are valuable members of the church. Pilots Captains and Officers are equally valued and we therefore demand a high standard in the materials that we provide for our workers. In the past two years we have delivered Pilots Voyages Packs that explore Bangladesh and the UK – with the UK being the first pack presented in a game format. We will be exploring other formats for our packs in the future.

2.2 Worship Pack 2005 explored the theme of Belonging, including belonging to Pilots, belonging to ourselves and each other, belonging together, belonging to God's World and belonging to God. The 2006 Worship Pack investigated Worship and looked at what worship is, and why and how we worship, culminating in Companies preparing and leading an act of worship for the church family.

2.3 The 1998 Edition of The Compass has served Pilots well for nearly 10 years. In the past eighteen months The Compass has been completely revised and largely re-written. This huge task has delivered a

Compass that will provide material and information for Pilots Companies for many years to come.

2.4 Pilots continues to grow, many new companies have been opened in the past few years. Pilots delivers what local churches want and what children and young people find exciting and fun. Not only that, but they invite their friends along too. Pilots is not only concerned with numerical growth but also with personal and spiritual growth. Pilots keeps God and the Kingdom at its core.

3 Good news going forwards – Future

3.1 It is 70 years since the London Missionary Society started Pilots in order to widen the interest of children in the missionary ships of the "John Williams" line. No particular celebrations are planned for this year, instead we are looking forwards to the 75th Anniversary in 2011. However, in order to note this significant milestone in Pilots history, and following work undertaken by the Pilots Archivist, a special celebration pack on the life of John Williams will be published.

3.2 Following on from the huge success at Cadbury World in 2002 when 3000 gathered and Legoland in 2005 when over 6000 gathered, planning for the next big event is underway.

3.3 Pilots has been an ecumenical organisation for a long time, and companies are based in a wide range of churches, with many informal ecumenical relationships formed. Discussions with other denominations continue as new opportunities arise.

4 Share the good news!

Pilots gives local churches the opportunity to share the love of God in the ongoing life of Jesus Christ by inviting children and young people on an exciting journey. This is the Good News of Pilots! If you want to know more contact the Pilots Desk at the United Reformed Church on 020 7916 2020 or by e-mail pilots@urc.org.uk.

Be a part of this wonderful adventure!

Youth and Children's Work Committee Resolutions

Resolution 40

Safe Church Declaration

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to revisit the 'Declaration of a Safe Church' and bring to the next Assembly proposals to extend its provisions to cover emotional, physical and domestic abuse and neglect.

1.1 At FURY Assembly in January 2006, the following motion was passed:

FURY Assembly supports the General Assembly's decision in 2005 to accept the Declaration of a Safe Church, which included the following statement:

This Church will:

- i. *inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them,*
- ii. *in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse is a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin,*
- iii. *take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken,*

iv. *put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action. Currently the only safeguards are against sexual abuse and other forms were unfortunately omitted from this resolution. FURY Assembly asks the Youth and Children's Work Committee to take recommendations to General Assembly 2006, asking them to extend the provisions under the Declaration of a Safe Church to all sufferers of abuse in the United Reformed Church, including those subjected to mental, physical and domestic abuse and neglect.*

1.2 The Youth and Children's Work committee completely endorses this resolution, feeling that, whilst the Safe Church declaration is both necessary and overdue, there is a need for a more co-ordinated, inclusive approach to issues of this kind.

Resolution 41

CORE

General Assembly endorses that view that all those working with children in the United Reformed Church should be adequately trained for their role. The ecumenically produced material *CORE skills for children's ministry* is welcomed as the most useful means to this end and commended to local churches.

1.1 *CORE skills for children's ministry* is the long-awaited successor to *Kaleidoscope*. The material is being formally launched in the early summer, followed by a conference in September.

1.2 This resolution is being complemented by a corresponding one at the Methodist Conference, and continues the committee's commitment to good and appropriate training for children's workers.

Resolution 42

Child Friendly Church Award

General Assembly commends the Child Friendly Church Award scheme to local churches and recognises the award as a sign of good practice.

1.1 The Child Friendly Church Award scheme has been developed from an original scheme in the Church of England. The Diocese of Liverpool, having carried out a review of its life and work, recommended that parishes welcome and integrate children and their families into the worshipping life of their church. They believed that it was desirable that churches advertise to the community that they take the provision for the young seriously. Churches inviting children in this way should provide a quality service which should be accountable to the church leadership and meet with certain set criteria.

1.2 The scheme, which has been rewritten for the United Reformed Church and piloted in East Midlands Synod, aims to encourage churches to put children and families on their agendas, to work towards certain targets and obtain a certificate and an award to be displayed as appropriate.

1.3 This is a voluntary programme with a light touch, but it is not just an exercise in ticking boxes. It is more about recognising the importance of children and young people in the local church and continually improving how we welcome them and minister with them.

Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: *Mr William M McVey*

Secretary: *Ann Barton*

*Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly,
Convener of Local Arrangements Committee for the relevant year.*

1 General Assembly 2008

The Committee brings a resolution that the Assembly of 2008 should be held at the Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh from 10th to 13th July. **[Resolution 43]**

2 The future of General Assembly

Much thought by many people has gone into the future of General Assembly. This encompasses not just size and representation, but purpose, content, timing, and integration with the other councils of the church. Proposals are to be brought within the framework of Catch the Vision to explore these ideas.

3 The conduct of General Assembly

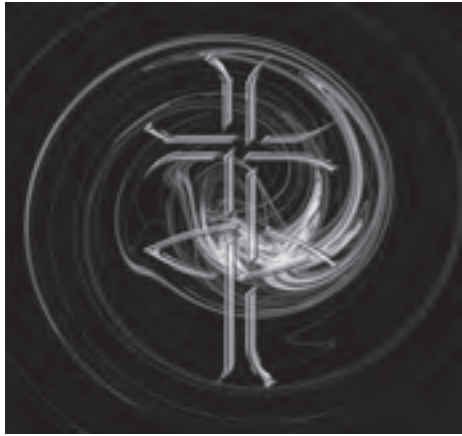
Last year Assembly broke up into small groups to enable the discussion of various proposals; this was a

difficult logistical exercise, but valuable at least in that it gave the opportunity for every voice to be heard. In the absence of topics that would benefit from this treatment, groups are unlikely to be used this year. However we are to start an investigation of decision-making by consensus. We expect to explore one small aspect of this process by using blue and orange cards to gauge opinion during the course of selected debates. A more detailed explanation of this process will be provided at Assembly. It should be emphasised that the cards are one part of a more complex process that will be explained in greater detail – but which in 2006 will not replace decision-making by formal majority voting.

Resolution 43

General Assembly 2008

Assembly agrees that General Assembly in 2008 will meet at the Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh from 10th to 13th July.



Catch the Vision

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

Catch the Vision

“Called to live?”

Summary

We set out our strategic thinking under five headings, ecumenism, changing church, spirituality and core values, ways of working, and finance and resources. We conclude:

- That our commitment to ecumenism should not restrain us from focusing on mission. We are called to live, not die.
- That the structures have been put in place for local experiments in being church differently
- That we are summoned to renewal, to model the love of God and the unity we have given by moving beyond stereotypical divisions of ‘liberal’ and ‘evangelical’.
- That the local church is central to our mission, and must take priority in our use of resources.

Having established those principles, we then suggest ways in which the work of the Assembly might be re-configured to give priority to mission. The report ends by grappling with our limited financial resources and suggests options that the church might adopt to achieve a balanced budget.

1 Introduction

1.1 ‘Catch the Vision’ (CTV) has been working to a published three-phase timetable. Last year we dealt with the structures of the church. This year we are focussing on the resources and staffing of the church, and next year our attention will be fixed on spirituality and values. This was always going to be the most difficult part of our journey because it is about learning to work with fewer resources. So, we hope and pray that this may be the year of pain before the year of gain.

The strategic questions

a) ecumenism

2.1. We are a radical people because our God is radical. All God’s love is everyone’s birth-right. The CTV prayer was our way of saying that:

....we seek to be God’s people,
transformed by the gospel..
committed to making a difference to the
world’s kingdoms
as we live Christ’s kingdom.’

2.2 ‘A united church’, Desmond Tutu told the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Porto Alegre, ‘is no optional extra, rather it is indispensable for the salvation of God’s world’. He went on to link unity firmly with mission and difference making, arguing that the survival of apartheid for so long was in part a result of Christian disunity. The church in his vision is a harbinger of what the world might one day be:

‘Jesus was quite serious when he said that God was our father, that we belonged all to one family, because in this family all, not some, are insiders...Bush, bin Laden, all belong, gay, lesbian, so-called straight – all belong, are loved, are precious.’

2.3 That is real ecumenical radicalism, and the unity of the church is but the faltering first step on the journey. We need no persuading. We were the church created to die, the transitional catalyst that would bring about the unity of English and Welsh Protestantism. It was a wonderful dream, and part of our vocation is to continue to dream, and to be an ecumenical thorn in the side of our partners, reminding them that Jesus longs for his followers to share the unity that he shares with the Father and the Spirit. (John 17:20-24).

2.4 God’s unique gift to us has been to form us from three unions and call us from three nations. Our passion for unity is to be seen in a growing number of ecumenical partnerships, in our national pastoral strategy with the Methodist Church, worked out in a growing number of united areas and in continuing conversations about how we can work together nationally. We have learnt a good deal about the difficulties of local united working, but we also know that successful united churches can be incredibly dynamic and exciting places to be. Across these islands, in countless places, we continue to be passionately committed to local as well as national ecumenism.

2.5 However, despite the rhetoric of Porto Alegre, the language of organic unity which we speak is rarely spoken elsewhere. Rather the dialect is of rejoicing in diversity and learning to live diversely and respectfully. The kind of unity for which we longed is not about to happen. It is clear from the Ecumenical Committee’s investigations that this is not the time for discussions about organic unity. It could, though, be the time to develop parallel pathways which may converge in the fullness of God’s time.

2.6 There are no unity schemes on the far or near horizon. For thirty years the driving dynamic of the United Reformed Church has been unity. It has made us a movement, a pilgrimage, a people of no abiding city. But is God now asking something extra of us? Are we now being asked to balance our willingness to 'die' with a passion for 'life' and mission?

2.7 In a world where calls for unity receive no positive response, we could opt for the 'homeopathic' form of ecumenism. This is the 'dilute until no one knows you're there' option, and it has a certain validity. Well, it says, pull down the shutters. That was an interesting experiment. Let's sell off the silver and throw in our lot with the parish church or the Baptist meeting and strengthen the Christian presence.

2.8 Or we could opt for the 'passion fruit concentrate' version of ecumenism. That says, we might be a peculiar flavour, but the drinks cabinet would be much worse off without it.

2.9 The first strategic question with which we have been grappling in the Steering Group is, dilution or concentration? Which of those positions will best enable us to share God's gift with our Christian brothers and sisters? We have heard it said in ecumenical circles (granted when others thought we weren't listening, 'Don't bother about the URC, they won't be here for long'.) We are not persuaded that our particular offering to the future great church and indeed to the future of Christian witness in our three nations will be best served by dilution.

2.10 We believe that we need to accept that in the goodness of God's grace, this is where we are called to pitch our tent, roll our sleeves up and get on with it. In other words, our ecumenical commitment needs to be put at the service of mission, and mission has to take its place at the centre of our agenda. We've been given so much. Historically we know about living a radical witness, surviving in the face of oppression, refusing to bow to the authority of the state in matters of conscience. We know about reconciling diversity (we have, after all, experienced three unions). We know what it is to be captivated by Scripture and have our lives turned upside down. It happens week by week and month by month. Its electric and wonderful, and we don't know why we don't shout about it. We might be an odd flavour, but we're a catchy one. People might get to like us.

2.11 It is what Christ has spoken and what we have heard that is the source of both our unity and our uniqueness. The unity is obvious, the uniqueness lies in the richness of the incarnate Word whose speech translates into countless cultures and traditions. What we have heard, as Congregationalists, Presbyterians, members of the Churches of Christ and an increasingly diverse United Reformed Church in three countries, makes us unique. Christ's gift is not that we are either

'united' or 'reformed', but that we are 'united and reformed'. That is Christ's gift to us, and because it is his unique gift to us, it is his gift to all God's people, just as their unique hearing is part of his gift to us. For the moment then, we need to rest in that uniqueness, to allow that gift to nurture and nourish us, and to help us re-discover the roots of our own spiritual vitality.

2.12 So, we think we are called to be part of the scene. Here to live rather than called to die. Let's not be ashamed about being here. Let's be ourselves. Let's be glad to be ourselves. Let's not apologise for being the United Reformed Church. Let's celebrate God's gifts, and think about possibilities and mission and growth. Why not church plant? Why not set about pioneering pieces of work? Let's get confident, secure in the gospel. Our ultimate unity lies there after all, not in ecclesiastical designs, however sophisticated, for as Rowan Williams puts it, 'The Catholic Church is simply that gathering in which what Christ has promised is spoken and heard.'

2.13 In the dome of the magnificent Catholic church of Sacre Coeur in Paris is a huge mosaic of Christ with outstretched arms. At the back of the church is a poster, which reads 'Whatever you have done, however life might have hurt you, you are welcome here. The arms of God reach out to you. This is for you.' Sacre Coeur's web site begins:

'Pilgrims, visitors, simple passers-by,
Here God welcomes you to give sense to your life.
Here God waits for you to offer you all his love.'

We dare to hope that might be true of our churches too.

b) Changing church

3.1 Such traditional 'ecu-speak' lacks resonance in some parts of the contemporary Christian world. Richard Mortimer taught us to distinguish between fresh expressions of church, and what he helpfully calls 'new expressions of ecumenism.' We stand a fighting chance of recognising the former, – cell church, café church and so on – because they are places where the eucharist is celebrated and fellowship happens. The latter are really rather different – the isolated rural teenagers with a faith who find each other at Summer events and whose deepest Christian community for the next 11 months is an electronic network meeting in an organised online chatroom; the single issue Christian pressure groups on such social issues as justice, refugees, asylum, the environment and climate change. Some of these would say that their being in some sort of community with each other as an outworking of their faith is a much more compelling encounter with God than Sunday church. What kind of challenge do they bring? Should we try and relate to them, and if so, how?

3.2 Whether we like it or not, understand it or not, ways of being church are being spawned beyond the scope of institutional denominations like ours. This is a very odd transitional period in history, and in it the most judicious mission strategy is one which rides the waves, in all their diversity. The Spirit will be about her winnowing work, and that of lasting value will be left. The difficulty, as ever, is reading the signs of the times, and coping with conflicting and multiple demands.

3.3 *Equipping the saints* (resolution 30 of the 2005 Assembly) offers us exciting opportunities. It has freed us from the impossible dream of providing ministerial leadership for every congregation by offering a broader and more realistic understanding of the ways in which leadership is exercised locally. We are, in that sense, well placed to manage and pastor this complex scene in which traditional church and fresh expressions of church and ecumenism are all happening together. The complementary resolution 39 (2005 Assembly) allows us to use some of our ministers more creatively in responding to those challenges. Responding to our environment is filled with risk, but when was Christian witness anything other?

3.4 We need to manage that risk with skilful accountability, whilst at the same time maintaining an alert traditionalism, and we need to balance that continuum with a clear and insightful realism. However attractive we are, however cleverly we niche market ourselves, there is no guarantee of success. Gospel and church were never programmatic processes. The Spirit is too subtle for that, and God too generous. However, we should not underestimate the stress this can cause. Support for those in leadership, but particularly for those engaged in full-time ministries and Christian work on our behalf, is critical, and deserves close thought.

3.5 Doing and being church differently can never be imposed 'from above'. It would be quite improper for Assembly to tell any of our churches how to 'be' and 'do' church. Assembly has provided the structural framework within which experiment and evolution can happen, and we look forward eventually to hearing the stories about what has been accomplished.

c) Spirituality and core values.

4.1 Renewal is at the heart of our agenda. If concentration rather than dilution is required of us, we must seek renewal from the God who calls us. Desmond Tutu was right to say that a united church is indispensable for the salvation of God's world. All around we see nation set against nation, culture against culture, faction against faction. Scripture is full of alternative visions, of wolf and lamb together (Isaiah 11), of Jerusalem's streets full of well cared-for old folks and bubbly kids (Zechariah 8:5), of the leaves of the trees being for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). The church is the harbinger of that new creation,

which has already begun in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:16ff). Granted, we hold that treasure in all too earthen vessels, but the world is right to have expectations that in the church they will see 'something different'.

4.2 Modelling that 'something different' calls us to repentance and renewal, for what the world actually sees is Christian pitted against Christian, fighting to the institutional death over issues like human sexuality and arcane aspects of Biblical interpretation. It is the most desperate witness. We who are committed to unity to need to live that commitment within our own local churches and amongst ourselves. We need to show that the old antagonisms between 'evangelical' and 'liberal' are outmoded and can be transcended.

4.3 We held a small consultation on mission and evangelism in December 2005, with the deliberate intent of seeing if there was common ground to build on. It turned out to be a quite remarkable 24 hours, bringing together 'evangelicals' and 'liberals', Biblical scholars and community ministry specialists, together with the odd church bureaucrat. In one memorable phrase, we discovered that the wings of the church either keep people apart or enable them to fly. We discovered a passionate excitement amongst all present about the reading of Scripture.

4.4 John Campbell, who was our main facilitator, posed the question, 'Why is the Bible so purposefully awkward?' Why does God communicate in this oblique, unusual way? Perhaps to defeat our inbuilt propensity to domesticate God and control religion, to challenge assumptions of closure, to seek our friendship, to show the value of vulnerability, to help us create community (for the Scriptures grew out of a community of believers), and show us that the text must be read anew in each generation. He summed up his thinking in the phrase, 'we have an amazing, intriguing, talkative God who is beyond us all but right there seeking us.'

4.5 And around that we converged, seeing both a God-given opportunity to leave behind the evangelical-liberal divide, and the possibility of a process of renewal which could gather the church into a community of difference makers for Christ's sake. We have seen a vision. We intend to follow it, and make it the key feature of 'Catch the Vision' 2007.

d) Ways of working

5.1 Our fourth strategic observation is that we believe the local church to be absolutely critical. It is here, more than anywhere else, that gospel and culture meet, here more than anywhere else that change can happen and discipleship flourish. That is not to endorse the way some churches do things now, but it is to say that we have a 'strategic footprint' across our nations that some commercial organisations would die

for! The possibilities of those places are only limited by our imaginations. We rejoice in Assembly's response to *Equipping the saints* because it allows us to resource local churches far more flexibly and creatively.

5.2 We wish to build on that. Gathering and dispersing is the tide of Christian living. That process is for us essentially parochial, although we are well aware that some still drive twenty miles to worship, and others shrink that distance in cyberspace, but the reality is still of gathering around the Word and then dispersing into discipling activity. Ministers and CRCWs are (with others in some places) the conductors and animateurs of that process. Or, to change the metaphor into management-speak – local churches are the only income generating part of the church process. Our ministers and CRCWs remain essential to that work, and that local work, presbyteral and diaconal, remains (and should remain) the focus of our resourcing.

5.3 If we are to continue to direct our resources there, we must press on with our quest for lighter governance and a leaner structure. Conciliar government is expensive government. Whilst we wish to reduce the cost of that government (which our auditors have identified as overly expensive for an organisation our size), we do not wish to forsake its principle. We have recognised that by proposing that Assembly will in future meet every two years, and by our acceptance that we wish to have one level of council between the Assembly and the local church. The representatives of that one local council will form both the Assembly, and the Council which will act on its behalf between Assemblies.

5.4 Our work this year on the governance of the church has fallen into two inter-related parts:

i) the structure of the church

5.5 First, the work begun last year on the number of councils between Assembly and the local church must be completed. Resolutions 40, 41 and 43 have each received the requisite two-thirds majority in the councils of the church.

Resolutions	40	41	43
Synods against	1	2	3
Districts against	3	21	

The Steering Group believes that the will of the church has been clearly expressed thus far, and therefore brings the resolutions back to this Assembly for ratification.

(Resolutions 43-47, p 136)

The report of the London Synod Commission is given in CTV Appendix 5 (p 161).

5.6 The legal advice which we have received, whilst not definitive, suggests that in all probability we will need to create a Statutory Instrument to amend the 1972 Act in respect of Section 5 Trusts. The Clerk's advice to the Steering Group is that, if this is necessary, it should be presented to the 2007 Assembly for agreement prior to its progress through parliament. That allows us a year to work out a smooth transition into new ways of working.

5.7 Second, we promised Assembly last year that we would present options about the possible size and composition of future Assemblies and (Mission) Council. We apologise that the material is not available in this report. We very much hope that it will be available as a separate paper within the Assembly mailing. Deciding about the size and shape of Assembly involves judgements about the balance of representation and trust, and (as within any Reformed system) representation has a direct relationship to the cost of governance (the larger the council, the more costly it will be). We trust that those will be amongst the factors affecting Assembly's decision.

ii) trusteeship

5.8 We must deal with the question of Trusteeship. In the United Reformed Church, the General Assembly (under God) is the source of authority and policy. The church operates under both its own laws and procedures, and under civil law, for it occupies a privileged position in civic life. The civil government therefore has a right to expect that churches and charities are managed and governed properly. It is the role of charity Trustees to give that assurance. Thus the Trustees of the Church should exercise the control and management of the **administration** of the church's policy (see s.97(1) of the 1993 Act). In other words, they are 'watch-dogs' who should have in place a series of measures to ensure that the administration of the church is being carried out according to the policy set by Assembly, and within the provisions of charity law. They must ensure that the charity is properly pursuing its purposes, preserving its assets and operating on a secure financial basis, and assessing and responding appropriately to risks and opportunities.

5.9 It has been clear for some time that our understanding of Trusteeship needs attention. The General Assembly of 2001 agreed that the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) should act as Trustees of the Church. That has proved less than satisfactory, not least because MCAG's busy agenda leaves it little time to carry out the necessary assurance processes. Given the way that our life is presently structured, the Finance Committee, the URC Trust, the Catch the Vision Steering Group (by default) and others have all found themselves doing trustee-type work. The Steering Group considers that we need to establish a more formal, rigorous, transparent process to provide checks and balances and assurance for those within and outside the church.

5.10 We believe that we now have the opportunity to do that, the better to comply with the requirements of good governance in the 1993 Act. After informal consultation with our Legal Advisors and the Charity Commission, we believe that we can do this simply, in two stages.

i) a transitional trustee body

5.11 Assembly is asked to appoint the directors of the URC Trust as Trustees in place of MCAG for a period of one year, and to instruct the Finance Committee to undertake the role of the Audit Committee for the Trustees.

5.12 Currently all the assets of the Church are held in the name of the URC Trust as holding trustees, and the URC Trust already has an investment sub-committee which, *de facto*, is undertaking a managing trustee role on the substantial investments of the Church. The Finance Committee's work already includes the preparation of the annual report and accounts which are already technically presented on behalf of the Trustees to the General Assembly by the Honorary Treasurer.

ii) a permanent trustee body

5.13 The 2007 Assembly should be asked to elect Trustees, whilst ensuring a proper degree of continuity with the URC Trust.

5.14 The aim is that within the shortest time possible the Trustee body should be entirely elected by the Assembly. Detailed descriptions of the number of Trustees, the skills needed by the Trustee body, and a suggested method of election are given in Appendix 2 (p 139).

iii) The Salaries Committee

5.15 We also recommend that the Salaries Committee, which at present has no reporting line, should become the Remuneration Committee for the Trustees.

5.16 In Appendix 1 (p 138) we offer in diagrammatic form a vision of the structure of the church, which includes the new Trustee body.

(Resolution 48, p 137)

5.17 If councils are presently one 'partner' in our governing structure, committees are the other. We have already (through the Staffing Advisory Group) undertaken extensive conversations with committees and staff secretaries to see how we might organise ourselves for the future. Once again, we do not believe that the *status quo* is an option, because we are a small church with limited resources. The days have gone when we could do all that we want to do. We therefore need to prioritise, and those priorities need to be set and evaluated by the councils of

the church. There are parts of our work where standing committees are vital, but other areas where a rapidly shifting environment demands a sure-footed, flexible response. We therefore offer an alternative vision, which we hope sets mission at the heart of our work (A more detailed picture is given in the diagram in Appendix 3 p 140). We adopt the term 'departments' on the advice of Mission Council, and we are happy to do so because the thrust of departments at an earlier stage in our history was to work with representative committees, acting as channels of information between Assembly and Synods. We believe this to be an important way of holding the work of the church together. Our hope would be that this could be further enhanced by allowing Mission Council to divide into three sections which could take a special interest in the work of the three departments.

- The Department of the Ministries of the Church, which will include training, eldership and youth and children's ministries, because they are part of the ministry of the whole people of God.
- The Department of Administration and Resources, which will provide support services like communications, human resources, finance and so on.
- The Department of Mission policy and Theology, which we hope will encourage teamwork and collaboration in the way we work out how we are to be the church, rather than the prevalence of our present committees to zoom off into narrow silos of limited yet passionate interest.

5.18. The Department of the Ministries of the Church will need much the same committee structure which we already have, as will certain functions (eg. pensions) within the department of Administration and Resources. However, the Department of Mission policy and Theology offers the chance of a new start. We would suggest one committee, with short-term working parties and reference groups where necessary. If this broad pattern is acceptable, we would come to the 2007 Assembly with detailed proposals for changes in committee structures.

5.19 We are also quite clear that this will have to be introduced and managed within reduced staffing and financial resources. We believe that to be possible. We do not believe that to be an ideal position; indeed, we note that in risk management terms, the staffing of the Assembly's work is so lean that it is unacceptably vulnerable. However, unless and until the giving of the church to the central budget increases, it would be irresponsible of us to suggest remedying this by increasing staffing. We wish to emphasise, though, that our motivation for suggesting this change of structure is not financial, but missiological. The church's mindset needs to shift to creative engagement with the cultures in which it is set.

5.20 We believe that this proposal will place mission and creative thought about the gospel at the centre of our corporate life. As it does so, it both reflects and will encourage best practice in other councils of the church.

(Resolution 49, p 137)

e) Resources and Finance

6.1 In our 2005 report (para 110a) we put the church on notice that '...unless giving increases considerably, programmes will have to be discontinued for further savings to be made.' Giving has not increased, and we must therefore attend to other ways of reducing our expenditure.

