



United
Reformed
Church

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1986

May 6th ~ 9th
Opera House
Winter Gardens
BLACKPOOL

ASSEMBLY REPORTS

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THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd A J Wells

Secretary: Mrs S M Tull

Following last year's Assembly it became clear that a Standing Order is required which sets out the rights of a local church to participate in an Assembly debate in which it is named. Whilst such rights are clearly set out in relation to appeals (*Manual* 74/5), that guidance does not cover other cases. The Business Committee therefore proposes that the following 'Rules of Procedure for access to Assembly by named parties' be approved and printed in the *Manual* after 'Rules of Procedure on Appeals'.

Rules of Procedure for access to Assembly by named parties

When a resolution, which directly concerns the life, status or witness of a named member or minister of the URC, a named local church or a church institution is brought to the Assembly by an Assembly Committee, Department or Provincial Synod, and the individual or group feels aggrieved thereby,

1. the individual or group may request the Clerk, not less than seven days before the opening of Assembly, for a hearing,
2. the individual or two representatives of the group will be received, will be permitted to speak and will have their travel costs within the UK paid,
3. and the time allowance for speaking will be equal in aggregate to that of the persons proposing the motion. Those speaking will follow the proposers at the start of the debate and precede the proposer at the end of the debate.

A resolution of the 1984 Assembly asked 'Departments and Committees to take steps to ensure that all future publications use inclusive language'. We now bring to Assembly a list of the proposed changes at those places where male language has hitherto been used. Those changes affecting the divine name have been referred to the Doctrine and Worship Committee. Our proposals are printed in two sections and the first section, numbered 1 to 18, referring to the Scheme of Union, will need a two-thirds vote at this Assembly and ratification by next year's Assembly. The changes will be published in the next edition of the *Manual*.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report.
2. The Assembly approves the 'Rules of Procedure for access to Assembly by named parties' as set out in the report.
3. The Assembly approves the amendments to the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church listed 1 to 18 in the Appendix, refers them to Provincial Synods and will consider them in 1987 for ratification in accordance with Section 10 of the Structure.
4. The Assembly approves the amendments to the Rules of Procedure numbered 19 to 45 in the Appendix.

APPENDIX

AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL

No.	Page	Section	
1	2	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 all.
2	3	111.8	. . . To live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all people in all the variety of their physical and spiritual needs . . .
3	3	141.29	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 people . . . When baptism is administered to an infant,

			upon profession of faith by the parent(s), the child is placed under the nurture of the Church with prayer for the leading of the Holy Spirit to a personal profession in due time of faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord and entry upon the full privileges and responsibilities of membership . . .
4	4	14	. . . No one shall be required to administer a form or mode of baptism to which that person has a conscientious objection . . .
5	4	161.31	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 and to grow together in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .
6	4	171.39	. . . We believe that God, in his infinite love for all people . . .
7	6	221.17	. . . entrusted to that elder's pastoral care.
8	9	Schedule C line 23	. . . a personal statement of call to the ministry
9	9	Schedule C	. . . The presiding minister shall then ask:
10	10	5	Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ and a desire for the salvation of all people . . .
11	10	8	Do you promise as a minister of this Church to seek its purity, peace and true prosperity, to cherish Christian love towards all other Churches . . .
12	11	8	. . . justice and peace for all people.
13	16	3(h)	The District Council shall elect from among its members a chairman, normally called President or Convener, a secretary and treasurer . . .
14	16	3(h)	. . . and may appoint to any such committee any member of the United Reformed Church notwithstanding that such member is not a member of the Council.
15	16	(ii)	. . . with the Moderator of Synod or the Moderator's deputy presiding . . .
16	17	(xix)	(i) United Reformed Church ministers/lay people serving . . .
17	18	(h) 1.37	. . . may appoint to any such committee any member of the United Reformed Church notwithstanding that such member is not a member of the Synod.
18	18/19		There shall be a Moderator for each Provincial Synod being a minister appointed from time to time by the General Assembly to which the Moderator shall be responsible after the end of the calendar year of attaining the age of sixty-seven. The Moderator shall be separated from any local pastoral charge; shall stimulate and encourage the work of the United Reformed Church within the Province; and shall preside over the meetings of the Synod . . . in consultation with interim moderators of local churches the Moderator shall suggest names of ministers to vacant pastorates; the Moderator, or the Moderator's deputy, shall preside at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the Province; the Moderator, being a member of each District Council in the Province . . .

No.	Page	Section	
19	70	1(4)	. . . so as to reach the Clerk not later than . . .
20	70	2(2)	. . . by the Moderator or the Moderator's deputy, such member displays it.
21	71	3(1)	The Moderator of the General Assembly shall be elected by ballot in accordance with these Rules and shall serve for one year commencing at the Annual Assembly in the year following the Annual Meeting at which the report of the election is received in accordance with Rule 3(10). The year of office shall be deemed to begin with the induction of the Moderator and shall continue until a successor is inducted into office.
22	71	3(4)	The General Secretary shall forthwith send to each person nominated a list of the nominations. Any nominee may, within 10 days of the receipt of this list, withdraw from nomination by notice in writing to the General Secretary.
23	71	3(6)	Persons voting indicate their preference by figures . . .
24	72	10	(i) inform the General Secretary of the name of the person elected and the General Secretary shall thereupon inform those nominated, individually, whether or not they have been elected;
25	72	11	If any of the Tellers appointed by the Assembly shall become incapable of acting, the Moderator shall fill any such vacancy or vacancies and report that action to the next Assembly.
26	73	6(1)	A Moderator for each Province who shall be a Minister of the United Reformed Church shall be appointed by the General Assembly. The Moderator shall be responsible to the General Assembly and shall be nominated for appointment in accordance with Part VII of these Rules.
27	73	2(i)	. . . following the Assembly at which the appointment is made . . .
28	73	2(iii)	. . . year of attaining the age of sixty-seven . . .
29	73	7(1)	Delete 'Chairman': substitute 'Covener'.
30	74	7(2)	Delete 'Chairman': substitute 'Convener'.
31	74	Appeals	. . . shall notify in writing the Secretary of the body concerned of such desire to appeal.
32	75	7(iii)	. . . to the parties through the presiding officer . . .
33	75	7(v)	. . . to them by the presiding officer who . . .
34	77	3d	A seconder may, by declaring the intention of doing so, second without speaking and reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
35	77	3i	The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter a motion or amendment such mover has proposed.
36	78	4b	When a speech is made on behalf of a Department or Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by a statement of name and accreditation to the Assembly.
37	78	4d	. . . but must strictly confine such reply to answering previous speakers . . .
38	78	5a 1.23	. . . as soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it . . .

39	79	7a 1.12	Delete 'Chairman': insert 'Convener'
40	79	8a	A member shall have the right to rise in such member's place and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any . . .
41	79	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 in such member's place and . . .
42	79	8c	The rights 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 clause 10 of the Basis of Union.
43	80	10	Delete 'Chairman': insert 'Convener'.
44	81/84		Delete 'Chairman' and insert 'Convener' throughout.
45	83	2(a)	. . . in which case such officer shall be a member of that Committee <i>ex officio</i> .



CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Convener: Dr Mary Ede

Secretary: The Revd John P Reardon

1. The work of the Department has continued to focus on the search for those patterns of community life, at local, national and international levels, that bear witness to the goodness and glory of God. That search engages people of goodwill in discovering social, political and economic relationships and structures that reflect a loving Creator.
2. The Department works as closely as possible, through the British Council of Churches, the Free Church Federal Council and other ecumenical bodies, with its counterparts in other denominations. It also values its many contacts with agencies and organisations which do not have specific religious ties.
3. Many of the issues that have occupied the Department in the past year are familiar and recurrent but, as always, new subjects have had to be mastered and new priorities assessed. However, some of the fundamental problems facing society must remain at the top of the agenda for Christians even when simpler and more immediate issues threaten to oust them.
4. **Northern Ireland** At the invitation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Government Committee four members of the Department Central Committee visited Northern Ireland at the end of October 1985 to be briefed at first hand on the situation there and to try to understand its complexities as they are seen from within the Province and particularly from within the Presbyterian Church. Prior to the visit the Revd Harold Allen, the Convener of the Government Committee, came to the Department Central Committee to explain the position of the Presbyterian Church and its hopes and fears about political developments within the United Kingdom.
5. Shortly after the delegation returned from Belfast the UK and Irish Governments signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It was no surprise to the delegation to learn that the optimism with which that Agreement was greeted in the rest of the UK was not generally to be found in Northern Ireland itself. There, there were deep feelings of hurt, acutely evident within the Presbyterian Church. There was a sense of frustration about the process leading up to the Agreement and continuing fears arising from the long history of violence and mutual distrust.
6. In welcoming closer association with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland the Department echoes the hope, expressed in the British Council of Churches resolution following the signing of the Agreement, that the present phase of Anglo-Irish relations may herald a process of reconciliation leading to a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland. The Department intends to maintain and strengthen the links with the Presbyterian Church so that it may understand the situation there more fully and encourage those who are trying to build bridges between the separate communities.
7. **Violence and Faith in the City** The end of last Summer brought with it outbreaks of street violence in several inner city areas in Britain. Blazing cars and buildings silhouetted riot police confronting stone-throwing crowds of young people. Some of our churches were involved in attempts to interpret the unrest in the inner city areas. The Department was grateful to receive reports from some of the affected areas pointing to some of the underlying problems and causes.
8. Contrary to some of the sensational and irresponsible reporting in the media the riots were not primarily caused by racial tension, although that was clearly an element in them. Many factors led to the open violence which caused deaths and serious injury, destroyed property and polarised communities which were already fragile and tense.
9. The riots exposed again the multiple deprivation experienced in inner city areas of the large cities and the inadequacy of the nation's policies towards them. Much of what had been done, for example, in the Handsworth area was cosmetic, with face-lifts to streets and house exteriors benefiting local authority contractors but leaving the unemployed people of the area even more bitter. Attempts at community policing seem to have been unable to establish better relations with the young people of the area and organised crime, particularly drug trafficking, seems to have contributed to the build up of tension. The incidents which sparked off the riots were like sparks on tinder.

10. The publication of *Faith in the City*, the report of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, came, at the end of the Autumn, as a timely analysis of the fundamental poverty which so many in our society experience. The poverty described in the report is a combination of powerlessness, inequality, polarization, and grave and fundamental injustice.
11. The issues raised by the report deserve more careful and thorough study, comment and action than the hasty and hysterical reaction from some politicians. Not only does the report speak to the nation about urgent matters which cannot be ignored or wished away, it also has important implications for the work and witness of the churches. The Commission saw "areas where unemployment, poor housing and the threat of criminal violence have reached such proportions that they are like a disease: they so dominate people's thinking and feeling that no presentation of the gospel is possible which does not relate to these material deprivations."
12. The Department believes that the challenge of unrest and deprivation in so many communities in Britain needs to be felt and responded to not just by the few churches in the areas affected but by our whole Church in its national, Provincial and District committees and councils. *Faith in the City* has implications for our financial, educational, evangelistic, deployment and social policies. Careful study of it could help to refocus some of the strategic questions which our own Church has been grappling with in recent years. Although the report itself is well worth reading in its entirety, the Department also commends the popular version prepared by the Commission and published by Christian Action at £1.00 per copy.
13. **Rural Deprivation** John Salsbury's study of rural deprivation, *And is there honey still* . . . ?, published since the last Assembly, has been well received in other denominations as well as in the URC. It raises important questions not only about the extent and nature of disadvantage in the countryside but also challenges the myths about rural life which are so widespread throughout society. The booklet has been sent to every District Council in the hope that it will lead to further consideration of the mission of the church in rural areas.
14. **Welfare State** Much of the Department's work, in co-operation with others, has centred on the future of the welfare state. Several important studies on the welfare state have been published in the past year, notable among them, *Christianity and the Future of Welfare* by Duncan Forrester, formerly a member of the Department Committee, and *A Christian Appreciation of the Welfare State* by Stephen Orchard, currently a member. Both of them show how much Christian belief played its part in shaping the welfare state in the immediate years after the Second World War. Both are a challenge to Christians to contribute to the debate about what kind of welfare provision today is most likely to enhance the dignity of all and least likely to perpetuate the poverty and disadvantage which have continued in spite of the work of the post-war pioneers.
15. Many churches have naturally seen their role, in the face of the obvious stresses in their localities, in terms of social service. With marital breakdown, unemployment, homelessness and drug addiction on the increase and with government "rolling back the state", one obvious response which reflects the Gospel is to offer pastoral care through social work. Other churches, while not ignoring the need for such caring, have seen that they have to engage in the struggle for a more just and caring society by challenging political priorities and current trends so that reform of the welfare state can also be a reflection of the Gospel.
16. The proposals by the Government to reform the social security benefits which are at the heart of the welfare state have come under heavy criticism in the churches and this criticism has been focussed in the work of Church Action on Poverty. During the Autumn and Winter the Department prepared briefings and resource lists and answered numerous enquiries about the Fowler Review of state benefits to encourage churches to engage in debate with local Members of Parliament.
17. Several already disadvantaged groups of people will lose income under the proposals. Although the broad framework of legislation will be completed by July 1986, eligibility and levels of payments will be determined when Parliament later passes Statutory Instruments for implementation in April 1988. At national and local level churches are encouraged to work collaboratively to understand and endorse publicly the cases presented by specialist organisations and alliances for severely disabled, homeless, unemployed and elderly people.

18. It is astonishing that the proposals within the Bill can so blatantly discriminate against women at every stage in their lives — as mothers, as workers, as carers and as old-age pensioners. The economy absorbs a high proportion of women in low-paid, part-time employment; the present proposals will ensure that many women will be kept dependent throughout their lives on a means-tested benefit system.

19. Many of the published responses during the consultation period before the Bill underlined the inter-relation between benefits received automatically, via the taxation system and those which are claimed through the Social Security system. There is widespread support for a fairer distribution between the two systems, particularly in respect of the married man's tax allowance and mortgage interest tax relief. The Government resisted this growing pressure, and also the advice of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Housing Benefit Review Team to look at benefits in the context of both taxation and social security provision, preferring to release a Green Paper on Taxation at a later date. The effect is redistribution of limited resources between the poor and the very poor, and the return to the concept of the Poor Box in the proposed Social Fund. It is incumbent upon those in relatively comfortable circumstances to indicate clearly the forms of redistribution from personal taxation which are both just and acceptable, so that all members of society can both give and receive in a dignified way according to their needs throughout the life cycle.

20. **Unemployment** In many of our churches there is experience of co-operation with the Manpower Services Commission in providing training and work opportunities for unemployed people. In the Community Centre Churches Consultation last Summer some of the complexities of the funding of these schemes were considered. In its discussion of these schemes the Department has experienced the ambivalence towards them which many others have expressed. On the one hand the schemes offer some short-term respite to individuals who would otherwise be unemployed but on the other hand they make little or no impression on the long-term unemployment problem and sometimes leave people feeling doubly frustrated.

21. In response to a request that the Department consider making a bid for placements for the URC under the new Charities Option of the Manpower Services Commission the scheme was studied and the request declined. The Department believes that the scheme is seriously underfunded, makes inadequate provision for management and for training, keeps people in low paid employment on a strictly temporary basis and makes no impression on the long-term employment situation. The emphasis of the scheme is to fund extra posts within the organisation to supplement the caring arm within the community. Past experience with Manpower Services Commission tells us of the inherent dangers for organisations of creating new posts when the conditions of the scheme can be changed at very short notice.

22. In the current climate of under-resourced community care and of some very depressed communities heavily dependent upon MSC schemes the use of a succession of short-term appointments becomes inappropriate if it is not also in the interests of clients or is incapable of re-kindling innate energy within communities. Community development work, sound relationships between statutory and voluntary agencies, continuity of care and trust all necessitate long-term commitment.

23. During the year the Department Secretary was invited to contribute to a Council of Europe sponsored consultation on education and unemployment in which educationalists from several European countries shared stories of different approaches to the problem. He was able to show the many positive ways in which the churches have responded to rising unemployment through job creation, training schemes, leisure provision, community education, pastoral counselling, voluntary service schemes and political analysis and pressure.

24. **Industry Year** 1986 has been designated Industry Year by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. On behalf of the URC the Revd Philip Lee-Bapty attended a meeting in September 1984 at St George's House, Windsor to consider whether and how the churches could be involved in the Year. Following that meeting a Churches Working Group was formed and study material for church use has been prepared and widely circulated.

25. The Department has shared in the planning of this year's Forum at Swanwick on the theme *Working towards the 1990s* when many of the underlying questions about industry will be explored.

It is vital that the churches should engage in serious consideration of the place of industry in our society.

26. *Thanks to Industry* is the slogan for Industry Year and it has provoked, particularly in some parts of the churches, a negative reaction. It seems to some cynical and inept to adopt such a triumphalist slogan when so many lack work and when so many areas are in the grip of industrial decline. There is, however, another slogan, *Industry Matters* and there can be little doubt that the importance of that assertion needs to be explored and affirmed.

27. The churches cannot accept Industry Year uncritically but nor should they condemn it without facing its inherent challenge. Many whose livelihood is in industrial and commercial employment already feel alienated from much of church life which either ignores industrial experience or undervalues it. Industrial mission has always taken industry seriously and is concerned to further the purpose and work of God within industry and industrial society. It aims to discover the effect of industry on the people who work in it, the society which depends on it, and the world order which is being shaped by it. It works for change in industry and commerce in the light of the Christian hope for justice and community. Industry Year could prove to be a time of growth in local churches as they too engage in reassessing the importance of industry and affirm the contribution which Christians are making within it.

28. **Peace** 1986 is also being observed throughout the world as the International Year of Peace. The Assembly resolution last year on a nuclear freeze provoked widespread debate in the churches and led many people to sign a petition calling on the British Government to take the initiative in trying to secure an international and multilateral freeze by declaring its willingness to halt all production, development and deployment of nuclear weapons as a first step to genuine negotiations for arms control and reduction. The BCC Freeze Discussion Pack and the Department's own discussion paper on the Nuclear Freeze have also been used by Christians in other denominations wanting to promote discussion of a nuclear freeze as a contribution to the International Year of Peace.

29. The Department's Peace Advisory Group has been engaged in debate about the theological understanding of peace, has stimulated the Department to begin preparing a paper on the Peace Tax Campaign, setting out the arguments for and against, and is exploring the possibility of producing some worship and meditation aids based on a striking series of embroidery panels worked by one of its members, Mrs Pamela Pavitt.