6.2 In the paragraphs that follow we (and our colleagues in the Finance Committee) have attempted to reduce what we believe to be an unacceptable deficit on the 2007 budget. We have had to do that from monies which are within the control of the Assembly – namely M&M. As we have done so, we have been conscious of the fact that it is work sanctioned by Assembly that we have been reducing. We believe our actions were necessary and prudent, but the uncomfortable and difficult process we have been through leads us to make three observations about financial strategy.

a) the wealth of the whole church

6.3 We believe there should be a synergy between the resources of the whole church and the ministry of the whole church. At present there is not. We have a corporate strategy for ministry and local liberal economy of buildings. We realise that it will not be easy to move to such a synergy, not least for legal reasons. However, it might be possible by extending the voluntary covenant that we make with each other through resource sharing. It is probably wildly idealistic to have a vision of a church where each congregation and synod places its wealth on a common table with complete transparency (see Acts 5!), but we believe that to be God's challenge to us. The United Reformed Church is resource rich, but cash poor. It is only by sharing those resources that in the long term we will be able to engage fully in the mission God calls us to.

b) cost control

6.4 As we have lived through this process this year we have noted how difficult it is to exercise cost control over Assembly's programmes. That is because financial responsibility and budgetary control are diffused rather than concentrated. Responsibility lies with committee convenors and their secretaries, and there are many of them. We suggest that whilst the councils of the church should continue to control stewardship and financial

policy (in the sense of deciding what the priorities of the church are and what resources should be given to them), operational management (and therefore budget control) should rest ultimately with the General Secretariat and the Treasurer. Their lines of accountability to Mission Council and Assembly are clear.

c) Buildings

6.5 Whilst we accept that it is presently impossible to produce an 'Assembly-wide' buildings policy, we know that a judicious policy of deciding what buildings we want where is central to the United Reformed Church's future, both financially and missiologically. We would urge Synods and local fellowships of churches to ponder this question carefully as they evolve strategies for the future. It may well be that what we cannot achieve through the Assembly might be achieved by the ministry of Synods.

6.6 If we are right in our contention that we are now called to live, not die, that what is required of us is concentration, not dilution, certain consequences follow. The way a church's identity is sustained is complex. In part it has to do with the kind of people we are, but it also has to do with the history we inherit, including our buildings, and the institutions which we have formed through the years. Throughout at least the last ten years, this has been a recurring dilemma for Assembly and its Training Committee, for a significant number of those institutions are training institutions.

6.7 The Steering Group's strategy, namely that we are being called to live, has important implications. A degree of concentration is essential if we are to maintain our unique contribution to the future of the church in these islands. It is essential both to maintain our self-understanding of organic unity (the precious gift of our history since 1972) and our perception of what it means to be part of the Reformed family (the heritage all of us brought to that and consequent unions). That concentration is intimately tied up with the life of the institutions of the church.

6.8 They represent a huge gift to us as we seek to further develop as a learning church. Our strategic intent is therefore at one with the proposals of the Training Committee. If we are to make an intelligent, creative and grounded contribution to the future church, we need to safeguard and nurture those few institutions which are still 'ours'. Any further dilution will damage our partners as much as ourselves, for it will weaken our ability to sustain what we have to offer.

6.9 It is the Training Committee's business to work out what that might mean in terms of theological education, and we would not wish to trespass on their territory. However, we would wish to make two further comments about other 'institutions' which are 'ours'.

i) Church House

6.10 The offices of a church don't have the same emotional resonance as other institutions. As we reported to Assembly last year, professional valuation revealed that the value of the building would not cover the cost of re-location elsewhere. However, as we also reported last year, we are continuing to explore with the Methodist Church possibilities of working more closely together at Assembly/Conference level, and that may well have consequences for the future of our offices. Those conversations are at a preliminary stage, and we do not expect to have anything specific to report in the near future, but it is important that Assembly realise that we are making no assumptions about the status quo.

ii) the Windermere Centre

6.11 We believe the Windermere Centre to have been a remarkable and brave creation of our recent history. We are confident that the Centre has a central role to play in the fostering of learning, spiritual vision and *koinonia* (that sense of 'God-ness' which means so much more than the flabby translation 'fellowship') amongst us. We endorse warmly the report of the task group that reported to Mission Council in 2003, and we ask the Finance Committee to continue their conversation with the Windermere Advisory Group about ways in which the necessary development of the Centre might be financed.

6.12 We believe that we should support our own institutions, and we propose that when committees and working groups seek meeting venues, the first call on their expenditure should be the United Reformed Church through the Windermere Centre, its colleges and Church House. Only if that is not possible should outside institutions be considered.

The Budget

6.13 As we have pointed out in previous reports, the finances of the church are complex. The national budget (which is Assembly's responsibility) is only part of the whole. Significant resources exist in some Synods (but not all) and in some local churches (but not all). Similarly, we are property rich, but cash poor. Our wealth is tied up in assets, mainly housing ministers in both active service and retirement, and in investments, many of which are restricted funds where we can only enjoy the income. We cannot realise that wealth, and where we can, it is not available immediately. However, that means that our current operation has to be funded principally by giving. The details of our proposals to maximise that giving are set out in the M&M review. The state of our finances is made clear in the draft budget which potentially shows a deficit of over £1 million. Had we unlimited reserves, we might be able to bear that, but we don't.

That deficit needs to be cut drastically as our reserves are very limited and we are conscious of our existing responsibilities to provide for ministers' pensions and retirement housing.

6.14 We have five options as we seek to manage this situation.

- a) we can increase our income through M&M
- b) we can cut back on ministry, which is by far our largest item of expenditure
- c) we can make cuts elsewhere in the budget
- d) we can agree to explore moving items out of the central budget to Synod budgets through a process similar to resource sharing
- e) we can produce a mixture of the above three measures

We will deal with each option in turn:

- a) increasing income

6.15 We have set out our suggestions for maximising income in the M&M review (see especially para 11). We hope and pray that this will commend itself to the church. However, it will not deal with our underlying problem, our age structure, which means that we are locked into expecting more giving from fewer people. Even if giving increases, we must have the courage to lay aside our 'large church' mentality, and adopt a structure which fits our size and resources.

6.16 Experience also suggests that Assembly's enthusiasm for programmes and expenditure is not echoed in local churches and Synods. We worry about the serious accountability gap between Assembly and the local churches and Synods, and we understand only too well the ecclesiological implications of that statement.

6.17 Nonetheless, we challenge to the church to maximise its stewardship, but we do so as realists who know that despite such appeals, for the last three years Synods have been unable to pledge their targets, and that the gap between actual and targeted income has been increasing.

- b) cutting ministry

6.18 We have made it clear in our strategic thinking that we do not believe that the church would countenance any further cuts in 'front-line' ministry. That is an assumption that we will have to test at Assembly. However, it is hard to see how we would be able to manage the necessary immediate reduction because a saving of £1 million would require the loss of forty ministers. It remains a medium-term possibility, but not one we believe the church would welcome.

c) cutting the budget elsewhere

6.19 We wish to pay tribute to our staff who manage budgets. Over the past five years they have struggled to keep expenditure level, often with little margin, for the bulk of most budgets consists of stipends, salaries and other items that cannot be easily reduced. It may be that there is still room for reducing discretionary expenditure. However, although savings in travel, committee and other expenses may be significant, they will not be dramatic.

6.20 Lasting and significant savings will only be made if Assembly addresses the question of non-discretionary budget expenses. We believe that Assembly must exercise that responsibility this year.

d) moving items to the budget of other parts of the church

6.21 Part of the rationale of 'Catch the Vision' was exploring what services needed to be delivered at each level of church life. We note that the combined income of Synods is greater than the national programme budget, and we therefore wish to explore the possibilities of shifting parts of our programme into Synod budgets.

e) A combination

6.22 A combination of the above measures will probably be necessary if we are to manage this situation creatively.

6.23 We do not rejoice in this. It is not where we wish to be. We wish to be in the position where we have a revenue rather than an expenditure led budget. We wish to be in the place where the church gives joyfully out of gratitude to God to enable the mission of God. However, we are not there. It is our hope that one day we might be. In the meantime we offer the following. Our prayer is that this will be a provisional state, and that within five years increased stewardship will result in an improved financial position which will enable us to expand rather than contract our work.

6.24 General Assembly needs to know the rationale behind our proposals. The background is one of sustained cost-cutting and budget reductions in the activities of the Assembly. Some budgets have already been cut to the point where to cut anything else would be to imperil the programme (for example, Church and Society). The M&M report (para 5:1) bears witness to the fact that over the period 2002-5 the costs of training and administration have been held. General Assembly needs to be clear that that has meant reductions in support staffing and administration (for example, one administrator now services International and ecumenical relations, and the General Secretary and

the Deputy General Secretary work to one PA). We have not, nor will we in the present financial climate, replace the Financial Secretary. In other words, administration is bearing a share of the costs. It is very difficult to see how we could cut central administration further without undue risk to the church's infrastructure.

6.25 Our options have therefore been severely limited, and at the time of writing the budget is still subject to negotiation. The following should therefore be understood as an interim statement of the measures that are under consideration.

a) substantial savings have been offered in the Ecumenical committee and Communications and Editorial committee budgets.

b) savings have been offered in the Racial Justice and Multicultural ministry budget.

c) after ministry and training, the largest item of expenditure in the central budget is Youth and Children's work. The vast majority of that is composed of salaries. The budgeted figure for 2007 is £650k (the committee, central cost of YCWT team, and PILOTS), to which must be added a further £280K which is the Synod portion of the cost of the YCWT team. In other words, we spend £930K on youth and children's work.

We suggest

(i) that the Youth and Children's Work budget be reduced by £60K (a cut of 6.5% in the church's total expenditure on Youth and Children's work at Assembly and Synod levels).

(ii) that the costs of the YCWT team be met entirely by Synods, perhaps by an extension of the resource sharing principle.

(d) should the proposals for re-structuring into 3 'areas' of work be accepted, we would envisage the eventual discontinuing of the Life and Witness post, because the focus of the new area will be mission, and the support of eldership will move to the training area. Given the present financial constraints, we would not feel justified in appointing an extra member of staff. We would therefore envision savings in the area of £40K.

(e) we note the proposals of the Training committee. It is difficult to anticipate what savings might occur should it be accepted, but we note that savings might well occur from 2008. However, we are also aware that if we are to maintain our present level of ministry (tracking at 3% membership decline

Resolutions 44-47

as Assembly has directed) we will soon need to foster vocations. A prudent and wise church would be opening a vocations campaign at this point. If we do that, it will be very hard for the Training Committee to cut costs.		£000
(f) if Assembly is held every two years, we should effect a saving of c. £100K p.a. (ie. the saving of £200K in alternative years)	Racial Justice	10
	Youth and Children's work	60
	Re-structuring mission	40
	Reduced Assembly	100
	Financial Secretary	50

6.26 In summary therefore, the following economies are suggested (to which will be added the substantial cuts under negotiation with the Ecumenical and Communications committees):	Sub-total	260
	Moving costs of YCWTs	280

	Total	540

We hope that the final result will be in the region of £700K, reducing the deficit to a manageable £300K.

Catch the Vision Resolutions

- a) Resolutions 40, 41 and 43 of 2005, which are returned for ratification

Resolution 44 (40 of 2005) Resolutions returned for ratification 1

General Assembly resolves that there shall be one level of council between the General Assembly and the local church.

Resolution 45 (41 of 2005) Resolutions returned for ratification 2

General Assembly resolves that as from General Assembly 2007, there shall be one level of council between the General Assembly and the local church, the thirteen 'new Synods.'

Resolution 46 (43 of 2005) Resolutions returned for ratification 3

General Assembly resolves that, as from 2007, General Assembly shall meet every two years.

- b) Resolutions consequent upon that decision:

Resolution 47 Changes to the Basis and Structure

General Assembly approves the changes to the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church consequent upon its acceptance of resolutions 40, 41 and 43 of 2005, as set out in Catch the Vision Appendix 4, pages 141-160 of the book of Reports 2006.

c) New resolutions

Resolution 48

General Trustees

General Assembly appoint the United Reformed Church Trust to be the General Trustees of the church from the close of Assembly 2006.

Resolution 49

The future work of Assembly

General Assembly approves of the principle of dividing its work into three departments, Ministries, Administration and Resources, and Mission policy and Theology, and instructs the Catch the Vision Steering Group to prepare detailed proposals for the 2007 Assembly.

Southern Synod has given notice that, in the event of Resolution 43 of Assembly 2005, "General Assembly resolves that, as from 2007, General Assembly shall meet every two years." not being approved, it will move:

Resolution 50

Southern Synod

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to consider whether some other form of General Assembly might be appropriate for the future, e.g. a much wider General Assembly every 3-5 years comprising ministers and representatives from all churches, funded by local churches, with Mission Council being given increased powers to act between Assemblies.

*Proposer: The Revd Michael Davies
Seconder: Dr Graham Campling*

1.1 During the Synod discussion of Resolution 43 of the 2005 Assembly, it was clear that there was considerable hesitation about the proposal. Part of the genius of the United Reformed Church is that it is a connexional church – a family. A smaller, less frequent Assembly will merely increase to gap between the local Church and General Assembly and deepen the "them and us" divide, which is quite contrary to our ethos.

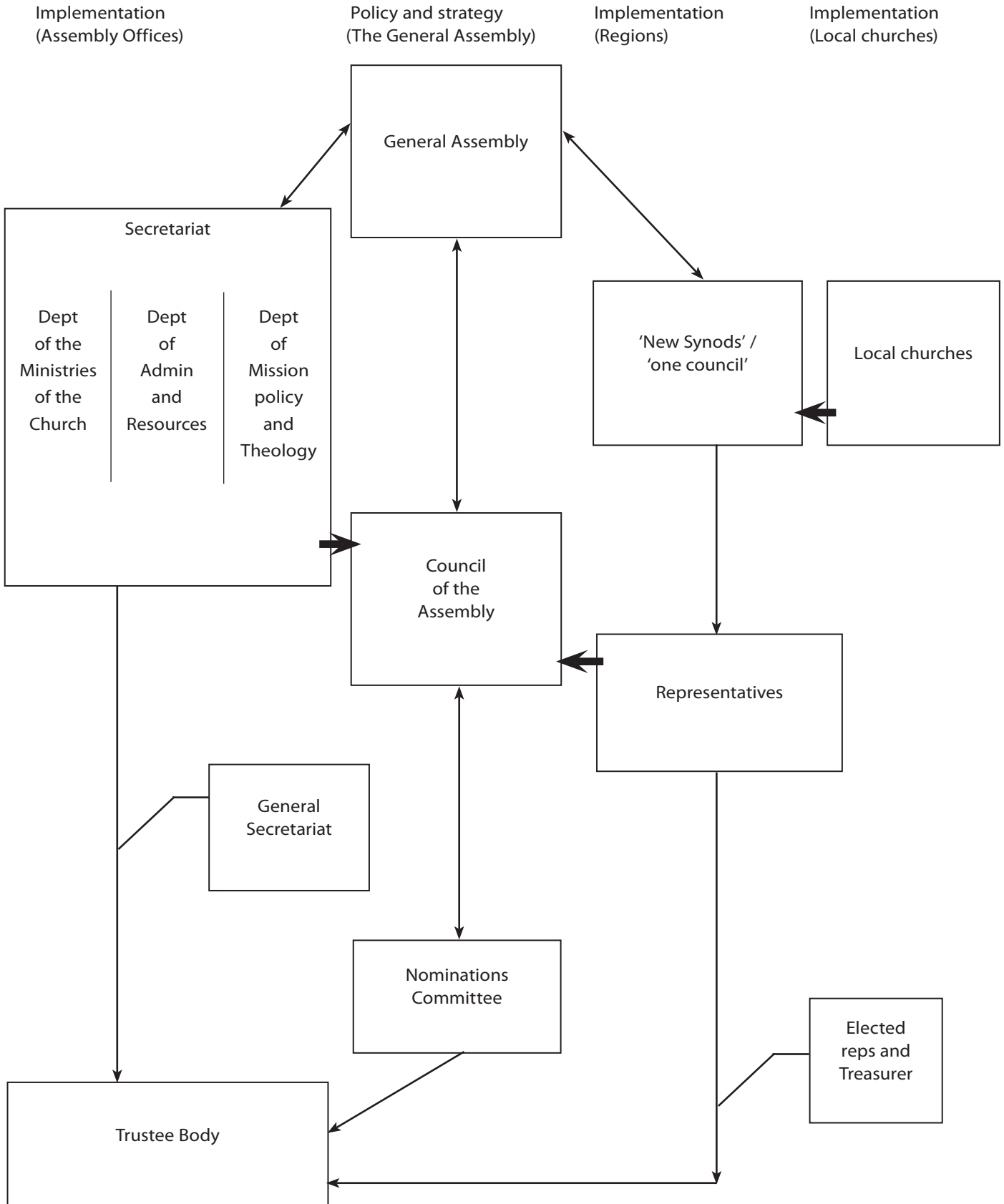
1.2 Whilst we have moved on from the days when May Meetings and General Assembly packed Westminster Chapel and the City Temple every year and anyway, no one suggests that 2,500 people would actually gather for an all-inclusive Assembly, we need to find a way to recapture that sense of the whole family meeting, at least once in a while.

1.3 We therefore suggest a model such as that used by the World Council of Churches, which has a full Assembly – every member church welcome – every 7 years for worship and fellowship, to elect leaders and to set broad policy guidelines, with a strong Central Committee to meet regularly meantime to implement policy. In the case of the United Reformed Church an Assembly every 3-5 years would probably be about right (with a strengthened Mission Council with powers to act). If local Churches were asked to save up and pay for their minister and representative, it would not be a great burden, but even if the cost were met centrally, it would be much less expensive spread over a period.

1.4 Such an Assembly would give us that sense of belonging, of being the church and ownership of our visions and policy, which seems so lacking at present.

CTV Appendix 1

Proposed model of governance



CTV Appendix 2

The Trustee Body

1 There needs to be a sufficient number of Trustees to have access to a broad range of knowledge and experience. The role of Trustee is an exacting role and demands a significant time commitment and has specific legal responsibilities.

2 Who will the Trustees be?

2.1 Two of the existing members of the Mission Council Advisory Group – the Moderator and the Treasurer – are Trustees by virtue of their office and should continue. The General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary will continue to be in attendance. Other Trustees (with relevant experience) should be elected by General Assembly. These Trustees are to provide independent advice and assurance. They should complement the skills of those Trustees already serving as directors of the URC Trust.

2.2 In the process of election, Assembly needs to be aware that the Trustee body *must* include members with legal, investment, financial and human resource experience. All Trustees should, of course, be fully involved in the life of the church. Those experiences are needed so that the Trustees can assure Assembly that the professional officers employed by the church are performing their duties with due propriety.

2.3 The quorum of the Board of Trustees is six or greater.

2.4 Trustees are ex-officio members of General Assembly and Mission Council.

2.5 The number of Trustees can be varied by General Assembly on the recommendation of the Council, following consultation with the Trustees.

2.6 The Board of Trustees may co-opt members with the agreement of Council in the event of:

1. Unexpected vacancy
2. Requirement of specific expertise

2.7 Trustee indemnity insurance will be provided.

2.8 Trustees will be given an induction to the role that equips them with the tools they need to become effective and valuable Trustees as quickly as possible.

3 How will Trustees be appointed?

3.1 The Officers of the Church are appointed by General Assembly for a specific term of years and serve during their term of office as ex officio.

3.2 The other Trustees will be elected by General Assembly for a term of six years. After this time the Trustee must stand down for a minimum of two years but will then be eligible for re-election.

3.3 Timetable and process for nomination (every two years to coincide with General Assembly):

- Synods consider candidates for Trustees and Honorary Treasurer and seek their consent and agreement to stand for election
- Synods provide nominations (together with CV and two references – one from the local church and one professional, for each nomination) to the Nominations Committee by the end of March
- Nominations Committee take up references, review eligibility and discuss with the Trustees
- The Trustees then interview candidates and nominate preferred candidates to the General Assembly for election

3.4 The Trustees will elect one of their elected United Reformed Church members as Chairperson who will act as a facilitator and serve the office of Chairperson. His/her term of service as a Trustee may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity of Chairperson. This appointment will be endorsed by General Assembly. After this term the Chairperson must stand down for a minimum of two years.

3.5 If an elected Trustee is appointed Honorary Treasurer his/her term of service may be extended by up to two years if necessary to provide continuity.

3.6 A special “start up” process of appointment will be required to prevent all Trustees retiring at the same time.

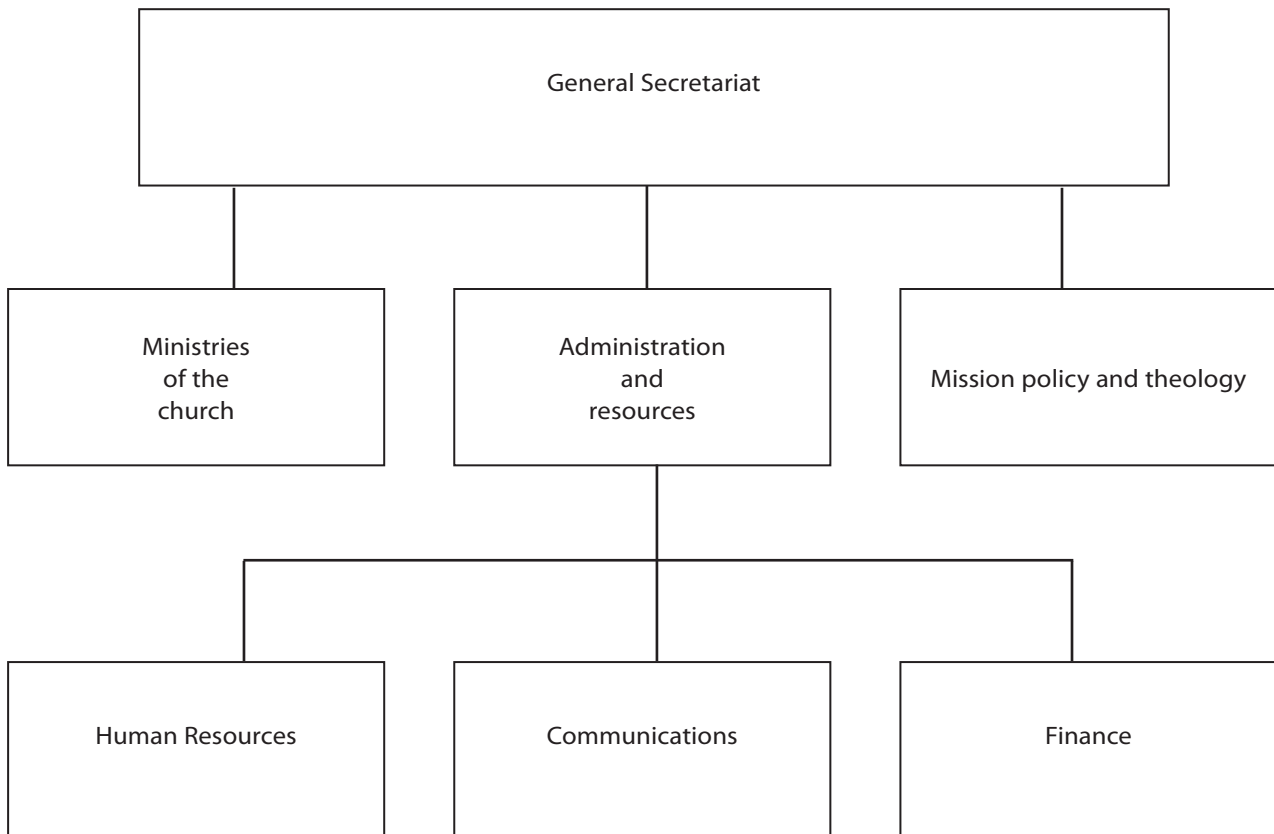
CTV Appendix 3

Proposed re-structuring and staffing

1.1 This proposal organises the work of Assembly into three 'areas' (albeit ones which will need permeable membranes between them).

1.2 The General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary would oversee all the work, as they do now, but with distinct areas of responsibility, for Mission and Theology and Ministries of the Church respectively. They would, in effect, be Co-ordinating Secretaries for those areas, and divide the work of the Administration and Resources between them.

1.3 In the mission and theology area, one member of the team would be the team leader, as Secretary for Mission and interfaith relations, and would co-ordinate the operational work in church and society, racial justice, international relations, theology and ecumenical relations. We envisage that this area would eventually be the responsibility of four members of staff.



CTV Appendix 4

Changes to the Basis and Structure consequent on the adoption of resolution 40-43 of 2005.

The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church

The Church and The United Reformed Church

1. There is but one Church of the one God. He called Israel to be his people, and in fulfilment of the purpose then begun he called the Church into being through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. The one Church of the one God is holy, because he has redeemed and consecrated it through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and because there Christ dwells with his people.
3. The Church is catholic or universal because Christ calls into it all peoples and because it proclaims the fullness of Christ's Gospel to the whole world.
4. The Church is apostolic because Christ continues to entrust it with the Gospel and the commission first given to the apostles to proclaim that Gospel to all peoples.
5. The unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church have been obscured by the failure and weakness which mar the life of the Church.
6. Christ's mercy in continuing his call to the Church in all its failure and weakness has taught the Church that its life must ever be renewed and reformed according to the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
7. The United Reformed Church humbly recognises that the failure and weakness of the Church have in particular been manifested in division which has made it impossible for Christians fully to know, experience and communicate the life of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.
8. The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.

9. The United Reformed Church testifies to its faith, and orders its life, according to this Basis of Union, believing it to embody the essential notes of the Church catholic and reformed. The United Reformed Church nevertheless reserves its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede this Basis so that its life may accord more nearly with the mind of Christ.

10. The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body, shall uphold the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

11. Within the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church the United Reformed Church acknowledges its responsibility under God:

- to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;
- to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;
- and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.

THE FAITH OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

12. The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the Church catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people. It acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

13. The United Reformed Church believes that, in the ministry of the Word, through preaching and the study of the Scriptures, God makes known in each age his saving love, his will for his people and his purpose for the world.

14. The United Reformed Church observes the gospel sacrament of baptism into Christ as a gift of God to his Church, and as an appointed means of grace. Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is the sacrament of entry into the Church and is therefore administered once only to any person.