30. The Department co-operates closely with other Churches and peace organisations through the BCC's Peace Forum and continues to benefit from the presence in this country of the Revds Pete and Maggie Peery, the Peace Associates from the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Pete is a member of the steering committee of the International Year of Peace on behalf of the British Churches.

31. **All Christian Peace Assembly** From the Peace Advisory Group Pete Peery and the Department Secretary attended the All Christian Peace Assembly in Prague in July 1985 as observers. Two other URC ministers, Fred Kaan and Geoffrey Beck, were also there as a guest and an observer respectively. The Assembly, organised by the Prague-based Christian Peace Conference, gave opportunity for dialogue among Christians from East, West, North and South to consider the urgency of seeking peace together in a dangerous and polarised world.

32. The Conference, chaired by Bishop Karoly Toth from Hungary, issued a message to the churches calling on them to redouble their efforts for justice and peace. One of the major themes debated in the Conference at length was the so-called Stars Wars programme. Soon afterwards the BCC's Peace Forum devoted a full day to a debate about Star Wars and is now preparing a study paper to stimulate a wider debate in the British Churches.

33. While it is almost certainly not appropriate for the URC to seek full membership of the Christian Peace Conference at this stage, those who were there believe that it provides an important forum for discussion, particularly between Christians from the Western and Eastern blocs. Observers at the Assembly were warmly welcomed and were able to make their contribution both in plenary sessions and working groups.

34. **South Africa** The news from South Africa during the past year has served to underline the crisis through which that country is passing. In his stirring speech to the British Council of Churches

in November, Beyers Naude, the Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, traced the current escalation of open opposition to apartheid back to 16 June 1976 when armed policemen opened fire on a crowd of unarmed schoolchildren in Soweto, demonstrating against their second-rate education. He described the horror of township violence and repression and accused South Africa of having declared war on its own schoolchildren. This judgement was echoed in letters received by the URC from one of the women who visited our churches in December 1984. Eyewitness accounts testify to the inhumanity and open sadism of the terror inflicted indiscriminately on black people throughout South Africa.

35. The Department protested to the South African Embassy, together with CWM and the BCC, at the raid last summer in which the South African army illegally entered Botswana and raided areas of the capital Gaborone. The complacent reply from the Ambassador was further challenged when it became known that one of the URC's former missionaries, Jeanie Fisher, was terrorised and injured in that raid thus giving the lie to South Africa's assertion that guerrillas were the only target of the attack.

36. The Department was pleased to give some financial support to enable Dr Philip Morgan to be a member of the delegation from the British Churches to visit South Africa in September at the invitation of the SACC. The delegation, part fact-finding mission, part gesture of solidarity with all who are seeking an end to apartheid, came back weighed down with the burden of tension and suffering which they saw but greatly heartened by the courage and hope of those who believe that they are now living through the death throes of apartheid and are witnessing and participating in the emergence of a new South Africa. The delegation, however, was under no illusion about the power of white supremacy there to prolong the suffering of the black community. The report of their visit, *Whose Rubicon?*, is warmly recommended for widespread study, as is the Kairos Document, a theological challenge to Christians everywhere, prepared and signed by South African Christians.

37. The crisis in South Africa has underlined again the prevarication of the British and United States Governments. Over the years they have become increasingly isolated in their continuing support for the South African regime. In the Commonwealth Britain plays a solitary role ensuring that the full weight of international opposition to apartheid is never complete. The delegation to South Africa from the British Churches, however, came back convinced that the case for economic sanctions was not only fully justified but was now supported by a large proportion of black people themselves. Indeed black people have organised their own boycott actions against white business and international economic sanctions are being openly called for in church circles in South Africa.

38. The BCC Assembly in November passed by an overwhelming majority comprehensive resolutions on economic disengagement from the South African economy, reaffirming its own policy of progressive disengagement from the economy of South Africa, requesting member churches to urge their financial authorities to cease investing in companies with a substantial stake in the South African economy, urging all Christians to refuse to buy or sell South African products and agreeing that in future the BCC will advocate and support carefully targeted sanctions against South Africa. The Department accepts and supports these resolutions and commends them for detailed study to the churches. In particular the Department hopes that the URC will add its voice to the calls for sanctions aimed at bringing apartheid to an end as quickly as possible. In expressing that hope the Department draws attention to a similar call issued by the Executive Committee of CWM meeting in December 1985.

39. **World Development** The Department has continued to give considerable time and resources to its World Development Programme. Not only did the Department assist the General Secretary in a correspondence with the Prime Minister urging a more generous short and long term approach to the famine in Africa, but it co-operated with the World Development Movement in the Mass Lobby of Parliament on 22 October 1985. A remarkable number of URC members took part in the Lobby and many also assisted as stewards in the Central Hall and inside and outside the Parliament buildings. The General Secretary, in his capacity as Moderator of the BCC Executive, was one of the speakers in the public meetings in Central Hall, Westminster.

40. The Lobby with its 20,000 supporters quite clearly influenced the Government who announced soon afterwards that it was budgetting for a modest rise in overseas aid over the next three years. However, the aid budget is a long way short of what it was ten years ago and successive governments have failed to give it the priority it deserves.

41. The Department continues to give enthusiastic support and much of its staff time to promoting One World Week, the ecumenical programme of development education every year in October. The *Recipes for Justice* theme in 1985 focussed on the food crisis in parts of the world and the debt which we owe to the poor for much of the food we eat. The theme for 1986 is *Listen for a Change* and urges all Christians to listen carefully to the stories of poor and oppressed people who are working to change injustice.

42. Part of the Department's World Development Programme is the 1% Appeal. In 1984/5 the total raised was £240,000 and with that money some exciting work overseas and in this country was funded through Christian Aid, the World Development Movement, and a number of other agencies listed in the report circulated last June to all the churches. A similar report will be circulated in June this year and the Department expects to be able to show increased giving over last year's total. Many churches have shown remarkable commitment to world development in the way they have regularly supported the Appeal.

43. Because of the increased interest and concern about world development the Department is preparing a booklet to encourage all churches to give this aspect of Christian discipleship a firm place in church programmes.

44. **Race Relations** The interdepartmental working group on Racism invited the Zebra Project from East London to organise a racism awareness weekend for the group. Towards the end of the weekend a programme of action began to emerge and the working group will continue to explore ways in which local churches and the URC as a whole can play a more conscious and effective role in opposing racism in church and society.

45. The publication of the Swann Report, *Education for All*, has highlighted the disadvantages which children from ethnic minority communities experience in British schools. The report shows the particular problems experienced by children of West Indian and Bangladeshi origins and makes a range of recommendations about changes in educational provision which would help to offset some of the most serious disadvantages.

46. **Religious Education** In particular the Swann Report draws attention to the vital role played by teachers of religious education in equipping pupils for life in a multicultural society. Often RE teachers are the only staff members in their school with a grasp of the cultural backgrounds of the children they teach. Yet so often RE is an under-valued and under-resourced subject. RE is often taught by non-specialist teachers and is often absent from the school curriculum for pupils above the third form level in secondary schools. There is also widespread misunderstanding in the churches about the nature of RE in schools. The Swann Report quite rightly draws attention to the importance of religious education in the development of a multi-cultural approach to the whole curriculum in schools. RE is making a vital contribution to assisting young people in their search for meaning and purpose in life and in becoming tolerant, caring and responsible members of society.

47. The Department believes that the Government should give substance to its many statements supporting religious education by encouraging the appointment in all local Education Authorities of full-time specialist advisers for RE and by under-lining again the need for LEAs to ensure the adequate implementation of the 1944 Education Act with regard to RE teaching. Local churches could help to highlight the shortage of RE teachers and the inadequate provision of RE teaching by writing to LEAs, local head teachers and school governors, officials of Parent-Teacher Associations and their MPs. The Department is ready to assist churches wishing to become engaged in such an enterprise.

48. **Family Life Education** The Department welcomes the booklet *Ask the Family* produced in North West Province. For use in small groups, material in the booklet has been tried out with people of all ages and all household types. The discussion groups are the first stage of a process of sharing experience, feedback, reflection and action which will be co-ordinated and developed by the Provincial Church and Society Committee.

49. Family Fortnight from 18-31 May this year provides an opportunity for churches to co-operate with the many other agencies in membership of Family Forum to emphasise the

contribution which families make to society and to focus on some of the important changes affecting families.

50. **Sunday Trading** Perceived threats to family life have been uppermost in the Christian opposition to Government proposals to lift all restrictions on trading hours particularly those affecting Sunday trading. While the adverse impact on family life is part of the objection the Department believes that there are many other objections to be raised. There are wide-ranging implications for employment, for prices, for workers in ancillary and other community services and, in particular, for a work force which is made up of a large proportion of low paid part-time employees. The quality of life for those living in shopping areas will be adversely affected and the whole community will be the poorer for the introduction of widespread shopping with no day made different by the absence of large-scale commercial business. The churches have not based their opposition on narrow sabbatarian grounds and on the adverse effect to themselves, but rather on the need within the whole community for a change of rhythm for rest, recreation and leisure at a time when the majority are free to benefit together. Sunday trading will destroy that possibility for a large section of the population and perhaps for everyone in the long term.

51. **Community Work** Over the past three years the Assistant Secretary has been a member of the Management Group of the Community Work Resource Unit of the British Council of Churches. The Unit has worked with the decision-making bodies of the Churches to encourage release of resources for community work, promoted training opportunities and encouraged the foundation of Regional Networks for support, sustaining good practice and developing strategy. Community work experience in the URC was strongly represented at the BCC National Conference in November 1985 and in the book *Down to Earth*, six stories of church-based community work.

52. **Alcohol and Drugs** The Department welcomes the publication by the Churches Council on Alcohol and Drugs of a study and discussion pack on the personal use of alcohol, *Give us a Break*. Members of the Department contributed papers for the pack. CCOAD also co-operated with the Anglican Board for Social Responsibility in producing study and information packs on *Alcohol Misuse* and *Drug Misuse*. The Church and Society and Youth Committees of the Mersey Province have published a useful leaflet on the drugs problem to help those who are seeking help and information.

53. In December there will be a church leaders' conference on alcohol abuse at Lambeth Palace and it is hoped that all Churches will co-operate in 1987 on the issue of drinking and driving to add weight to public concern about the continuing high level of offenders and the consequent injuries and deaths caused by them.

54. **International Year of Shelter for the Homeless** The United Nations has declared 1987 as International Year of Shelter for the Homeless to activate the political will to tackle the causes of homelessness and to involve people in appropriate responses both nationally and internationally. In this country local groups are being formed to plan programmes of education, campaigning and fund-raising for specific projects. The year will provide a challenging opportunity for a wide variety of people to work together from world development organisations, voluntary housing agencies, architects, builders, local businesses and the churches. The Department's study and action pack, *No Certain Dwelling Place*, raises many of the housing issues that must be faced by this country in its response to the Year.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Church and Society Department for debate.
2. The Assembly, recognizing the complexities of the situation in Northern Ireland with its long history of violence and distrust:
 - a) welcomes the Church and Society Department's strengthening of contact with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;
 - b) urges all church members to support initiatives that may lead to the healing of relationships between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and within Northern Ireland;
 - c) invites churches and church members to continue to pray for reconciliation leading to a just and lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

3. The Assembly welcomes the publication of the report of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City*, and encourages Provinces, Districts and local churches to study its recommendations and to consider appropriate action, ecumenically wherever possible.
 4.
 - i) The Assembly, recognizing the courageous witness of partner Churches and fellow Christians in South Africa against the unjust system of apartheid, and reaffirming its own policy of progressive disengagement from the economy of South Africa agreed in 1982, calls on Her Majesty's Government to impose fuller sanctions against South Africa designed to hasten the end of apartheid.
 - ii) The Assembly calls on all church members to identify personally with the peaceful struggle against apartheid by refusing to buy or sell South African products.
 5. The Assembly, welcoming Her Majesty's Government's declared support for the Welfare State, calls on the Government to increase the total funds made available through Social Security benefits for low-income families and the long-term unemployed, without reducing benefits to other low income groups; and recognises the implications that follow for public expenditure priorities and the level of personal taxation.
 6. The Assembly encourages local churches and District Councils to enter into dialogue with Local Education Authorities with a view to pressing for a clearer and more urgent commitment to supporting and extending religious education in their schools.
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MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT

Convener: Revd A G Burnham

Secretary: Revd M G Dunford

1. Our report to Assembly this year reflects progress on a number of fronts, as we discover the needs of our church in terms of a diverse and effective ministry. Our three main committees, VOCATIONS, TRAINING and SUPPORT, commenced work in September 1985, and the CENTRAL committee began a detailed survey of every aspect of the Church Related Community Worker programme. These four reports now follow.

VOCATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Michael B Stolton

Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

2. The new committee began its work in September, taking over responsibilities previously undertaken by the Recruitment and Applications Committees. We noted the confidential nature of much of our work, and of the close liaison that is required with the Moderators, and we acknowledge our debt to them all for their patient co-operation and attention to detail. We report on our work as follows:-

ADMISSIONS TO THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

3. **By ordination:-**

Jeffrey Armitstead, Colin Bones, J Stuart Brearley (A), Sarah Brewerton (A), David Bernard Brown, Mitchell Bunting, Robert A Canham (A), Pat Carpenter (A), Jeanne Christie (A), Elizabeth J Brown, Jean Cook (A), Henry J Dickenson (A), Helen Drummond, Dave Dunster, Catherine M Evans (A), Geoffrey Finch (A), Grenville Fisher, Ronald J Forster, Bernard Grimsey, David Hamblin, David F Jones, Sandra K Lloydlangston (A), John Mallas, Jennifer Martin (A), David Murphy, Robert Ogilvie, John Piper (A), Michael Powell (A), Lydia Rapkin (A), Roy Ritchie (A), Eilleen Ritchie (A), Marie W Roe, Marjorie E Rowlands, Sheila M Scarr (A), Elizabeth Scopes, Patrice Sessions, Arthur A Smith (A), Noel J Stancliff, Graham Sweeney, Gwyneth Thomas, Phyllis Trace (A), Martin Truscott (A), John C Wade (A), Jean Wileman, John Woolley (A).

4. **By transfer from other Churches:-**

Revd Herbert Kelsey (United Church of Christ, USA)
Revd Clive Moore (Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches)
Revd Basil Filby (R) (Uniting Church in Australia)
Revd James McCormack (A) (Roman Catholic Church)
Revd Roberta Sears (UCC/USA)
Revd Peter H Welsh (Church of Scotland)

DELETIONS FROM THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

5. **By transfer to other Churches:-**

Revd Karl E Olson (to the United Church of Christ USA)
Revd Alex R Forsyth (to the Church of Scotland)
Revd David Wilson (to the Baptist Union)
Revd John C O'Neill (to the Church of Scotland)
Revd Ian J Stewart (to the United Church of Christ, USA)
Revd Alastair J Goss (to the Church of Scotland)
Revd Brian Hunt (to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland)
Revd A Lesley Fisher (to the Society of Friends)
Revd Einar Michaelson (retired to the United Church of Christ, USA)
Revd Elizabeth J Brown (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

6. **By resignation:-**

Revd Sean Larkin
Revd G Michael Taylor
Revd Alan W Lamb

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY

7. Certificates were issued to 7 ministers, some of whom are already inducted to a pastorate or in process of seeking a call.

RECRUITMENT

8. A successful Ministry Experience Week in January, arranged by the West Midlands Province, was attended by 17 people, reflecting a wide range of backgrounds, ages and interests. This followed the Vocation Sunday held in November, for which we provided background information and worship material. We are continuing to organise Enquirers' Conferences in 1986, will support regional conferences in 1987, and then consider what would be most fruitful beyond that. We are constrained in our budget of £1,000, and are grateful for local initiatives wherever they occur.

ASSESSMENT

9. We are monitoring the whole process, taking a fresh look at the way national assessment conferences do their work. We considered the training day for the members of the national assessment panel, which was very well attended, to be most worthwhile.

ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

10. In the light of changing circumstances, we have reconsidered the entrance qualifications of those who candidate for the auxiliary and stipendiary ministry. We are unanimous in believing that there should be no reduction in standards, in the interests of both the individual and the whole Church. We submit the following revised entrance qualifications:-

1. **Personal Maturity**

Those taking part in assessment procedures must be convinced of the personal maturity of the candidate before recommending acceptance.

2. **Minimum age at entry**

Normally no candidate shall begin ministerial training prior to their 21st birthday (stipendiary) or 30th birthday (auxiliary).

3. **Experience of the URC**

Normally no applicant shall be allowed to commence the candidating procedure until they have been in membership of the URC for at least two years (NB: Formerly one year).

4. **Academic Ability**

The minimum entrance requirements for ministerial training are:-

- either (i) Five 'O' levels or two 'A' levels or their equivalent,
- or (ii) Evidence of the ability to cope with sustained study, which must be provided in some tangible form,
- or (iii) Completion of the *Exploring the Faith* course.

These requirements shall be adhered to, but exceptional circumstances must be agreed by the Vocations Committee. They shall be required of all those who submit applications to a District Council from 1 September 1986 onwards. (Resolution 2)

It is to be noted that the three year work rule for those without a degree or diploma is hereby superseded.

WORK IN HAND

11. Consideration is being given to the procedures by which we authorise payment from MoM funds to ministers of other churches who are called to serve URC pastorates, and to the Overseas Recruitment Scheme which we shall take over from the World Church and Mission Department as soon as practicable.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Joan Boulind

Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

INTRODUCTION

12. Much of the detailed work of our committee is undertaken by the experienced and knowledgeable members of our sub-committees: the Board of Studies for the Auxiliary Ministry, the Lay Preaching sub-committee, the Westminster College Management Committee, and the Ministerial Training Fund. We are concerned with overall policy which increasingly takes account of the various ministries required by our church and the resources of colleges and courses available.

13. We are sharing in consultations with the Faith and Life department about teaching methods, with the British Council of Churches about collaborative styles of ministry, and with the Vocations Committee about entrance qualifications for the various courses. In collaboration with provincial Ministry Committees we are exploring the need for Induction Courses for new spheres of ministry, and have prepared a Manual of Advice to help all those specifically engaged in guiding candidates and supporting students. On the world scene, we continue to develop our relationship with theological education in Europe, India, South East Asia, and the United States of America, and in particular have explored methods of theological reflection and of post ordination support. We have begun to help selected students from the Predigerseminar Landau in West Germany by introducing them to life in a local URC congregation as part of their internship training programme.