When the Church observes this sacrament it makes explicit at a particular time and place and for a particular person what God has accomplished in Christ for the whole creation and for all humankind – the forgiveness of sins, the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and newness of life in the family of God. In this sacrament the Church affirms its faith in the action of God in Jesus Christ; and takes corporate responsibility for those receiving baptism, promising to support and nourish them as it receives them into its fellowship. Baptism may be administered in infancy or at an age of responsibility. Both forms of baptism shall be made available in the life of every worshipping congregation. In either case the sacrament of baptism is a unique part of the total process of Christian initiation. When baptism is administered at an age of responsibility, upon profession of faith, those baptised enter at once upon the full privileges and responsibilities of membership. When baptism is administered to infants, upon profession of faith by their parent(s), they are placed under the nurture of the Church that they may be led by the Holy Spirit in due time to make their own profession of faith in Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and enter upon the full privileges and responsibilities of membership. These two patterns of Christian initiation are recognised by the United Reformed Church.

The profession of faith to be made prior to baptism by a believer or at an age of responsibility by one baptised in infancy is indicated in Schedule A.* This profession, and its acceptance by the church which shares in it, is a necessary part of the process of initiation and whenever possible it should be made at a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

* Admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church shall be in accordance with paragraphs 2(1) and 2(2)(vi) of the structure and with Schedule A

The United Reformed Church includes within its membership both persons whose conviction it is that baptism can only be appropriately administered to a believer and those whose conviction it is that infant baptism also is in harmony with the mind of Christ.

Both convictions are honoured by the church and both forms of baptism are understood to be used by God in the upbuilding of faith. Should these differences of conviction within the one church result in personal conflict of conscience it will require to be pastorally reconciled in mutual understanding and charity, and in accordance with the Basis of Union, in the first instance by the elders' meeting of the local congregation, and if necessary by the wider councils of the church. Whether the baptism is of an infant or a believer, whether it is by pouring or immersion, it shall not be such to which a conscientious objection is taken either by the person administering baptism, or by the person seeking it, or by the parent(s) requesting it for an infant.

15. The United Reformed Church celebrates the gospel sacrament of the Lord's Supper. When in obedience to the Lord's command his people show forth his sacrifice on the cross by the bread broken and the wine outpoured for them to eat and drink, he himself, risen and ascended, is present and gives himself to them for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. United with him and with the whole Church on earth and in heaven, his people gathered at his table present their sacrifice of thanksgiving and renew the offering of themselves, and rejoice in the promise of his coming in glory.

16. The United Reformed Church gives thanks for the common life of the Church, wherein the people of God, being made members one of another, are called to love and serve one another and all people everywhere and to grow together in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Participating in the common life of the Church within the local church, they enter into the life of the Church throughout the world. With that whole Church they also share in the life of the Church in all ages and in the communion of saints have fellowship with the Church triumphant.

17. The United Reformed Church at the date of formation confesses its faith in the words of this statement:-

We believe in the one living and true God, creator, preserver and ruler of all things in heaven and earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Him alone we worship, and in him we put our trust.

We believe that God, in his infinite love for men, gave his eternal Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who became man, lived on earth in perfect love and obedience, died upon the cross for our sins, rose again from the dead and lives for evermore, saviour, judge and king

We believe that, by the Holy Spirit, this glorious Gospel is made effective so that through faith we receive the forgiveness of sins, newness of life as children of God and strength in this present world to do his will.

We believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church, in heaven and on earth, wherein by the same Spirit,

the whole company of believers is made one Body of Christ, to worship God and serve him and all men in his kingdom of righteousness and love.

We rejoice in the gift of eternal life, and believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

18. The United Reformed Church, under the authority of Holy Scripture and in corporate responsibility to Jesus Christ its everliving head, acknowledges its duty to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit and therefore affirms its right to make such new declarations of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit.

At the same time the United Reformed Church accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. It recognises as its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ as stating the Gospel and seeking to make its implications clear*.

* e.g. Among Presbyterians: The Westminster Confession, 1647; A Statement of the Christian Faith, 1956.

Among Congregationalists:
in England and Wales: The Savoy Declaration, 1658;
A Declaration of Faith, 1967.
in Scotland: A Statement of Faith, 1949.
Among Churches of Christ: Thomas Campbell's
Declaration and Address, 1809.

At the General Assembly of 1997 the United Reformed Church adopted the following alternative version of the statement in paragraph 17 to be available alongside the 1972 statement:

1. We believe in the one and only God, Eternal Trinity, from whom, through whom and for whom all created things exist. God alone we worship; in God we put our trust.
2. We worship God, source and sustainer of creation, whom Jesus called Father, whose sons and daughters we are.
3. We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh; who lived our human life, died for sinners on the cross; who was raised from the dead, and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God; who lives eternally, as saviour and sovereign, coming in judgement and mercy, to bring us to eternal life.

4. We worship God, ever present in the Holy Spirit; who brings this Gospel to fruition, assures us of forgiveness, strengthens us to do God's will, and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus, sons and daughters of God.
5. We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, united in heaven and on earth: on earth, the Body of Christ, empowered by the Spirit to glorify God and to serve humanity; in heaven, eternally one with the power, the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.
6. We believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in heaven and on earth through Christ, and be perfectly honoured and adored.
7. We rejoice in God who has given us being, who shares our humanity to bring us to glory, our source of prayer and power of praise; to whom be glory, praise and adoration, now and evermore.

MINISTRY IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

19. The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness; by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility; and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.

20. For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church. The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and ministers. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills: the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them to their particular ministry and give them authority to exercise it within the church, setting them apart with prayer that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfilment, which solemn setting part shall in the case of ministers and elders be termed ordination and in the case of church related community workers be termed commissioning.

21. Some are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be ministers of local churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry, and are then ordained and inducted to their office. They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a **Synod** and in a context it has approved.*

* Those persons who, at the time of unification serve as Registered Pastors and are so recognised by the Congregational Union of Scotland, may continue in that service under the same conditions. Such persons shall be authorised by a **Synod** to preside at the sacraments and to serve as members of that **Synod**. They may seek further training with a view to applying for recognition as ministers.

22. Some are called to the ministry of church related community work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be church related community workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, and are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with Schedules D & F. Church related community workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a **Synod** and in the context it has approved.

23. Some are called to be elders. They share with ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local churches, taking counsel together in the elders' meeting for the whole church and having severally groups of members particularly entrusted to their pastoral care. They shall be associated with ministers in all the councils of the church. Elders elected by the church meeting are ordained to their office and are inducted to serve for such limited period as the church which elects them shall determine. All elders are eligible for re-election, and those elected shall enter upon their office by induction. On moving to another local church an ordained elder is eligible for election by that church to the elders' meeting, and, if so elected, is inducted. The ordination and induction of elders shall be carried out in the course of public worship by a minister of the local church (or, during a pastoral vacancy, by the interim moderator) acting with the serving elders (see Schedule B).*

* Within the Synod of Scotland those office bearers who fulfil the functions of the United Reformed Church eldership will be called elders, or by local church meeting decision, may retain their existing titles. Such persons will be recognised as elders for all purposes by the wider councils of the Church.

24. All other ministries recognised by the uniting churches at the date of unification (as defined by the United Reformed Church Act 1981) shall continue to be exercised in the United Reformed Church without further commissioning, subject always to the decisions of the General Assembly. The United Reformed Church shall determine from time to time what other ministries may be required and which of them should be recognised as ministries in the whole church. It shall decide how those who are to exercise them shall be set apart.

25. The worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God. In order that this may be clearly seen, the United Reformed Church shall (a) take steps to ensure that so far as possible ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments are readily available to every local church; (b) provide for the training of suitable men and women, members of the United Reformed Church, to be accredited by **Synods** as lay preachers; (c) make provision through **Synods**, in full consultation with the local churches concerned, for the recognition of certain members of the United Reformed Church, normally 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 or area 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 provisions of paragraph 25 are intended to establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church. The provisions do not prevent the congregation assembled for baptismal or communion service from themselves appointing, as a church meeting, a suitable person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament in a case of emergency, for example if the expected president is taken ill or held up in travel. The provisions do not require such an action rather than a postponement of the baptismal or communion service if that seems preferable.'

26. The ordination and induction of ministers shall be in accord with Schedules C and D. Appropriate affirmations of faith shall also be made by those entering upon other ministries within the life of the church. In the United Reformed Church all ministries shall be open to both men and women.

The totality of ministers who fall within any of the categories defined in Schedule E, Paragraph 1 and are in good standing may be referred to as the Roll

of Ministers. Ministers shall conduct their ministry according to the criteria set out in Schedule E.

SCHEDULE A

(see clause 14 in the Basis of Union)

Affirmation of faith to be made at admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church

It is the responsibility of the minister and elders' meeting, before bringing the names of candidates to the church meeting, to be assured of the sincerity of their intention. After adequate preparation, and acceptance by the church meeting, candidates shall be publicly admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church of Jesus Christ and in particular to the membership of the local church.

This act may include the laying on of hands as a sign of the commissioning of those called by God to the service of Jesus Christ. Acceptance of the candidates, as also their acceptance of their commission, shall be signified by the giving and receiving of the right hand of fellowship.

Thereafter they shall be commended to the love and care of their fellow members.

During the act of admission public profession of faith and of commitment to the Church shall be made:

VERSION I

Either:

(a) by question and answer thus:

Q: Do you confess your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, taking the Father to be your Father, the Son to be your Saviour and Lord, the Spirit to be your helper and guide?

A: I do.

Q: Do you promise, in dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the Church and to share in its work,

and to give and serve, as God enables you, for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world?

A: I do.

Q: Do you promise, by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

A: I do.

Q: And do you trust in his mercy alone to bring you into the fullness of the life of the world to come?

A: I do.

VERSION II

Or: (b) in the form of a declaration such as the following:

I confess my faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, taking the Father to be my Father, the Son to be my saviour and Lord, the Spirit to be my helper and guide. I promise, in dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship, to live in the fellowship of the Church and to share in its work, and to give and serve, as God enables me, for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world. I promise, by that same grace, to follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of my life. And I trust in his mercy alone to bring me into the fullness of the life of the world to come.

Or: (c) Addition to Schedule A: Version III

(At Baptism at an age of responsibility or at profession of faith for those baptised as infants)

Q: Do you believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, giver of life, redeemer of the world?
A: I do.

Q: Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil, and turn to Christ?
A: By God's grace, I do.

Q: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?
A: I do.

(At reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of membership)

Q: From the beginning, believers have continued in the worship and fellowship of the church:
N, do you commit yourself to this life?
A: I do, with God's help.

Q: With the whole Church, will you proclaim by word and action the good news of God in Christ?
A: I will, with God's help.

Or: (d) in a form which includes the following elements:

- a Trinitarian confession of faith
- repentance of sin
- a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord
- a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the Church.

SCHEDULE B

Affirmations to be made by elders at ordination and induction

NOTE: The service, which takes place at public worship, shall include the reading of the Statement contained in Schedule D and a statement regarding the functions of the elders taken from clauses 19, 20 and 23 in the Basis of Union.

Afterwards the presiding minister shall say to the elders elect:

In the light of this Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and the statement concerning the functions of the eldership, the elders elect are now asked to answer the following questions:

Q: Do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
A: I do.

Q: In dependence on God's grace do you reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord and your promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

A: I do.

Q: Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

A: I do.

Q: Do you accept the office of elder of the United Reformed Church in this congregation and do you promise to perform its duties faithfully?

A: I do.

SCHEDULE C

(see clause 21 in the Basis of Union)

Affirmations to be made by ministers at ordination and induction

NOTE: The service will also include the reading of the Statement contained in Schedule D, and provision will be made for a statement to be made concerning the circumstances of the call. Ministers may also make a personal statement about their faith and sense of calling. After the statement has been read the presiding minister shall then ask one of the following sets of questions:

VERSION I

Either:

1. A.B., Do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do.
2. Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

I do.

3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world? Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people? And will you faithfully proclaim this Gospel?

By the grace of God this I believe and this I will proclaim.

4. Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

I do.

5. Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, so far as you know your own heart, the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

They are

6. Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.

7. Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge* faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?

By the grace of God, I do.

8. Do you promise as a minister of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

By the grace of God, I do.

9. Will you undertake to exercise your ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church?

I will, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

VERSION II

Or:

1. A.B., will you confess anew your faith?

I confess anew my faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

I believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary,

lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world.

I believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people.

And by the grace of God I promise to proclaim this gospel faithfully.

I believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ.

2. What leads you to this ministry?

So far as I know my own heart, I believe that zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, are the chief motives which lead me to enter this ministry.

Relying on the strength of Christ, I promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise.

3. Will you faithfully fulfil the duties of your charge?*

* The presiding minister (after appropriate consultation) may modify the wording of question 7 or the answer to question 3 to fit the kind of ministry to which the candidate has been called.

By the grace of God I promise to lead the Church in worship, to preach the word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take my part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in mission to the world.

As a minister of the United Reformed Church I promise to seek its well-being, purity, and peace,

to cherish love towards all other churches, and to endeavour always to build up the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I undertake to exercise my ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church.

All these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

SCHEDULE D

A statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church

(One of the following authorised versions to be read aloud at ordination and induction services.)

VERSION I

1. The United Reformed Church confesses the faith of the Church catholic in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
2. The United Reformed Church acknowledges that the life of faith to which it is called is a gift of the Holy Spirit continually received in Word and Sacrament and in the common life of God's people.
3. The United Reformed Church acknowledges the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.
4. The United Reformed Church accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and recognises as its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ as stating the Gospel and seeking to make its implications clear.
5. The United Reformed Church testifies to its faith, and orders its life, according to the Basis of Union, believing it to embody the essential notes of the Church catholic and reformed. The United Reformed Church nevertheless reserves its right and declares its readiness at any time to alter, add to, modify or supersede this Basis so that its life may accord more nearly with the mind of Christ.
6. The United Reformed Church, under the authority of Holy Scripture and in corporate responsibility to Jesus Christ its everliving head, acknowledges its duty to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit and therefore affirms its right to make such new declarations of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit.
7. The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the one Body, upholds the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace.

8. The United Reformed Church declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the only ruler and head of the Church, has therein appointed a government distinct from civil government and in things spiritual not subordinate thereto, and that civil authorities, being always subject to the rule of God, ought to respect the rights of conscience and of religious belief and to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind.

9. The United Reformed Church declares its intention, in fellowship with all the churches, to pray and work for such visible unity of the whole Church as Christ wills and in the way he wills, in order that people and nations may be led more and more to glorify the Father in heaven.

VERSION II

With the whole Christian Church
the United Reformed Church believes in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
The living God, the only God,
ever to be praised.

The life of faith to which we are called
is the Spirit's gift
continually received
through the Word, the Sacraments
and our Christian life together.
We acknowledge the gift
and answer the call,
giving thanks for the means of grace.

The highest authority
for what we believe and do
is God's Word in the Bible
alive for his people today
through the help of the Spirit.
We respond to this Word,
whose servants we are
with all God's people
through the years.

We accept with thanksgiving to God
the witness to the catholic faith
in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.
We acknowledge the declarations
made in our own tradition
by Congregationalists, Presbyterians
and Churches of Christ
in which they stated the faith
and sought to make its implications clear.
Faith alive and active:
gift of an eternal source,
renewed for every generation.

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union in which we give expression to our faith in forms which we believe contain the essential elements of the Church's life, both catholic and reformed; but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises, to change the Basis of Union and to make new statements of faith in ever new obedience to the Living Christ. Our crucified and risen Lord, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit, we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction. For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace. We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love and grow together in the peace of Christ.

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head. Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief. While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever. Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory. Amen.

SCHEDULE E

1. The following constitute the categories of ministers comprising the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church;
 - a. Ministers of the former Congregational Church of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England who became ministers of the United Reformed Church at its formation in 1972.
 - b. Ministers of the former Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ who became ministers of the United Reformed Church in 1981.
 - c. Ministers of the former Congregational Union of Scotland who became ministers of the United Reformed Church in 1999.
 - d. Ministers who have been ordained as ministers of the United Reformed Church and inducted to a local pastorate (or some other post approved by Synod) after having received a call with the concurrence of the **Synod** or have been appointed to a post by councils of the Church or are associate members of **a Synod**
 - e. Ministers of other churches who have been granted a Certificate of Eligibility by the General Assembly, or the committee designated by the General Assembly with the responsibility to grant Certificates of Eligibility, and who subsequently transferred to the United Reformed Church upon ordination and/or induction to a local pastorate following a call with the concurrence of the District or area Council.
 - f. Ministers of other churches who, with the approval of a Synod, have been permitted by the General Assembly, or the committee delegated by the General Assembly to act on its behalf, to transfer to the United Reformed Church without receiving a call to a local pastorate or without being appointed to a post approved by Synod.
2. Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.
3. Acting in due exercise of their functions as contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the councils of the Church have authority in certain circumstances (without prejudice to a minister's conditions under the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial

Remuneration) to suspend a minister which involves a temporary ban on the exercise of ministry by the minister concerned but not his/her removal from the Roll of Ministers.

4. A minister under suspension, whether in pastoral charge or not, shall not present him/herself as a minister and shall not preside at communion. The minister shall refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a minister of religion. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the ministerial rights of membership of any council of the Church. Suspension does not remove any of the rights accorded by the process of determining the disciplinary matter which had led to the suspension.

5. A person whose name has been deleted from the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and who remains a member of the United Reformed Church has the privilege and responsibilities of that membership, but not those of a minister of Word and sacraments, and should refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a minister of religion. However, should that person be re-instated to the Roll of Ministers, he/she would, on being called to a pastorate, need to be inducted to that pastorate, but not ordained, since ordination is not repeatable.

SCHEDULE F

(see clause 22 in the Basis of Union)

Affirmations to be made by church related community workers at commissioning and induction.

NOTE: The service will also include the reading of the Statement contained in Schedule D, and provision will be made for a statement to be made concerning the circumstances of the call. Church related community workers may also make a personal statement about their faith and sense of calling. After the statement has been read the presiding minister shall then ask one of the following sets of questions:

Either: **VERSION I**

1. A.B., Do you confess anew your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do.
2. Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

I do.
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world? Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people? And will you faithfully proclaim this Gospel?

By the grace of God this I believe and this I will proclaim.

4. Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

I do.

5. Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, so far as you know your own heart, the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

They are.

6. Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.

7. Do you promise to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the wellbeing of the community? Do you promise to take your part in the councils of the Church and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world?

By the grace of God, I do.

8. Do you promise as a church related community worker of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

By the grace of God, I do.

9. Will you undertake to exercise your ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church?

I will, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Or: **VERSION II**

1. A.B., will you confess anew your faith?

I confess anew my faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people.

I believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world.

I believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people.

And by the grace of God I promise to proclaim this gospel faithfully.

I believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ.

2. What leads you to this ministry?

So far as I know my own heart, I believe that zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, are the chief motives which lead me to enter this ministry.

Relying on the strength of Christ, I promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise.

3. Will you faithfully fulfil the duties of your charge?

By the grace of God I promise to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the wellbeing of the community.

I promise to take my part in the councils of the Church and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world.

As a church related community worker of the United Reformed Church

I promise to seek its well-being, purity, and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches, and always to endeavour to build up the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I undertake to exercise my ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church.

All these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Structure of the URC

1.(1) Members of the United Reformed Church associated in a locality for worship witness and service shall together comprise a local church.

1.(1)(a) Since the proper functioning of the local church is so fundamental to the life of the United Reformed Church, where there is a number of small congregations in proximity to one another unable separately to provide leadership and resources for the work of the church, such congregations shall consult with the Synod to formulate an acceptable scheme for joining together with a single membership, a common church meeting and elders' meeting, representative of all the constituent congregations, and a shared ministry.

1.(1)(b) Where two or more local churches together, and in consultation with the **Synod**, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share resources and ordained ministry, they may, on the decision of the synod, form an association known as a group of churches with a structured relationship and a constitution governing the way in which they relate to one another as to the sharing of both resources and the ordained ministry. Each church within the group shall retain its own identity, and the church meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the constitution shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii) may be taken by a single group church meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the group shall be eligible to attend and vote.

1.(1)(c) Where two or more local churches together, and in consultation with the **Synod**, decide that their mission will be more effective if they share ordained ministry (but not other resources) they may, on the decision of the synod, form an association known as a joint pastorate, with a structured relationship with respect to the provision of ordained ministry only and a statement of intent governing the way in which they relate to one another in relation to the sharing of ordained ministry. Each church within the joint pastorate shall retain its own identity, and its church meeting and elders' meeting shall continue to exercise all their functions in relation to that church, save that, so long as the statement of intent shall so declare, decisions relating to the calling of a minister (see paragraph 2(1)(vii)) may be taken by a single joint pastorate church meeting at which all the members of each of the constituent churches in the joint pastorate shall be eligible to attend and vote.

1.(2)(a) The United Reformed Church in England shall be divided into provinces, each having a synod. In Wales and in Scotland, in recognition of the different status of these nations there shall in each case be a single synod to be known as a national synod.

The expression "Provincial Synod" when used in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 shall in relation to property in Wales be read as referring to the national Synod of Wales

1.(2)(b) Throughout this statement of the Structure of the United Reformed Church references to 'Provincial Moderators' shall be read as meaning 'Moderators of Synods' in respect of Scotland and Wales.

1.(3) The oversight of the United Reformed Church shall be the concern both of the local church and wider representative councils. The councils of the United Reformed Church shall be:

- (a) the church meeting and the elders' meeting of each local church;
- (b) the council of each area of ecumenical cooperation to be known as an area meeting
- (c) the synod of province or nation to be known as a provincial or national synod; and
- (d) the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

These four parts of the structure of the United Reformed Church shall have such consultative, legislative and executive functions as are hereinafter respectively assigned to each of them and each shall be recognised by members of the United Reformed Church as possessing such authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, as shall enable it to exercise its functions and thereby to minister in that sphere of the life of the United Reformed Church with which it is concerned. **The consultative, legislative and executive functions of an area meeting shall be devolved from the synod and shall in all cases be subject to an agreement between the Synod and the equivalent body or bodies in the relevant ecumenical partners.**

The Composition and Functions of the Councils of the United Reformed Church

2.(1) The Church Meeting of the local church shall consist of those persons who have been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the United Reformed Church and whose names are included on the membership roll of such local church. The church meeting may invite other persons who regularly worship with the local church but whose names are not on the membership roll to attend and speak at its meetings on particular occasions but no such person shall have the right to vote. In the church meeting which shall meet at least once a quarter and at which the minister or one of the ministers shall normally preside, the members have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision and care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.

Functions:

Concerning the outgoing of the Church:

- (i) to further the Church's mission in the locality;
- (ii) to develop local ecumenical relationships;
- (iii) to further the Church's compassionate ministry in the locality and throughout the world;
- (iv) to consider and support the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (v) to consider public questions in relation to the Christian faith;
- (vi) to bring concerns for consideration by the elders' meeting and wider councils of the church.

Concerning the nurture of the fellowship:

- (vii) to call a minister with the concurrence of the district council(s) concerned (see paragraph 2 (3) (ii)); (Where two or more churches have formed a group or joint pastorate in accordance with paragraph 1(1)(b) or (c) above on the decision of synod under its function 2(4)(A)(iv), the church meetings of each church may, with the agreement of the synod on the advice of the district council and so long as the group constitution or the statement of intent as appropriate shall so provide, join together as a group or joint pastorate church meeting for the purpose of calling a minister, in which case this function shall be exercised by the group or joint pastorate church meeting.)
- (viii) to elect elders and officers, determining their number and period of service, and representatives to wider councils;
- (ix) to admit and transfer members, to maintain standards of membership, and to suspend or remove names from the membership roll, always on advice from the elders' meeting;
- (x) to consider, always on advice from the elders' meeting, any application for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to transmit it, if approved, to the **Synod**;
- (xi) to adopt financial reports;
- (xii) to receive reports and proposals from the elders' meeting, synod and General Assembly and to authorise appropriate action;
- (xiii) on the recommendation of the elders' meeting to make or provide for the making of arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the local church.

And generally:

- (xiv) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

2.(2) The Elders' Meeting of the local church shall consist of the minister(s) and the elders elected by the church meeting of such local church and shall exercise oversight of the spiritual life of the local church. The elders' meeting shall serve the local church and by its relation to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church represent the whole Church to the local church. The minister, or one of the ministers, or during a pastoral vacancy the interim moderator appointed as hereinafter provided, shall normally preside over the elders' meeting.

Functions:

- (i) to foster in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community, evangelism at home and abroad, Christian education, ecumenical action, local inter-church relations and the wider responsibilities of the whole Church;
- (ii) to see that public worship is regularly offered and the sacraments are duly administered, and generally to promote the welfare of the congregation;
- (iii) to ensure pastoral care of the congregation, in which the minister is joined by elders having particular responsibility for groups of members;
- (iv) to nominate from among its members a church secretary (or secretaries), to be elected by the church meeting, to serve both the church meeting and the elders' meeting;
- (v) to arrange for pulpit supply in a vacancy;
- (vi) to keep the roll of members (see paragraph 2 (1)) and (as an aid to the discharge of the congregation's pastoral and evangelistic responsibility) lists of names of adherents and children attached to the congregation, and in consultation with the church meeting to maintain standards of membership and to advise on the admission of members on profession of faith and by transfer, on the suspension of members, and on the removal of names from the roll;
- (vii) to be responsible for the institution and oversight of work among children and young people and of all organisations within the congregation;

- (viii) to call for the election of elders and advise on the number required;
- (ix) to consider the suitability of any applicant for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to advise the church meeting about its recommendation to the **Synod**
- (x) to recommend to the church meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the local church;
- (xi) to act on behalf of the church meeting and bring concerns to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church;
- (xii) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

2.(3) The Synod being representative of the local churches in that province or nation united for the purpose of dealing with matters of wider concern shall consist of:

- (a) All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers who are for the time being **engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church** within the province or nation;
- (b) All missionaries of the United Reformed Church for the time being on furlough and for the time being resident within the province or nation;
- (c) Representatives of local churches within the province or nation who shall normally be members of the elders' meeting of a local church and who shall be appointed by the church meeting of such local church, the number of such representatives to be: 1-200 members, one representative; over 200 members, 2 representatives; **A Synod may, at its discretion vary the number of representatives of local churches so that both local churches with 1-200 members and local churches with over 200 members appoint two representatives.**

(where a local church, whether a local ecumenical partnership or a local church organised according to the second sentence of paragraph 1.(1)(a), comprises two or more congregations worshipping in separate locations, the synod may authorise that local church to appoint representatives to the synod from each constituent congregation to such numbers as would be permitted by the above rule if each congregation were a separate local church);

- (d) Such members of local churches, normally elders, not exceeding twelve (or such other number as the General Assembly may from time to time determine) as may be co-opted by the synod;
- (e) Such members as shall from time to time be appointed by the General Assembly;
- (f) Such retired ministers who have been appointed by the synod as officers of the synod, for the period of their appointment;
- (h) All retired ministers not covered by clause **2.3a or 2.3f** residing within the province or nation served by the synod, who shall be associate members of the synod having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the synod;
- (i) Two young people, being members of the United Reformed Church, nominated by the synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;
- (j) Representatives, not exceeding the number approved by the General Assembly, of other denominations as the synod may from time to time determine;
- (k) An elder appointed by the **synod** as an interim moderator who shall be a full member of the synod for the period of the appointment.