SCHOLARSHIP RESEARCH

14. Alert to educational and ministerial training needs in the future, we have responded positively to requests from the colleges to support post-graduate students. We are also supporting the proposed Mona Powell Fellowship being introduced in Northern College, Manchester, which will allow someone with experience in a pastorate to engage in advanced study and limited tutorial work over a three to four year period.

MANSFIELD CENTENARY

15. We note with pleasure that Mansfield College, Oxford, this year celebrates the Centenary of its foundation in Spring Hill, Birmingham. We continue to share in its Ordination Programme, and efforts to frame a constitution which reflects the needs of the present day.

DR DONALD SYKES

16. We wish to place on record our sincere appreciation of the contribution made by the retiring Principal of Mansfield College, Dr Donald Sykes, over a period of 9 years. Whilst we are sad that his retirement is due to ill health we are pleased to learn that he will retain his place in the Mansfield community as a Senior Research Fellow.

THE TITLE OF "PROFESSOR"

17. Discussions have taken place in Westminster College concerning the use of the title of 'professor' for members of the teaching staff, which they now find to be inappropriate in the modern context. It has been decided that its use should be discontinued, and replaced by *Director of Studies* in each of the teaching disciplines.

THE WELSH COLLEGES

18. We draw attention to the report of the visitors to the theological colleges at Bangor and Aberystwyth and the recommendation of the Assembly in 1983 that their relationship with the URC be reviewed in 1986. Consultations have taken place with the two colleges and with the Province of Wales Ministry Committee and they strongly advise us to take this review through some further stages before a recommendation about the future is considered. They request this against the background of ecumenical relationships, and new thinking about ministerial training in Wales, with so much in a state of change and development. We shall bring proposals to a future Assembly.

POST ORDINATION TRAINING

19. The Assembly in 1984 agreed to proposals for a Post Ordination Support programme to take effect from September 1985, and these are now being implemented. In consultation with the

Provinces we have considered the practical aspects of the scheme, and we understand that they are now in a position to make their own arrangements to appoint Pastoral Advisers after due consultation with the District Councils and with the newly ordained minister. Advice about the work that the two have to do together has been given, and we are now exploring the kind of training and support required for the Advisers themselves. Now that the scheme has been launched we are recommending that its oversight become the responsibility of the Support Committee within the Department, though we shall continue to provide In-Service Training courses and general advice when it is required.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

20. We have been gratified by the way more ministers are now taking advantage of summer schools, of long and short term training courses, and of the sabbatical programme. Over the past twelve months 381 ministers have been grant-aided for such purposes from central funds. In response to the discussion at the 1985 Assembly, we are now making available a higher rate of grants from the central funds. We are prepared to offer up to two thirds of the cost of courses on the usual conditions.

INTERNSHIP TRAINING

21. Since September 1985 all three main colleges have provided internship training for those preparing for stipendiary ministry. The aim of the programme is to enable students to experience the full range of ministry in the context of a local congregation and to reflect theologically on the experience within the college community.

22. This is a new and evolving programme. Whilst no final policy has been reached, the Training Committee is encouraging the colleges to adopt the following basic guidelines:-

22.1 Internship training will normally take place in either the final or penultimate year of foundation training.

22.2 The Internship Programme is compulsory for all students with the exception of those who have served in a pastoral charge for at least two years, either as an auxiliary minister or in some other URC situation. For those taking a 4-year course, the internship will last for a whole academic year, (i.e. approximately 9 months). For those on shorter courses, arrangements for an internship element shall be the responsibility of the college.

22.3 Colleges arrange suitable placements, after due consultation with the Moderator, the District Council, and the local church, and taking into account the personal circumstances of the student. The effectiveness of the programme depends upon the right choice being made and continuous working relationships between all parties concerned.

22.4 Apart from exceptional circumstances students are to train continuously in the practical situation (from September to June in the case of 4-year students), under the guidance of an experienced stipendiary minister. The internship year shall include a balance of preaching, administration and pastoral care, with an appropriate share in the leadership and education of the congregation, and opportunity to become familiar with the local community and its needs.

22.5 Students are required to divide their time more or less equally between church work and college-directed work, which will include attendance at college for two days per week (including at least one overnight stay). These periods in college will provide a programme of theological reflection in which all students should participate, made up of the following elements: reading, reports, worship, lectures, seminars and student house activity.

22.6 Placements can be arranged in a variety of situations. No geographical limitation is to be imposed, so long as there is opportunity for regular return to college (without this requiring undue outlay of time, energy, and money) and for proper local supervision. In accordance with Assembly policy, the placement will be for a position (or, at most, two positions) of pastoral responsibility.

22.7 Whenever appropriate, and with authority granted by the District Council, internship students on the grounds of pastoral necessity, may preside at the Lord's Supper, after due account has been taken of local feelings and customs, and the student's own considerations.

(NB: A fresh question arises as to how this rule is to be interpreted in view of the close pastoral bond established between the student and the congregation).

22.8 It is the responsibility of each college to take note of these provisional Guidelines, and of the Ministries Department through its Training Committee to modify them in the light of experience. (Resolution 2)

NB: The financial implications of the Internship Programme are under debate, and will be the subject of a report to a future Assembly. We shall wish to ensure that all expenses are properly covered, that we are fair to students who will be serving in a variety of situations, and that no local church is precluded on financial grounds from assisting in the programme.

NEW TESTAMENT AT WESTMINSTER

23. Following the departure of the Revd Dr John O'Neill to the University of Edinburgh, we shall welcome the Revd John Proctor as Director of New Testament Studies, in the Dunn Chair of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology. He is aged 34, born in Scotland of English parents, married and with a young family. He was educated at Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall, and at St John's College, Cambridge, where he read mathematics and graduated BA with first class honours in 1974. He then read Statistics at Glasgow University, graduating MSc in 1976, and also lectured in the subject.

Accepted as a candidate for the ministry of the Church of Scotland he read Divinity at the University of Glasgow, obtaining a BD with first class honours in New Testament in 1980. Following ordination, Mr Proctor served first as Assistant Minister at Knightswood St Margaret's, Glasgow, and from 1981 has been minister of Colston Milton Parish Church, a parish of 3,700 houses, almost all post-war council property on the northern boundary of Glasgow, with a membership roll of 570. He also lectures part-time in New Testament at the university.

24. The Principal of Westminster College, the Revd Martin Cressey writes: "The Revd John Proctor would evidently bring to the college and Federation team the contributions of a colleague younger than any of the present Westminster College staff, committed to the life of the church and ready to apply himself to the work of New Testament scholarship. It was clear from our contacts and at interviews that it is only Mr Proctor's welcome involvement in parish life that has prevented him from writing for publication hitherto; his teaching in the Glasgow faculty has been valued. He comes from an evangelical background, yet with no trace of divisiveness of approach and a full openness to the use of critical method. I believe that the team of Biblical teachers in the Federation will continue to combine a spread of theological backgrounds with a shared approach which will enable the team to contribute their varied insights in a creative way."

Ministerial Training Fund

25. In view of New College income, and help from other sources, the Fund balance as reported to the last Assembly was high. There have been two consequences. One is the feeling that we do not need the income, and the other is that there has been a noticeable relaxation of efforts round the Provinces to provide grant aid to our auxiliary students. We are anxious about this. To the best of our knowledge, a large projected operating deficit in 1987 could indicate real problems in the future. We cannot proceed safely on a deficit budget, and already are considering how we might either reduce expenditure or seek funding elsewhere in the longer term.

26. The Assembly will wish to learn why costs have risen so sharply in 1985/6. We can report that the cost of training stipendiary ministers continues to increase, the effect of the internship year is now being experienced, and the costs of auxiliary training are rising sharply around the country. We draw attention to these facts and indicate that care needs to be taken at the present time.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

A Year of Change

27. "All the changing scenes of life" seem to have been exemplified on the small scale of Westminster College over the past year. The college is in the middle of one of the most complete staff changes ever; the process of curriculum change and development has continued, in particular through the introduction of the mandatory internship; there was a large exit of students in 1985; gas-fired boilers have replaced the long-serving oil-fired ones in the main heating system — and a renovation of portraits has begun in hall and library. This last process is the only one that the college would like to see continued at an accelerated pace; the others now need consolidation.

The Dunn Chair

28. The Revd Dr John C O'Neill was called to the Chair of New Testament at New College, Edinburgh in September 1985. Provision has been made for New Testament courses in the academic year 1985-6 with the help of other staff in the Cambridge Federation of Theological

Colleges and of the Revd David Jelleyman, a recently retired Baptist missionary, and by the Principal's teaching an exegesis course. Filling the vacancy remained an urgent need, for which the Nominations to Teaching Staff Committee turned to the Assembly Executive Committee for an appointment in February 1986. In this connection advice was also sought on the descriptive title to be used for college staff, without alteration of the legal status of the Chairs endowed at the college.

The college buildings

29. The Management Committee has been able to appoint a new architectural consultant, Mr Peter Hall. He has carried out a detailed survey and reported both on the main buildings and on the staff and student residence, and on this basis the Management Committee is preparing a long-term maintenance and development plan.

The Reid Lectures

30. The Reid Lectures, endowed in memory of the Revd Dr James Reid of Eastbourne, will be given on June 9, 10, 11, 1986, by the Revd Dr John de Gruchy, Professor of Christian Studies, University of Cape Town, on *Theology and Ministry in Context and Crisis*. They are open to all who are interested; details from the Principal.

NORTHERN COLLEGE (United Reformed and Congregational), Manchester

New premises for college

31. The premises in Whalley Range which had been the home of the college since 1843 were sold in the early summer of 1985. The 142 years of education, training and worship at Whalley Range and the new future which the college was embarking upon were marked by a service of thanksgiving and commitment on 22 June 1985. The new owners of the college (General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union) moved in immediately the building was vacated and began renovations with a view to making it their national training centre. Throughout the summer staff and students were occupied with moving the college library, office equipment and other items of furniture required in setting up their new home.

Luther King House

32. The new premises in Brighton Grove, Rusholme, Manchester 14, formerly known as the Northern Baptist College, are called Luther King House. Compact and modern, it is close to the University. The property is leased jointly to the five member institutions forming the **Northern Federation for Training in Ministry**. Northern College will continue to be responsible for enrolling, supervising and financing the training of its own students, while a Council formed from representatives of each of the members of the Federation is responsible for the new ecumenical work now underway.

The College community

33. Altogether the Federation has 92 students in training for the stipendiary ministry and a further 65 for the non-stipendiary ministry. In addition to the latter are another 45 students training for auxiliary and lay forms of ministry at Luther King House by means of the Christian Leadership course which is run by the Manchester Christian Institute. A staff of 17 is engaged in the residential, congregation and community-based forms of training. Increasingly, the training is becoming ecumenical. In token of its commitment to the ecumenical partnership to which it now belongs, Northern College has pledged income from the investment resulting from the sale of its Whalley Range property to assist the work of the Federation. In particular, it will help with the creation of regional centres outside Manchester. These will provide support for students of the auxiliary and other ministries currently being trained at Manchester and assist local initiatives in lay and in-service training.

34. In the midst of the additional work involved in moving the college the day-to-day activities of the college were maintained. The annual mission was held at Easter, and the new community-based course at Salford was planned and started. Now staff and students are playing their part in building the new community at Luther King House. They are agreeably surprised at how smoothly the integration is progressing.

Retrospect and prospect

35. As the college records its gratitude to all those individuals and churches who have supported

it over many years it prays that it will continue to have their support as it responds to the new opportunities opening to it.

MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

College Life

36. Our Centenary Year is here and the college buildings are being renovated with money already raised from the Appeal capably handled by Peter Spicer. We are now going to look to the Americas for Endowment funds, and we are confident that our long associations with overseas friends will stand us in good stead.

37. A full Centenary programme has been arranged with John Marsh as Commemoration Preacher, a symposium on *100 Years of Ministerial Training* and a session on Mansfield House University Settlement, Canning Town, has been booked. These events will be on 21 June 1986. Other events linked with Oxfam and Industry Year will follow. The Assistant Chaplain, Justine Wyatt, is preparing a new College History and there is a Centenary Ball on 27 June, the Vice Chancellor's Luncheon on 2 July, and other features are planned for October when the college opened its doors to seven students in 1886. There are now 160 students including 30 in theology.

Staff

38. John Creaser, our English Fellow since 1966, has been appointed Hildred Carlile Professor of English Literature at Bedford and Royal Holloway College, London. He is greatly missed. His post has been filled by Dr Kate Flint from Bristol University. Michael Freeden, our Politics Fellow, has been appointed to a University Lectureship. Martin Conway, Director of the East Oxford Pastoral Course and the Oxford Institute of Church and Society (of which Mansfield is a sponsoring body), is to become President of Selly Oak Colleges. We will continue to use the East Oxford Course with Ripon College, Cuddesdon, which concentrates on inner-city problems.

39. We are fortunate that we can draw on a wide variety of University and Theological College tutors for our teaching of ordinands, and we are also grateful for local ministers Caryl Micklem and Donald Norwood for much help. Tony Tucker, Director of Student Services for the Oxford Polytechnic and Chairman of the Reading and Oxford Pastoral Committee, has begun to teach the course in Pastoral Psychology and Care. Margaret Taylor and Ivan Andrews came to the college for a week to teach their courses respectively in Christian Education and Youth Leadership. David Dale will be here to lead a 2-day course in Christian Healing. Lesslie Newbigin is in college for the Mission course, as well as giving the Chavasse Lectures at Wycliffe College. The University Mission leader was Bishop John Taylor and the College Missioner was the Revd Graham Spicer from Birmingham. Susan Durber and Martin Manley gained Distinctions in the University Certificate of Theology.

40. During the illness of Principal Donald Sykes, the college has been very well served by the Revd Dr Jan Womer, the Lutheran Fellow, who took over as Acting Principal. The Revd Charles Brock continues as Director of Ministerial Training, Chaplain and minister at Wheatley.

Internship Year

41. This began in September 1985 with placements at Milton Keynes and Swindon. We are very pleased with the results so far and our grateful thanks to Northern College for all their help in setting up the course.

Chapel

42. Preachers this academic year included Richard McLaren of the Marylebone Counselling Centre. Edward Guest of the Federation of Congregational and Evangelical Churches, Ferenc Kenez from Hungary, Kenneth Stevenson from Manchester University, Bishop John Gibbs from Coventry, Paul Fiddes from Regent's Park College, Tony Burnham from the Provincial Moderators, Mother Frances Dominica from Helen House, as well as college staff. The Mansfield Singers presented their usual interesting and varied programmes and sang for occasional services. There are various prayer and discussion groups in the college that meet in student rooms.

The Reformed Church Society

43. This university society for Oxford students had a good year with many speakers and a variety of activities including the leading of worship, socials, and a week in the Lake District. Caryl Micklem and Charles Brock are joint chaplains. There is Sunday morning worship at St Columba's

and evening speaker meetings with a meal at Mansfield.

44. A pamphlet *Ordination Training at Mansfield* is available free by writing to the College Secretary. *A History of Mansfield College* and *100 Years of Ministerial Training* will be available at the end of the summer for a small charge.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM

45. Student entries from the three denominations involved in this ecumenical college for theological training are something of an unknown quantity each year, but currently the intakes are satisfactory, with a total student number of 66.

46. The URC has two candidates for the stipendiary ministry, one third and one first year, and anticipates sending at least one more next year, under the special arrangements agreed by the Assembly.

47. The West Midlands Training Course is also based at the college, and we are exploring ways in which we can take advantage of that training facility also for our auxiliary candidates. We have none there at present, but several visits have taken place, and we are aware of what is available.

BOARD OF STUDIES FOR THE AUXILIARY MINISTRY

Convener: Revd Alan Dunstone

National Director of Training: Revd Michael Dunford

48. The Board is responsible to the new Training Committee of the Ministries Department and administers the training programme followed by all candidates for the auxiliary ministry. By the end of 1985, 62 students completed their studies satisfactorily and we are pleased to report that the drop-out rate has been quite low, and not more than 10%.

49. Students cover some preparatory work under our guidance, and then undertake a course organised within the URC or by an ecumenical body. Currently 30 students are doing the URC course, which has the advantage of flexibility and includes shorter and specialised courses for the different models of auxiliary ministry. We have currently 39 students on 10 other courses around the country, and have been glad to draw the attention of the church to this significant ecumenical enterprise, and excursion into a whole new field of ministerial training.

50. Two matters are claiming our attention. We are concerned at the rising costs of training our students on ecumenical courses, though we do not wish to recommend any change in our recruitment or training patterns. The URC Course is being substantially revised to take account of our experience so far and the particular nature of this specialised ministry, and we trust that *Preparing for Ministry* will match the expectations of the Church.

LAY PREACHING SUB-COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Sylvia Owen

Secretary: Vacant

51. The Supplementary Ministries Committee was dissolved on 9 October 1985. It is intended that all the arrangements made for administering the *Exploring the Faith* course, the conferences and any other business connected with the training and well-being of lay preachers, made by the SMC, will be honoured by the Lay Preaching sub-committee.

Conferences

52. The annual Joint Anglican/Methodist/Congregational/United Reformed and Baptist Conference held in April is much appreciated by those who can attend and all the places are taken for April 1986.

53. The Lay Preaching Commissioners' Consultation is held annually in May and is well subscribed. It is a valuable opportunity for discussion and exchange of ideas.

54. A successful Lay Preachers' National Conference was held at The Hayes, Swanwick, from 31 May — 2 June 1985, and another is being planned for 1987. Arrangements are being finalised for a Students' Study Weekend at Swanwick from 30 May — 1 June 1986.

Exploring the Faith course

55. This course is still in demand by potential lay preachers and others. It is also increasingly used in the initial training for the auxiliary ministry. There are 1,117 students on the register at mid-January 1986. District Councils submitted 23 names of lay preachers for National Accreditation. Our continued gratitude is expressed to tutors and assessors who give time and expertise in helping students gain a high standard throughout the 17 units. The Lay Preaching Commissioners are the link between students and tutors, and the Lay Preaching committee, and represent lay preachers on their respective District Councils.

Shergold Prize

56. The committee are pleased to award a place at one of the study conferences to Mr Peter Lambden, Coventry District, who gained the highest overall mark of the course in 1985.

57. **STUDENTS IN TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY 1985/6** (as at February 1986)

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Michael Armstong (Mansfield), Colin Marsh (Mansfield), John Kingsley (Northern).

Auxiliary

Gordon Connacher (NEOC), Tom Ellison (NEOC), Margaret Smith (URC).

NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Joseph Clemson (Westminster), Robert Jones (Westminster), Stephen Brown (Northern), Arthur Climpson (Northern), David Legge (Northern), Peter Meek (Northern), Ian Ring (Northern), Eric Wollaston (Northern).

Auxiliary

Alan Batterbee (CLC), Tony Cottam (CLC), Tony Grand (CLC), Denise Megson (CLC), Yvonne Oldfield (CLC), Barbara Plenderleith (CLC), Betty Roe (CLC), Tom Taylor (CLC), Jack Thompson (CLC), John Hetherington (CDB), Andrew Lonsdale (CLC).

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

James Whateley (Westminster), John Bremner (Mansfield), Wendy Baskett (Northern), Andrew Fairchild (Northern), Paul Holmes (Northern), Philip Tiplady (Northern).

Auxiliary

Pamela Cox (CLC), Katherine Stocks (CLC).

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Richard Pearson (Westminster), Gregory Thompson (Mansfield), Peter Clarkson (Northern), Christopher Elliott (Northern), Paul Ellis (Northern), Susan Henderson (Northern), Michael Moss (Northern).

Auxiliary

Steven Knapton (CLC), George Perrott (CLC), Eric Rogers (URC/Sheffield), Julia Martin (CLC).

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Cecil White (Westminster), Christopher Strong (Westminster), Terry Hinks (Mansfield), Chris Ball (Mansfield), Betsy King (Mansfield), Martin Whiffen (Northern), Celia Whitman (Northern), Andrew Willett (Northern).

Auxiliary

Rodger Charlton (URC), Malcolm Deacon (URC), Graham Maskery (URC), William Spurling (EMMTC), Leslie Watson (URC), Lesley McNeil (EMMTC).

WEST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Joan Winterbottom (Northern)

Auxiliary

Margaret Renton (URC), Lewis Reynolds (URC), Stephen Sawyer (URC), Doreen Vick (URC), Ronald Webb (URC), Roger Woodall (CLC), Christine Key (URC), John Dews (URC), Peter Lovett (URC).

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

James Bolton (Westminster), Adrian Bulley (Westminster), Edward Martens (Westminster), Simon Ellis (Westminster), Peter Elliott (Mansfield), Bill Thomas (Mansfield), Craig Bowman (Northern), Martin Nicholls (Northern), Nick Stanyon (Northern).

Auxiliary

Joyce Benfield (URC), David Robertson (EAMTS), Julia Stone (URC), James Tarrant (URC).

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Peter Southcombe (Westminster), Ian Knowles (Northern), Erica Beglin (Queens).

Auxiliary

Gill Brown (SWMTS), Tom Bush (SWMTS), Les Phillips (URC), Evelyn Ridout (URC), Mary Wheatley (BDSM), Isa Napier (URC), Heather Pencavel (BDSM), Andrew Pugh (URC).

WESSEX PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Stephen Wilkins (Mansfield), Daphne Williams (Mansfield), David Walker (Northern).

Auxiliary

Emily Browne (SDMTS), Bill Connell (SDMTS), Griselda Langdon (URC), Nina Mead (SDMTS), Kathleen Pryde (SDMTS), Anita West (URC), Frank Cochrane (SDMTS).

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Derek Galloway (Westminster), Nigel Rogers (Westminster), John Vickers (Westminster), John Wadhams (Westminster), Ruth White (Westminster), David Whiting (Westminster), David Yule (Westminster), Martin Manley (Mansfield), Yvonne Workman (Mansfield), Mia Kyte (Mansfield), Michael Hodgson (Northern), Nicola Lowen (Northern), Elizabeth Kemp (Westminster).

Auxiliary

Edward Delasalle (Oak Hill), Laurence Dixon (Oak Hill), Gordon Hearne (SOC), David Jenkins (URC), Doris Knee (URC), Michael Potter (SOC), Audrey Proffitt (SOC), Philip Stewart (URC), John Walker (St Albans).

SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Paul Breeze (Westminster), Jean Black (Westminster), Rudolph Dixon (Westminster), David Hilborn (Mansfield), Sally Beck (Northern), Colin Foreman (Northern), Russell Furley-Smith (Northern), Raymond Singh (Northern), Stuart Scott (Queens).

Auxiliary

David Allonby (SOC), John Hall (SOC), Helena McKinnon (URC), Mary Read (SOC), Karen Street (URC).

PROVINCE OF WALES

Stipendiary

John Rees (Mansfield), Tracey Goddard (Northern), Kenneth Jones (Northern), Philip Jones (Northern), Julian Thomas (Northern), Shirley Mountcastle (Northern).

Auxiliary

Marina Kennard (URC), Kirsty Lehnert (URC).

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Janet Flawn (Westminster).

CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS in training:

Kate Breeze (St Andrew's Hall) — Eastern Province
Graham Ghaleb (St Andrew's Hall) — Thames North Province
Theresa Mansbridge (non-residential) — West Midlands Province

Auxiliary Courses

BDSM — Bristol Diocesan School of Ministry
CDTI — Carlisle Diocesan Training Institute
CLC — Manchester Christian Leadership Course
EMMTC — East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC — North East Ordination Course
Oak Hill — Oak Hill Non-Stipendiary Ministry Course
SADMTS — St Albans Dioceses Ministerial Training Scheme
SDMTS — Southern Diocese Ministerial Training Scheme
SOC — Southwark Ordination Course
SWMTS — South West Ministry Training Scheme
URC — URC Auxiliary Ministry Training Programme

58. TRAINING STATISTICS

College or Course	Total in Training at Feb. 1986	1986	Entry into URC Ministry 1987	1988	1989	Actual Nos entered service 1985/6
Westminster	23	11	2	5	5	11
Mansfield	16	8	2	2	4	6
Northern	36	9	8	8	11	10
Queen's	2	1	—	—	1	—
Totals	77	29	12	15	21	27
Auxiliary Ministry	69	27	17	12	13	24
CRCWs	3	—	2	1	—	1
Grand Total	149	56	31	28	34	52

SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Peter Brain
Secretary: Vacant

59. This new Committee started life in September 1985 with terms of reference agreed by Assembly last year. Part of our agenda is inherited from the former Supplementary Ministries Committee, part from the previous Deployment Committee and part is of a development nature. We have met three times and, for the first two meetings, have benefitted from the secretaryship of Revd Charles K Meachin.

“SPECIAL CATEGORY” MINISTRIES

60. One aspect of the Department's policy on ministerial development which is especially the responsibility of this Committee is the decision to retain, for the time being, the category of 'special' posts, currently 30. We consider new applications, meeting and visiting as required; and we review time-expired posts for possible renewal or amendment.

It is clear that this policy on 'specials' has provided lessons for the Church as a whole which we shall seek to share. For example, such posts require 'job descriptions' setting out priorities for the new ministry and they are automatically reviewed and sympathetically assessed after a specific

period; we might ask why this valuable discipline is demanded only of the few 'specials'? Again, such posts require, as do all ministries, considerable locally-raised funds and much effort is often put into this provision, e.g. from Provincial funds: but we would surmise that some other, non-special, 'hard-to-fill' vacancies will also have this problem.

Some of these 'special' posts are established chaplaincies, e.g. in educational establishments or industry. We are concerned to ensure more continuity in this work, knowing that the requirement to re-apply to the national Committee implies a possibility of termination which can be threatening. However, we have no wish to tie up so many of these 'special' posts that new requests cannot properly be considered.

In our consideration of 'specials' and of deployment criteria in general, we hope we can be guided by those points made in the report **Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Ministry** (Chapter 2) as accepted by Assembly in 1982. Here are emphasised the changing nature of ministry and its increasing variety, the need for teamwork, the necessary flexibility of attitude and of organisation, and above all the priority of the requirements of God's Kingdom in contemporary society.

SUB-COMMITTEES

61. We have decided to set up a minimum of sub-committees and to rely on a number of individuals as consultants in various fields; we shall also form short-term working groups for specific tasks.

62. We have set up a sub-committee on **Ministries in Higher and Further Education** comprising 3 chaplains, 3 students and 3 lecturers. We are glad that David Cornick, himself a chaplain at Robinson College, Cambridge, will now be the secretary of this sub-committee in succession to Peter Peirce.

63. The biennial Chaplains conference was held at Warwick in September. It was good to have the concerns of part-timers to the fore this time since there are altogether over 100 people involved in the work to a greater or lesser extent. The current climate of cuts in Education budgets continues to cause much anxiety, several redundancies and the prospect of worse to come. The work of chaplaincy in Polytechnics has been featured in *Going Public* a survey and an affirmation of this work; it is now available (£1) and we commend it.

64. We are setting up one other sub-committee, on **Ministries in the Community**. The membership reflects URC experience in the particular initiative of Church Related Community Workers and in the less specific work done in many local churches where social care and community development constitute most of the demand.

65. Here is a double agenda for what promises to be an important sub-committee. Under the auspices of the former Supplementary Ministries Committee, a successful residential consultation was held in London in September. This afforded the opportunity for the CRCWs in post and in training to meet. Also in September, Miss Alison MacLean was commissioned by Nottinghamshire District Council to serve on the Clifton Estates as a CRCW.

PARTICULAR MINISTRIES

66. We have identified four other specialist areas of ministry in addition to educational chaplaincy work, where institutions are served in the name of the URC; industry, the armed forces, prisons and hospitals. There are individuals on the Committee with experience in each of these but we have done little more than listen to them and invite reports from them at this stage.

We have noted with great pleasure the honour conferred on the Revd Hamish MacLagan, a United Board Chaplain to the Forces, in the award of the MBE.

RETIRED MINISTERS

67. Our terms of reference specifically mentioned retired ministers and widows. There is no way that a national Committee can minister directly to them but we have a responsibility to ensure that the proper support structures are in place and we have made enquiries regarding the slightly different practices of the Provinces.

DEACONESSES

68. Miss Kay Salvage is the only serving Deaconess. It was a pleasure to present Christmas gifts of £60 each to four retired Deaconesses, namely, Miss Jean Anderson, Miss Nan Purdie, Miss

Audrey Langdown and the Revd Lilian Blythin.

69. We thank God for the life and work of Miss Catherine Egdell who died on 13 April 1985.

SUPPORT OF MINISTERS

70. Prompted by several queries and at least two pieces of individual work by local ministers, we have begun to examine the question of 'the Church as employer' and the need to improve some aspects of that role. We have much listening to do to groups and individuals already conscious of this issue — and aware of the impact on individual ministers and thus on the well-being of the churches. We invite any local church member or minister to send comments on this matter; we shall naturally receive these with suitable confidentiality.

71. To distend a familiar phrase, this Committee seeks to be a servant of the servants of the servants of God! That is our true context and our only satisfaction.

CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS (CRCWs)

Policy Development

INTRODUCTION

72. In 1980 the General Assembly resolved to select and train CRCWs and in 1984 gave practical support to the work by including £20,000 p.a. in the budget raised through the Unified Appeal. It is already clear that CRCWs are helping the church to meet some of the opportunities of mission. However, after five years of this new venture, it is time to take stock of what has been achieved and to see where we need to go in the future. In addition, many questions have been asked about the detailed working out of the scheme and they need to be answered. This report is an attempt to give a full picture of where we are now and to place any unanswered questions on record.

SOME DEFINITIONS

73. Definitions of *community work* begin with a style and method of work rather than content. The central aims include a concern to improve both the general quality of social relationships and to achieve a greater measure of social justice. Community workers are involved in encouraging a community or local group to determine their own needs and to develop the will and the confidence to use their own gifts and skills in building and sustaining community life. In addition a group may need to press for additional resources or changes in policy or procedure so that needs can be met. The task of the community worker with local people, be they residents in a neighbourhood or those with a common problem or aspiration, will be to create the conditions for informed decision-taking and effective planning and action. A *community worker* is one who works in this way. Such a person may or may not be professionally trained.

74. The *context* of community work is normally but not exclusively amongst the disadvantaged, who tend to be more concentrated in certain areas or amongst particular groups. The contribution which community work skills can make are along four lines:-

- i) developing self help and mutual aid, mobilising a group's own resources and bringing in new financial and human resources, often under the group's control;
- ii) developing community organisation which can press for changes or developments in the policies of statutory bodies or other agencies active in an area;
- iii) having a concern to start with peoples' experience as they express it rather than with the concepts of other professional groups. From involvement with people in their hopes and fears, aspirations and struggles and in dialogue with them, alternative views of the effects of social and economic policy on community life can be articulated and presented;
- iv) having a focus on learning, so that people develop skills to initiate and manage community and co-operative enterprises (for example, housing co-operatives, community centres or community businesses). This educational thrust also provides an opportunity for dialogue between the group and the worker about motivation, aims and values.

75. A *Church Related Community Worker*, in the broadest sense, is a community worker who enables the church to work in this way with its local community, rather than someone employed

by the church to act on its behalf. In the narrower URC sense, it is also a church member who is commended by local church and District Council and accepted for training by the Provincial Synod. (For the rest of this report, CRCW will refer only to this latter category). Churches have sought the help of a CRCW when they are set in urban priority areas, or where their neighbourhood has within it ethnic minorities, or groups with special needs, for example the elderly, single parent families, the unemployed.

EXISTING PRACTICE

76. Since the scheme began ten persons have been accepted for training or recognised as CRCWs. Of these, two work with local churches, two with one District Council and one with another denomination. Of these five, three are part-time. In addition, one moved from a post on marriage and another is seeking a post within a limited geographical area. Three are in training. There are also other workers employed by churches who are not accredited.

77. Although not all community workers are professionally trained, it was decided that CRCWs should hold either a Certificate in Youth and Community Work, a B.Ed having specialised in community work, or a CQSW with a community work component, all followed by additional theological training. So far most of the training has been done at Westhill College and St Andrew's Hall. LEA grants were to be sought for the support of the students' professional training and an annual budget of £5,000 was agreed to cover the cost of the support of students during theological training. However, because of difficulties in obtaining the LEA grant, this budget figure has been used to support both parts of the training. In addition, one of the World Church and Mission Department's reserved places at St Andrew's has had to be used.

78. Appointments to posts are made by the local sponsors, usually a District Council or a pastorate. In some cases, the Moderators have been used to make introductions.

79. The funding of such posts can be difficult. The original intention was to seek Local Authority support and not to seek central church funding. Whilst the need for CRCWs has increased, the possibilities of grant aid from local authorities has decreased dramatically hence the General Assembly's decision of 1982 to give some financial support. This money (£20,000 p.a.) is used to top up money found locally. 80% of the allocation has already been committed in 1986 and 1987. The present policy is that such "grants will be made for the salary support of qualified CRCWs in URC approved projects. Such workers will normally be URCRCWs". The grant is for a project and therefore applications have been expected to provide details of the preparatory work, a budget, a job description and appropriate support and accountability procedures.

80. All decisions about CRCWs were taken by the Supplementary Ministries Committee which also dealt with Lay Preachers. Now decisions regarding recruitment, selection and accreditation are the responsibility of the Vocations Committee. A small working party containing members with professional knowledge of community work education will be set up to give preliminary advice to the Department. The Support Committee will deal with all other matters including the support of projects and CRCWs. This will be through its Ministries in the Community sub-committee.

SOME QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

81. Salaries and Conditions of service differ. Ought the church to provide a salary and conditions comparable to relevant secular scales or comparable to ministerial stipends and conditions? A CRCW could be placed on the Joint National Council (JNC) at Scale III at around £8,500-£9,000 p.a. This is marginally higher therefore than a minister on the basic stipend plus full housing costs.

82. If the latter, then questions regarding the provision of housing, retirement housing and pension arise. Underlying the question are two further issues. Firstly, are CRCWs expected to commit themselves to the lifelong service of the church or only for such shorter periods as they and the church think fit? Secondly, in some situations where churches have wanted to appoint a CRCW there has been no trained, accredited worker available. In these cases, churches have appointed local people with the necessary skills but without qualifications or accreditation and called them CRCWs. In other situations churches have wanted to appoint an appropriately skilled person from the locality but they are not recognised as CRCWs by the URC. Should we recognise that this may happen and develop a system for the training and accreditation of such workers, for whom a pattern of residential, professional training may not be appropriate or who may have part of the necessary qualification (e.g. community work training but no theological training)?

83. There is also a debate on finance. In the new situation referred to in paragraph 79, ought the church to consider funding the whole of the salary from national resources? If so, how many workers can we afford? East Midlands province suggests an establishment of thirty to be shared between the provinces, in order that 'their ministry and style of working can become known throughout the church'. This would cost over a quarter of a million pounds each year. In addition, a training course of three years would cost between £12-15,000 for each student.

84. In accordance with the Assembly resolution of 1984, discussions with the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee have been opened but these figures indicate that many large questions need to be settled before they can reach a conclusion.

85. There is a further question on the recognition of projects which is linked to the previous question on finance. Is it helpful to draw an analogy with the 'special category' posts in which certain ministers are placed? These are projects, prepared and submitted through Provinces, duly costed and providing for proper management and evaluation. Should the Church be willing to place and support recognised community workers in such projects, up to an agreed national limit?

86. Before an adequate answer can be given to these questions we need to tackle two fundamental issues:-

(a) How does the church regard CRCWs theologically? There is no doubt that CRCWs are engaged in Christian ministry. However, do CRCWs represent the beginnings of a contemporary attempt to restore the diaconate, ordained as a ministry with its own dignity and meant to be exercised for life? Or are they to be related more to that ministry exercised by every member of the church? Answers to questions about calling, accreditation, training and funding depend on the answer to this question;

(b) the second question follows from this. Whilst we recognise the importance of community work as an approach to the church's ministry and mission there are other needs for professional service opening up, as we struggle with the many needs of the people, communities and organisations. Other forms of service have already emerged, for example, pastoral workers, church/community centre workers, educational workers. How should the church promote, recognise and support this growth of a wide variety of ministries?

DEPARTMENTAL ACTION

87. **The Central Committee** has the unresolved theological question on its agenda and will consult the Doctrine and Worship Committee. Developments in other British churches and in the world Church are being studied. Discussion with the Provinces and the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee will be continued.

88. **The Training Committee** will review the training offered to CRCWs in the light of advice received from the working party.

89. Apart from the continuing care of our present CRCWs, the **Support Committee** will look at the question of other kinds of ministry (para.86b). In addition, guidance will be given on job descriptions, contracts and conditions of employment; also on management, monitoring and evaluation of workers and projects, and the lessons to be learned by the wider church; and, finally on the need for proper local support for CRCWs.