The synod shall elect from among its members a clerk, a treasurer and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable and shall determine their periods of service. It may also appoint such committees and for such purposes as it from time to time may think desirable and may appoint to any such committee any members of the United Reformed Church notwithstanding that they are not members of the synod.

Moderators of synods. There shall be a moderator for each synod being a minister appointed from time to time by the General Assembly according to its rules of procedure and responsible to the General Assembly.

The moderator shall:

- be separated from any local pastoral charge,
- stimulate and encourage the work of the United Reformed Church within the province or nation,
- preside over the meetings of the synod and exercise a pastoral office towards the ministers and churches within the province or nation,

- suggest names of ministers to vacant pastorates, in consultation with interim moderators of local churches,
- preside, or appoint a deputy to preside, at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the province or nation,

The moderators of the synods shall meet together at regular intervals for the better discharge of their duties.

Functions of synod:

A. The Synod is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below):

To take action which supports

- the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad
- the **spreading** of the Gospel at home and abroad,
- **the life and witness of the United Reformed Church**
- the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole,
- the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;

(ii) to **encourage** church extension within the province or nation, decide upon the establishment of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;

(iii) to decide upon all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches.

(iv) **to take appropriate action on matters referred to it by the General Assembly**

(v) **to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by Local Churches and to advise thereon.**

(vi) **to make proposals to and raise concerns for consideration by the General Assembly.**

(vii) **to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the local church, any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the synod.**

(viii) **to appoint, in consultation with the local church, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In**

exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;

(ix) **to care for all the churches of the synod ensuring that visits are made at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work.**

(x) **to appoint from time to time such number of representatives to the General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, at least one representative under the age of 26.¹ As far as possible all appointments shall be made in rotation from local churches.**

(xi) **to appoint to service on synod :**

(I) **United Reformed Church ministers/ lay people serving as (a) full-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) secretaries and other full-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;**

(II) **United Reformed Church ministers giving significant oversight to local churches, under the general direction of the synod concerned;**

(III) **Ministers, or members of Diaconal Orders, of other churches appointed to serve on behalf of the United Reformed Church in charge of a United Reformed Church or in an ecumenical group including United Reformed Church interests;**

(IV) **Ministers not in pastoral charge who perform duties within the synod in respect of which the synod has some direct responsibility;**

(xii) **to consider and where appropriate appoint to service on Synod**

(I) **United Reformed Church ministers/ lay people serving as (a) part-time chaplains to universities, colleges, hospitals, factories, where their work is seen to be an extension of the ministry of the synod concerned, (b) part-time officials of ecumenical bodies with which the United Reformed Church is in relationship;**

(xiii) **to devise strategies which enable and support the exploration of mission opportunities in the region and to encourage in Local Churches concern for service and a sense of responsibility for**

the wider work of the Church at home and abroad.

- (xiv) to exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3) (a), (b) (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who are the responsibility of the General Assembly.
- (xv) to give oversight to candidates for the ministry and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call.
- (xvi) where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the Synod considers that a Minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process;
- (xvii) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals.
- (xvii) to accredit and provide support and training for lay preachers and worship leaders and, in consultation with the Local Churches concerned, to give authority for appropriate lay persons to preside at the sacraments. Authorisation for lay persons to preside at the Sacraments in Ecumenical Areas shall only be given after consultation with the appropriate Ecumenical Partner, (In most cases the Methodist District)
- (xviii) to receive the resignation of ministers and to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraph 2.5.xviii)
- (xix) to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly.

(xx) to decide upon all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings..

(xxi) to receive, hear and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted.

(xxii) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.

(B) As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the Synod shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

(C) No Appeal shall lie against a decision by the Synod to refer any case to the Assembly Commission under Function (xv) above.

2.(4) The area meeting of each Area of Ecumenical Co-operation being representative of the local churches in that area grouped together for the purposes of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight and united action shall consist of representatives of all churches engaged in the area of ecumenical co-operation. The United Reformed Church membership of the area meeting in each area of ecumenical co-operation (hereinafter referred to as the United Reformed Church Committee) shall consist of the moderator of synod, all ministers, church related community workers and registered pastors (in Scotland) engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within the area, representatives of local churches within the area, and such other persons as determined by the constitution of each area meeting as approved by resolution of the synod.

(A) The Synod shall delegate to the area council the following functions, unless by agreement with the relevant ecumenical partner it is felt that some of these functions should be reserved to the Synod, and it shall be the responsibility of the Area Council

(i) to exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3)(a), (b), (f) and (g) except moderators of synods who although members of the area council are responsible to the General Assembly;

(ii) to give (or, where deep pastoral concern for the church requires it, to withhold) concurrence in calls to ministers and, with the moderator of the synod or the

moderator's deputy presiding, to conduct, in fellowship with the local church(es), any ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the district;

- (iii) to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers and church related community workers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals;**
- (iv) to appoint, in consultation with the local church(es) and the moderator of the synod, an interim moderator during a pastoral vacancy, such interim moderator normally being a serving minister or a retired minister. In exceptional circumstances an elder may be appointed;**
- (v) to care for all the churches of the area council and to visit them by deputies at regular intervals for consultation concerning their life and work;**
- (vi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision;**
- (vii) to accredit lay preachers**
- (viii) to consider resignations of ministers not currently the subject of any case within the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline referred to in Function (xviii) below and, in consultation with the moderator of the synod, to decide upon appropriate action (see also paragraph 2.4.xviii);**
- (ix) from time to time to recommend to Synod such number of representatives to the General Assembly as the Synod shall determine;**
- (x) to engage in study concerning the Church's mission in the region and to encourage in the local churches concern for youth work and social service and a sense of responsibility for the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;**
- (xi) to promote church extension within the area and to submit proposals to the synod for the establishing of new causes and the recognition of mission projects;**
- (xii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the**

synod in consultation with the moderator on all matters regarding the grouping, amalgamation or dissolution of local churches;

- (xiii) to make recommendations to the synod in consultation with the churches concerned and to act on behalf of the synod on all matters regarding erection, major reconstruction or disposal of buildings;**
- (xiv) to provide a forum for concerns brought forward by local churches and to advise thereon;**
- (xv) to hear and make decisions upon appeals brought forward by local churches and church members;**
- (xvi) to take appropriate action on matters referred to the council by the synod or General Assembly, and to initiate or transmit proposals for consideration by those bodies;**
- (xvii) to maintain contact with ecumenical and missionary work in the area;**
- (xviii) where the area council considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process at the appropriate time as specified in that Process.**

(D) Such functions as relate solely to the work of the United Reformed Church may be discharged by the United Reformed Church Committee of each area meeting.

2.(5) The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of:

a) The moderators of the General Assembly and of the synods and such other officers of the General Assembly and of the synods as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (The Assembly has determined that Clerks of Synods, Treasurers of Synods, the Clerk of Assembly, the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary shall be members of Assembly);

(b) *The convener of each of the standing committees of the General Assembly;*

(c) *A staff representative and a student representative, being members of the United Reformed Church, from each of such recognised theological colleges as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine;*

(d) *Up to twelve representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland or such other number as the Assembly shall from time to time determine;*

(e) *Such other ministers and elders of the United Reformed Church as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine (the Assembly has added to its membership one serving United Reformed Church chaplain to the forces, nominated each year by the Organising Secretary of the United Board, in consultation with the three Principal Chaplains, nine representatives of the Synod of Scotland and three representatives from each other synod);*

(f) *All former moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and all past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, all past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, all former moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, all former chairmen and presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, and all former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church;*

(g) *Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, being members of the United Reformed Church, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present two);*

(h) *Representatives, not exceeding the number approved by the General Assembly, of other denominations in the United Kingdom as the Assembly on the advice of the Mission Council may from time to time determine;*

(i) *A representative of the Council for World Mission.*

In making its determination from time to time as to the number of members the total number of members shall not exceed 250

The General Assembly shall elect a moderator and such other officers as it shall from time to time think desirable. (The Assembly has appointed the following to serve as officers with the moderator: the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Clerk of Assembly, The Treasurer and the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.) It shall also appoint a Mission Council with power to act in its name

in matters of urgency between meetings of the General Assembly and to discharge such other functions as the General Assembly may from time to time direct. The General Assembly shall appoint standing committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of the continuing interests of the church. It may also appoint special committees which subject to the General Assembly shall have charge of such matters as the General Assembly may assign to them from time to time. The General Assembly may appoint to any such committee members of the United Reformed Church who are not members of the General Assembly.

Functions:

(A) General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below):

- (i) to oversee the total work of the church;
- (ii) to make decisions on reports and recommendations from its own committees, issue such directions and take such actions as it deems conducive to the propagation of the gospel, the welfare of the United Reformed Church, the interests of the Church of Christ as a whole and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed;
- (iii) to conduct and foster the ecumenical relationships of the United Reformed Church;
- (iv) to support and share in the missionary work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (v) to determine the standards and scope of an adequate ministerial education and training;
- (vi) to make regulations respecting theological colleges belonging to the United Reformed Church, to appoint the principal, professors and other members of the teaching staff, and Board of Governors, and to superintend their work;
- (vii) to recognise theological colleges previously recognised by the Congregational Church in England and Wales or the Congregational Union of Scotland and such other colleges in such manner and for such purposes as the General Assembly may determine;
- (viii) to appoint moderators of synods;
- (ix) to remit questions concerning the witness and judgement of the church for general discussion in church meetings, elders' meetings, and synods, and to call for reports from these councils;

- (x) to interpret all forms and expressions of the polity practice and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church including the Basis and the Structure and to determine when rights of personal conviction are asserted to the injury of the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xi) to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church and Part 1 of the Statement of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below;
 - (xii) to make, alter or rescind rules for the conduct of its own proceedings and of those of other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church and such other rules, bye-laws and standing orders as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable for the performance of its functions and the carrying into effect of any of the provisions contained in the Basis and the Structure and for the conduct of the business and affairs of the General Assembly and of the other councils and commissions of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xiii) to appoint at its discretion additional members to serve on synods;
 - (xiv) to make such alterations in the boundaries and groupings of synods and to establish such new synods as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable;
 - (xv) to consider and decide upon references and appeals duly submitted;
 - (xvi) to make, alter or rescind rules of procedure for the submission and conduct of references and appeals to and by the councils of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xvii) to receive and decide upon applications for admission into the United Reformed Church from ministers, probationers and congregations, transmitted by synods through their moderators;
 - (xviii) to decide upon questions regarding the inclusion on the Roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by synods (but excluding any matter which is being dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below);
 - (xix) to provide for the raising of funds for the work of the United Reformed Church and to determine arrangements for payment of stipends and expenses to ministers and officers of the United Reformed Church and for such other financial matters as the General Assembly may from time to time think desirable;
 - (xx) to consider and decide upon issues and representations duly transmitted by other councils of the United Reformed Church;
 - (xxi) to make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Commission Panel and to any administrative office under the Process for Ministerial Discipline contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Process (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Process are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding);
 - (xxii) to provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Section O, Part 1 of the Manual for any appeal brought under Paragraph 11 of Section O, Part 1 of the Manual;
 - (xxiii) In the absence of any reference to the Assembly Commission by the appropriate synod (the case of any minister who is a moderator of synod being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the General Assembly (or the Mission Council acting on its behalf) considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process at the appropriate time as specified in that Process.
 - (xxiv) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the church.
- 2(5)(B) 'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case against a minister under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, neither General Assembly nor Mission Council on its behalf shall exercise any of General Assembly's functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or

interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

Constitutional Amendments

3.(1) No exercise by the General Assembly of the function of constitutional amendment contained in 2.5.xi shall have effect unless the following procedure has been followed:

(a) The proposal for the amendment shall be made in accordance with the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.

(b) The General Assembly shall vote on a motion to approve the proposal which shall require a majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting to pass.

(c) The General Assembly shall, if such motion to approve the proposal is passed, refer the proposal to synods and may, if it deems appropriate, in exceptional cases refer the proposal also to local churches.

(d) The General Assembly shall in making any such reference set a final date for responses to be made, which shall normally be at an appropriate time before the next annual Assembly.

(e) If by such date notice has been received by the General Secretary from more than one third of synods (or, if it has been so referred, more than one third of local churches) that a motion 'that the proposal be not proceeded with' has been passed by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such body, then the Assembly in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to ratify the proposal.

(f) If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting. Such a motion shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass. In its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, before voting on such a motion the General Assembly shall invite a representative of any synod from which the General Secretary has duly received notification under 3(1)(e) to present the main reasons for its objection.

(g) If such a motion is passed by such a majority the amendment shall have effect.

(h) For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods and **local** churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

3.(2) In the case of motions which would have the effect of terminating the separate existence of the United Reformed Church, or of a synod within it, by union with other churches, the voting process to be used shall be not less stringent than in 3 (1) and that process shall be determined by a single vote of the General Assembly which shall require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass. In the case of a proposed union affecting only Scotland or Wales no action will be taken by the General Assembly until a decision in favour of union has been taken by the relevant synod.

Consultation

4. Decisions on the part of any council shall be reached only after the fullest attempt has been made to discover the mind of the other councils or of local churches likely to be affected by the decision.

5. APPEALS

5.(1) No right of Appeal shall lie against the decision of any council of the Church (acting with due authority in the matter) to refer any case to the Assembly Commission, and once such reference has been made that case shall be resolved in accordance with Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and not under Paragraph 5(2) below.

Any decision reached in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church has the status of a decision of the General Assembly and is final and binding.

5.(2) The procedure for dealing with reference and appeals falling outside paragraph 5(1) is as follows:

A local church or any member thereof or elders' meeting may appeal to the **synod** upon which the local church is entitled to be represented for the resolution of any dispute or difference and may appeal from any decision of such synod to the General Assembly.

A synod may refer any dispute or difference, whether or not the same shall have come before it on a reference or appeal, to the General Assembly.

The decision of the General Assembly on any matter which has come before it on reference or appeal shall be final and binding.

Note: The procedure for appeals appears in paragraph 8 of the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church.

CTV Appendix 5

LONDON SYNOD COMMISSION Interim Report 2006

The London Synod Commission was established by Mission Council in Autumn 2005 with the following members: Revd Bill Mahood (Convener); Mrs Sheila Brain (Secretary); Revd Wilf Bahadur; Ms Rachel Greening; Revd Malcolm Hanson; Revd Heather Pencavel.

The Commission has given priority to identifying the principles underlying the suggestion of a London Synod and assessing the basic advantages and disadvantages. In addition it has given careful consideration to the process of consultation with local churches and Districts, ecumenical partners and other relevant bodies. This will clearly take time and cannot be completed in time for Assembly 2006. It is however able to bring an interim progress report this year, with a full report to be presented to Assembly 2007.

Terms of reference

1. To investigate the feasibility of creating a London Synod and to submit an initial report to the 2006 Assembly (Resolution 42, Assembly 2005). To submit a full report to the 2007 Assembly.
2. To open up a broad consultation process, in order to assess the rationale for such a change and to consider whether the advantages significantly outweigh the disadvantages
3. To consult in-depth with the Southern and Thames North Synods, and in lesser detail with the surrounding Synods whose boundaries might be significantly altered by the creation of a London Synod (Eastern, East Midlands, Wessex).
4. To consider the ecumenical dimensions of the proposal and the implications for future ecumenical work and mission in Greater London.
5. To explore alternative ways in which the URC could relate more effectively to London in mission and service.
6. To recommend practical means by which any changes might be implemented.

Progress Report

1 Principles to be established and questions to be raised include (among others): Is there a strong vision for a London Synod and what has changed since 1972? What would be its size and where would the boundary be? What happens to the churches/Districts outside and how would this affect surrounding Synods? What are the specific concerns expressed in opposition to the idea and how might these be met? Would the loss of the broad spread of church life (urban, suburban, rural) be outweighed by the commonality of interest of the churches lying within the whole Greater London Authority (GLA)? How are other denominations dealing with the London situation? What are the legal and financial implications?

2 Consultation Process

Both written and verbal submissions are currently being sought, covering a broad spectrum of all those concerned. This includes contact with ecumenical colleagues, most notably the Methodists, who have recently taken the decision to establish a London District following a major consultation process across the region. As a result of these initial deliberations the Commission plans to produce a detailed set of proposals which will be submitted to the local churches and Districts covered by the two London Synods for consideration during the Autumn, with a view to reaching a consensus on the way forward by Spring 2007. If the decision proves to be in favour of establishing a London Synod, then further work will need to be done on the practical details concerning precise boundaries and the legal requirements concerning Trusts and finance.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Appendices

General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

Appendix 1

MINISTERIAL INCAPACITY PROCEDURE

PART II – not subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure (governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

A. GENERAL

A.1 The following is a list of definitions of terms as used in the Incapacity Procedure:-

- **“APRC”** means the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee which operates under the General Assembly of the Church
- **“Appeals Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding each appeal dealt with under that process
- **“Appeals Review Commission** means the Commission consisting of three person constituted for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each appeal under Part II, Section L of the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Assembly Commission”** means the Commission constituted under the Disciplinary Process for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under that process
- **“Basis of Union”** means the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church
- **“Church”** means the United Reformed Church
- **“Commencement Notice”** means the Notice sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.3 in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Consultation Group”** means the group of persons required to be consulted in accordance with Part II, Paragraph B.1 as to whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated
- **“Decision Record”** means the record of the Decision made by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be in the case of any Minister under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Disciplinary Process”** means the Process operated by the Church for the purpose of exercising ministerial discipline contained in Section O of the Church’s Manual

- **“District Council”** means that District Council which exercises oversight of the Minister in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure (unless such meaning is excluded by the context) and references to District Councils shall be understood to include Area Councils in Scotland, such Area Councils being in every respect identical with District Councils and wherever the words “District Council” or “District” appear they shall as regards Scotland be read as meaning “Area Council” or “Area”
- **“Enquiry”** means the enquiry carried out by the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Section G
- **“Hearing”** means any Hearing conducted by the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission under Part II, Sections J or L
- **“Incapacity Procedure”** means the whole Procedure set out in Parts I and II hereof for dealing with cases of ministers falling within Part I, Paragraph 1 hereof
- **“Minister”** means a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers and who is under consideration within the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Minister’s Representative”** means any person appointed to represent a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph A.7
- **“Notice of Appeal”** means a Notice of Appeal lodged by or on behalf of a Minister in accordance with Part II, Paragraph L.1.1
- **“Record of the Hearing”** means the Secretary’s Minute together with any verbatim record made and transcribed in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **“Review Commission”** means a Commission consisting of five persons selected as described in Part II, Section D for the purpose of hearing and deciding upon each case dealt with under the Incapacity Procedure
- **“Roll of Ministers”** has the meaning given to it in Paragraph 1 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **“Secretary of the Review Commission”** means the person appointed to act as the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph D.2
- **“Secretary’s Minute”** means the summary minute of the Hearing prepared by the Secretary of the Review Commission in accordance with Part II, Paragraph J.9
- **“Standing Panel”** means the panel of persons constituted in accordance with Part II, Section C who will form part of each Review Commission
- **“Statement of Reasons”** means a statement appended to the Decision Record setting out the reasons for the Decision
- **“Structure”** means the Structure of the United Reformed Church
- **“Suspension” and “to Suspend”** shall have the meanings given to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union
- **“Synod”** means the Synod of which the Minister concerned is a member (unless such meaning is excluded by the context)

- A.2 The Incapacity Procedure needs to move along in a timely manner so that feelings of frustration and unfairness do not arise as a result of unexplained delays and also so as to reduce the period of maximum stress for the Minister and all those involved. Yet, of equal importance, the issues have to be explored sensitively to enable wise and thoughtful decisions to be taken. Thus the Review Commission must at all times be mindful of the need to balance proper expedition on the one hand with the need to achieve natural justice both for the Minister and the whole Church and an outcome which is fair and properly considered.
- A.3 Subject to the exception contained in Paragraph A.4 all statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of the Incapacity Procedure shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason and shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Incapacity Procedure.
- A.4 The Review Commission may, with the consent of the person or group making it, pass on any statement falling within Paragraph A.3 to any person or group within the Church, provided that the Review Commission satisfies itself that any statement so passed on will remain within the confidential forum of the recipient(s).
- A.5 In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding the appointment of persons to the Standing Panel or to any Review Commission or in the initiation of the consultation specified in Paragraph B.1 or as a member of the Consultation Group or in the subsequent issue of a Commencement Notice or some other administrative or procedural matter under the Incapacity Procedure is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Incapacity Procedure already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This paragraph does not permit any member of a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission to appoint his/her own deputy.
- A.6 In any case where the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary in the case of appeals) is unable for any reason to carry out the duties of that office, his/her place shall be taken by a deputy duly authorised by or in the name of the General Assembly.
- A.7.1 Any Minister coming within the Incapacity Procedure shall be entitled to appoint another person to act as the Minister's Representative* in receiving and responding to any forms, letters or other documents, in dealing with any other procedural matters and in attending any meeting or Hearing*, with or without the Minister.
- A.7.2 In the case of any Minister who, by reason of his/her incapacity, may be incapable of understanding the implications of his/her involvement in the Incapacity Procedure or the nature and substance of the Commencement Notice*, or of dealing with any procedural issues or of taking any active part in any meetings or at any Hearings, the Review Commission, or the Appeals Review Commission, as the case may be, may, in response to an application made on the Minister's behalf, agree to the appointment of an appropriate person to act as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.3 In the case of a Minister coming within Paragraph A.7.2 on whose behalf no such application is made under that Paragraph, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may invite APRC* to advise whether such an appointment would be appropriate in the Minister's best interests and, if so, to recommend a person for appointment and may thereupon appoint the person so recommended as the Minister's representative for the purposes set out in Paragraph A.7.1.
- A.7.4 In the event that APRC, for whatever reason does not respond to the invitation contained in Paragraph A.7.3, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission may, following consultation with the Moderator of the Synod*, itself appoint a person as the Minister's representative for the purposes of Paragraph A.7.1.
- B. INITIATION OF THE INCAPACITY PROCEDURE**
- B.1 If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary believes that a particular Minister may be incapable of exercising (or of continuing to exercise) his/her Ministry on any of the grounds specified in Paragraph 1 of Part I, s/he shall consult with the other of them and with the Convener of APRC and those persons ("the Consultation Group*") shall together consider whether the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated.

- B.2 As part of that consultation they must satisfy themselves as to the following matters:-
 - B.2.1 that all reasonable steps to rehabilitate the Minister have been made; and
 - B.2.2 that the procedures for ill health retirement do not apply or that there is no reasonable prospect of their implementation or of the resignation of the Minister; and
 - B.2.3 that, if APRC has already been involved, that Committee believes that it can do no more for the Minister; and
 - B.2.4 that no case against the Minister is already in progress under the Disciplinary Process.
- B.3 If, having so consulted, the Consultation Group believes, unanimously or by a majority, that the Incapacity Procedure should be initiated, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall forthwith send or deliver to the Secretary of the Review Commission* a Commencement Notice in order to initiate the Incapacity Procedure, setting out the reasons for the issue of such notice and at the same time inform the Minister that this step has been taken.
- B.4 The Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary may, if s/he considers that there are strong and urgent reasons for so doing, and only so long as s/he forthwith invokes the consultation procedure set out in Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 above, suspend* the Minister with immediate effect, either orally or in writing. Suspension* imposed orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing to the Minister and written notice shall also be given to the Secretary of the District Council. In the event that the Consultation Group decides that a Commencement Notice should not be issued, the suspension shall immediately be terminated and written confirmation thereof sent by the Moderator of the Synod or Deputy General Secretary as the case may be to the Minister and the Secretary of the District Council.
- B.5 On the initiation of the Incapacity Procedure the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary shall put in train appropriate procedures to ensure pastoral care for the Minister, his/her family and the local church(es) involved.
- B.6 Should the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary receive in accordance with the provisions applicable to

the Disciplinary Process a recommendation falling within Paragraph 4 of Part I, s/he shall forthwith invoke the consultation procedure set out in Paragraph B.1 and B.2 and, unless the Consultation Group consider, either unanimously or by a majority, that there are compelling reasons to the contrary, the Moderator of the Synod or the Deputy General Secretary who received the said recommendation shall forthwith initiate the Incapacity Procedure in accordance with Paragraph B.3 and shall attach to the Commencement Notice a copy of such recommendation. S/he shall send a copy of the Commencement Notice to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission* or the Appeals Commission* as the case may be to enable that commission to make a final order declaring the proceedings under the Disciplinary Process to be concluded.