90. In the light of the work carried out by the other three committees, the **Vocations Committee** will review policy and publicity regarding recruitment, selection and accreditation.

91. The department places on record its appreciation of the detailed work carried out by the Thames North Province. (Resolution 3)

PERSONALIA

92. We wish to place on record our gratitude to all those who retire from committees within the Department, and we welcome those who join us. In particular our appreciation is expressed to those who have rendered particular service in positions of responsibility and leadership, giving the whole Church the benefit of their considerable gifts.

93. **CHARLES MEACHIN** deserves more than a paragraph but even then it would be impossible

to describe and evaluate his 15 years' service, first in the Training and Mission Department of the CCEW, then with the Church Life Department of the URC and latterly in Ministries. His energy and enthusiasm and incredible ability to sell ideas, be it in stewardship, lay preaching, or in-service training, will long be remembered. His leadership of overseas journeys to Germany, Zambia, and India have encouraged countless young people in their faith and service to the Church. There are many Lay Preachers throughout the country who are equally indebted to him for his guidance and help in their training. He helped us launch the CRCW programme. His presence both in the office and around the country will be greatly missed. We sincerely thank him for all his efforts and wish him well as he returns to a local pastorate. We do not imagine that we have heard the last of Charles, and wonder what new initiatives will be promoted in the Croydon District.

94. **JOHN O'NEILL** occupied the Dunn Chair of New Testament at Westminster College for 21 years with great distinction. Generations of students and many churches came to appreciate his searching scholarship and pastoral concern. Our loss is Edinburgh's gain.

95. **EILEEN PELLING** leaves us after a total of 19 years' loyal service on the clerical staff in Memorial Hall, Livingstone House and finally Tavistock Place. We acknowledge our debt and wish her well in retirement.

96. **PETER PEIRCE** served the former Chaplains and Students Committee since 1982. He has done so much more than the minimum that might have been required, offering characteristic encouragement and practical help to chaplains in various establishments.

97. **ROGER SCOPES** gave valuable help assisting with the administration of the Training Programme for the Auxiliary Ministry and we offer him also our thanks.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the Report of the Ministries Department for debate.
 2. The Assembly adopts the revised entrance qualifications for ministerial training as set out on pages of the Assembly Book of Reports.
 3. The Assembly notes the paragraphs relating to the development of CRCW policy, as set out on page of the Assembly Book of Reports, and refers them to Departments and to Provincial Synods for written comments by 30 November 1986.
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ASSEMBLY PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd A L Macarthur

Secretary: Revd B G Thorogood

1. The Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee now completes three years of work in trying to fulfil the brief given to it by the Assembly of 1983. Three years has proved too short a time to assess the value of what has been attempted, or to see clearly what amendments are required to the original directions. The Committee therefore welcomes the proposal of the Executive Committee that it should continue in its present role for a further three years.

2. The small size of the group has been an advantage both in confidentiality and in pastoral understanding of the cases that have been referred to us. Any such central group will always be too remote from the problems to be other than a 'reference' group available to support and advise Moderators, Councils and others whose immediate and daily involvement is inescapable. However, its remoteness has its own value in objectivity, so that those who have to make the decisions have a sounding board available to them as they seek to resolve difficulties in pastoral and ministerial care of the churches.

3. Our short experience has shown that many of our ministers and churches are under strain, domestic, vocational, financial and personal. We are impressed and encouraged by the care given to such matters by Moderators, Pastoral Committees, neighbouring ministers and friends. We are aware that some of the Councils of the Church find it hard to give the time and support that is needed in such situations. More fraternal groups could help to support those under stress and at early stages might well save difficulties from developing into acute problems. We have been in touch with other committees, especially those involved in the assessment and training of candidates for the ministry. We believe that there has been some failure in the assessment of personal, as distinct from academic, development during the preparation for the ministry, and we welcome steps now being taken in the Colleges and Councils which may help to forestall some of the difficulties.

4. During the year some sixteen cases have been brought to our attention. Many of these have resolved themselves through local initiatives. The Committee is grateful for the power entrusted to it to authorise payments from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund and other Assembly funds. This is essential as we try to give opportunities for renewal and reconciliation, and enables us to make interim arrangements outside the normal rules and to give opportunities for professional counselling. We are aware that this power needs to be used sparingly and with awareness of the problems of those responsible for the whole financial needs of the Church.

5. If the the Assembly extends our remit, we will not only continue along the lines so far followed but will keep open to possible changes in the role given to us, and in the way in which the work of the Committee is keyed into the departmental structures of the Church.

RESOLUTION

The Assembly receives the report for debate.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

Convener: Mr Fred Brooman

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

1. **Contributions to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and the Unified Appeal 1985** The budgets for 1985 approved by Assembly 1984 (*Record* pages 70 and 71) provided for expenditure which was to be financed by contributions of £5,795,000 to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and £1,280,000 to the Unified Appeal. (The figure of £1,290,000 for the Unified Appeal which appears on page 70 of the *Record* was reduced by £10,000 when Assembly decided not to proceed with the proposal for a residential Assembly.)
2. The contributions received are shown in Appendix 1. They fall short of the budgetted figures by £3,546 as regards the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and £18,647 for the Unified Appeal but these are not large amounts in relation to the total budgets and we again express our sincere thanks to local churches for their loyal support and to Provincial and District officers for all their work. (Resolution 3.)
3. **Expenditure on Central Activities 1985 — The General Fund** The accounts for 1985 had not been finalised at the time of writing this report, but we expect the expenditure on the General Fund to be about £1,406, 000, £19,000 less than budget, but still £100,000 more than for 1984. The comparative figures adjusted for inflation are shown in Appendix 2.
4. **Stipends of Ministers Serving Centrally** Information about the stipends and other conditions of service of ministers holding Assembly appointments is given in Appendix 3.
5. **Accounts for 1985** The accounts for 1985 will be published separately when the audit has been completed and will be carried to the *Record of Assembly* in the usual way.

MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd John Waller

Secretary: The Revd George Hooper

6. **Pulpit Supply Fees** At last year's Assembly the Committee was asked to look into the arrangement whereby the amount of pulpit supply fees that could be reclaimed for each service was related to a church's contribution to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund. It was quickly agreed that this arrangement was no longer appropriate, and from 1 January 1986 the maximum amount reclaimable is £12.00 per service for all churches where circumstances permit a claim.
7. The major work of the Committee in the past year has been in the areas of the adequacy of stipends and the improvement of pension arrangements. A great many people have been involved in the discussion of these matters and the Committee is grateful to them all.
8. **Adequacy of Stipends** Given the circumstances of ministers and their families, and of the people among whom they work, differ so widely any concept of "adequacy" is hard to define. After hearing and discussing a variety of opinions the Committee thinks it right to make a number of general statements which it hopes will give churches and ministers confidence in its stipend recommendations now and in the future.

8.1 The basic stipend should be sufficient to enable ministers and their families to live without undue financial worry whilst carrying out their ministry.

8.2 The stipend should not be tied directly to the remuneration level of any other employment because no direct comparison of circumstances can be made. However there does need to be regular reference to general income levels, the index of retail prices (particularly that part which falls within a minister's budget), and the stipends paid by other denominations. There also needs to be some general monitoring of ministers' circumstances, although always on a strictly confidential basis.

8.3 At the same time we have to keep in mind the ability of a declining (at present) number of church members to provide the contributions needed to pay stipends and other related costs. It is also necessary to take account of the church's policy of providing trained ministry to all pastorates, since this affects the number of ministers to be paid.

9. The Committee took soundings in the Provinces on three possible ways forward in the immediate future:

9.1 The re-introduction of children's allowances to help ministers with families.

9.2 The payment of an extra allowance to all ministers with no significant family income other than the basic stipend.

9.3 A general phased increase in the real value of the basic stipend over a number of years.

10. The responses received were not unanimous! However the third option clearly found the greatest favour and the Committee proposes to move down that road.

11. It had been the hope of a number of members of the Committee that an 8% stipend increase could be approved, but this has proved to cost considerably more than the maximum offers made by provinces towards the 1987 requirement. It has therefore been decided to increase the basic stipend by about 7.5% from 1 July 1986 (to £5,712.00 p.a.), although even this marginally exceeds the offers received.

12. The budget allows for a further 7% increase for 1987. (Resolution 4.) This will require an increase in contributions from the churches in 1987 of approximately 5%.

13. **Pensions** Assembly 1985 was advised verbally that the preliminary result of the actuarial valuation of the URC Ministers Pension Fund as at 31.12.1984 showed that, provided the annual subvention of £426,000 from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund continued until 31.12.1995 there would be a small surplus of £373,000 in the Pension Fund. This was a satisfactory result and had led the Committee to ask for further costings from the Actuaries.

14. Two particular priorities for improvement were put before Assembly:-

14.1 To increase pensions in respect of service by ex-Congregational ministers prior to 1971 to a more realistic level.

14.2 To increase the lump sum death-in-service benefit from one year's basic stipend to two years' basic stipend.

15. With regard to 14.1 we are advised by the Actuaries that provided the annual subvention from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund is increased from £426,000 p.a. to £500,000 p.a. and is continued until 31.12.2000 it would be possible to increase the annual rate of pension from £19.10 p.a. to £30.00 p.a. in respect of each year of service prior to 1971, creating only a small deficit in the Pension Fund which need not be dealt with at this point.

16. With regard to 14.2 it is possible to make this improvement provided that the church's normal annual contribution to the Pension Fund from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund is increased from 7.75% to 8% of basic stipend.

17. Your Committee strongly recommend that both these improvements be implemented and submit Resolution 5 to make the necessary changes in the Rules. Provision for the increased subvention of £500,000 to the Pension Fund has been made in the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund budget for 1987.

18. Reference was made last year to possible changes in state pensions being considered by the government. A green paper subsequently published proposed to abolish state earnings-related pensions (SERPS), which would have had an adverse effect on the total pensions of our members in the 21st century. In common with many other funds we submitted representations, dealing particularly with the special problems of our ministers. Since then a white paper has proposed as an alternative a reduction in SERPS rather than abolition, and a government Bill has now been published, the basic proposals of which will not come into force until 1988. We shall continue to monitor the position as the debates proceed, but in consultation with the Actuaries it is felt that there is no need to take definite action to amend the structure of our Pension Fund at this stage. Future action will be based on the need to protect fully the pension entitlements of ministers.

19. Compulsory changes in Pension Funds are brought about by the Social Security Act, 1985. One change provides that where, in respect of early leavers, a "frozen" or "deferred" pension is or has been set up within an approved Pension Fund, this must be increased by 5% p.a. or by the

increase in the Retail Prices Index if lower with effect from 1 January 1985 in respect of a member who becomes a non-contributory member of the fund after 1 January 1986. Not all the necessary Regulations under the Act have yet been finalised, and our Actuaries recommend that changes in our Scheme Rules should not be made at this juncture.

20. Helpful discussions have continued with the Charity Commissioners regarding the future of the Pastors' Superannuation Fund and the Pastors' Widows' Fund. The legal considerations and processes inevitably take time, but the funds continue to be administered in the best interest of all who qualify for benefit.

21. **Progress of the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund** It has been possible to carry out these discussions and come to these decisions from a position of confidence and strength. The Committee therefore wishes to acknowledge the efforts of all in the churches who, often at considerable sacrifice, have made sure that again the Fund received virtually all its promised contributions in 1985.

22. However, as we have already seen this year, it cannot be taken for granted that contributions will always be sufficient to meet any demand that is made on the Fund. Our strength depends upon a finely-tuned operation which works on very small reserves.

23. Thanks are also due to the Provincial Representatives and office staff, who administer the Fund with skill and dedication and an awareness of the needs of both local churches and ministers.

24. All this can be seen in the figures. The churches contributed only £3,546 less than was asked for, and expenditure on the Fund was £48,020 below budget. This is a remarkable achievement in an exercise that involved the receipt and payment of £5.9 million in the year!

CHURCH BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Maurice Husselbee

Secretary: Mr Tegid Peregrine

25. The Committee's terms of reference were revised by the 1985 Assembly (Resolution 6) and are set out on page 44 of that *Assembly's Reports*.

26. In national terms the main issue of concern to the Committee is the continued uncertainty over the Government's attitude to the retention of the ecclesiastical exemption that churches enjoy in relation to buildings listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The Government has made no pronouncement on this issue since it issued a consultation paper in 1984.

27. Apart from contact maintained with a number of provinces over specific issues the Committee's main source of advice and consultation centred on a Special Property Conference held in October 1985. The theme of the Conference was Conservation and Church Buildings and speakers were invited from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England and the Historic Churches Preservation Trust. A number of Case Studies of conservation in action in selected UR Churches were also presented. A note of the Conference has been circulated to Provinces. Further copies can be supplied if required.

28. The guidelines for giving financial assistance from the Church Buildings fund remain unchanged from 1985. They are as follows:-

28.1 Assistance will be given to those projects recommended by Provinces which the Committee deems appropriate in all the circumstances.

28.2 To encourage churches to employ professional consultants to advise in property matters, loans will be made of 50% of professional fees, subject to a maximum of £10,000. Such loans will be interest free for the first two years. Thereafter the loan will be repayable by quarterly instalments of not less than 4% of the sum advanced and the balance outstanding will bear interest at 7%.

28.3 Applications for loans for building work will be considered only if the total cost of the project will not be less than £30,000. Loans will be limited to not more than 50% of the total cost of the project and no loan will exceed £50,000. Repayment will normally be by quarterly instalments of not less than 4% of the sum advanced, and the balance outstanding will bear interest at 7%. The Committee's resources will be sufficient to finance only a few loans each year on this basis.

28.4 Current resources will not permit the making of further grants.

29. 11 Applications for assistance from churches were approved during 1985 amounting to £161,000 for building works and £47,000 for professional fees. The sum available for loans in 1986 is likely to be of the order of £200,000.

30. During the year decisions were made on two rating cases which will be of interest to some churches. In the first it was accepted by the Rating Authority that houses occupied by caretakers within the curtilage of the church are exempt from payment of general rates. The second concerned church halls which are let to outside bodies on a financial basis. Rates are payable on such halls but expenses incurred in making them available for letting can be taken into account in assessing the amount. It was ruled that such expenses may include not only the actual extra cost of caretaking, heating, lighting etc., but also the notional cost of extra cleaning, secretarial work etc. supplied voluntarily by church members. Further details of both cases are available from the Secretary.

31. The Revd Maurice Husselbee has served as Convener to the Committee for six years and retires at this Assembly. During this period of change and expansion he has conducted the affairs of the Committee with courtesy and efficiency. We express our deep appreciation of the service he has rendered.

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Skidmore

Secretary: Mr Bob Carruthers

32. The Committee has overall responsibility for all retirement properties whether owned in the name of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited or the United Reformed Church Trust (including Retired Ministers Housing Fund Properties). Retirement Housing is an enterprise of more than 170 properties; the administration cost which is shown in the account reflects only a proportion of the true cost due to the denomination providing services without charge and the willingness of those who undertake the work with no or little reward.

33. The Committee has continued the policy of providing housing in localities where applicants seek to live subject to the limitations imposed by the purchase ceilings which are set each year. The ceilings for 1986 are a maximum contribution of £30,000 from Society/Trust funds and a purchase ceiling of £45,000 where the applicant or other persons contribute the balance in excess of £30,000. The continuation of this policy involves the Society/Trust in the sale of vacant properties which are in areas in which known applicants do not wish to live.

34. The Guidelines which were published as Appendix 4 to the Finance and Administration Department's Report to the 1985 General Assembly have been amended by the inclusion of:-

Sub-paragraph 1 (3)

"When a minister is not in full-time service at age 65 years but has given 25 years full-time stipendiary service, an application may be considered nine months before retirement in the light of the merits of the case and the resources available at the time".

Sub-paragraph 2 (e)

"Service with Mansfield, Northern and Westminster Colleges, subject to the conditions of service being comparable with those of ministers of the United Reformed Church".

35. In 1985 the Committee provided housing for 20 retired ministers and in addition rehoused 2 retired ministers and 1 widow in properties more suited to their needs. There were no delays in the provision of housing and no qualifying applicant was refused assistance. Of the 23 properties purchased 17 were purchased jointly with the tenant and/or a Province.

36. During the year 10 properties and one plot of land were sold and at the year end one further property was sold subject to contract.

37. It is difficult to forecast the demand for retirement housing in future years. Some ministers may have to make sudden decisions about retirement and a significant number advance or defer the date of their retirement. The 1982 survey forecast the need to provide for 27 retiring ministers in 1985 but the number housed was only 20. The number of ministers reaching the age of 65 years in that year was 10 but whereas in 1986 25 ministers will attain that age the survey forecast suggests

the need to provide for only 15 retiring ministers.

38. We continue to be grateful for the foresight of friends who give large sums of money for the housing of Retired Ministers, and also to those who leave money or property for this purpose after their death. In this context we gratefully record the receipt of five houses and money producing in all in excess of £500,000 in the year. We noticed in particular a gift in lieu of a legacy of £157,000 which arrived unannounced in the post, and the bequest of a house, 'Nidalla', under the will of the late Mrs Macleod "in memory of the great kindness to Mr P Willey while in the Cornwall Mental Hospital, Bodmin, in 1945, who had no legs or speech and had lost the use of his hands, shown by Mr David D Smith of 47 Clapton Way, London E5., Mr Maurice C Griffiths and Mr Gordon F Prentice of 18 St John Street, Prestwick, Ayrshire all of whom were members of the National Fire Service, and were also members of the Congregational Church".

39. Although the loan made from the General Funds of the Church has been repaid, to meet the demand for retirement properties in 1985 it was necessary for the loan from money received by the Church from Grants received from Memorial Hall Trust to be increased by £112,500 to £448,500. The Committee is grateful to the Treasurership Committee for the provision of these loans but once again looks to Provincial Synods and District Councils to encourage regular giving by members and churches, bearing in mind that in the early months of 1986 there will be a likely deficit of £149,000 if the needs of applicants are to be met.

40. Attention is drawn to the Accounts for the Society and the Retired Ministers Housing Fund. It is to be regretted that the Charity Commission was unable to agree to the amalgamation of the two groups of properties into one organisation because the terms of the Trusts are not identical. Even so the Committee sees it as its responsibility to ensure that the tenants of both Society and Trust properties are treated equally as regards rents, repair etc. under identical tenancy agreements.