C. STANDING PANEL

- C.1 Appointment to the Standing Panel shall be by resolution of General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee, who shall in considering persons for appointment select one person from each of the following categories, namely (i) a former moderator of General Assembly (who shall also have the responsibility of consulting with the officers of the General Assembly for the purposes set out in Paragraph D.4.1, (ii) a Synod Moderator or a minister in local pastoral charge, (iii) a doctor with experience of general medical practice and (iv) a person with some legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background (see also Paragraph D.6.1).
- C.2 Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph C.3, members of the Standing Panel shall be appointed for a term not exceeding five years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power to the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms not exceeding five years each.
- C.3 When any member of the Standing Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Standing Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Review Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on a Review Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

D. REVIEW COMMISSION

- D.1 No person shall sit as a member of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission in the hearing of any case in which s/he has any involvement whether as a member of any local Church, District Council* or Synod connected with the case or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by the officers of General Assembly or by the proposed person him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to take part in the hearing of the case.
- D.2 A Secretary shall be appointed by resolution of General Assembly, on the advice of the Nominations Committee, to be responsible for all secretarial and procedural matters laid upon him/her by the Incapacity Procedure, including the servicing of the Review Commission, and the period and terms of office shall be such as General Assembly shall decide.
- D.3 On receipt of a Commencement Notice, the Secretary shall forthwith take the following steps (marking every envelope containing papers despatched in connection with the Incapacity Procedure with the words 'Private and Confidential'):

 - D.3.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice and
 - D.3.2 Send to the Minister copies of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice giving the Minister the opportunity to submit a written response within a period of one month from the date of the Commencement Notice and
 - D.3.3 Send to each member of the Standing Panel a copy of the Commencement Notice and any supporting documentation, together with a Notice drawing attention to Paragraph D.4 and requesting confirmation that the addressee is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Review Commission.

- D.4.1 The member of the Standing Panel in the first category mentioned in Paragraph C.1 (or the member in the second, third or fourth categories (in that order) if the member(s) in the preceding category(ies) is/are unable to participate in the particular case) shall forthwith consult with the officers of General Assembly and jointly with them appoint as the fifth member of the Review Commission a person (not already a member of the Standing Panel) chosen on account of particular expertise

or experience in the subject matter of the case, ascertaining through the procedures set out above that no conflict of interest or other reason would prevent such person from serving upon the Review Commission.

- D.4.2 In the event that any member of the Standing Panel shall be unable to take part in the particular case, the Secretary shall invite the officers of General Assembly to appoint another person from the same category as specified in Paragraph C.1 as his/her replacement on the Review Commission.
- D.5 When the identity of all five members of the Review Commission has been provisionally ascertained, the Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing thereof and invite him/her to state within 14 days of receipt of the Notice whether s/he has any objection to any of the persons serving upon the Review Commission and, if so, the grounds for such objection. Any such objection shall be considered by the officers of General Assembly, whose decision on whether to uphold or reject the objection shall be final.
- D.6.1 The Review Commission shall appoint its own convener who shall be a member of the Church and who shall normally be the person appointed to the Standing Panel by virtue of his/her legal, tribunal or professional experience or other similar background under Paragraph C.1(iv).
- D.6.2 The Convener of the Review Commission shall not have a casting vote, unless the Review Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph D.7.1 consist of an even number of members.
- D.7.1 In the event that any member of the Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.
- D.7.2 Once a Review Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps to investigate the case, no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Review Commission.
- D.7.3 In the event that the Review Commission shall be reduced to fewer than three members at any time after it has taken any steps to investigate the case under the Incapacity Procedure, that Review Commission shall stand down and be discharged and a new Review Commission

shall be appointed under this Section D which shall have access to all information (including documentation available to the former Review Commission).

- D.7.4 If the Convener of the Review Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reason stated in Paragraph D.1, the remaining members shall appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.

E. SUSPENSION

- E.1 If the Minister has already been suspended before the case has come into the Procedure, the Review Commission must, as soon as it has been constituted, decide whether the suspension should be continued or lifted, and inform all those concerned.
- E.2 If the Minister has not already been suspended, the Review Commission may, either immediately upon its appointment or at any time during the continuance of the case, resolve that the Minister be suspended.
- E.3 Any suspension, whenever imposed, may be lifted by the Review Commission at any time during the continuance of the case.
- E.4 Any decision made by the Review Commission under Paragraph E.1, E.2 or E.3 shall immediately be notified in writing by the Secretary of the Review Commission to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice under Paragraph B.3).
- E.5 An existing suspension continued under Paragraph E.1 or a new suspension under Paragraph E.2 shall remain in force until either:-
- E.5.1 the Review Commission makes a subsequent decision relative to that suspension or
- E.5.2 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.2 that the name of the Minister be retained on the Roll of Ministers*, in which case the suspension automatically ceases on the date upon which that decision is formally notified to the Minister or
- E.5.3 the Review Commission reaches a decision under Paragraph K.4.3 that the name of the Minister be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, there being no appeal within the period allowed, in which case the suspension shall

continue up to the date of deletion (i.e. the date of expiry of such period under Paragraph K.4.3) or

- E.5.4 there is an appeal against the decision of the Review Commission, in which case the suspension shall continue throughout the appeal proceedings and automatically cease on the date of the formal notification of the Appeals Review Commission's decision to the Minister (whether this be that his/her name be retained on or deleted from the Roll of Ministers, in the latter case the termination of the suspension coinciding with the deletion).
- E.6 For the avoidance of doubt, in the case of a suspension first imposed under the Disciplinary Process upon a Minister who then enters the Incapacity Procedure through the issue of a Commencement Notice, the provisions of the Incapacity Procedure, and not those of the Disciplinary Process, shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension. Conversely, in the case of a suspension first imposed hereunder upon a Minister who then enters the Disciplinary Process as a result of the steps set out in Section H, the provisions of that Process shall thereafter govern all aspects of that suspension.

F. INITIAL REVIEW

- F.1 The members of the Review Commission shall consult together as soon as possible to consider the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their enquiry* should take (as to which, see Section G below).
- F.2 At the outset the Review Commission will need to address the following questions:
- F.2.1 Have all the steps outlined at Paragraphs B.1 and B.2 been taken?
- F.2.2 How has the Minister responded, if at all, to the issues raised in the Commencement Notice, particularly those relating to his/her conduct and/or behaviour or to any other concerns and/or problems expressed about his/her ministry and will it be necessary to meet with other persons with knowledge of any relevant events or circumstances to test the accuracy and weight of these matters and their importance to the enquiry?
- F.2.3 Should an early meeting with the Minister be sought or should this be deferred pending further enquiry?

F.2.4 Is specialist advice and guidance relevant as to the question of whether, based on the criteria set out in Part I, Paragraphs 1 and 5, the Minister is or is not capable of exercising, or of continuing to exercise, ministry? If so, what steps should be taken to ensure that such advice and guidance are available for consideration by the Review Commission?

F.2.5 Are there any special factors in the particular case which should be taken into account at this stage? This is particularly relevant in cases coming into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Ministerial Disciplinary Process.

F.3 Having carried out its initial review and agreed on its modus operandi, the Review Commission will move into the enquiry stage of its proceedings.

G. CONDUCT OF ENQUIRY

G.1 The Review Commission shall have control of all procedural matters, including the gathering of information and any issues relating to the Minister's suspension. The Review Commission shall also have discretion as regards the extent to which written statements, reports, videos, recorded interviews and other recordings and transcripts may be taken into account.

G.2 The members of the Review Commission will need to pay constant attention to all the issues referred to in Paragraph F.2 and any other factors present throughout the whole progress of the case.

G.3 Where cases come into the Procedure following a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process, information may already have been considered within that Process. However, the Review Commission must always carry out its own enquiry and cannot rely upon such information simply because it was presented and considered within the Disciplinary Process.

G.4 In the light of Paragraph 1 of Part I the Review Commission should, as early as possible in its investigation and wherever possible or practicable, take the following steps:

G.4.1 meet with the Minister or, if circumstances render this impossible or impracticable, with the Minister's representative, either or whom may, if s/he wishes, have a friend present with him/her and

G.4.2 seek the written permission of the Minister or his/her representative (but only so far as the latter has the authority in law to grant such permission on behalf of the Minister) to apply

for copies of all the Minister's medical notes, records and reports from his/her General Practitioner and copies of the reports from any specialist who may have examined or been consulted by the Minister.

G.5 If the Review Commission is unable to follow the steps outlined in Paragraph G.4 in any given case, it will need to consider the underlying reasons very carefully and be prepared to proceed with its enquiry in the light of the best information available.

G.6 As envisaged in Paragraph F.2.2, the Review Commission may also meet with other persons during the course of its enquiry and should inform each such person that s/he may be called later to give evidence and answer questions at a Hearing with the Minister present. If any such person refuses or expresses an unwillingness to attend any Hearing in person, the Review Commission may invoke the provisions of Paragraph G.1.

G.7 The Review Commission shall be entitled to call for and consider all minutes of meetings, correspondence, notes, reports and documents which it considers appropriate to its enquiry. This provision shall not apply where those from whom such documentation is requested can show that it is protected by confidentiality, but instead they would be asked to supply a written report which would also be available to the Minister.

H. RECOMMENDATION FOR REFERRAL TO THE DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

H.1.1 If it considers that, in a case within the Incapacity Procedure, an issue of discipline is or may be involved, the Review Commission or, in the event of an appeal, the Appeals Review Commission, may, at any time during the proceedings and whether or not a Hearing has yet taken place, refer the case back to the person who initiated it in accordance with Paragraph B.3 with the recommendation that the Disciplinary Procedure should be commenced in respect of the Minister, whereupon the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned pending the outcome of that recommendation.

H.1.2 In such a situation, the Secretary of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall forthwith send or deliver to the person who initiated the case a written notice containing such recommendation, signed by the Convener and incorporating a statement of the reasons

on which the recommendation is based, in summary form if the Commission so decides, together with such other documentation (if any) as the Commission authorises the Secretary to release.

- H.1.3 That Notice shall state that the proceedings under the Incapacity Procedure shall stand adjourned to await the recipient's response and shall also state the time, which shall be not be longer than one month, within which the recipient must notify the Secretary in writing whether the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted or rejected.
- H.2.1 The Secretary shall at the same time send a copy of the said Notice to the Minister. It is assumed that the Minister will already have copies of all the accompanying documents mentioned in Paragraph H.1.2, but, if there are any which s/he has yet not seen, copies of these must also be sent to him/her.
- H.2.2 The Secretary shall at the same time send copies of the said Notice (but not the accompanying documentation) to the General Secretary, the Secretary of the District Council and the Moderator of the Synod (in any case where s/he is not already the recipient of the Notice under Paragraph H.1.1).
- H.3.1 If written confirmation is received from the recipient of the Notice, countersigned by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission, that the recommendation contained in the Notice has been accepted and that a Referral Notice has been issued under the Disciplinary Process in respect of the Minister, the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission as the case may be shall declare the case within the Incapacity Procedure to be concluded and no further action shall be taken in respect thereof. The Secretary shall give written notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.
- H.3.2 If written notification is received from the recipient of the Notice that the aforesaid recommendation has been rejected, the case shall forthwith be resumed within the Incapacity Procedure. The Secretary shall give notice to this effect to the Minister and the persons specified in Paragraph H.2.2.
- H.4 No recommendation for referral to the Disciplinary Process shall be made in any case which comes within the Incapacity Procedure as a result of a recommendation from the Disciplinary Process.
- H.5 As to the position regarding the suspension of a Minister to whom this Section H applies, see Paragraph E.5.5.
- For the avoidance of confusion, there is no Section I.*

J. HEARINGS

- J.1 The Review Commission shall decide when it is appropriate for a Hearing to take place and whom it requires to attend, whereupon the Secretary shall consult with the Convener, the other members of the Review Commission, the Minister and any other such persons as might be required to attend as to the venue, date and time for the Hearing and, when these are fixed, shall give written notification thereof to all concerned with the request that they confirm their intention to attend and, in the case of the Minister, state whether it is his/her intention to have a person to accompany him/her.
- J.2 The Hearing shall be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend:
- The members of the Review Commission
 - The Secretary or a duly appointed Deputy
 - The Minister
 - A person chosen by the Minister to accompany him/her
 - Any medical, specialist, expert or other witnesses, but only while giving evidence, unless the Review Commission otherwise directs
 - A representative of the Church's Legal Advisers, if requested to attend by the Review Commission.
 - Any person responsible for operating the recording equipment or otherwise preparing a verbatim report of the proceedings referred to in Paragraph J.9.
- J.3 Subject to ensuring that the rules of natural justice are observed, the Convener should ensure that the proceedings are as relaxed and informal as possible.
- J.4 All witnesses called by the Review Commission to give evidence shall be subject to questioning by the Convener (and by other members of the Review Commission with the Convener's permission). The Minister shall be entitled to ask questions of such witnesses.
- J.5 When the process described in Paragraph J.4 has been completed, the Minister or his/her representative may invite witnesses called by him/her to give evidence and may

question them, as may the Convener and other members of the Review Commission with the Convener’s permission.

- J.6 When all the witnesses have given evidence, the Minister or the Minister’s representative may if s/he wishes address the Review Commission.
- J.7 In the special circumstances of any case the Convener may, if s/he considers it appropriate and helpful, vary any of the above procedures at his/her discretion.
- J.8 In considering the evidence and information before it, the Review Commission shall apply a standard of proof on the balance of probability.
- J.9 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (‘the Secretary’s Minute*’). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording, or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener. The Record of the Hearing* shall consist of the Secretary’s Minute together with any such verbatim record, which shall be transcribed in the event of an appeal.
- J.10 At the conclusion of the Hearing the members of the Review Commission will wish to deliberate upon their final decision, together with any guidance and/or recommendation(s) which they may wish to append to their decision. The Convener will inform those present that the decision will not be made that day but that written notification of the decision will be given within ten days to the Minister, the General Secretary, the Synod Moderator and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.2.1). The Hearing is thus concluded.

K. REVIEW COMMISSION’S DECISION AND ITS NOTIFICATION

- K.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Review Commission shall, all meeting and deliberating together, but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons, consider all the information concerning the Minister which has been before them during the case for the purpose of reaching a decision in accordance with Paragraph K.2. In particular they must make a careful and detailed appraisal of all of the following:

- K.1.1 the circumstances which have led up to the commencement of the case as indicated in the Commencement Notice and
- K.1.2 any expert opinion of a medical, psychological or similar or related nature in respect of the Minister which has been sought by the Review Commission or which has in any way been presented to it during the case and
- K.1.3 information supplied by the Minister and others within the Procedure, whether or not on the Minister’s behalf and
- K.1.4 reports and other documentation requested by the Review Commission from other persons or bodies within or outside the Church with whom the Minister, through the exercise of his/her ministry, might have had a particular involvement, such as ecumenical posts, chaplaincies or positions within public bodies and
- K.1.5 all other factors properly coming within the scope of the review being undertaken by the Review Commission and
- K.1.6 the weight to be attached to each of the factors in the case as indicated above, bearing in mind the manner in which the information was provided and, where appropriate, whether the Minister or his/her representative had the opportunity of challenging or commenting upon it.
- K.2 The purpose of the deliberation referred to in Paragraph K.1 is to enable the Review Commission to reach (either unanimously or by a majority) a decision in accordance with Part 1 Paragraph 5 as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- K.3 The Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record*) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and shall append a statement of its reasons (the Statement of Reasons*) for the decision, but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.
- K.4.1 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2 and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph K.4.2 or Paragraph K.4.3, whichever is applicable.

- K.4.2 If the Review Commission/Appeals Review Commission decides to retain the Minister's name on the Roll of Ministers, his/her status is unchanged.
- K.4.3 If the Review Commission decides to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers, no appeal having been lodged by or on behalf of the Minister within the period specified in the notification referred to in Paragraph K.8.1, deletion shall take effect on the date of expiry of such period.
- K.5 Every decision reached under the Procedure (whether or not on appeal) is made in the name of the General Assembly and is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- K.6 Within ten days of the date of the Review Commission's decision the Secretary shall send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative.
- K.7 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be retained on the Roll of Ministers, the Secretary shall at the same time send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.
- K.8 Where the decision is that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, then:
- K.8.1 The written notification shall draw the Minister's attention to his/her right of appeal and specify the precise date by which notice of appeal must be lodged by the Minister with the Secretary.
- K.8.2 The Secretary shall, at the same time as taking the action required under Paragraph K.6, send to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee a Notice to the effect that a decision has been made by the Review Commission that the Minister's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Such Notice shall not contain any further information other than that the decision is still subject to appeal and that a further Notice will be sent when it is known whether there is to be an appeal or not.
- K.8.3 If by the date specified in the written notification to the Minister under Paragraph K.6 as the final date for the lodging of an appeal no appeal has been lodged by the Minister, the Secretary of the Review Commission shall send copies of the Decision Record to the General Secretary, the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.
- K.8.4 If the Minister lodges a Notice of Appeal*, the procedure set out in Section L applies.

L. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- L.1.1 Should the Minister wish to appeal against the decision of the Review Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers, s/he or his/her representative must lodge written notice of such Appeal with the Secretary of the Review Commission within 21 days of receipt by the Minister of the written notification of the decision under Paragraph K.6 (which shall set out the grounds of the appeal either in detail or in summary form as the Minister chooses).
- L.1.2 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall forthwith notify the General Secretary that an Appeal has been lodged, at the same time passing on to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal together with the body of papers laid before the Review Commission in hearing the case and the Record of the Hearing as defined in Paragraph J.9. The General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial and administrative capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.
- L.1.3 At the same time the Secretary of the Review Commission shall also notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council (and the Deputy General Secretary if s/he issued the Commencement Notice in accordance with Paragraph B.3) that the Minister has lodged an Appeal against the decision of the Review Commission.
- L.1.4 A Notice of Appeal which is outside the time limit specified in Paragraph L.1.1 will not normally be accepted. The General Secretary may, however, at his/her discretion accept a Notice of Appeal out of time, but only if s/he is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which would justify the exercise of discretion by the General Secretary to allow the appeal out of time.

Appendix 1

- L.1.5 The Rules set out in this Part II as applicable to the Review Commission shall also apply to the Appeals Review Commission (with the necessary changes), except for those which by their context are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure.
- L.1.6 No-one apart from the Minister shall have a right of appeal against a decision of the Review Commission.
- L.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal lodged under Paragraph L.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal and send to the Minister a copy of the Record of the Hearing before the Review Commission (see Paragraph J.9).
- L.3.1 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph L.1.2 (or within such further time as they may reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Review Commission, which shall consist of three persons, in accordance with Paragraphs L.3.2 and L.3.3.
- L.3.2 The three persons to be so appointed shall be (i) a person with some legal, tribunal or other professional experience or other similar background (being a member of the United Reformed Church but not necessarily a member of General Assembly), who shall normally act as Convener of the Appeals Review Commission, (ii) a former Moderator of the General Assembly and (iii) either a person with general medical experience or one with professional expertise in the condition(s) giving rise to the subject matter of the case (such person not necessarily being a member of the Church).
- L.3.3 In the event that for any reason it is inappropriate for the person in the first category specified in Paragraph L.3.2 to be the Convener of the Appeals review Commission, the convenership shall be assumed by the person in the second category thereof.
- L.3.4 Persons appointed to an Appeals Review Commission are subject to Paragraph D.1.
- L.4.1 The General Secretary shall send or deliver to each of the proposed appointees a written invitation to serve on the Appeals Review Commission for the hearing of the Appeal, naming the Minister concerned but supplying no further information about the case.
- L.4.2 The invitation shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph D.1 and shall request confirmation that s/he is willing to accept appointment and that s/he is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.4.3 The Invitee shall within seven days of receipt of the invitation to serve notify the General Secretary in writing whether s/he is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so confirming compliance with Paragraph L.4.1.
- L.5.1 The General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative in writing of the names, addresses and credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraph D.1 and pointing out that any objection to any of the proposed appointees must be made to the General Secretary in writing within fourteen days, setting out the grounds of such objection.
- L.5.2 To ensure that the appeals process moves along in a timely manner, any such objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- L.5.3 The officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or reject it.
- L.5.4 If they reject the objection, the General Secretary shall notify the Minister or the Minister's representative.
- L.5.5 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall give written notification thereof to the Minister or the Minister's representative and to the person to whom the objection has been taken and the above procedure shall be repeated as often as is necessary to complete the appointment of the Appeals Review Commission.
- L.6.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Review Commission shall be unable to carry out his/her duties on that Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Review Commission, subject to there being a minimum of two members, in which event, but not otherwise, the Convener shall have a casting vote.
- L.6.2 In the event that, for the reasons stated in Paragraph L.6.1 the Appeals Review Commission shall consist of fewer than two members at any time after that Commission has taken any steps in connection with the

- Appeal, the Appeals Review Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Review Commission shall be appointed in accordance with the procedure laid down in this Section L to hear the Appeal.
- L.6.3 Once the Appeals Review Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section L, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Review Commission.
- L.7 Each member of the Appeals Review Commission when appointed shall receive from the General Secretary copies of the following:
- L.7.1 The Decision Record and
- L.7.2 The Statement of Reasons and
- L.7.3 The Notice of Appeal, setting out the grounds of the appeal and
- L.7.4 The body of papers considered by the Review Commission
- L.7.5 The Record of the Hearing
- L.8 The members of the Appeals Review Commission, when constituted, shall consult together as soon as possible to review the information laid before them and to agree upon the course which their conduct of the appeal shall take, following the procedures set out in Sections F, G and H (if they deem the latter appropriate). In addition, they may, if the circumstances so require, consider any of the following, particularly if any such issues are raised in the Notice of Appeal:
- L.8.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not have reasonably been available to the Review Commission before it made its decision under Section K.
- L.8.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Review Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.
- L.8.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding by the Review Commission of the information before it or of any aspect of the Procedure itself.
- L.9.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, there shall be a Hearing before the Appeals Review Commission which the Minister shall normally be expected to attend.
- L.9.2 The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Review Commission and, where possible, with the Minister or his/her representative as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall notify all concerned in writing of the arrangements for the Hearing.
- L.9.3 The General Secretary shall (unless excluded for the reasons specified in Paragraph D.1) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Appeals Review Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing. S/ he shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.
- L.9.4 If the General Secretary cannot for any reason be present at the Hearing, the Appeals Review Commission shall itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for him/her for that purpose, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph D.1. Such person will carry out the duties set out in Paragraph L.9.3 but shall not be present when the Appeals Review Commission deliberates and decides on the case.
- L.9.5 The General Secretary or his/her deputy appointed under Paragraph L.9.4 shall prepare a summary minute of the proceedings at the Hearing (the Secretary's minute). Where possible, a verbatim record of the proceedings shall also be made by electronic recording or by such other means as shall be directed by the Convener of the Appeals Review Commission. The Record of the Hearing shall consist of the Secretary's minute together with any such verbatim record.
- L.9.6 A representative of the Church's legal advisers may, at the invitation of the Appeals Review Commission, attend the Hearing in order to advise it on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation, but s/he shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Appeals Review Commission, nor shall s/he be present when it deliberates and decides upon the case.

- L.9.7 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Review Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Review Commission.
- L.9.8 At some point during the Hearing the Convener will invite the Minister or his/her representative to address the Appeals Review Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.
- L.10.1 The members of the Appeals Review Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing, all meeting and deliberating together but in the absence of the Minister and all other persons consider and arrive at their decision in accordance with Paragraph L.10.2. In so doing they are required to make a careful and detailed appraisal of all the factors set out at Paragraphs K.1.1 to K.1.6 and of all the information, reports, representations and other factors forming the subject matter of the appeal
- L.10.2 The purpose of their deliberation is to enable them to reach (either unanimously or by a majority vote) a decision in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I of the Procedure as to whether, having full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto, the name of the Minister in the particular case should remain upon, or be deleted from, the Roll of Ministers.
- L.10.3 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Review Commission which is final and binding on the Minister and on all the Councils of the Church.
- L.11.1 The Appeals Review Commission shall record its decision (the Decision Record) and, in doing so, shall state whether it was reached unanimously or by a majority and whether its decision upholds or reverses the decision of the Review Commission and shall append a statement of its reasons for the decision (the Statement of Reasons), but shall not be obliged, unless it wishes to do so, to comment in detail on any of the matters considered by it.
- L.11.2 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Appeals Review Commission in the Procedure except as to the discharge of its responsibilities under Paragraph N.2.
- L.11.3 If the decision is that the name of the Minister shall be deleted from the Roll of Ministers, such deletion takes effect with immediate effect.
- L.12 Within ten days of the date of the Appeals Review Commission's decision the General Secretary shall:
- L.12.1 Send or deliver written notification of the decision and copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Minister or his/her representative and
- L.12.2 Send or deliver copies of the Decision Record and the Statement of Reasons to the Moderator of the Synod, the Secretary of the District Council, the Deputy General Secretary (but only if s/he issued the Commencement Notice) and the Secretary of the Ministries Committee.
- M. FORMS, SENDING/DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS**
- M.1 Model forms have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Procedure. The forms may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and minor variations in the wording will not invalidate them, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.
- M.2 Any form, letter or other document required to be sent or delivered to a person under the Procedure shall be assumed to have been received by that person if sent or delivered in any of the following ways:
- M.2.1 By delivering the same personally to the person concerned or
- M.2.2 By delivering the same or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the person concerned in a sealed envelope addressed to that person or
- M.2.3 In such other manner as the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission (in the latter case if the sending or delivery relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.
- M.3 Any form, letter or document required to be sent or delivered to the Secretary of the Review Commission or on the General Secretary (in the case of an appeal) shall be delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Review Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the

current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT and marked "Ministerial Incapacity Process".

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| <p>M.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked "Private and Confidential".</p> <p>M.5 Where any form, letter or other document is sent by first class pre-paid post, it shall be assumed to have been received by the recipient on the third day after the posting of the same.</p> <p>M.6 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission, that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.</p> <p>M.7 Deletion as a result of the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.</p> <p>N. REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY, COSTS AND RETENTION OF RECORDS AND PAPERS</p> <p>N.1 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly all decisions reached by the Review Commission and the Appeals Review Commission in the following manner:</p> | <p>N.1.1 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers is subject to appeal, the Report shall simply state that a decision has been reached in a case which is subject to appeal and shall not name the Minister.</p> <p>N.1.2 If a decision of the Review Commission to delete is not subject to appeal, the Report shall so state.</p> <p>N.1.3 If a report has already been made to the General Assembly under Paragraph N.1.1 and the Appeals Review Commission reverses the decision of the Review Commission and allows the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll of Ministers, the General Secretary shall report the decision of the Appeals Review Commission to the next meeting of the General Assembly without naming the Minister.</p> <p>N.2 The cost of operating the Procedure and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending a Hearing and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Review Commission or the Appeals Review Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of the Procedure (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.</p> <p>N.3 The Secretary of the Review Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Review Commission and by the Appeals Review Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases, which shall be kept in a locked cabinet at Church House.</p> |
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Appendix 2

A Scheme for Ministerial Review

The History

1 In 1997 General Assembly approved a scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal which has since operated throughout the Church with varying degrees of success.