41. In July 1985 the Committee decided to increase rents from 1 January 1986 by £1.05 per week for tenants paying the maximum of £7.00 per week and pro-rata for others. The decision was notified to all tenants shortly after the decision was taken and was confirmed formally in November 1985.

42. The oversight arrangements continue to operate in the Provinces and during the year the Principal Officers made visits to 8 applicants and to 52 tenants and vacant properties.

WELFARE AND EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Michael Whitehorn

Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

43. The Committee has continued its normal concerns through its three meetings in the year, while other urgent matters are handled by the officers, especially through the Revd Bernard Thorogood and his secretary, Mrs Jean Rolls, to whom we are indebted for her kind help.

44. Since we have felt that there may be greater need in certain situations, particularly for ministers in retirement and in case of marriage difficulties, the Committee has met with two of the Provincial Moderators to see if their experience generally suggests that more help may be needed. We realise that Provinces vary in the resources they each have to help in difficulties. We are grateful to the Moderators for their continued co-operation in many of the situations calling for help.

45. We are also grateful to the whole Church for its contribution of over £18,000 to the Welfare Fund through the Unified Appeal, by which we are able to make a much appreciated Christmas gift to ministers' widows and to some retired ministers. The invested resources of the other funds have again been adequate to enable us to meet the requests for help in many individual cases, whether for medical help, holidays and schooling costs. These apply generally to ministers and their widows and families, as only two funds are more widely available. Certain bursaries are available from time to time at Caterham and Silcoates Schools through the Fowler Scholarship Fund, as well as help in uniform and certain other costs in other cases.

46. We hope in these various ways to have met the cases of real need within the wider fellowship of the United Reformed Church.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the report of the Finance and Administration Department for debate.
2. Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31 December 1985.
3. Assembly notes the contributions made for 1985 to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and the Unified Appeal and thanks all those who have provided money, advocacy and administration.
4. Assembly approves the Maintenance of the Ministry Budget for 1987 noting that it allows for an increase of 7% in the basic stipend from 1 July 1987.
5. Assembly approves the following amendments to the rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund:-

Add at the end of Rule 15b

“with effect from 1 July 1986 this percentage shall be increased from 7·¾% to 8%”.

Add at the end of Rule 22a

“with effect from 10 May 1986 the lump sum payable shall equal 2 years basic stipend at the date of death. Proportion of benefits in respect of limited membership shall be increased pro-rata.”

Add at the end of Rule 18ci

“with effect from 1 July 1986 the figure of £12.00 shall be increased to £30.00.”

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION — APPENDIX 1

Contributions to the Maintenance of the Ministry and Unified Appeal 1985

Province	Maintenance of the Ministry		Unified Appeal	
	£	% of amount promised	£	% of target
1. Northern	480,000	100	102,664	98
2. North Western	550,000	100	117,000	100
3. Mersey	419,454	100	90,050	100
4. Yorkshire	400,000	100	92,260	101
5. East Midlands	334,000	100	76,995	100
6. West Midlands	462,000	100	101,864	102
7. Eastern	440,000	100	98,236	100
8. South Western	370,000	100	87,225	103
9. Wessex	551,000	100	117,016	100
10. Thames North	675,000	100	150,070	101
11. Southern	835,000	100	189,578	105
12. Wales	<u>275,000</u>	100	<u>37,003</u>	100
Total from Provinces	5,791,454	100	1,259,961	101
Other receipts	—		1,392	
	<u>5,791,454</u>		<u>1,261,353</u>	
Amounts required by Budget	<u>5,795,000</u>		<u>1,280,000</u>	
Shortfall	<u>£3,546</u>		<u>£18,647</u>	

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION — APPENDIX 2

Expenditure on Central Activities

The expenditure on central activities financed mainly by the Unified Appeal is set out below and in the right-hand column we have shown it in terms of 1980 £s, i.e. adjusted for inflation by reference to the Retail Price Index.

	Expenditure £	At 1980 Prices £
1980	915,000	915,000
1981	985,000	871,000
1982	1,075,000	849,000
1983	1,178,000	887,000
1984	1,306,000	935,000
1985 (provisional)	1,406,000	959,000

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION — APPENDIX 3

Ministers employed centrally —

Stipends and Conditions of Service from July 1985

- Provincial Moderators.** The stipend of Provincial Moderators is £7,104 per annum (plus any children's allowances). They are provided either with a house free of maintenance costs, rates, heating and lighting, or with a house allowance in lieu. Travelling expenses, telephone costs etc., in connection with church business are refunded. A car is provided, maintenance and running cost being met by the Church subject to an adjustment for private use. The Moderator may provide his own car and claim mileage allowances.
 - Ministers at Tavistock Place.** Stipends range from £7,104 per annum for Assistant Secretaries to £10,536 for the General Secretary (plus any children's allowances). The other arrangements are similar to those for Provincial Moderators but fares between home and Tavistock Place are met by ministers.
 - Preaching Fees and Travelling Expenses.** When Moderators and Staff Secretaries visit a church or attend a meeting in the course of their official duties, any fee or reimbursement of travelling expenses paid to the Officer is accounted for to the central funds of the Church.
 - Academic Staff at Westminster College.** Stipends range from £7,104 to £7,776 per annum (plus any children's allowances). The housing provisions are the same as those for Provincial Moderators.
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**WORLD CHURCH & MISSION DEPARTMENT
CENTRAL COMMITTEE**

Convener: Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow
Secretary: Revd Donald Elliott

Dear Assembly Member,

1. You will have read many Reports by the time you come to this one, but even a cursory reading of the World Church and Mission Department's committee reports will reveal the multiplicity of the contacts and links the URC has with people and churches throughout the world. One of these days I would like to take you with me on a journey. We can start at Dover and wend our way through Europe meeting Christians who belong to churches with whom the URC has fraternal links: in France l'Eglise Réformée, in West Germany the Church of the Pfalz, in East and West Germany the Evangelical Church of the Union, the Waldensian Church in North Italy, the Mission Covenant Church in Sweden, the Reformed Church in Hungary, Poland and Romania, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Portugal.
2. On our way to Dover we will have passed through places where local United Reformed churches have become involved in Local Ecumenical Projects (LEPs) in which Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists, Roman Catholics and ourselves have joined to witness to the unity of the Church in Jesus Christ.
3. Would you rather be more enterprising in our travels? Let's go to Heathrow and start on a Council for World Mission journey. En route we shall pass through Southall where the Church is seriously engaged in dialogue with people of other faiths, as it is in many parts of the country. I missed the second Christian-Sikh Conference last year. I hear it was very stimulating.
4. We could start our CWM journey with a short flight to Holland and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands where the Council meeting of CWM was held at Leusden last year. Holland is in the European region of CWM, one of six, so I think we ought to visit one of the churches in each of the other five regions. Perhaps the next stop should be in Southern Africa to visit Botswana, one of the countries embraced by the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, then across the Indian Ocean to the Church of Bangladesh, and then on to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and on still over the Pacific to the Church of Tuvalu, and finally across Central America to the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. By the time we returned home we should have visited only six of the twenty-eight churches to whom we are bound in the partnership of sharing people, ideas and resources in a great missionary enterprise. Perhaps we should have arranged a stop-over in the USA to visit the office of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council in Indianapolis, and even gone South to Brazil to return the visit of the Revd Gerson and Mrs Romelia Meyer of the United Presbyterian Church of Brazil to Britain last year.
5. Even all this travelling would have given us only a limited introduction to our Christian contacts, but I hope we shall have grown in knowledge and enthusiasm for the mission of the Church and that we should have learned that the "best way of communicating ideas about mission throughout member churches was person to person. So all (CWM) member churches are encouraged to promote the exchange of personnel in as many ways as possible" (Personnel Committee). It will be interesting to share in the CWM Education in Mission project to help us understand our partnership better, (*Resolution 2*).
6. Did you hear on our journey that some of our CWM partners are short of money for their special programmes? We in the URC support CWM through the Unified Appeal, and at the moment we budget for only a British inflation increase in our asking from our churches. I don't think we have really explained to our members the needs of the Unified Appeal, do you? Not only CWM but other new initiatives in mission, many in the urban areas of this country, need increased sums of money, (*Resolution 3*).
7. Have you found yourself trying to explain what you believed as a member of the URC when you went to one of the inter-church Lent groups discussing *What on earth is the Church for?* As part of the *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* process, all the denominations have drafted statements of their understanding of themselves. This has proved much more difficult than you would think, but now that we have our statement of the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of its mission (*Appendix 1*), I hope you will find time to discuss it with your fellow church members and later

on with other Christians. Here our faith, our church order and our experience of union come together in one short document.

8. Did you know that the Amity Foundation set up by Christians and others in China has asked the British churches to send teachers of English to China? And what is more, the different denominations and missionary societies have co-operated to interview and pay for them? Isn't it strange that it takes a request from Chinese Christians to make our missionary societies in this country work together?

9. By the way, there is news from Scotland and Wales. The Congregational Union of Scotland has invited the URC to talk about union, and the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the URC Province of Wales are hoping to work more closely at local levels. The URC continues to seek the unity of all God's people.

10. I hope you will be present to hear the Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh, the new General Secretary of CWM, talk to Assembly on Thursday night. Meanwhile I must find out what Leonard thinks about the Freemasonry report (*Appendix 2*).

Good wishes,
The Department Convener

COMMUNICATION

Secretary: Mrs Helen Lidgett

11. A deep concern throughout the year has been how to develop personal communication between members of the URC and of our partner churches around the world. The Department has encouraged URC members to visit local churches when they travel abroad and asked local congregations to make contact with members of partner churches working and studying in this country. It has also encouraged congregations to develop 'twinning' links and can offer advice on this. It has talked with CWM about the possibilities and difficulties of 'twinning' links with CWM member churches. It urges URC congregations contemplating such links to identify their objectives extremely carefully, to be ready to listen to our partners and to exercise great patience.

12. The personal links formed during the visit of the South African women have borne fruit in widespread concern in URC congregations about the present situation in South Africa. The Department was able to share news and offer advice on ways of offering support and help which was taken up by many congregations. Their expressions of concern and prayer are deeply appreciated by our partners in South Africa.

13. A good opportunity for personal contact is the Swanwick World Mission Conference. The 1985 Conference was attended by 370 people and drew friends from East and West Germany, Ghana, the USA, Papua New Guinea, India, Jamaica and Australia. Many deep and lasting friendships were formed with these visitors. The 1986 Conference will be held on 9-15 August, with Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh, General Secretary of CWM as the main speaker on the theme *Doing With Christ — Equipping Local Congregations for Mission*. Friendships have also been formed with visitors to Assembly and the Department encourages Assembly members to meet and get to know their guests.

14. The Department has noted the desire of a number of congregations to support individual projects. While it applauds the deep and caring concern demonstrated by these congregations, the Department wishes to stand by its policy of undesignated giving to CWM. It believes this is the best way to enable receiving churches to plan effectively and fairly and to take their own decisions about the use of money. This understanding also lies behind the thinking that has gone on in the Department during the year on the World Council of Churches encouragement of the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources, whose principles it commends.

15. The Communication Section has throughout the year readily responded to requests for speakers, programme ideas and display materials for local churches. Plans are in hand for the production of material for the leaders of children's groups later this year. It will include stories, activities and visuals and be designed to help children discover a sense of belonging to the world church. The Section welcomes the expansion of CWM's list of filmstrip/slide sets and ideas, which are all available from Livingstone House, 11 Carteret Street, London SW1H 9DL.

16. The Department co-operated in the production of the 1986 Prayer Handbook *The Word and the World*, contributing world church, interfaith and ecumenical insights. It also produced the supplement *Partners in Mission* to provide churches with basic information about CWM, its member churches, staff and missionaries. Further thought has been given to the best way of enabling prayer for CWM partners through the Prayer Handbook.

17. **Community of Women and Men** Department Committees have discussed the mission needs exposed when serious attention is given to the Community of Women and Men in the Church and the implications of the involvement of women in interfaith dialogue. It is hoped that these continuing concerns will gradually re-shape the perceptions and practice of the Department.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Mary Marsden
Secretary: Miss Sheila Rudofsky

18. At its recent Council meeting, CWM came to the conclusion that the best way of communicating ideas about mission throughout member churches was person to person. So all member churches are encouraged to promote the exchange of personnel in as many ways as possible.

19. The URC is responding in several ways.

The Revd Raymond Arnold (West Midlands province) is at present in Madagascar, invited back by the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) to lecture for six months at the theological college.

Marie Trubic (Yorkshire province) is involved in the 1985/6 Training in Mission programme.

Bernard Deeks (Eastern Province) took six weeks leave of absence to work as a senior tutor at Chikballapur.

Three ministers are planning sabbaticals in CWM member churches.

20. The World Church and Mission Department is using its five "specials" to bring ministers from overseas to work in local congregations. Missionaries in the past and those sent from the URC today include both lay and ordained, so the Personnel Committee welcomes and encourages the inter-departmental conversations at present taking place within the URC on how to support LAY people working in the mission of our church.

21. Exchange of personnel continues outside the CWM family in order to promote growth in relationships.

The Revd George Stephen, Moderator of the Presbytery of Lanka, Sri Lanka, is studying at Northern College, Manchester.

Mr Elystan Miles (Wales Province) is assisting with conversational English at Debrecen High School, Hungary.

Peter Maier, a final year student for the ministry in the Palatinate, was on a "placement" in Winchester for three months. Sixteen students from the Pfalz Church paid a visit to the URC Central Office and some of the London churches last September.

The Synod of the Pacific, Presbyterian Church USA, has invited the URC to appoint a minister to take part in their peace emissary project.

22. The Committee welcomes an exciting new development taking place in mission in Britain. Many mission agencies — including the URC — are seeking to respond together, through the Conference for World Mission of the British Council of Churches, to requests coming from Hong Kong and China. The URC has committed itself to support jointly with the Church Missionary Society, the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Methodist Church Overseas Division, the Baptist Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, Mr Richard Worssam to work as a member of staff of the Hong Kong Christian Council. We have also committed ourselves to support jointly with the above agencies a group of teachers of English who have been requested to teach in China by the Amity Foundation (see para. 38). The support promised is both financial and secretarial, and throughout our negotiations we have been in touch with CWM.

23. Some of these exchanges are self-financing, others need support directly from the World Church and Mission Department, or through CWM. If we are to expand this work of mission, contributions to the Unified Appeal must rise so that the World Church and Mission budget can be increased by more than the inflation rate and our contribution to CWM and ecumenical programmes similarly increased to enable those bodies to respond positively to the many requests they receive. (*Resolution 3*).

24. The Revd Roberta Sears (York Road URC, Woking) was recruited into the URC ministry from the Presbyterian Church USA. The recruitment programme will be transferred to the Ministries Department; similarly the ongoing programme of finding placements for some of the theological students from the Pfalz Church.

25. The number of individuals working in a variety of countries who wish to remain in contact with the URC through our Register Of Members Serving Overseas is now over thirty.

26. People appointed to serve overseas:

Through CWM— the Revd John and Mrs Mary Burgess of Gleadless URC, Sheffield, to Luanshya congregation, Copperbelt Presbytery, United Church of Zambia.

27. Candidates in training at St Andrew's Hall for service overseas:
Mr Anthony and Mrs Susan Gay from Pontypridd, Wales Province.

28. Missionaries who have completed their service with churches through CWM:

Miss Kathleen Moody: Taiwan
The Revd Paul and Mrs Jean Floe: Jamaica
The Revd Norman and Mrs Olive Kemp: Samoa

29. Ministers serving the URC, recruited through the World Church and Mission Department from overseas churches:

The Revd Anthony and Mrs Beatrice Beeko: Presbyterian Church of Ghana
London Ghanaian Chaplaincy

The Revd Chong Kah Geh and Mrs Shirley Chong: Presbyterian Church in Malaysia
London Chinese Chaplaincy and minister of the London Chinese URC

The Revd Roderick and Mrs Wilhelmina Hewitt: United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman
Pastoral ministry at South Aston, Birmingham

The Revd Ward and Mrs Ruth Murray: Presbyterian Church USA
Pastoral ministry at Saffron Walden and Great Chishill with Barley, Essex

The Revd Hakim B Singh Rahi and Mrs Annie Rahi: Church of North India
Pastoral ministry at Winson Green, Birmingham

The Revd Roberta Sears: United Church of Christ, USA
Pastoral ministry at York Road, Woking

30. Ministers from overseas receiving scholarship support from the URC:

The Revd George Anabah: Presbyterian Church of Ghana
St Andrew's Hall

The Revd Chun Byung Geum: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
St Andrew's Hall

The Revd William Senya: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana
St Andrew's Hall

The Revd George Stephen: Presbytery of Lanka, Sri Lanka
Northern College

The Revd Yang Gyo Chul: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
St Andrew's Hall

31. A full list of URC missionaries appears in the Year Book.

ST ANDREW'S HALL: REPORT FOR 1984/1985

Principal: Revd Dr H D Beeby

32. Like the previous year and in company with the Selly Oak Colleges Federation as a whole, St Andrew's has been full for the past year with a high proportion of our members doing Courses in the Mission Department. There was the usual mix of races, nationalities and denominational colouring in the community but it mixed unusually well giving us a very happy year. Not quite the New Jerusalem but maybe we caught the flavour of one of its suburbs. Some think that it was (and still is) due to great numbers of talented musicians in our midst — everything but harpists.

33. John Ferguson retires from the Presidency of the Selly Oak Colleges at Easter, to be followed by another well-known lay theologian, Martin Conway. There are changes also at St Andrew's. Robert Houston, the long-time Treasurer is to be succeeded by Philip Longman, and Mrs Sheila Kaye who was the Secretary has now become the Bursar. Having reached retirement age I hand over in September to the new Principal, David Grainger, who is a theological teacher at present serving with the Baptist Missionary Society.

34. We continue to enjoy the presence of URC Sabbatical Ministers in our midst and are pleased to have a small part in the training of URC youth and community workers. As the Church becomes more aware of "Mission-field England" perhaps St Andrew's will play a greater part in the whole task of ministerial training.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK ABROAD COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Derek Wales
Secretary: Revd Donald Elliott

35. How does the life of the URC fit into the life of the whole Church of God on earth? How can we grasp what "mutuality in mission" means, and facilitate the sharing of resources which it implies? How do we express our care for Christians and others who struggle under repression — political, ideological, cultural or religious? Such questions underlie the work of the "Abroad" Committee. We seek to be one channel of communication for our church with the churches across the world, while we gladly see many such channels being opened up as individuals, congregations, Districts and Provinces form their own links with Christians abroad. We search for people with the right skills and experience to represent us at the many international conferences where particular theological or confessional issues are debated or the particular concerns of one church or region are shared. We support the officers of the Department in their individual responsibility to speak for the URC. We listen to visitors, from home and overseas, and receive reports from many consultations, and try to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

36. We rejoiced in the appointment at the Council Meeting in Leusden, Netherlands, in July '85 of Dr Fred Kaan as Chairman of CWM and of Dr Christopher Duraisingh as General Secretary. We listened as Dr Duraisingh spoke to us of his passionate concern that the new emphasis in CWM on **Education in Mission** should be reflected in the mission of each congregation, with implications for its worship, structure and finance, and that the churches in the family of CWM should be able to share their stories, their struggles and their hopes.