2 The original aims of the scheme were as follows:

- a) to affirm Ministers in their work and encourage them to follow God's calling with a renewed sense of vision.
- b) to aid the continuing personal and professional development of Ministers in ways which are of benefit to them and the Church they serve as they:
 - take stock of their ministry thus far and identify areas on which to build and areas of need which should be addressed
 - become realistic about strengths and weaknesses
 - set goals for work and personal development
 - identify training and personal development needs and ways of addressing them
 - become aware of sources of support.

3 These aims are still the necessary and relevant aims of any system of ministerial appraisal for both Ministers and Church Related Community Workers, whatever their particular role. For ease of reading, "Minister" will be used throughout this paper to refer to either a Minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker. "Pastorate" will be used to refer to their sphere of service, whilst recognising that for some Ministers that is a post without a congregation and therefore another group would take the role described here for the Elders.

Reactions to the existing Scheme

4 It is true to say that feedback from Ministers and Appraisal Partners has become increasingly positive over the life of the scheme to date, to the extent that it is widely seen as an excellent and valuable tool for helping both reflection and forward thinking on ministry.

5 On the other hand, some have regarded it as unhelpful or of little value, and others have criticised the style and length of the guidance booklet *Taking Stock*. Many believe that there is a lack of connection

to the actual ministerial tasks of a pastorate or post, and that the scheme lacks rigour because it is not obligatory and because the Minister is given the option of not involving the Elders and congregation(s) in the process.

Today's Context

6 Before making proposals for a new scheme, which aims to address both positive and negative reactions to the present version, it may be helpful to set down the context in which those proposals are made. It is worth noting those elements of change in relation to ministry, and the culture in which ministry is exercised, which have taken place since 1997.

7 First, there has been a change in the attitude of many Ministers to the concept of appraisal and review. In 1997 there were many who still believed that appraisal did not fit comfortably with the exercise of a vocation. An optional scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal was the only style that had any likelihood of being approved by Assembly. Since then, the proportion of our Ministers who have had positive experiences of appraisal in their working lives prior to entering the ministry has continued to grow.

8 There is increasing evidence of Ministers suffering long-term illness due to work-related stress. This stress has several causes but a mismatch of church and ministerial expectations of the Minister's task is often a key factor. There is also the debilitating effect of working in an atmosphere of decline against which an individual's best efforts seem to count for little. The 'wilderness years' are not comfortable. Now more than ever, support systems for Ministers are necessary. A scheme that requires clear, specific, and manageable objectives and responsibilities, within which ministerial service is exercised, coupled with a regular review and opportunity for development, can be one such system.

9 The *Catch the Vision* process envisages a Church that has purpose and commitment, with clear aims and objectives. This suggests an environment which should encourage Ministers to have a clear sense of purpose in their particular pastorate.

10 In addition, the proposed scheme is set against the background of the report *Equipping the Saints*. That report, accepted by Assembly, is based on the assumption that the Church's ministry is the

responsibility of the whole Church not just the task of a few hundred ordained people. The ministry and mission of each local church is a collaborative partnership with Minister, Elders and congregation all taking responsibility or having key objectives in relation to that ministry and mission. Furthermore, Ministers in the United Reformed Church have responsibilities beyond the local situation and any appraisal of their ministry needs to provide space for reflection upon the wider role and the nature of the calling itself. It was therefore proposed that a review of ministry must contain the elements of joint and self-appraisal as both Minister and pastorate reflect on the strengths and weaknesses, achievements and setbacks of the period under review.

11 In the United Reformed Church, those who are called by God to the ministries of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work have that sense of call tested and acknowledged by the Church. The Church also gives the authority for the exercise of that ministry. However the ministry can only be properly carried out when Ministers recognise their mutual accountability within the community of Christ. Ministry is a shared experience through which the Ministers serve others, and in which they build up others as they themselves are built up in the Body of Christ. There has been an increasing acceptance of collaborative ministry and the mutual accountability that accompanies such a work style, although it is by no means a new concept. The basic theological concept behind this scheme is that all in ministry are accountable to God for the discharge of that ministry. A framework in which Ministers regularly stand back and reflect can be seen as a recognition of that basic accountability.

12 There are other New Testament discipleship themes behind this scheme. These include the full use of gifts in God's service; the concept of stewardship; and the need for each Minister to play their proper part in the life of the Church, the body of Christ, so that it grows and develops.

13 Running parallel to the internal Church debates has been the consultation since 2002 that the United Reformed Church, along with other Churches, has had with the Department of Trade and Industry. In January 2005 the DTI produced a draft Statement of Good Practice in relation to the working conditions of both office-holders (such as Ministers) and employees. One area of this is the provision of a review and development policy. This makes our own review of the ministerial accompanied self-appraisal scheme all the more apposite.

The Proposed Scheme

14 With the above context and assessment of the present scheme in mind, the following draft scheme for ministerial review and development is proposed.

15 The scheme would become an obligatory part of ministerial service and would supersede the present scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal.

16 It would continue to be known as *Taking Stock* since this title aptly sums up the review exercise.

17 It would provide the opportunity for each local church to identify key objectives for ministry and mission and conduct a regular review of those objectives.

18 It would require each Minister to have a role description setting out their key responsibilities and objectives as well as Terms of Settlement for their pastorate. This role description is to be worked out within the context of the mission and key objectives of the pastorate and the responsibilities and objectives of colleagues. The term "job description" is deliberately avoided here as a Minister's role is more than a list of tasks and needs to include being as well as doing.

19 The scheme would provide an opportunity for confidential, accompanied self-appraisal for each Minister to:

- i) review their role description, key responsibilities and objectives within the context of the particular pastorate;
- ii) reflect on the ways in which the work is an expression of their ministerial calling and the ways in which the different parts of the work complement or conflict with one another;
- iii) reflect on his/her personal life and integration of work with the rest of life, thereby affirming a holistic view of ministerial vocation.

20 It would include, as part of the process, conversations between Ministers, Elders and other key colleagues in order to:

- i) assess the objectives and key responsibilities of all concerned, the minister's role description and Terms of Settlement;
- ii) identify future objectives and key responsibilities for the pastorate and the Minister;
- iii) amend the Minister's role description if necessary;
- iv) make any necessary changes to the Terms of Settlement.

21 *Taking Stock* would lead to conversations with the Synod Training Officer about continuing ministerial education and development and any development needs identified within the pastorate.

22 It would operate within specified guidelines on confidentiality.

Role description, key responsibilities and objectives

23 A scheme that is designed to allow Ministers to review their objectives can only work if those objectives are clearly set out. Therefore all Ministers, in consultation with the pastorates, should draw up a list of key responsibilities and objectives. Where a pastorate is made up of more than one church or combined with another role, it would be for each pastorate/post to decide whether to draw up an overarching set of objectives or separate objectives for each component.

24 The pattern of ordained and commissioned ministries within the United Reformed Church has changed radically in recent years. No longer is the one-Minister-one-congregation a norm. A Minister may be the only ordained or commissioned Minister in a group or one of several, whether that Minister is serving in a stipendiary or non-stipendiary capacity. A Special Category post may be part scoped and linked with a part time pastorate – which may be a single congregation or a group. A part-time post may be supplemented with a secular job. It is intended that the ministerial review should be a support for all the patterns of ministry that exist. It is important that the review takes into account the entirety of the ministerial task and its several parts.

25 Following from the objectives of the pastorate will be a written role description incorporating key responsibilities and objectives for the Minister. Regardless of the number of constituent parts in any one appointment, each Minister will have only one role description which integrates all aspects of their specific ministry. The role description should:

- a) relate to the descriptions of the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work in the Basis of Union (paragraphs 21 and 22) as well as being post specific;
- b) recognise that the ministry and mission of a pastorate is collaborative and therefore it should contain a description of the individual responsibilities of the Minister as but a part of the responsibilities of the whole church.

26 For those moving into a new pastorate, these lists could be agreed prior to the Induction in the same manner and at the same time as Terms of Settlement.

27 Ministers in posts not involving pastoral responsibility for a church and congregation should use or agree a job description drawn up with the body which appointed them.

28 The lists of key responsibilities and objectives for the Minister and the pastorate would then become the basis on which to build the exercise of review.

The procedure for *Taking Stock*

29 The scheme would operate biennially as does the present scheme. The Synod would appoint an Appraisal Partner to work with the Minister and a Pastorate (or Post) Partner to work with representatives of the pastorate (or post).

30 Each review would begin with a consideration of the agreed key responsibilities and objectives and the extent to which, through the collaborative efforts of Minister and pastorate, they have been accomplished. This exercise would centre on conversations with Elders and others with key responsibilities within the pastorate, such as the Local Management Committee in the case of a CRCW. It might involve various informal consultations but thoughts would need to be gathered together at a meeting. This meeting should include the Minister, the Appraisal Partner and the Pastorate Partner, who would normally chair the discussion.

31 Following that meeting, the Minister would carry out a process of accompanied self-appraisal with the Appraisal Partner, using an amended version of the *Taking Stock* booklet. The Minister would prepare a confidential personal reflection on the key responsibilities and objectives for the Appraisal Partner to see in advance of their discussion.

32 The pastorate meanwhile would have a further meeting, without the Minister but with the Pastorate Partner, to reflect on the issues raised in the first meeting. The Pastorate Partner would normally chair this meeting.

33 The review would end with a final meeting between Minister and Elders and any other relevant colleagues to (a) set the key objectives and responsibilities for the pastorate for the next two years; (b) agree any changes to the Minister's key objectives and responsibilities; and (c) agree any proposed changes to the Terms of Settlement to recommend to the District Council. The Pastorate Partner would normally chair this meeting. The intention would be to find agreed outcomes through prayerful working together and with no suggestion that the Elders have become the "line managers" of their Minister. The Minister would be free to invite his or her Appraisal Partner to attend if the Minister wished to do so, although the Appraisal Partner would need to be conscious of the confidential nature of the self-appraisal with the Minister.

34 After completion of the review, the Minister would contact the Synod Training Officer to talk about perceived training needs in the following two years. The Elders may also wish to contact the Training Officer about the training needs identified for others in the pastorate.

35 Where a pastorate involves more than one local church, the scheme will have to be adapted in ways appropriate to the relationship between the churches. In some pastorates the churches operate as

a group with a clear group decision-making structure and with a recognised body capable of acting for the whole pastorate in a review.

36 In pastorates with several congregations that remain very independent, reviews in each place would need to be carried out within a time scale which allows for a coherent list of key objectives and responsibilities to be agreed by the Minister. Ideally the same person would act as Pastorate Partner in each church and would need to ensure that the aggregate of the expectations of the several congregations was reasonable.

37 In the intervening year between biennial reviews, the Minister and Elders should devote a meeting to an interim consideration of the key objectives and responsibilities.

Administration of the scheme

38 Although the scheme would become an obligatory part of ministerial service, there would still be a need for administration by the Synod. Appraisal Partners and Pastorate Partners would be nominated by the Synod and chosen with care: they would need to have shown an aptitude for careful listening and thoughtful interpretation of what they hear. Care would also have to be taken over the quality of the training and support they receive.

39 Ministers and pastorates would, as now, be offered the list of Partners and given a choice as to whom accompanies the review process.

40 Each Synod would appoint an Administrator for the scheme who would:

- keep lists of Appraisal Partners and Pastorate Partners;
- ensure that training and support for these Partners is in place;
- keep a note of the dates of the reviews;
- contact the participants in order to activate the *Taking Stock* exercise;
- keep the Synod Training Officer informed of the timing of the reviews;
- be responsible to the appropriate Synod Committee.

Introducing the Scheme

41 There are several reasons for introducing the scheme over a period rather than for every Minister at the same time. Synods have operated the existing Accompanied Self-Appraisal scheme in different ways and some could transition to the new scheme more easily than others. All Synods will need time to build up a team of high quality, trained Partners. And amongst our Ministers, some would welcome the opportunity to participate in a more comprehensive scheme as quickly as possible while others may not be so immediately confident of its value.

42 As a minimum it is suggested that, from a date set by the Church, the new scheme should become a standard part of the Terms of Settlement for every new pastorate or post. Therefore from that date newly ordained Ministers would all have reviews as a normal part of their service and existing ministers would join the scheme at their next move. Where Synods have the capacity, they might offer participation in the scheme on a voluntary basis to other Ministers prior to a move.

43 Well before the launch date, the Ministries Committee would make available a revised version of the guidance booklet *Taking Stock*. The Committee would also consider what help could be provided from the central offices to shape the training of Appraisal Partners and Pastorate Partners and in the drawing up of role descriptions, key responsibilities and objectives.

44 A decision to make review an obligatory part of ministerial service raises the question of what sanctions would apply if a Minister refused to participate. Clearly the hope would be that Ministers would see the advantages of the scheme and share the view of many lay people in the Church that a well-conducted review can be very beneficial to fulfilling a vocation as well as affirming personally. As review would become the major route by which training needs are identified, Ministers who had not participated might well find Synods reluctant to fund EM3 courses for them. In the last resort, however, the Church would be entitled to regard refusal to participate as a disciplinary offence.

A Final Word on Flexibility

45 The United Reformed Church is expressed in many different ways in different local settings. A scheme such as described here cannot fit every situation perfectly and would need intelligent adaptation so that the principles were honoured in ways that made sense locally.

46 In particular, there are local URC congregations, Local Ecumenical Partnerships and posts that are already working with objectives and used reviewing them regularly. There are also some Ministers of Word and Sacraments, and especially our Church Related Community Workers, already committed to regular review. Their pastorates and posts might migrate easily to the new *Taking Stock* scheme, but Synods would want to ensure that *Taking Stock* is dovetailed in with any other continuing systems of review and adapted accordingly. A clear objective should be that the same person should not be subject to a multiplicity of overlapping reviews from different directions.

47 The pattern of District visitations to congregations also varies from one part of the Church to another. The same principle of avoiding duplication should apply. Where those matters that visitations cover could be incorporated efficiently in a biennial review under this scheme, and without losing the focus of the review, there is little value in mounting a separate exercise.

Appendix 3

Charity Trusts

General Assembly notes the clarification of and alterations to the advice concerning Charity Trusts given to the General Assembly in 2001 and 2004 and asks synods, synod trust companies, district councils/area meetings and local churches to ensure that all are aware of their responsibilities.

1 Most United Reformed Church property (churches, halls and manses) is held under the statutory trusts in the United Reformed Church Acts (and printed in Section D of The Manual). There has been much discussion about who are the “charity trustees” of these properties.

2 At the heart of the discussion have been the differing perceptions of “charity trusteeship”, not just by the Charity Commission in 2001 and 2004, but by the synods and their trust companies. Although the synods have over the years evolved different policies, they all have the same basic understanding of the underlying duties and responsibilities falling upon the councils of the Church and the “trustees”.

3 The primary concern of those who formulated the statutory trusts was that those trusts should accurately reflect the conciliar nature of the United Reformed Church, in which authority is based on the complementary roles of its councils. Consequently, it is not possible to single out any one body as clearly having “charity trusteeship” in the sense in which it is understood by the Charity Commission, i.e. as the body responsible under the charity’s governing document for the general control and management of the charity. It is important that all the relevant bodies are fully aware of their responsibilities.

4 The table below shows for each paragraph of the statutory trusts where the responsibility lies for the required action. It will be seen that the local church (through both its elders’ and church meetings), the district council/area meeting and the synod all have their part to play in respect of statutory trust properties, as do the trustees (the company or individuals having legal title) of those properties. No one body has sole responsibility, and the carrying out of the purposes of these trusts is a collaborative exercise in which each has its part to play. As a general guide, when any of the tasks is contemplated,

the elders’ meeting	recommends,
the church meeting	resolves,
the synod	approves,
the trustees	implement

– and in that order. If in doubt, churches should ask the secretary to their “trustees” (usually but not invariably the synod trust company) for advice.

5 As stated in Reports to Assembly in connection with resolution 8 in 2001 and resolution 39 in 2004, the members of the elders’ meeting collectively are the charity trustees for the working funds of the local churches and for any properties or investments to which the statutory trusts do not apply. The day to day oversight, management, safety and insurance of all property and financial resources lies with the local church, principally with the elders’ meeting, which refers to the church meeting as appropriate.

6 Although this statement has been prepared with particular reference to England and Wales arising from dealings with the Charity Commission, the principles and processes within the URC are the same for churches in Scotland. Churches in Scotland now come under the jurisdiction of the new Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH PROPERTY TRUSTS

(URC Act 1972 Schedule 2, URC Act 1981 Schedule 2, URC Act 2000 Schedule 1 as applicable to churches becoming part of the United Reformed Church at different dates but with equivalent provisions)

The table below summarises the responsibilities of the different councils of the United Reformed Church, and of the “trustees”, in relation to the statutory trust property. The “trustees” are those individuals or bodies specifically appointed for this purpose who have legal title to the property, normally but not invariably the synod trust company.

Para	Task	Recommendation	Resolution	Approval	Implementation
1	use of the premises on a day-to-day basis for direct and ancillary church purposes or, where applicable, as a residence for ministers or other church workers	Elders' meeting	Church meeting		Church meeting *
2	alteration, enlargement, mortgage, re-development, sale or lease etc. of the premises and, where appropriate, the application of sale or leasing proceeds	Elders' meeting	Church meeting	Synod (except for work not substantially affecting character appearance or value)	the trustees, using their discretion, on instructions from church meeting (land and buildings) or, when applicable, as directed by synod (unexpended proceeds)
3	hiring (as distinct from the leasing or letting) of part of the premises	Elders' meeting	Church meeting		Church meeting *
4	repairing and maintaining the premises				Not the financial responsibility of the trustees **
5	sale or lease of premises considered by synod to be no longer useful and, where appropriate, the application of the proceeds	District council/ area meeting, having consulted local church	Synod		The trustees on instructions from synod, but the trustees have no discretion

** Church meeting is used in preference to Elders' meeting as the latter has only an advisory role in the statutory trusts. However, it is acknowledged that, in practice, the task will often be delegated to the elders' meeting by the church meeting. It is the responsibility of the trustees to authorise or permit implementation by the church meeting.*

*** The statutory trusts do not refer explicitly to the day-to-day management and upkeep of the premises. It is implicit in the functions of the elders' meeting and church meeting as declared in the structure of the United Reformed Church (see Manual, Section B) that these are matters for the local church and do not involve the trustees. (It is a function of the elders' meeting to recommend to the church meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings, and of the church meeting to make or provide for the making of such arrangements).*

Appendix 4

Students sent by Synods

(Information as of February 2006)

Northern

Stipendiary

Liz Jewitt (NEOC)

Non-Stipendiary

Stan May (NEOC)

Helen Weatherley (NEOC)

CRCW-in-Training

Ann Honey (Northern)

North Western

Stipendiary

Philip Brooks (Northern)

Alan Crump (Northern)

Gillian Heald (Northern)

Richard Howard (Mansfield)

Michele Jarman (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Michael Aspinall (Northern)

Sheila Coop (Northern)

Lindsey Cottam (Northern)

Doreen Goodship (Northern)

Mersey

Stipendiary

Caroline Andrews (Northern)

Hilary Bell (Northern)

Stuart Radcliffe (Northern)

Carolyn White (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Anne Bedford (Northern)

Yorkshire

Stipendiary

Philip Baiden (Northern)

Ashley Evans (Northern)

Murray George (Northern)

Annette Haigh (Northern)

Rosalind Selby (Northern)

East Midlands

Stipendiary

Debbie Brown (Northern)

Marcus Hargis (Northern)

Janet Hopewell (Westminster)

Suzanne McDonald (SC&UR C)

Jenny Mills (Mansfield)

Lesley Moseley (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Victor Webb (Northern)

West Midlands

Stipendiary

Timothy Mullings (Northern)

John Potter (Queens)

Ann Sheldon (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Robert Maloney (Northern)

CRCW-in-Training

Rosemary Buxton (Northern)

Eastern

Stipendiary

Claire Gouldthorp (Queens)

Kate Hackett (Westminster)

Andrew Mann (Queens)

Samantha White (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Don Nichols (ERMC)

Mary Playford (Westminster)

Andrew Royal (ERMC)

CRCW-in-Training

Liz Kam (Northern)

Mark Tubby (Northern)

South Western

Stipendiary

Paul Ellis (SWMTC)

Viv Henderson (SWMTC)

Timothy Searle (Mansfield)

Wessex

Stipendiary

Bridget Banks (STETS)

Helen Higgin-Botham (Westminster)

Hilary Nabarro (Westminster)

Jon Sermon (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Mark Meatcher (STETS)

Wendy White (STETS)

CRCW-in-Training

Patricia Oliver (Northern)

Thames North

Stipendiary

Andrew Birch (Queens)

Anne Dove (Westminster)

Dominic Grant (Westminster)

Shirley Knibbs (Westminster)

Peter Little (Westminster)

Pauline Main (Westminster)

Iain McLaren (Mansfield)

Graham Tarn (Westminster)

CRCW-in-Training

Karen Campbell (Northern)

Southern

Stipendiary

William Bowman (Westminster)

Suk In Lee (Queens)

Romilly Micklem (Westminster)

Martyn Needs (Queens)

Caroline Vodden (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Ed Collins (SEITE)

Ian Gow (SEITE)

Diane Farquhar (STETS)

Darryl Sinclair (STETS)

Jenny Snashall (STETS)

Wendy Swan (SEITE)

Malcolm Wright (800 Hour Placement)

Scotland

Stipendiary

Craig Jesson (SC & UR C)

Helen Mee (SC & UR C)

Zam Walker (SC & UR C)



Appendix 5

Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2003	Feb 2004	Feb 2005	Feb 2006	2006	2007	2008	2009
STIPENDIARY								
Full Time Courses								
Mansfield College	6	8	6	6	1	2	2	1
Northern College	24	22	16	17	7	5	5	2
Queen's College	4	4	6	6	4		1	1
SC & URC	3	2	4	4	2	1		
Westminster College	23	20	18	14	4	5	5	1
Part time Courses								
EMMTC		2						
NEOC	1	1	1	1			1	
STETS	1	1	1	1	1			
SC & URC	1	1						
SWMTC	1	2	2	2	1		1	
Synod	2							
Subtotal	66	63	54	51	20	13	15	5
CRCW								
Northern	6	5	5	6	3	1	2	2
NON-STIPENDIARY								
Part Time Courses								
ERMC	1	2	2	2		1		1
EMMTC	2	1	1					
Northern College	7	8	5	7	3	2		2
NEOC	2	2	1	2	1			1
SEITE	3	2	3	3	1	1	2	
STETS	7	8	6	5	1	1	1	2
SWOC	1	1						
SWMTC	3	1	1					
Synod	2	3		1				
Westminster College				1				1
WMMTC	1	1						
Full Time Courses								
Mansfield College								
Queen's College								
SC & URC								
Westminster College	3	2						
Subtotal	32	31	19	21	6	5	3	7
GRAND TOTAL	104	99	78	78	29	19	20	14

ERMC	Eastern Region Ministry Course
EMMTC	East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC	North East Ordination Course
SC & URC	Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College
SEITE	South East Institute for Theological Education
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
SWMTC	South West Ministry Training Course
SWOC	South Wales Ordination Course
WMMTC	West Midlands Ministry Training Course

Appendix 6

Reports from Colleges

Mansfield College Oxford Ministerial Training Course

1 The past year has been one of great anxiety, but also of much creative thinking, for Mansfield's Ministerial Training Course, as we have sought to respond in a positive way to the plans being developed by the Training Committee for the future of training in the United Reformed Church.

2 But before I comment on that, let me say something about the life and work of the course during the past year. Student numbers stand at six, the same as last year. David Morgan completed his course and in September was ordained and inducted as minister of Trinity URC, Bromley, half-time, with a half-time chaplaincy to Bromley town centre. At the same time we welcomed Iain McLaren from Thames North Synod to begin his course. In addition to our six United Reformed Church students we have once again had an Erasmus student from Bern, Michael Stähli, as part of the ordinand group, and we expect to have another next year. However, because Richard Howard and Caroline Vodden have been on internship, Iain has his own house, and Jenny Mills joins us part-time on Tuesdays, there have only been three members of the group living regularly in Wessex House, 30 Aston Street, Lesley Moseley, Tim Searle, and Michael Stähli, and only Michael at weekends, which means that much of the community spirit has been lost. Nevertheless, I want to affirm that, small as it is, this is a group full of spirit, imagination, good sense, and warm good will, whom it has been a delight and a privilege to lead as Director and to teach as a tutor. They have worked at a very high level of competence both on the academic side and on placement, and I expect every one of them to serve the Church with distinction in the years ahead.

3 There have been no changes in teaching staff either at Mansfield or at Regent's Park College, with whom we work closely in the delivery of the course, since last year. At Mansfield, Julian Templeton continues to devote half (at least!) of his working time to Mansfield as Assistant Director alongside his ministry at Highgate, dealing especially with placements and training in worship and preaching; and John Muddiman and Peggy Morgan give generously of their time in their respective fields of New Testament and World Religions and in the day-to-day supervision of the course. I myself continue to introduce ordinands (and many others) to the study of the Old Testament.

On the governance side, we are grateful to the Principal of Mansfield College, Dr Diana Walford, for the interest she has taken in the course, and to John Proctor for his conscientious and indefatigable work as Chair of the Ministerial Education and Training Committee (METC).

4 Alongside the course for initial ministerial training we continue to admit students working full-time and part-time for the Oxford M.Th in Applied Theology, which is suitable as an in-service course for ministers and CRCWs at EM3 level. Martin Camroux wrote a distinguished dissertation on church decline in the United Reformed Church and was awarded the degree with flying colours last year. This left us with only one United Reformed Church minister (Gerald Moule) on the course during the past year, out of five on the course in total. However, Oxford also admits research students in theology for the D.Phil on a part-time basis, and it is possible that one or more United Reformed Church ministers may join us in that capacity next year, as well as on the M.Th course.

5 During the year our friends at Regent's Park and other colleges in the Oxford Partnership in Theological Education and Training have been working to develop a new degree, a Bachelor of Ministry, which will be a purely part-time degree which will be suitable both for ministerial education and for theological education for the people of God in general. There may be a Master of Ministry associated with this, which will be able to draw from a wider catchment than the M.Th. Once the degrees are up and running, it will be possible for students to study for them at Mansfield.