37. We heard with interest of the involvement of **youth** in the Council Meeting, in the Youth Event which accompanied it and of the establishment of two bodies: the joint URC/Congregational Federation CWM Action/Reflection Group, and the Youth Committee's World Affairs Sub-committee. We resolved to keep in touch.

38. **China** has been much on our agenda. We congratulated Donald Elliott on his appointment as moderator of the China Study Project, and sent representatives in December to CSP's stimulating conference attended by three Chinese Church leaders. We have promised to respond to the CSP's request for increased funding and to support the **Amity Foundation** by which resources of personnel and money may be applied to the educational and social development of the Chinese people through the Church in China without compromising its "Three-Self" stance — self-government, self-support and self-propagation.

39. The Secretary attended an Inter-Church Consultation on the Church in **Taiwan** in Taipei in October '85. Concern was expressed there lest the welcome renewed relations with the Church

in China should jeopardise the position of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan within the ecumenical fellowship. (*Resolution 5*).

40. Of the many contacts with churches in **Europe** we were particularly grateful for the visit of pastors and members of the Evangelical Church of the Union in the **German Democratic Republic** to four of our Provinces. The Secretary visited **Czechoslovakia**. We received a first-hand report of the sixth **All-Christian Peace Conference** in Prague. British Council of Churches observers there recommend continued interest in order to keep communication with Christians in Eastern Europe open, and to share with them and others in the urgent pursuit of peace in the world.

41. We were addressed by Dr George Bebawi of the **Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church** who spoke of the need for developing contact between Middle East Christians and those outside the area; we received a report on a visit to Britain by the Revd Gerson Meyer of the United Presbyterian Church of **Brazil**, also seeking closer links; and we resolved upon the establishment of such links with the **Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council**, (*Resolution 4*).

42. This Committee also has responsibility for the Ghanaian Chaplaincy in the UK. In consultation with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, we have concluded a review of the Chaplaincy which recommends:-

- a national network of contacts with Ghanaian and other West African students and families through local churches, and
- the close association of the Chaplain with a local URC congregation.

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

General Secretary: Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh

43. At the meeting of the Council in Leusden, Netherlands, Revd Dr Fred Kaan was elected as Chairman and Revd Maitland Evans as Deputy Chairman; Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh was appointed as General Secretary for a four year term. The Executive Committee, meeting in Jamaica in December '85, has recommended a person as the Associate Secretary for Education in Mission.

44. The International Youth Event that took place alongside the Council Meeting in Netherlands is a significant feature of the Council's activities during the year under review. It enhanced the inter-action of young persons with the members of the Council. It has brought into being an effective network of young persons who share the Council's vision of one world mission and its style of common sharing of resources for mission.

45. New Initiatives:

- a. Council has set in motion an Education in Mission process to help member Churches in their effort to equip local congregations for mission. Such a mission-education will be undergirded by inter-regional and inter-cultural sharing of experiences, stories and spiritual heritages. Through a series of regional consultations, the plan will be finalized by the end of 1986.
- b. The acute need for leadership formation in some of the member churches is acknowledged by the Executive and a Leadership Development Fund has been established in order to meet the pressing need for training between two meetings of the Executive.
- c. The Council has also established a Communication Training Fund for assisting churches in developing communication skills.
- d. In order to express the Council's solidarity with those who suffer through emergencies and crises, the Council has plans to establish a Solidarity and Action Fund and the Secretariat has been instructed to bring proposals for the next Executive.

46. Continuing Concerns:

- a. *Priorities* — Our common sharing of the Council's resources continues to demonstrate the Council's priorities in mission, namely, mission with the disadvantaged, outreach and leadership formation.

b. An evaluation process of the Training in Mission programme is underway and the forthcoming Executive Committee in June '86 will decide whether to continue the TIM in 1987 after a break during '86-87. The evaluation process seems to clearly indicate the need to continue the TIM but with modifications.

c. By issuing a strong statement against apartheid and in solidarity with the oppressed people in South Africa, the Council has called all its member churches to express their joint advocacy on international issues of justice and peace. A revised statement on the approach of the CWM to Christians in the People's Republic of China was also approved by the Executive.

d. Greater ecumenical thrust of the Council and its encouraging member churches for greater ecumenical involvement continue to be the concerns of the Council as well. As in previous years several grants were made to ecumenical bodies. For the first time a grant was made to the WCC's sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Other Faiths in order to express the Council's commitment to this major concern as well.

47. It was expressed both at the Council and at the Executive that future meetings should consider programmatic expressions for the Council's concerns such as valuing and more exchange of 'non-material' resources, enhanced personnel exchange and short-term team visits within given regions, and greater participation of women and youth in the decision-making processes of the Council.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK AT HOME COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Slow

Secretary: Revd Bernard Thorogood

MISSION AND UNITY

48. 'The Church cannot be the sign of God's reconciling grace for all humankind while itself remaining unreconciled, stubbornly clinging to the past . . . It is when we turn towards the world as witnesses, heralds and servants of his kingdom that we shall learn the secret of unity'. (*God's Reign and Our Unity*—p.80)

Without mission there is no true unity: without unity there is no true mission. The work of the Committee takes place in this creative tension.

49. **Across national boundaries** The Committee has been encouraged by developments in Scotland and Wales.

49.1 **Scotland: Multilateral Church Conversation** The Committee responded to the Report *Christian Unity—Now is the Time* in the following terms:

1. The URC is grateful for the progress that has been made in the multilateral discussion in producing this Report, and for the vision this brings of a united church in Scotland.
2. The URC needs to consider in detail matters which are only generally described in the Report, for example, the church/state relationship that is envisaged, baptismal practice to be followed and patterns of ministry to be developed.
3. We encourage the next step, to prepare a plan of Union, so that the URC may be able to see more clearly the detail of what is in mind, and may then respond more fully.

49.2 **Congregational Union of Scotland** The Committee welcomes the decision of the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland to open bilateral negotiations with the United Reformed Church. The Committee has given careful thought to a positive response to this approach, noting the following aspects of the negotiation:

The URC seeks to develop its relationship with other churches in Scotland in such a way that a bilateral negotiation will not impede, but encourage the ecumenical movement in Scotland.

The URC will consult with the CUS to agree what representatives of other churches in Scotland should be invited as observers.

In seeking a union with CUS the URC would be affirming both our unity in Christ

across cultural and historical boundaries, and the importance of distinctive traditions for the wholeness of the church.

It is hoped that the ordering of the URC, described in the Basis of Union, which has brought together local churches from three streams of church life, may be a positive contribution to the ecumenical life of Scotland.

The URC recognises that the pattern of a future URC in Scotland should express the character and hopes of the people involved there.

The URC in its central decisions on this matter will take full account of the recommendations of the Mid-Scotland District Council of URC.

This was endorsed by both the Departmental Committee and the Assembly Executive Committee. The Assembly is asked to confirm the process of negotiation in *Resolution 6*.

The following ten representatives have been appointed to begin the negotiations: The Revds Donald Elliott, David Hannen, Don Powis, Stephen Orchard, John Slow, Bernard Thorogood, Mrs Joan Boulind, Mr Fred Brooman, Mr Ian Neilson, Miss Janet Turner.

49.3 Wales Discussions between the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the URC have reached the point of producing a document of *Guidelines for local co-operation* which the Assembly is asked to welcome. This is designed to facilitate the formation of joint local churches of the two denominations. The only area where the practices of our two churches differ significantly is in the election and ordination of elders in which Presbyteries have a more active role than our District Councils. In the *Guidelines* a recommended pattern for joint churches is offered. (*Resolution 7*)

50. Joint Decision-making 'We agree to continue to give every possible encouragement to local ecumenical projects and to develop methods of decision-making in common'. That proposition — no. 8 of the *Ten Propositions* (Churches' Unity Commission 1976) — still presents its challenge to the churches. The Committee has noted some of the varying response being made in different parts of the country. We shall be pleased to receive details of other developments.

50.1 The Merseyside & Region Churches' Ecumenical Assembly Christians from six different traditions in the region committed themselves to one another as partners in the work of the gospel on Pentecost Sunday, 1985. The signing of the Covenant by Church Leaders in the memorable Celebration of Unity led immediately and unexpectedly to joint action as the churches expressed corporate sorrow and shame following the disaster at the Brussels football stadium.

The Ecumenical Assembly, whose membership consists of 1/3 Free Church, 1/3 Roman Catholic and 1/3 Anglican representatives, works through five departments: Ecumenical Affairs, Social Responsibility, Ministry, Education and International Affairs. The Assembly is the commitment of the churches in Merseyside and Region to make decisions together, and to put them into action.

50.2 Thamesdown (Swindon) recognises that further theological work is needed as it seeks to prepare the way for the appointment of an ecumenical bishop. Representatives from Thamesdown will be sharing their vision and thinking with the Committee in June.

50.3 Milton Keynes There are now 23 ecumenical congregations in 7 LEPs in the new city, involving the Baptists, Church of England, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed Churches. The Presidency of Milton Keynes Christian Council, in response to a request from its Ecumenical Assembly, is currently discussing new patterns of ecumenical oversight 'with teeth', an interlocking of different denominational structures in a conciliar pattern.

50.4 'New Shapes of Ecumenical Growth', mentioned in our report last year suggests the possibility of creating ecumenical units of between 10 and 20 congregations within an area — city, town or group of villages — with a gradual transfer of functions from the participating denominations to ecumenical bodies. The paper has already stimulated discussion in some Districts and Provinces and in some places in ecumenical groups. We hope that this paper will be taken up in other parts of the Church.

50.5 The call to make more visible our unity in Christ requires vision, dialogue, acceptance and patience.

51. Seeking to renew old structures

51.1 *The Sharing of Church Buildings Act, 1969*, became a significant part of the discussion at last Assembly. The Committee, reflecting the concerns expressed, has raised again the possibility

of further legislation to meet the requirements of the new situation which have developed, particularly in recent years. Although there is no support among the other denominations for an attempt to amend the 1969 Act, the Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England has agreed to formulate the difficulties experienced by local churches and to present them to the Churches' Main Committee. A notice has been sent to Province Trust Officers regarding the Charity Commissioners' interpretation of the Act.

51.2 The Future of the Free Church Federal Council In general support of a Working Party's proposals, the Committee re-affirmed its participation in the Council as part of the URC commitment to the ecumenical movement. It welcomed the Council's continued concentration on those tasks which the Free Churches need to do separately from other churches; while looking forward to a more radical view of our shared life and work before the end of this decade. We are pleased that the Revd John Johansen-Berg has been nominated to serve as Moderator of the FCFC in 1987/8.

52. Exploring new paths

52.1 *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*, a process on the nature and purpose of the Church in the light of its mission, was inaugurated on 8th November 1985, in a service at which Bishop Lesslie Newbigin preached the sermon. Over 30 denominations will be involved during the next two years.

52.2 *What on earth is the Church for?* The Lent '86 programme, the first stage of the Inter-Church Process, was supported by 52 local radio stations. The responses from individuals and ecumenical groups at local church level are now being collated and worked into a report by September 1986.

52.3 *The Process: 1986* Further submissions will also be received during the year including:

- i) Statements by denominations of their understanding of themselves in relation to other churches are being received. The URC Statement (*Appendix 1*) was prepared by the Secretary from a wide variety of contributions and amended and approved by this Committee and the Central Committee of the Department.
- ii) Replies received from a questionnaire sent to LEPs, Councils of Churches and Sponsoring Bodies on local ecumenism;
- iii) A summary of views of other local Christian communities: e.g. House Churches, Communities;
- iv) Responses to international dialogue — e.g. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, God's Reign and Our Unity*.
- v) Third World insights.

These will form the basis of a series of reports to the churches to be published at the end of 1986.

52.4 *A new way forward?* Meetings in Wales, Scotland and England in Spring 1987 will use the major report as a foundation document; leading to a central Conference in the Autumn which will expect to formulate recommendations on our next steps in the United Kingdom towards effective unity.

53. A Strategy for Mission

53.1 *Mission with the Poor in Urban/Rural Britain* A consultation has been arranged for 30 May – 1 June 1986, "to consider the spiritual, practical and strategic **changes for the URC** alongside other churches, **implied in taking the Gospel option for the poor seriously**". Participants drawn mainly from the North-Western, East Midlands, Thames North and Wales Provinces will share their stories of hope, frustration, achievement and insight in a context of experience and Bible study.

53.2 *New Enterprise in Mission* The Committee has made grants of £19,375 to 15 projects commended by local churches and supported by Districts and Synods. Despite a small increase in the budget, applications for grant aid are still likely to exceed the funds available. A review of the criteria for making grants has, therefore, been necessary. A revised version of the leaflet *Can we get a grant for our project?* is being prepared. In allocating limited finance, the Committee seeks to enable adventurous projects to be launched, evaluated and developed.

MISSION AND OTHER FAITHS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Roger Tomes

Secretary: Revd John Parry

54. The **Methodist report on Freemasonry** was published shortly after our Assembly in 1985, and the Committee has commended it for study to all who are concerned about the matter. However, the responses to the report have suggested to us that there is need for a document which is more informative about certain aspects of Freemasonry, and this we have tried to provide in *Appendix 2, (Resolution 8)*.

55. A visit to Israel and the West Bank will be made in February 1987 when it is planned that those participating will be able to come to a better understanding of the political, economic and social situation in the Middle East through contact with Jews, Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. Time will also be given to visiting traditional sites. This is a rescheduling of the visit to have been made in February 1986.

56. The second Sikh-Christian consultation took place at the end of August 1985 and gave considerable hope for the development of deeper understanding. A spirit of openness was plainly evident at the meeting where participants were challenged by one Sikh member: 'What is the use of spirituality if it doesn't help your fellow human-beings?' Liberation Theology will be the topic for discussion at our next meeting.

57. *The limits of religious freedom* was the theme of the Jewish-Christian consultation held in October 1985. Jews as well as Christians expressed concern about possible legislation against New Religious Movements, but an additional Jewish concern was the revival of Christian missionary effort directed specifically toward Jews. From the Jewish side also came a strong plea that people in both traditions should face the racial and religious prejudice in themselves and thus help to combat it elsewhere.

58. By the time Assembly meets, the Committee will have held a conference whose chief aim was to bring together people working locally in interfaith situations, especially any who felt they were getting little support from the Church. We would remind Assembly members that the Committee's consultants are available to speak to local groups and work with them on interfaith issues.

59. Since last Assembly's debate we have sought meetings with parents whose sons or daughters have become members of the Unification Church and we are studying their experience carefully. We have also sought to clarify the basis on which any further conversations with the Unification Church might be possible. One particular difficulty is that the movement is the result of interaction with Christianity. It claims to be a new interpretation of the Bible in the light of revelation given to Moon. It is hard to know whether to treat it as a different faith altogether or as a deviation from mainstream Christianity. We regard it as sufficiently different from Christianity to come within the remit of our Committee, and we therefore make it clear that we do not support any suggestion that it should be given recognition as a Christian church, either nationally or locally. Nor do we necessarily assume that dialogue in the full sense is possible. That depends on a willingness on both sides to be frank and open. But we cannot offer the church responsible guidance on any faith or movement unless we are given the freedom to listen to its members and study its teachings as thoroughly as possible.

WORLD CHURCH & MISSION DEPARTMENT — APPENDIX 1

A STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ON THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IN THE LIGHT OF ITS MISSION

1. Dust and Spirit

1.1 Like all churches we are a mixed bag and we have our differences. To present a comprehensive portrait in a small space is impractical; it would need a travelling camera to produce a long school photo. But for some people in the URC the church means a gathering for worship on Sunday morning, in a sanctuary built in the 1890s, with about 60 people present and with a

minister preaching a sermon thoughtfully offered and leading prayers deeply felt. That expression of the church is a reality but does not tell the whole story. In this account of the URC we recognise the weakness of our discipleship, fellowship and witness, but also look at the calling of God as we have received it, the many gifts shared among us and our expectation as we explore God's mission in the world.

1.2 That note of the mixture which we sense in all our church life points us to the mystery of the church. At every point it is both flesh and spirit, dust of the earth and breath of God. We see the human institution with its rules and buildings, but also the glorious company of the apostles, martyrs and saints in whom God's spirit has been made plain in the world. Our response to God in faith, partial though it is, is our entry into the pilgrimage of his people, with all the discipline and joy that entails, but the end of which is not visible to us nor ours to command.

1.3 It is this experience which shapes our understanding of church and Kingdom. The church is a consequence of the Gospel, the community where the story of Jesus is celebrated, the presence of Jesus is known, the healing of Jesus is brought into human lives and the way of the cross is proclaimed and practised throughout the world. God's purpose, as we know it, is that his church might so bear his truth and his nature that it demonstrates the new life in Christ for all the world to see. It is a first instalment of the Kingdom, where love controls relationships and hope directs vision. The failures of the church, in all ages and in all its branches, remind us that, like Paul, we have not yet reached the mark but press on towards it, and need forgiveness at every step. Exclusive claims for the church sit uneasily beside the breadth of God's love and the uncontrollable wind of the Spirit, but great claims for Christ are the ground of our praise.

2. By what authority?

2.1 To speak of the URC as a church and part of the church is a considerable claim which implies some authority to make it. God's authority is both over the church, to judge and cleanse it, and through the church, to proclaim his word in the world. Any authority in the people of God derives from his presence with them. We believe that his presence is known as we study the Bible and celebrate the sacraments, as we receive the experience of Christians through the ages and as we respond to his call in our own lives. These are not mechanical channels, they are personal and therefore limited by our dim vision, like 'puzzling reflections in a mirror'. (1 Cor. 13.12) We do not claim God's authority to judge or exclude or declare the whole of truth. But the presence of God has been so real for our community of faith that we believe we have authority to declare the Gospel, to celebrate the sacraments, to shape church life and to make decisions, both corporate and individual, about the way of the Kingdom in the affairs of the world. We do not hold any written creed to be a test of faith, but a witness to faith as it was understood at one moment in history. We have to make our own testimony, in life as well as in words, as pilgrims under the authority of God.