6 Staff of the course, like those at other colleges, are always ready to lead courses and address conferences, summer schools, etc. in their own specialities, and in this way serve the wider church—and their more purely academic research and writing also serves the church in its own way. I myself have led two Synod courses in biblical study for ministers in the past two years, and would welcome further invitations.

7 The future of the course at Mansfield now lies in the hands of Assembly, assuming that the proposals presented to them by the Training Committee, which as I write have not yet been formally revealed, are as outlined to us during the year. We recognise that if numbers of candidates continue at their present level, the United Reformed Church will need to concentrate them more. But there will always be some people

who because of geographical constraints would not be able to receive the benefit of a full-time course at either Cambridge or Manchester. We believe we are well-placed to continue to offer such candidates, even in small numbers, high-quality initial education for the ministry, and my experience in this post has persuaded me that we can do this for people from a wider variety of educational backgrounds than is sometimes assumed in our church.

8 However, it will be clear, I hope, from what I have already said, that Mansfield is already offering much more to the United Reformed Church than just a small initial ministerial education course. Even if Assembly does decide to withdraw IME, Mansfield College will not disappear, because it is a College of Oxford University with a wide educational remit; and many of us at the College would wish to enable it to continue to be a valuable, and valued, resource

for the United Reformed Church. For this reason, the METC has been working hard for the past 18 months, even going outside its strict brief, to develop viable proposals for a fresh and distinctive piece of work to be done for the Church by my successor as Chaplain to the College, after I retire in a year's time. As it would need some initial funding from the United Reformed Church Training Committee, and I am writing in March, it is not possible for me to say more about this at this point, but I hope that it will be possible to talk about it at the Assembly itself.

9 At this difficult time for Mansfield, I would value your prayers for us all: our ordinands, our staff, our METC; and not only those involved in ministerial education, but for the whole College, its Principal, Fellows, other staff and students. Please join me in commending them all to the love and care of God in Christ, and to the Spirit who leads us into new ventures for the Kingdom.

NORTHERN COLLEGE

1 ENRICHING OUR ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

1.1 For a number of years Northern College has been a committed member of the Partnership for Theological Education, based at Luther King House in Manchester. We work as an integrated staff team with three other denominational colleges offering United Reformed Church students, alongside Methodists, Baptists, Moravians, Congregationalists and Unitarians, shared teaching programmes that lead to University of Manchester BA and MA degrees in Contextual Theology. The full-time BA course is taught intensively over three days each week for two 10-week semesters to allow participants simultaneous involvement in substantial church and community placements all through the four years of their preparation for ministry. At the moment we have students living and working all across the North West of England, Yorkshire and the East and West Midlands who come into Manchester for their teaching days. The part-time course (requiring attendance at six teaching weekends a year) currently serves ministry students from a similar area, with our furthest student travelling in from Rugby. However, the format of the part-time course would clearly allow attendance by people living in many other parts of the country, as it has previously. The full-time community work strand (requiring six visits a year to Manchester, each for five tightly-packed days of teaching, which are then supported by extensive community work placements close to the student's home) serves those who are preparing for a Church-Related Community Work ministry. At the moment we have community work students who live and work in the Norwich, London, Oxford, Salisbury and Newcastle areas, as well as Manchester.

1.2 Up until now the Church of England's Northern Ordination Course has shared our building but taught its own separate course. However, the Anglican 'Hind' process has recently led to rapid negotiations between the Dioceses of Liverpool, Manchester and Chester and the free churches represented in the Partnership for Theological Education. At the moment we are seeking to develop the 'Southern North-West Training Partnership' with equal numbers of Anglican and free church foundation directors. This emerging Training Partnership is hoping to develop a new 'Foundation Degree' in contextual theology (validated in parallel by the Universities of Chester and Manchester and Liverpool Hope University) that would be offered from September 2007. This would be available to Anglican students from the three dioceses and free church students from a much broader catchment area. It would be taught in various centres and various modes (including weeknight, weekend, distance learning and various full-time formats) and increase the variety of what we could offer to all our students, including United Reformed Church students at Northern College. It would also extend and enrich our ecumenical context with its careful balance between three Anglican dioceses and three main free church partner groupings.

2 EXTENDING OUR UNITED REFORMED CHURCH INVOLVEMENT

2.1 Northern College is an independent theological college with Congregational roots and an honourable history of service to the United Reformed Church. Currently, its four full-time teaching staff are all ministers of the United Reformed Church. Whilst working in a richly ecumenical context of shared teaching in a single shared building, we are always seeking to improve our links to and service with the wider United Reformed Church. This last year our

staff have shared in ministers' summer schools in the National Synod of Wales and the North West Synod in England and a variety of one-day learning events and residential conferences for ministers, lay preachers, local leaders, elders and others in North West, Northern, West Midlands, South West, Eastern and Mersey Synods and have accepted invitations to share in other events in East Midlands and Yorkshire Synods before Assembly meets. We have also furthered our ongoing conversations about co-operation with the Windermere Centre, Westminster College and the Scottish College, finding a real desire for creative co-operation in each case.

2.2 At the same time we have been seeking to improve the quality of support we give to United Reformed Church ministers and churches who take our students for in-depth student placements. These placements are a key component of the study experience at Northern at every stage of our programme of education for the ministry of Word and Sacraments and Community Work ministry. We remain very grateful to all those who have supported our work in this way and have adjusted our support systems to try to improve the links between college and placement supervisors. We have also sought to improve the briefings and handbooks we offer those who do this crucial work on our behalf.

2.3 We greatly value our involvement in preparing students for the Church Related Community Work Ministry of the United Reformed Church alongside our students preparing for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. This year we have recruited more qualified CRCWs to teach some of our community work modules and also begun a programme where we invite a practicing CRCW into the class in each of our community work modules so that something of the actuality of their experience is offered at every stage of our educational programme.

The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education

1 The Queen's Foundation, comprising the Queen's College, The West Midlands Ministerial Training Course and the Research Centre, has enjoyed a buoyant, expansive year. The overall number of those engaging in theological education has increased by around 40%, in part as a result of new partnerships with local churches to share the provision of adult theological education. As a Foundation we are dedicated to excellence in theological education and formation for ministry in partnership with our sponsoring churches – the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Our ecumenical and theological diversity, together with our setting within the multi-ethnic and multi-faith city of Birmingham,

3 ENJOYING WORLD CHURCH LINKS

3.1 We are very grateful to both the Council for World Mission and the *Belonging to the World Church* programme of the United Reformed Church for their continued support of our policy to maintain good contact with sister denominations in other parts of the world. During this last year four of our students have been able to visit with churches in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Madagascar and India. One of our tutors, the Revd Dr John Parry, also led a party of members of the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan to India to explore the nature of church life as a minority community with members of the Church of North India. We have also received students from American Samoa, Madagascar and Taiwan on our MA programme. We have also been visited by students on placement in Wythenshawe from Tainan Theological College and Seminary where one of our recent PhD students, the Revd Dr Li Hau-Tiong now teaches. Visitors to the College have included the Revd Cindy Strickler, the chaplain of *Dunamis* in the USA. Opportunities for visits to places of worship of other faiths continue to be taken, providing time for dialogue and increasing mutual understanding.

4 GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS

4.1 This year Liz Shaw left us in July 2005 for ordination into the United Reformed Church pastorate of Eastcote and Northwood Hills, at the same time Gillian Heald left us for a further year of postgraduate Biblical Studies at the University of Sheffield prior to seeking a pastorate and in January 2006 Alison Dalton left us to be commissioned as a Church Related Community Worker called to serve with an ecumenical project in Poole, Dorset. We wish them all well in these new enterprises.

and our relationship with the University of Birmingham, provides a rich and challenging resource for students to explore the distinctiveness of their own tradition and identity, as well as fostering lively dialogue and deep respect for the traditions of others.

2 The Foundation is an active partner in the emerging West Midlands Regional Training Partnership. This partnership is being given expression through a formal Covenant and practitioners are beginning the task of designing new pathways and curricula for a range of educational, ministerial and training needs. The experience of Queen's in offering flexible pathways in various modes – full and part-time, residential and non-residential, helps us all in the region to be creative and innovative in our thinking and planning.

3 The Selly Oak Centre for Mission Studies, the successor body to the United College of the Ascension, will be inaugurated in September this year as an integral part of the Foundation. Four new members of staff, including one from India and one from Southern Africa, will lead the work of the Centre, and provide mission education and training for mission partners and students sent by world church partners. Many will do a new MA in Mission and Leadership, and we look forward to a vibrant, international, multi-cultural student and staff body which will greatly enhance and enrich every aspect of ministerial education and formation at Queen's. The Centre is sponsored by the Methodist Church and USPG, but we hope that this resource will be used by other partners as well, including the United Reformed Church. The Foundation is already enriched by a range of student exchanges with the wider world church, including exchanges with the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, with churches in Port Elizabeth in South Africa, and with the theological faculty at Leipzig. The presence of the Centre for Mission Studies will enhance and increase the opportunity for encounter and exchange with the world church for all students and candidates.

4 The Research Centre flourishes with over 60 students registered with the University of Birmingham in association with the Foundation, studying for a range of postgraduate degrees from MA to PhD. Staff research and publications continue in the course of the busy life of the Foundation. Mukti Barton has published *Rejection, Resistance and Racism: speaking out on racism in the Church*; Paula Gooder's study on *The Pentateuch* has been reissued; John Hull has published an important response to and critique of *Mission Shaped Church*; Stephen Burns has published an SCM Study guide on *Liturgy*, and a Canterbury Study Guide on *Living the Thanksgiving: exploring the Eucharist*; Anthony Reddie has published *Acting in Solidarity: Reflections in Critical Christianity*.

5 Visiting presidents and preachers at Foundation services lead our worship, enhance our spirituality and deepen and challenge our faith. Worship lies at the heart of our life, whether that is in the daily prayer that gathers those on the campus, or the patterns of worship that sustains the community of those who learn and train through occasional residence. In an ecumenical context we welcome the opportunity and challenge of drawing deeply on the traditions and best practices of each participating Church, attending to places of convergence and difference which are often not located on denominational lines, and working hard to explore new patterns of worship that serve churches committed to working and worshipping ecumenically.

6 We are very conscious that all the churches which sponsor the Foundation are engaged in searching reviews of their training needs and their relationship to training institutions. We realise that the United Reformed Church has hard decisions to make and that withdrawing full-time ordination training from Queen's is possible. We would deeply regret such a decision as it would do fundamental damage to the ecumenical nature of the Foundation, and would diminish the richness of ecumenical encounter and reflection, not only for United Reformed Church candidates, but also for Anglicans and Methodists as well. Although the cohort of United Reformed Church candidates is small we do not believe that this is detrimental to their formation or that it prevents their being grounded in their denomination. On the contrary, our experience is that denominational identity is realised and deepened in and through the encounter with others, and we regret the pressures that are moving our churches to concentrate denominational resources and groups as a means of securing and preserving denominational identity. Queen's wishes to continue to serve the United Reformed Church by training its ordinands; we do not need or want large cohorts to do this well and we hope that Assembly will have a bolder vision than one of withdrawal.

SCOTTISH UNITED REFORMED & CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE

1 INTEGRATED LEARNING FOR THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

1.1 We believe that our college has been in the vanguard of developing integrated learning for a wider learning group which has ordinands at the core of that learning community but draws in others to share in and contribute to that learning. Of course, the creation of such wider educational cohorts responds positively to the issue of small ordinand numbers but it would be utterly wrong to base the commitment to integrated learning in an exercise to bolster falling ministerial candidate numbers. The development is rooted in a much deeper conviction and commitment

– our belief that a learning church is best created when people learning for different forms of service learn together. This conviction shapes how we bring people together, how we design the curriculum, how we foster learning. It encourages us to take a less traditional view of theological education, its content, approaches and methods.

1.2 General Assembly adopted a policy commitment to the better integration of education for ministry across stages 1, 2 and 3. One aspect of this is improved coherence of the curriculum from initial to continuing education and we are organisationally set up to comply with this, having responsibility for the synod of Scotland for all the stages of ministerial formation.

1.3 We take this a stage further however. It is about encouraging and facilitating the learning together of ordinands and ministers (and indeed also with 'non-ministerial' learners). The more 'typical' college course is becoming one where ordinands, ministers in EM2 or EM3, lay students and adult education learners learn together, nor separately and therefore learn from one another.

1.4 We believe that there is no contradiction in suggesting that ordinands are both at the heart of this community and yet other learners are not 'fill-in' students to make up the numbers, for there is an organic dynamic in which each constituency makes its own vital contribution.

1.5 For those who are interested in numbers: we may only have four ordinands, but around 500-600 people will have attended at least one college course or event this academic year.

2 CURRICULUM

2.1 Ordinand students continue to pursue the relevant academic curriculum in the university at which they are co-matriculated. Two are currently taking the taught MTh in Ministry at Edinburgh, one an MA in Religious Studies and a further a PhD at St Andrews.

2.2. The college's own programme has focused on ministering with people at different stages of life and faith (integrated with a continuing education component for ministers and others on ministering with older people). We have worked together on issues of life and death, not only in their pastoral and theological context, but through a series of movies. We have explored key periods of church history and also the history of ideas, as well as being stimulated by some literary anniversaries (from Kierkegaard to Mrs Tiggywinkle and a theatre outing to *Jane Eyre*). There have been an open monthly programme on the Seven Deadly Sins and workshops on IT. The third term will be on community work and on the distinctive history of Scottish Congregationalism.

2.3 This year's college retreat was on the theme of *Looking into the Distance* and brought together the wider college community. Students are encouraged also to attend the silence and retreats programme that the college runs in association with the synod which this year has included a St Cecilia's Day retreat, a programme on Tallis and Tippett, a retreat on pictorial representations of Jesus and studies in the Book of Ruth. We ended last session some 300 miles from Glasgow on Orkney, where we were valedicting one of our students (the journey embraces not just the physical distance but another cultural shift into a Scots/Norse cultural heritage!).

2.4 This year, we continue in this vaguely Nordic direction with a study tour to Denmark where our focus will be on such issues as the life of smaller nations, multiculturalism post-'the cartoons', drugs and social exclusion, learning about Lutheranism, alternative forms of church (including the night church at Copenhagen cathedral) and developing learning for the whole person and whole community.

3 PARTNERSHIP

3.1 In this past year, a key conversation has been with the Northern College in Manchester. In the coming academic year, we anticipate making significant appropriate use of one another's learning resources, both of staff and in other ways. We look forward to learning from one another's experience and supporting one another in developments. Each institution has its own particular strengths, expertise and emphasis to be pooled better. We are collaborating on thinking how the church might more give expression to its identity as a church in three nations through education for ministry which extends across the nations.

4 ECUMENICAL ENGAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND

4.1 We listen with interest to the discussions in England that are leading towards the establishment of regional training partnerships in that country and wish well those who share in the demanding task of establishing, making work and delivering programmes through these partnerships.

4.2 Scotland of course sits outside those conversations, for it has its own separate ecumenical scene, rooted in its own history and culture, with a significantly different set of partners from south of the border and responding to the distinctive needs of Scottish church life and society.

4.3 The College is actively engaged in the ecumenical work that is being done here in the fields of initial ministerial formation, continuing education and lay adult education. We believe that we bring to those conversations and collaborative opportunities an understanding of and sensitivity towards the particular dynamics of the Scottish ecumenical scene that comes from the local knowledge of a Scottish institution and have credibility for our knowledge of the Scottish context, our close connection to the Scottish churches and for our particular expertise as educationalists.

4.4 In the past year, there have been significant positive developments in the Scottish ecumenical educational scene. Following the SCIFU talks amongst the major denominations, the United Reformed Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Methodist Church in Scotland have continued into

new conversations. We are glad these discussions have already identified education and training as one of the key areas for work on extending ecumenical collaboration and we look forward to being able to contribute to and support these developments, including in the key area of initial training.

4.5 The Church of Scotland has recently undertaken a major restructuring of its organisation. We have already had conversations with its senior staff and welcome their commitment to a renewed engagement of the Kirk in ecumenical educational collaboration. In significant respects, we use similar models of initial ministerial education with the Scottish universities as partners. The older universities here, though not standing still, have retained a stronger 'divinity' emphasis than perhaps is true in other parts of the United Kingdom.

4.6 We have had for some time a shared library with the Scottish Episcopal Church. For practical reasons, but also in order to create a more cost-effective provision and to introduce a more modern and professional library service, the College and the Episcopal Church's Theological Institute have combined our resources with those of the existing library of the International Christian College in Glasgow. We believe this to be a positive move in educational support terms, but also as basis for further ecumenical collaboration in both ministerial and lay education. In the ecumenical lay learning group, the partners are active to develop improved collaboration in the identification and utilisation of the expertise and experience within the member churches and to make greater use of one another's educational programmes.

4.7 We welcome the fresh commitment of staff within the university schools of divinity to work more collaboratively with the theological colleges and this year brings the first fruits of co-sponsored events.

5 RELATING WIDER

5.1 The 2000 unification process, which brought the 'new' United Reformed Church into being, affirmed as a core principle the denomination being a "church in three nations". This was not merely a statement of fact, but a strong declaration of intention – to respect the cultural distinctiveness of the two smaller nations and to commission them to act for the whole church in their own place. It was an affirmation of our multiculturalism, not only in relation to ethnic minorities in the UK but in our regard for the minority nations.

5.2 This model of unity with diversity will always be anxious, we are sure, to celebrate the distinctive lives of Scotland and Wales alongside that of their bigger neighbour and to foster their preservation and nurturing.

5.3 The principle is also however a giving of responsibility to the institutions in the 'Celtic' nations. The creation of the Scottish Parliament has been in parallel with and has fostered a renaissance across a whole range of aspects of Scottish life. We are glad for example that the Scottish Storytelling Centre, of which we are members, has entered a new and more extended phase of its work. We seek to play our part in this flourishing on behalf not only of the synod of Scotland but also of the whole United Reformed Church. We believe that it is vital that education within the United Reformed Church, including its formation of ordinands, takes nourishment from this culture and responds to the challenges of this context.

5.4 We welcome those who have come into the synod of Scotland from elsewhere with all the gifts and insights they bring and play our part in their induction to Scottish life. We believe also that it is important that there are those who are raised up and formed within our own national context. This we affirm, even if some of them will go on to minister outwith Scotland, taking our distinctive gifts to the wider church.

6 Being Scottish and serving Scotland and the church in Scotland is at the heart of our life. In being true to that, we serve the whole church. But we want to say that we are more than that too. A college is a college... is just not true!

6.1 We also have particular areas of expertise and interest:

- the development of adult learning as an area of professional expertise
- ministry with older people – their spirituality, their participation, their pastoral needs
- the use of storytelling and narrative approaches – in worship and learning, in pastoral care and organisational life
- the nurturing of human resources and organisational development

and we hope that in the new partnership processes for the new learning church, we might be able more fully to offer what we have to give.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

1 The Cambridge Theological Federation

1.1 Westminster College is not a stand-alone institution but a part of a significant ecumenical enterprise. For every minister in our own Church who is grateful for the teaching they received at Westminster College there are now two or three people ministering in other denominations who have an affectionate regard for our staff and whose memories of Cambridge are located in our classrooms and our library. Westminster College is not only the United Reformed Church's gateway into a rich ecumenical resource; it is a place where our contribution counts and is valued. What is true in Cambridge is true elsewhere. Theological education has become a significant expression of ecumenism in many parts of the country. It is not possible for any one denomination to take strategic decisions about theological education without the impact being felt by others. Those of us who serve the various institutions in Cambridge share a feeling of being at the mercy of denominational forces beyond our control. We also share a conviction that the grace of God will enable us to overcome our ecclesial and doctrinal differences.

1.2 The planned changes in our academic programmes, which we outlined last year, are now being put into effect. Some of this has involved a systematic and occasionally tedious process which enables us to meet the requirements of academic bureaucrats. What has lightened this process is the conviction that we will be offering courses fit for the purpose of preparing people for ministry and mission in tomorrow's Church. We have managed to do this without reducing the programme to a "one size fits all" approach. Within the Federation we now offer a range of academic courses. There are varieties of learning style and assessment. We can offer a course for those who come into residence in Cambridge, those who come on a part-time basis and those who live at a distance. We have programmes for graduates and for those who come having just secured the basic academic qualifications. Most of our Federation students have experience of another career; a large number are married, with children; by contrast with even ten years ago there are roughly equal numbers of men and women.

1.3 Westminster College is one of the entry points for United Reformed Church students to all this richness. Those who wish to follow our new BA in Christian Theology at Anglia Ruskin University, at graduate or diploma level, may enrol through Westminster or the Eastern Region Ministerial Course, who work closely together in the Federation. The MA in Pastoral Theology is similarly available. Those who wish to follow the Cambridge University course leading to a degree of Bachelor of Theology in Ministry need to live

in Cambridge and be linked to the university through Westminster. The new arrangements will make it possible, we believe, for all ministerial candidates to graduate in relevant disciplines. We believe that the Church is right to demand academic qualifications for the ministry of Word and Sacrament; we also believe that gifts and graces which are not subject to academic assessment are essential.

2 The wider United Reformed Church

2.1 The whole college community has been exercised by the uncertainties created by the review of training. Whatever assurances are given, all those who are employed in church institutions, whether they be colleges, synods or the staff of General Assembly, are unsettled by major reviews. Nor is it the United Reformed Church General Assembly alone, which commissions radical reviews of its procedures and institutions only to reject the conclusions of those who have conscientiously devoted their time and imagination to coherent proposals. This happens in all denominations and public bodies. Westminster College finds itself in double jeopardy. Not only is its future as a training institution dependent on review and decision by General Assembly but when Assembly, quite properly, puts a moratorium on General Assembly staff appointments until a review is complete, this makes for further complications.

2.2 It is with these kinds of considerations in mind that the Governors and the principal officers of General Assembly have been reviewing how we manage Westminster College as a charitable body. This is part of a general review of how charitable matters will need to be handled in the future given the changing guidance of the Charity Commission. At present we are considering how to build upon the changes in college management that were made by General Assembly in 1995. Westminster College is a registered charity with an object, modified by the United Reformed Church Act of 1972, to provide ministerial education for the United Reformed Church. Its trustees, the Board of Governors, are appointed by the United Reformed Church. However, the use which the Church makes of this valuable asset is restricted by the objects of the charity. Put bluntly, the assets of the college are for ministerial training and cannot be realised in order to meet shortfalls elsewhere in the Church. We are therefore exploring the possibility of following the logic of the 1995 resolutions and making the Governors solely responsible for running the college, in a way which is analogous to the other colleges recognised by the Church. This would not only bring certain operational gains but give the Governors the responsibility and freedom to consider how best to develop the use of the college and to make alliances with other bodies.

2.3 In spite of these legal considerations we do believe that the Training Committee plans to extend the role of the college are eminently achievable, not least because the Church is the most significant contributor to the current revenue of the college. Westminster continues to be substantially committed to work with lay preachers, TLS, continuing ministerial education, refresher courses, sabbaticals and the DMin programme we are running in collaboration with Princeton Theological Seminary. The popularity of our annual course for lay preachers has led us to plan two for the coming year. Some of the TLS courses to which we contribute take place at the college and we are glad to see some regular visitors who regard us as friends. Our staff and students take parts in the wider life of the Church, serving in a variety of voluntary tasks locally and nationally. Unfortunately, the fall in student numbers and the changing patterns of study make it impossible to provide leadership in worship for all the local churches which make requests to us.

3 The world Church

3.1 Our students continue to participate in programmes which take them beyond the United Kingdom. At the beginning of this academic year one of our students visited India and another Canada on church-related programmes. Staff have been to various parts of Europe and the United States. The Federation resumed our study programme in Israel and hope to go again this summer if the political situation permits. We have received visitors from the United States, New Zealand and Europe. Two of the staff of the Princeton Theological Seminary spent time with us and also met with DMin students in Cambridge. In the summer of 2006 our ministers on this course will again be travelling to New Jersey. The Federation opens up other parts of the world to us as visitors come to our partners in Cambridge. The college has a policy of expecting students to travel to at least one overseas placement during their course, not only to enjoy Christian hospitality but to see how the mission of the Church is practised in other cultures. We regard visits and visitors as an important part of Christian formation for our own ministry.

4 The buildings

4.1 This year saw the completion of a new en-suite facility which will meet disability requirements. We have also upgraded the disabled lavatory provision. The Dining Hall is now equipped with chairs rather than benches. Although sentiment argued for keeping the benches, the needs of our current students and visitors argued for seating which was more flexible in use and accessible. Compliance with the legislation on asbestos in buildings required certain minor works. We have commissioned and completed a major structural survey of the college. This not only assures us there are no major structural problems to address but provides an agenda for planned and

costed maintenance over the next few years. We are fortunate in our Management Committee, both in terms of the expertise and imagination which is at the service of the college. We have retained the services of a specialist contractor to oversee and co-ordinate work on the building in order to ensure that it is properly specified and carried through efficiently. With the benefit of this preparatory work we are resuming our plans for further improvements in the facilities offered at the college.

5 The Library

5.1 We reported last year that cataloguing of the United Reformed Church History Society collection has passed the half-way point. It is now nearing completion and we have also commissioned cataloguing of the rare books in the Carrie Room, which have not been included in the on-line catalogue up to this point. Those who are interested in browsing the catalogue on the web can do so through the University of Cambridge Library catalogue, via the section called "Affiliated Institutions". Generous gifts from friends enabled us to purchase the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, a small balance of the cost being met by the college and the United Reformed Church History Society. Oxford University Press have announced a major new publication of the papers of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, to which we will be contributing the text of the Westminster Confession of Faith and other documents. This will add to the requests by scholars to visit our collections. We also anticipate new publications on Agnes Lewis and Margaret Gibson, our benefactors, and a re-issue of the college history. The college library remains one of the major resources of the whole Federation and is in much demand on a daily basis. Alongside this we provide a service for local churches researching their own history and for individuals. We make a modest charge to those seeking help with family history, to cover our costs. We are grateful for the continued work of Richard and Jean Potts in sorting and classifying archives of the Presbyterian Church of England. One of our building projects is to secure better storage space for this large collection. We have also received a donation of the papers of Jack Newport from his family.

6 Staffing

6.1 We welcomed Revd Neil Thorogood, as Director of Pastoral Studies this year. He is now living in the Thornton Close house and fully immersed in college and Federation life. Our colleague Revd Dr Peter McEnhill has announced his intention to leave us at the end of the academic year after serving for ten years as Doctrine teacher. Peter has also been our Librarian, Director of the Institute of Reformed Studies and taken responsibility for our computer network. This has been a rich ministry with us and we wish Peter well in the next sphere of service to which he is called.

7 Celebration

7.1 At our Commemoration of Benefactors in 2005 our preacher was Revd Dr Walter Houston of Mansfield College, Oxford, a former member of the Westminster staff, and the lecture was given by Professor John Hull of Birmingham, a former student of Cheshunt College. At a service in Emmanuel Church in November we remembered with thanksgiving the life of Arthur Disney, who was employed by Cheshunt College in the 1950s and who regularly attended Commemoration at Cheshunt and then Westminster throughout his life, taking a great interest in the college and its prosperity.

7.2 We also give thanks for the gifts of our leavers, who were: Richard Bradley, (Hope, Denton and Trinity, Audenshaw), Lucy Brierley, (Woking), Kay Cattell, (Marpool and Selston), John Cook, (Bexley, Bexleyheath and Welling), Tim Richards, (Mid-Somerset Group), and Alison Termie, (SPACE Norristhorpe and Gomersall). Colin Harley who left in 2004, was ordained and inducted to street chaplaincy in Poole.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Information



General Assembly 2006
Exeter University

July 7th-10th

United Reformed Church History Society

1 The Society held a very successful Study Weekend, 17-19 September 2005, based at Hinsley Hall in Leeds. Dr Simon Green, Fellow of All Souls, Oxford gave the Annual Lecture, posing the question, 'Was there an English religious revival in the 1950s?' He was much encouraged by the contributions of those who had memories of the decade and indicated that some would be incorporated in the final version. Members gave presentations of work in progress, one particular anniversary being brought to mind in an account of Sheerness Congregational Chapel at the time of Trafalgar. The expedition included a tour of the former Yorkshire Independent College and a visit to Saltaire. This provided an organ recital at Saltaire United Reformed Church (a Grade I listed building) as part of the annual festival programme, and an opportunity to hear and see something of Sir Titus Salt's vision for his model village.

2 Business matters of some significance were also transacted. During the year the Charity Commissioners had approved the scheme for a merger of the Churches of Christ Historical Society and the United Reformed Church History Society. Members of each body, having accepted a revised Constitution, met separately within Hinsley Hall and voted in favour of the union. The registered charity number for the Churches of Christ Historical Society becomes the number for the new Society and will allow gift aid to be claimed on future subscriptions (279213). The new Society will retain the name 'The United Reformed Church History Society'.

3 There has been renewed scholarly interest in Edward Irving, and the Taiwan mission field holdings. Thanks are due as usual to Mr and Mrs Richard Potts for their continued commitment to the sorting and listing of archival material. At the request of the General Secretary the Administrator has also undertaken a survey of committee records maintained since 1972 and mostly retained in the basement at 86 Tavistock Place, with a view to their deposit and conservation elsewhere.

4 The cataloguing of the library has continued under the meticulous attention of Dr Marian Foster. The unique nature of the collection is underlined when cross catalogue checks reveal that seventeenth century works in our library may be examined by the reader rather than consulted via a micro-film screen, as happens in the University Library.

5 The Administrator received a steady stream of enquiries, gave advice to churches on record preservation and acted on behalf of the Hewley Trust in distributing a history written to mark the bi-centenary of Dame Sarah's legacy. In addition material for a commemorative account of the more recent past, the 2007 jubilee of the Pulpit and Table Fellowship with the Pfalz church has been collected.

6 The *Journal*, edited by Professor Clyde Binfield, covered a variety of topics, ranging from the English Civil War to the Japanese Christian scholar, Tadeo Yanaihara, via Nonconformist education and spirituality, and the Welsh Revival. An article by Stephen Orchard on the picture owned by the Society (and reproduced on the cover of *Under God's Good Hand*) was a useful reminder that things are not always what they seem.

7 At the General Assembly meeting held in Warwick Clyde Binfield introduced the volume he and John Taylor are editing, *Who they Were...* a collection of concise biographies of those active in reformed church circles in the twentieth century, to be published soon.

8 Membership of the Society costs £15 a year, with a reduction for students. Full details may be obtained from Mrs M Thompson, Westminster College, Cambridge CB3 0AA
(tel: 01332 741300 / email: mt212@cam.ac.uk)

United Reformed Church Musicians' Guild

1 Another opportunity to promote the Musicians' Guild has soon come round. We still meet people at events and in churches who have never heard about the organisation devoted to music-making in worship in the United Reformed Church. This is such a pity because the Guild has much to offer to musicians of all ages and abilities – and indeed also to those with no special skills but who feel uplifted by music in church!

2 However, like most organisations, the Musicians' Guild has enjoyed another year a bit like the fabled curate's egg – good in parts! Whilst wonderful musical events and experiences have been arranged by some of our branches across the country, other branches have struggled to keep going. Again, such a pity, when there must be church members everywhere for whom music is an essential part of their spiritual life.

3 Our most important event is Celebration Day, always held in October. In 2005, members gathered at the beautiful modern ecumenical Church of Christ the Cornerstone in the centre of Milton Keynes. Our day of music was led by Adrian Boynton, Director of Music and included choral workshops with many of the pieces being sung as part of worship at the end of the day. Members were put through their vocal paces before and after lunch. Singing is a fantastic aerobic activity and all those who enjoy it will tell you that, at the end of a workshop, choir practice or concert, a singer is on a 'high' and usually ravenously hungry and thirsty! Music-making in church also comes with the special joy of knowing that everyone taking part is making music for the glory of God in His place.

4 During 2005, and indeed for several years before that, a very important task was being undertaken by many specialist volunteers across the country. In many of our churches, the pipe organ is still the instrument that accompanies worship and, in recent times, the Guild has become very concerned about the number of instruments of merit that become redundant, are taken apart during building refurbishment (or closure) and disposed of often without any advice being taken regarding possible alternative action. Although hymn singing in United Reformed Churches has not always been accompanied by pipe organs, many instruments are now a vital part of our musical heritage.

5 Early in 2006, the Guild published a survey of organs containing the results of a questionnaire sent to all United Reformed Churches in the UK. There was a 64% response rate from churches and nearly 600 pipe organs have been assessed by a team of advisers across the country – a huge undertaking. One of the major objectives of the survey is to establish a list of those organs considered to be worthy of Grade I, II* and II status and to ensure that each Synod office of the United Reformed Church is informed of the churches in their area of special importance.

6 The Musicians' Guild is indebted to John Harding, the Co-ordinator of its Organ Advisory Service, for undertaking this important work.

7 For further information about the Guild, please visit our website at www.urcmusic.org.uk or contact our Secretary, Mrs Chris James, 56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts SG7 5PE. (tel: 01462 742684)

Schools Related to the United Reformed Church

1 Representatives of the Schools related to the United Reformed Church met in London, for their annual meeting on Monday 13 June 2005.

2 The Schools continue to be grateful for bursaries provided from time to time by the Milton Mount Foundation and the Leverhulm Trade Charities Trust.

3 Matters of common interest included the continued development of overseas links, which can provide opportunities for Gap-Year experience, and the future development of the "Building Bridges" initiative, which is to include a visit to Taizé.

4 Caterham School

4.1 Caterham has had another successful year with exciting developments in independent learning, encouraging greater breadth, scholarship and self-development. Examination results continue to improve, with the best ever results at A level and a position in the league table of the top 100 schools in the country. At present, twenty pupils have offers of places at Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial.

4.2 Boarding numbers continue to develop with 140 pupils representing thirty different countries.

4.3 The Duke of Edinburgh's Award continues to thrive with thirty new pupils involved and takers at all three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold. Expeditions continue, with a proposed thirty-strong sixth-form group going to Iceland.

4.4 In sport the Boys' Hockey XI are now one of the top teams in the South of England having lost only one match by two goals. Currently the Captain has been selected for England and the goalkeeper for Scotland.

4.5 Music goes from strength to strength with an excellent recent production of *Les Misérables* and a concert to celebrate Mozart's life.

4.6 Following the success of the trip to Italy and a second "Building Bridges" conference in Northern Ireland at the Corrymeela Reconciliation Centre in County Antrim, a third trip is planned for Taizé in France.

4.7 The new Master Plan for the school is underway and a new Science Block and Refectory will be ready before Christmas.

5 Eltham College

5.1 For many at Eltham College, the highlight of this year came in November when the Duchess of Kent officially opened the Music School which had been created from the old Boarding House. The new facility provides practice and teaching rooms for individual and ensemble music groups, percussion and harp rooms, an instrument locker room for two hundred instruments, two offices, and library space for music and archives. The Duchess enjoyed her tour round the new facilities talking easily with enthusiastic young musicians; she is herself a music graduate, a member of the Bach Choir, and has recently launched a charity, "Future Talent", to provide musical opportunities for children in deprived areas. The event reached a fitting climax with a concert by the Orchestra of St John's Smith Square, the College Choir, and string players featuring a choral and orchestral work specially commissioned for the evening, "Sing we merrily unto God" by Karl Jenkins.

5.2 Music has taken significant steps forward in the last year: events like the Choral Concert (Handel's *Messiah*, with James Bowman as one of the soloists); the Eltham College Community Orchestra "Pops" concert in the summer, as well as the Jazz evenings, have become increasingly popular, and the range of music on offer has increased significantly: there are now over twenty-five ensembles in which pupils perform, and that does not include their own rock bands. The choir, as well as singing four carol services in the winter, spent a week in the summer holidays performing services and concerts at Bristol Cathedral.

5.3 This year's Speech Day will be remembered for our Guest of Honour, Mo Mowlam. This was one of her last public appearances: she arrived in a wheelchair, and proceeded to dominate the event through her force of personality. Although she struggled to read her speech on the state of Europe, she really came alive when she handled a question and answer session in our marquee full of parents and pupils. She then stayed afterwards for a reception and was reluctant to leave as she enjoyed the political banter and discussion.

5.4 Eltham College has always encouraged its pupils to look out on the world and to travel, a legacy surely of its foundation by the Missionary Societies. This year members of staff organised trips to the First World War Battlefield sites (History), Venice (Art), Berlin, Cuba (Spanish), Iona (RS), California (Rugby), and the Indian Himalayas, as well as language

exchanges to France, Germany, and Spain. A visit that aroused much interest was the Six Schools journey of discovery to Corrymeela, organised by Rob Davey, Headmaster of Caterham School; whose father was the founder of this cross-denominational community. Such was the success of this event that another is planned for the future.

5.5 In December we organised a reunion for former pupils who had been part of the school at the end of the Second World War. Before lunch and an afternoon rugby match between younger and more athletic OEs, a chapel service included the reminiscences of a pupil who as a Boarder had been evacuated to Taunton, a pupil who had been interned in a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp with his missionary family in China, and a pupil who had remained at Eltham and remembered hiding in make-shift air raid shelters when the German bombers flew over. It was a very moving reunion and those who attended enjoyed coming together to thank God for this sixtieth anniversary of the cessation of that war in Europe. Their experiences gave many of the present pupils much to think about as we enjoy the comparative peace of our current times.

6 Silcoates School

6.1 The three schools of the Foundation continue to flourish. From another characteristically busy year, here are a number of items which may be of broader interest.

6.2 Some news of the Board of Governors. We were greatly saddened by the death of the Revd Graham Adams, of the Congregational Federation, a member of the Board for six years. During that time this genial man of many talents was a very interested supporter of the School. His contributions to topics of discussion were always to the point and led to happy, constructive conclusions. We said farewell to the Revd Arnold Harrison, Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod, after eight years. Church commitments limited his attendance at Board meetings, which we regretted because he too had a keen interest in the fortunes of Silcoates and he was a kind and thoughtful member of the Board. Mr David Figures, who retired from the Board after six years, was latterly Vice-Chairman – as was his father, a former Lancashire Moderator, before him. As a schools inspector he brought to his Governorship a special expertise which added a great deal to the deliberations not only of the Board but also of the Governors' Junior School Committee, where he was able to provide a penetrating analysis of our assessment procedures.

6.3 The Revd Tony Burnham, erstwhile Head Boy and Governor, spoke movingly and affectionately at the Thanksgiving Service for the life and work of Jack (1914-2004) and Joyce (1919-2004) Whitwam, two great servants of Silcoates who devoted most of their working lives to the School, Jack finishing his career as Second Master.

If you get the chance to see a performance of *The Visit* by Duerrenmatt, do so. An unusual play, it is by turns bizarre, hilarious, touching and disturbing. It was performed by senior pupils at the school this year and some people said it was the best play they had seen at Silcoates.

6.4 During the 1930s the School won many prizes, usually Sèvres vases, offered by the President of France for success in the examinations of the Société Nationale des Professeurs de Français en Angleterre. In 1940 the team of Silcoates linguists again won "the prize which before the fall of the Third Republic had brought with it the Sèvres vase presented by the President". Needless to say, France was at the time beset by concerns more pressing than a reward for Silcoates young prizewinners. Nevertheless, "General de Gaulle stepped into the breach and offered a silver cup" – which lay for many years unremembered in the corner of a cabinet. Quite a trophy, though, for the School to possess, given by the man voted earlier in the year by his compatriots as the greatest Frenchman. New elegantly restored, the de Gaulle cup is presented to the winner of the French Prize.

6.5 The first rule of headmastering is "Never allow your school to be featured in a television programme". So the headmaster did. Ian Clayton's *My Yorkshire* was an ITV series celebrating aspects of life in the county and Silcoates occupied half of one of the six thirty-minute programmes. The short documentary followed two girls as they went about their school day. We were delighted with the portrayal of the School and one Governor kindly said that the Headmaster's brief interview made him seem almost human.

7 Taunton School

7.1 Julian Whitely left to John Newton, his successor as Headmaster, a school in good heart with many achievements to its name and an exciting future ahead.

7.2 The academic year ended with fine academic results: 96% of sixth formers went on to Higher Education. Over one hundred pupils have gained places at Oxford or Cambridge during the past fourteen years, including six last year, and we were pleased that our A level results were the best we have ever had: 99.6% pass; 70% Grades A and B.

7.3 It was truly pleasing to learn from the latest government league tables that we had come sixteenth in the country for our value-added factor from Key Stage 2 (exams taken by pupils of eleven years of age) to GCSE. It shows how much we enhance the academic performance of pupils through the end of the Prep School and into the junior part of the Senior School.

7.4 Both the Prep School and the Senior School underwent inspections in 2005. No major recommendation was made about the Prep School

and the Senior School reduced its recommendations from five in the last report to one in this report: that we had to improve our management and delivery of ICT services. On the positive front, there were compliments about the quality of teaching, standards of attainment, and pastoral care; about relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff; about the personal development programme; and about the quality of governance and management.

7.5 Away from the classroom, Senior School life has been refreshed by a number of cultural events, building on the excellent work done by colleagues in the Prep School. Notable among these is the enthusiasm for individual music lessons – still at a much increased rate under the present Director of Music. Annual events include the Popular Music Concert, the Chamber Music and Singing Concert, the Fireworks Concert in the summer. The Dance Band has a strong regional profile and our music department is attracting greater numbers of applicants for music scholarships as a result. On stage we have enjoyed many fine shows including a number directed and written by our own pupils. Curriculum drama has become a strength of the school.

7.6 In sport, boys' first teams lost only two matches – one rugby and the other hockey – in the year 2004-2005. Girls' netball and hockey can boast several close calls in regional tournaments. Were the school not in the same county as Millfield, we would find ourselves in more regional and national finals than we presently do. Strength in depth comes from a whole host of male and female county representatives, and in hockey we are proud to boast two boys in the national England U18 squad and one boy who is a trialist for the Wales U18 squad.

7.7 The Christian heart of the school beats strong. The pupils live in a culture where initiative is celebrated and charity events are encouraged. Thus the vision to instil a sense of service in our pupils as well as fine intellectual, cultural and sporting attitudes means that the school's ethos remains faithful to its founding objectives.

8 Walthamstow Hall

8.1 2004-2005 was a more than usually eventful year at Walthamstow Hall.

8.2 The newly refurbished Science Block at the Senior School was officially opened by Professor Roger Williams on 29 September 2004, since when girls and staff have been appreciating the attractive new laboratories and darkroom. On 29 September 2005, Professor Sam Berry (ex Walthamstow Hall parent and Governor) opened an equivalent new laboratory at the Junior School site, completing the project.

8.3 At the Senior School Prize-Giving, 2 July 2005, we welcomed an Old Girl, Janine Gibson, as Guest of Honour. Her spirited address, recounting experiences in the world of the media, was very well received by the school, who were inspired by her exhortation to believe that a Walthamstow Hall education prepares one to feel confident in any company.

8.4 At the same Prize-Giving, Mr Ian Philip, the Chairman of the Governing Body (and also an ex-parent) announced that our programme of improving facilities would continue over the next five years through the Mulberry Development. This will upgrade our sports facilities and repair and refurbish the main Assembly Hall and Teaching Block.

8.5 In August, the examination results were splendid. 77% of A2 candidates passed with A and B grades, and at GCSE 74% of girls passed with grades A and A*. There was 100% pass rate in both. These results put us in top position in Kent for Independent Girls' Schools, for the second year running. However, league tables and examination results are a very small part of the education girls receive here, and I am proud that so many pupils continue to be involved in sport, music, drama, and wider activities beyond the classroom. Their generosity with their time and money is impressive, and they regularly give through House and Form charity events. These have included raising money for the Tsunami disaster, the earthquake victims in Pakistan, and more local good causes like the Peckham Settlement. Sixth-form girls continue to run a thriving Christian Union which meets weekly with regular input from local youth workers from St Nicholas's Church, Sevenoaks.

8.6 The inter-house music and drama competitions continue to be hugely popular and last spring's challenge was for each House to present thirty minutes of musical theatre in *The Ship*. The talent that was evident inspired the Music and Drama Departments to collaborate to produce a magnificent version of *South Pacific* this Autumn. This was a joint production with Skinners' School in Tunbridge Wells.

8.7 *The Ship* was full to brimming on all three nights and we felt how fortunate we are to have this superb facility. Girls continue to reap the benefits of our predecessors' vision.

8.8 We look forward to an exciting new stage in the school's history and development.

9 Wentworth College

9.1 Value added (measure of progress for each pupil's career in the school) continues to be a main strength and feature of our examination results. We were delighted that we gained the highest Value Added score from all of the schools in Bournemouth and were

in the top 5% of all schools in England and Wales. There were some excellent individual results: thus three girls achieved 10 grade A* or A. One of our girls was awarded the highest mark for Food Technology and was honoured to meet the Princess Royal. Education is not all about academic achievements: our girls have also been successful with sports, drama, art, and music.

9.2 This year we had ten of our Year Twelve girls participating in the Young Enterprise scheme and comprise four separate companies. The products range from curtain ties, under 18's nights, bracelets, ipod covers, and speed dating events. All of the girls involved are finding this to be a rewarding and insightful experience and their companies have a number of awards at regional level.

9.3 Our musicians have played on numerous occasions, both in and out of school – our choir were runners up in the Bournemouth "Choir Idol" competition. The annual "Songs from the Shows" dinner was particularly well received, as were our senior drama productions of "A Bad Dream", "Marvin's Room" and a modern version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and the junior drama production of "Oklahoma".

9.4 Our girls have taken part in various visits, including the BAE Systems Roadshow, Imperial War and Black Country museums; the ballet, theatre trips, a ski course to Italy, and rock climbing in the Purbecks.

9.5 In the past year we have supported the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, Barnardo's and the BBC Children in Need Appeal. The two last were the charities chosen by the sixth form for their charity week. This fun-filled week of fundraising activities saw the staff and girls sponged, playing netball, pitting their wits against each other in a general knowledge quiz and being "made-over". The girls also had their own X-Factor show. This term we also entered a team – Wentworth Wave – into the Poole Lions' Swimathon. Our six swimmers managed thirty-five lengths in fifty-five minutes, a commendable achievement. The total raised for all charitable events so far is over £1400.

Silence and Retreats Network

Core Group

Convener: *The Revd Sue Henderson*

Treasurer: *The Revd G Jackson*

The Revds Ruth Crofton, Franziska Herring, Jane Weedon, Mr Mark Argent

1 In this report last year we noted that we suspected that a time of change might be upon Silence and Retreats Network. This has proved to be the case. Linking into what we believe are signs that spirituality, however defined and understood, is rising up the church's agenda, and responding to the expressed needs of many of those involved, we have met with others to try to mark out possible ways of responding to the challenge.

2 During the Windermere retreat in 2005 we were prepared for change by first becoming more aware of the great affirming gifts which silence and reflection bring to ourselves and to all who make the inner journey. At the same time we were challenged to wait; to resist forcing a way down a path which we never the less believed was opening up to us. And the time for action has happened and we have decided to become actively involved in the next exploratory stage of a process, which we hope will lead towards the formation of some kind of committed Prayer Fellowship, which will be supportive of the individuals who decide to join it. The Fellowship will be an integral part of the Silence and Retreats Network and with the Core Group and Synod Links, will explore how we can enable a deepening of the prayer life of the church. A conference over the first weekend in Advent is being planned to facilitate this move, a move which will impel further change to the Network.

3 In response to this initiative, the Windermere retreat this year has seen the formation of a new mission statement (see below) which reflects a broader self understanding as a group of people engaged in the promotion of spirituality in all its

aspects and forms. Silent prayer and retreating remain important and the network will continue to promote them; but they are simply two elements within a huge richness of devotional practices which the Reformed tradition can call upon to develop its life in God, who is himself the central purpose of our being Christians in the first place.

4 An almost completely new Core Group has been chosen, largely from the Synod Link people, along with a new convener and 'Windows' editor, to guide this process. Being formed from Synod Links, the core group will be more in touch with what is happening at the 'coal face' in the Synods and so can reflect concerns in both directions – between the synods and those involved in the development of the prayer fellowship.

5 It seems that there exciting times ahead, then, so keep watching this space and keep a look out for the advertising material for the November Conference which should be appearing at this year's Assembly.

Silence and Retreats Network Mission Statement:

The Silence and Retreats Network exists to resource people in the United Reformed Church who seek to deepen and broaden prayer life, including stillness and reflection. Synod Links work to extend this vision as widely as possible.

Women's World Day of Prayer

1 The annual Day of Prayer on Friday, 3rd March began as dawn broke over the islands of Tonga in the Pacific, and continued across each continent like a great Mexican wave until the last service of this special day on the Pacific islands of Samoa. Over 3 million people worldwide were involved, and in the United Kingdom over 5000 services were held.

2 The theme of the service was '*Signs of the Times*', and had been prepared by the Christian women of South Africa, a country known as the 'Rainbow Nation' because its people are from very diverse backgrounds, cultures and traditions. Within this diversity South Africans may be described as sharing warm hospitality, a deep sense of spirituality, music, a love of sport, the outdoors and '*ubuntu*', a particularly African concept focusing on a respect for human dignity.



3 The accompanying graphic, designed by a South African, was inspired by Luke 21 and Revelation 22 to portray the hope that we have in God, and the signs of the times from an African perspective. The border includes three-legged pots, symbols of fellowship in South African communities. The image of the leaves is the central focus: they are our hope for the healing of the nations and a reflection of the Trinity. The small icons symbolise: the features of the end times; the ribbons of solidarity with all who suffer as a result of HIV/AIDS; and the small leaves, the children of God, challenged to reflect the signs of hope and peace in this broken world.

4 In a life that symbolises the triumph of the human spirit over man's inhumanity to man Nelson Mandela accepted the 1993 Nobel Peace prize on behalf of all South Africans who suffered and sacrificed so much to bring peace to their land during the years of apartheid. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu gave many the opportunity to express their anguish, sorrow and anger, paving the way for forgiveness and healing. However South Africa still has real problems, including the spread of HIV/AIDS, poverty and drug crime and abuse. Violence both outside and within the home, especially against women and children, crosses cultural and economic boundaries.

5 In our service we developed the theme through: **Signs of the end times** (Luke 21:5-19); **Signs of new life** (Ezekiel 37: 1-10), and **Signs of love and service** (Matthew 26:1-13). We were challenged to discover that we as followers of Jesus, who is the true Sign of the Times must be the signs of hope, love, care and joy, pouring into our communities the gifts that God has showered upon us.

6 Prayer lay at the heart of the service; including a joyous African psalm of praise, and thought-provoking prayers of confession. Through the motto of the WWDP '*Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action*' we are encouraged to have a continuing relationship in prayer and service with our sisters in many countries and in our own neighbourhoods.

7 During the year Mrs Josie Owens came to the end of her service on the National Committee. She had served for nine years, including time as Conference Co-ordinator for the South Eastern Region, and a term as Vice-Chairperson. The Committee expressed their gratitude and thanks to her for all that she had done for the work of the Movement. It is my privilege to follow in her footsteps, and my prayer is that I may make a useful contribution.

8 In 2007 the WWDP celebrates the 75th anniversary of the first service in England with the theme: '*Continuing to HOLD FAST IN PRAYER*'. There will be services of celebration in London, Bristol and Leeds. Further information about these events and the WWDP may be obtained from the web site: www.wwdp-natcomm.org, or the office at Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR. (tel: 01892 541411)

Eileen Rhodes

Women's World Day of Prayer (Scottish Committee Report)

1.1 With a vengeance, winter finally arrived in Scotland on Friday 3 March. We woke to snow across most of the country but the show must go on and our services did just that. Some were cancelled and others had smaller attendances.

1.2 "Sign of the Times" written by the women of South Africa was an excellent Service with good reports which were held in all the usual places.

1.3 Many of the Services had speakers who knew South Africa and some even had South African ministers and this gave added dimensions to the Services.

1.4 The amount raised through offerings is not finally known as the Books do not close for a few weeks.

1.5 Following on from the 75th Anniversary services in April 2005 we have not rested on our laurels. Once the copies of the service for 2006 were mailed out by the willing band of committee member who do this very important service, work started on the service for 2007 at our week-end retreat at Balvonie in the autumn where much valuable work was done, including reviewing Our Constitution. Time was spent in prayer and reviewing various aspects of the committee's work.

1.6 We look forward to March 2007 and the Service from Paraguay, "United under God's Tent".

ELIZABETH I M KING



The
**United
Reformed
Church**