3. Apostolic, Catholic and Reformed

3.1 We believe that there is an apostolic succession. It is the succession of faithful people which links us with the physical life of Christ in Palestine, and which testifies in all ages to the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is apostolic as it lives within the confidence that Christ is risen and as it shares that faith with the world. Faithfulness to that inheritance is one of the gifts of the Spirit, and is not guaranteed — however it may be helped — by any human institution. The guarantee is the faithfulness of God.

3.2. To be catholic is the gift of God which is one of the characteristics of the church. It is the quality of wholeness — the whole Gospel presented by a whole witness for the whole world. We do not see any present communion possessing catholicity. None can claim that all the breadth of devotion and wisdom is within its borders. The divided church is not a whole church, for there is even exclusion at the Lord's table. We pray that we may be catholic as we pray for holiness, and we treasure the keynotes of catholic tradition in scripture, sacraments, ministry and faith in the risen Christ.

3.3 To be Reformed is to be part of a particular history. The Reformation was a period of dynamic movement, often confused and no doubt spoiled by intolerance and the mixed motives which lame us all. Yet it was a spiritual liberation. Breaking out from the structures of the late medieval church, men and women discovered new life in Christian communities which opened the word of God for themselves, shared freely in the sacraments and praised God in their own language. The power of that movement lay in the obedience of those who heard the word of God

through scripture as it came alive in their context, and we acknowledge that same witness in the Reformed churches of today. The very same dynamism was at work in the early nineteenth century movement which led to the Disciples (Churches of Christ).

4. The Vocation of the Church

4.1 The mission of the church in the world is easy to write about and never easy to fulfil. It means following the way of Christ, the way of self-offering. We repeatedly fall away into self-concern. Maintenance frequently threatens mission. But members of the URC would probably recognise in the following notes the main tasks to which we are called.

4.2.1 Praising God. We are called to worship God with love, intelligence and sincerity, so that there may be a response of deep thankfulness for God's gift of life and salvation. The focus of our worship is the Word made flesh, God's coming in the limitation and vulnerability of our humanity, so that we may be united with him in faith. We confess that worship is too often dull. We pray for the spirit of joy and hope in all our worship.

4.2.2 Praying with love. We are to pray, in public and in private, for those in trouble, pain and loss; to pray for the whole fellowship of Christians; to pray for our own growth in faith. In prayer the church seeks to lift up human need before God, to enter into his loving purposes and to become part of his saving hand in the world.

4.2.3 Sharing Good News. We are to speak the word of forgiveness to all who turn to God in sincerity. Our life as a church or as individual Christians never fully reveals the wonder of the Gospel of grace. Therefore the speaking, writing, preaching and singing of the Gospel is a constant calling, so that others may know that God reaches out to us all in Jesus.

4.2.4 Challenging evil. Both in the small scale of the home which is threatened by bitterness or poverty, and in the large scale of nations overcome by an ideology of death or slavery, we know something of the light which is God's presence and the darkness which is God excluded. The church is called to struggle against evil.

4.2.5 Serving the community. The church is called to touch the life of the world around us in the spirit of healing, reconciliation and confidence in God. This means involvement, participation, study and co-operation in the common life. In this sense the whole church is the missionary of the Gospel. We are grateful that during the last century our particular traditions have given a large place to civic duty and service. In our day this is translated into multiform involvement as local churches give room to a host of community organisations, and church members are in the front line of social service.

4.3 How are we to hold these dimensions of our vocation together? We know how easily they can be separated. Jesus Christ came to save people, to heal and recreate and renew people, to bring the whole world into that unity with God which is true life. It is in following him that we find every talent used, every piece of service becoming a prayer and every act of worship translated into love for neighbour. We know that we often fail to serve the whole Gospel, and our most common temptation is to be satisfied with our passive attendance at public worship as sufficient response to what God has done.

5. The URC — Our short life

To give a testimony for our church must include reference to this brief history. Congregational and Presbyterian churches came together in 1972 and were joined by the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in 1981. These acts of union were not without pain. We said farewell to some old friends who could not join us in the enterprise. There are those among us who still feel that they have lost something precious in a particular tradition. But for many this has been a time of joy, learning and enlargement, with horizons being widened. It is a young church and it often feels a young church. It is, perhaps, the reality of change and the constant exploration of new ways of being the church which have contributed most to the feeling that the URC is young and alive. There is a tension created, on the one hand, by the need to settle down and realise our own potential and establish our identity, and, on the other hand, the call to press forward into new exploration of how the whole church may be healed of its divisions. It is a healthy tension to live with, for it reflects the 'now' and 'not yet' of the Kingdom. The URC is not a piece of ecclesiastical

territory we have won and intend to hold, but rather a bridgehead where we dare not remain and from which we are called to move forward.

6. Our emphases

The URC sees itself as part of the whole church in these islands which is called to give expression to certain major emphases:-

6.1 Reform. As a church standing in the tradition of the Reformation we have a special obligation to sustain the fundamental principle that God's Word, alive and active, constantly teaches us new ways of obedience in every human context. New light and truth do 'spring forth from God's holy word', as one English Reformer declared.

6.2 Participation. The three traditions which have come together in URC all cherished the reality of membership which carried with it the obligation to participate in the ordering of the church and in its mission in the world.

6.3 Liberty. As a small denomination which has historic experience of civil disabilities, we cherish freedom of religion. In consequence we also acknowledge the freedom of minority opinion within the URC, and the liberty of each congregation to develop its patterns of worship and mission. The limits of freedom for us as a church are set by fellowship in one body.

6.4 Unity. We feel called to encourage the process toward unity, challenging those obstacles which inhibit full fellowship and attempting new ways of expressing the reconciling grace of Christ. We have not yet seen the shape of unity which can hold all the diversity of the disciples of Christ. About 12% of our congregations are now in local unions or covenants with other denominations.

7. Membership

It is by God's grace that we become part of his church. That grace cannot be confined to our channels, so there is no human way of enumerating God's faithful people. But we do seek to know membership in the URC. The process of entering into the full responsibilities of membership includes baptism and confession of faith. Because of our union we have been led to see two forms of baptism as equivalent alternatives and both forms as proper witnesses to the Gospel. Parents may bring a child for baptism; teaching and nurture follow and we hope that a personal declaration of faith in Christ is made when the person is mature enough to make a public commitment. Alternatively parents may bring a child for a service of thanksgiving and blessing, and baptism is celebrated later on when the individual gives personal expression to faith. It is too soon to say how this breadth of practice will develop in every locality.

8. Church Order

8.1 We do not find in scripture, in Christian history or in present experience that any one existing order is mandatory for all Christians. One aspect of our present pilgrimage is to seek that ordering of the church which will draw us closer to Christ and help us all to serve him more effectively.

8.2 In the local church there is a regular meeting of the members which is the body responsible for key decisions regarding the witness and service of the fellowship. There is also an Elders' Meeting. Elders are elected and ordained. They form a corporate leadership of the local church, and share in the pastoral care of the members. Elders normally represent the local church in the wider councils of the URC.

8.3 We ordain ministers of the Word and Sacraments. They are called by one or more congregations and the District Council is responsible for concurring in the call and for inducting them to the pastorate. We have 760 stipendiary ministers, supported financially by the whole URC, and 145 auxiliary (non-stipendiary) ministers. Some ministers serve the church in central appointments and some serve overseas.

8.4 Congregations are grouped in Districts and Districts in Provinces. Each of the 12 Provincial Synods is served by a minister appointed by the General Assembly to be Moderator. The Moderator has pastoral responsibility for ministers and their families, normally presides at meetings of the Synod, and at ordinations and inductions of ministers in the province, and is charged to 'stimulate and encourage' the work of the URC in that area. The Moderator's appointment is for a stated term.

8.5 The District Councils appoint representatives to the General Assembly which meets annually

and is the decision-making body for the denomination which covers England, Scotland and Wales. It is served by a central staff. It elects annually a Moderator as the national representative and president of the church, and a General Secretary is appointed for a stated term. The Assembly has a membership of about 700, half lay, half ministers.

8.6 Our experience is that God calls both women and men to every ministry of the church. Through our Congregational roots this experience extends for 70 years.

8.7 We find that individual and corporate oversight need to be blended at all levels of church life. This has long been customary in local churches. In Districts, Provinces and the national church the experience is less traditional and the URC is still working out the appropriate balance.

9. Relationships with other Christians

9.1 Part and Whole. Since there is only one church of Jesus Christ, we know that our own communion is only a small fragment of the whole. We recognise Christian faith and devotion in a host of others. As the fragment receives God's mercy in the Gospel it does not preach a fragment of salvation, but points to the wholeness of life in Christ. When a local church joins in prayer at a baptism, for example, the members represent the whole people of God, in the apostolic tradition, and seek the fulness of Christ's blessing for the person being baptised. But our knowledge of Christ is incomplete. Only 'with all the saints' shall we understand and receive the full dimensions of the love of Christ.

9.2 Fellowship now. There is much we share as expressions of unity — baptism in the name of the Trinity, the celebration of the Lord's Supper to which we commonly welcome members of all churches, ministers of the Word and Sacraments, the open Bible, prayers and praises, the great Christian festivals and common service for those in need. When an ordained minister of another church seeks entry into the URC ministry we do not ordain again, for we understand the church which has ordained to have acted for the whole church. Similarly we are able to receive a member without a further act of confirmation.

9.3 Ecumenical movement. We give thanks for this movement which has enabled us to enter more fully into the breadth of God's family. It can be a painful process as we learn how we have hurt others, and as we witness the struggles of other Christians whom we have done little to assist. 'With all the saints' does not mean a party for mutual congratulations. We learn most from those experiences when we hear different views of Christ and when others speak the truth in love to us. Ecumenism is also a joy as we discover closeness in the Lord.

9.4 World Mission. Many of our world links have grown out of the missionary movement which has been a formative influence for many of our people. We are excited by the birth and growth of churches in other lands to which our forebears gave sacrificial service. The old missionary society has gone and in its place we are part of the Council for World Mission; in this co-operative enterprise our relationships have been transformed. It is a round table at which twenty-eight churches share both needs and gifts. We seek to make a full contribution — in people, prayer, interest and money — and increasingly to receive talents and insights from others.

9.5 Confessional families. Generally speaking, people in the URC place little emphasis on our membership in confessional groups. This is partly because the bodies in which we are involved — the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Disciples Ecumenical Council — are consultative and unobtrusive, and partly because, as a united church we are not fully a part of any one confessional group. But we delight in fraternal links with churches in many parts of the world; with several we exchange ministers.

10. Triumphant and Struggling

We have confidence in the fellowship of the whole people of God, those, in the words of the epistle to the Hebrews, who now run the race and those who are now spectators and who surround us with their love. All find life in Christ. He is the power for new creation who binds us to God and to one another, who sets before the world a new possibility, who claims our commitment and our thankfulness. Why God is so patient with the church when it stumbles so often in the race, wanders from the way, disputes the truth and is divided at the holy table, that is a mystery. We can only offer ourselves as people whom the Spirit has moved to love the Lord.

WORLD CHURCH & MISSION DEPARTMENT — APPENDIX 2

FREEMASONRY

1. Historically, freemasonry is a continuation of the English stonemasons' guilds in the Middle Ages. Since they were a close society with trade secrets and travelled about the country wherever work was to be found, they needed to develop set ceremonies for the admission of apprentices and a system of secret signs and passwords for the recognition of a freemason at another lodge, as the building in which the masons lived on the site was called. The 'old charges,' which were read to newly admitted members of the craft, are preserved in a number of mediaeval MSS. They trace the origin of masonry back to Euclid, relate the practice of the craft from the Tower of Babel and Solomon's Temple, and tell how masonry was introduced into England in the time of St Alban and how Athelstan granted the masons a charter, allowing them to hold an assembly each year. The newly admitted member was instructed to be true to every master and fellow of the craft and to 'do to them as you would they should do to you.' Masters were warned not to take on any work unless they knew themselves 'able of cunning to perform the same' and to pay their fellows 'honestly and truly.' No member of the craft was to be put out 'unless he be unable of cunning to end the work.' Masons from other parts of the country were to be given at least a fortnight's work if work was available.

2. The freemasonry of the Middle Ages was *operative masonry*, the corporate life of those who actually worked in stone. In the 17th century, other people, chiefly those interested in architecture or antiquities, began to join the lodges, and gradually took them over from the craftsmen. Freemasonry thus became *speculative masonry*, 'a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.' Unhewn stone became a symbol of 'man in his infant or primitive state,' rough and unpolished; polished stone became a symbol of 'man in the decline of years, after a regular and well spent life in acts of piety and virtue, which can no otherwise be tried and approved than by the square of God's word and the compass of his own self convincing conscience.' Solomon's Temple was understood as a symbol of perfected man.

3. Freemasonry as it developed in the 18th century encouraged an undogmatic and tolerant attitude to religion. 'Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order, provided he believe in the glorious architect of heaven and earth, and practise the sacred duties of morality.' On the Continent masonry became associated with freedom of thought and radical opinions, and thus has never found favour with the Roman Catholic Church. In the British Isles, on the other hand, freemasonry has always been eminently respectable and has supported the orthodoxy of the age. Nowadays, masons are still required to believe in a Supreme Being, but discussion of religion and politics is barred in lodge meetings. Masons are proud of the fact that people of different faiths may join the craft. They lay great stress on the fact that they follow the three great principles of brotherly love, relief and truth. They point out that lodge meetings are never held on Sundays, so that there need be no conflict between freemasonry and attendance at worship.

4. Freemasons do not regard 'the craft' as a secret society. They prefer to think of it as a private society with some secrets. The secrets that are obliged to keep are the steps, signs, grips and words which are disclosed to them in the initiation ceremony and the ceremonies of passing from the degree of entered apprentice to that of fellow craft (the second degree) and from the fellow craft to that of master mason (the third degree), that is, 'the marks by which we are known to each other and distinguished from the rest of the world.' It is in fact quite easy for an outsider to discover what these secrets are, because the complete rituals have been published more than once. There is no obligation on a mason to keep his membership of the craft a secret, though some would defend reticence about it on the ground that they would not want to be thought to be seeking any advantage for themselves through the masonic connection. A candidate for admission has to declare that he is 'unbiased by the improper solicitation of friends against your own inclination, and uninfluenced by mercenary or other unworthy motives.'

5. It is true that in the rituals for entering each of the three degrees the candidate invokes dire penalties on himself if he fails to keep the secrets. But masons point out that these penalties have never been enforced, and that the real penalty is that of being 'branded as a wilfully perjured individual, void of all moral worth, and totally unfit to be received into this worshipful lodge, or any . . . society of men who prize honour and virtue.'

6. Some elements in the masonic legend and ritual may seem to imply something more than an allegorical interpretation of the secrets of operative masonry. In the ceremony of initiation into the first degree the candidate is blindfolded ('hoodwinked') and declares himself to be 'a poor candidate in a state of darkness,' but when the blindfold is removed he is said only to have been 'restored to the blessing of material light.' Masons insist that there is no suggestion that the candidate is passing from darkness to light in a spiritual sense. In the ceremony of raising to the third degree the candidate re-enacts the death of Hiram Abiff, the principal architect of Solomon's Temple, who, according to the legend, was murdered by his fellow craftsmen in an attempt to obtain from him the secrets of the master's degree. He is then 'raised from a figurative death to a reunion' with his fellow masons. The lesson drawn from this is that the master mason must be equally resolute if he is under pressure to reveal the secrets of the degree. Not that he has the genuine secrets: they were lost with Hiram Abiff. He is only entrusted with substitute secrets. Masons deny that there is any claim that belonging to the craft leads to new life in a spiritual sense nor any contradiction of the Christian claim that there is new life in Christ.

7. There are other degrees of freemasonry which are open to master masons. None of these were an original part of craft freemasonry, though some claim a connection with mediaeval orders of chivalry. The most important of these is Royal Arch masonry, which is regarded as the completion of the master's degree. The Royal Arch legend is that the secrets of the master's degree were rediscovered when the temple was being repaired under Josiah (the Irish version) or being rebuilt under Zerubbabel (the English version). The 'secret' is a triangle within a circle. The circle bears the divine name JEHOVAH, and the triangle bears the word JAHBULON, which is explained as a compound descriptive term: JAH, the Hebrew name for God, signifying 'I am and shall be'; BUL, a Syriac word, meaning 'Lord of heaven or on high'; ON, an Egyptian word, meaning 'Father of all'. (A mason has recently suggested an alternative explanation: the term represents three Hebrew words, describing qualities of the deity, that is, his eternal existence, his transcendence and his omnipotence.) The entrant into the Royal Arch pledges himself never to pronounce the word, 'unless in the presence and with the assistance of two or more Royal Arch companions, or in the body of a lawfully constituted Royal Arch chapter, while acting as first principal.'

8. Many freemasons are also church members. The above account of freemasonry has been written in the conviction that there needs to be greater understanding between members of the URC who are masons and members of the church who are not. The latter need to know why it is that people become masons and what value they derive from belonging. Masons need to allay the suspicions that popular surround freemasonry.

9. Many members of the URC are unlikely to be attracted by freemasonry. Those who prize open discussion of religion or politics will not find that it meets their needs, and it will have little appeal for those to whom building up the community of women and men in the church has a high priority. Not all will think that the allegorical interpretation of the legends and ritual of medieval stonemasons' guilds is the obvious way to learn morality. Many will want to devote their time and money to specifically Christian causes rather than to masonic charities. Yet it would be unfair to question the motives of those who do become masons. If they have joined because of family connections, or because of a genuine interest in ritual and antiquities, or because of their admiration for the masons they know, these are innocent enough motives. Nor would it be fair to question their testimony to the value of belonging to the craft: many masons must be much more charitably inclined than they would have been otherwise and many indeed put their fellow church members to shame in this respect.

10. On the other hand, the present lack of understanding is not all the fault of those outside the masonic craft. Secrecy is bound to generate suspicion, however unfounded, and it is in the interests of masons to make it clear how far their obligation to keep secrets is supposed to go. Whether masons, in virtue of their solidarity, are able to exercise a hidden influence in certain areas of public life is not something which can be easily proved or disproved. If however Christian masons are aware of any such influence, it is not unfair that the church should look to them to ensure that it is not used to the disadvantage of those who are not masons.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the report of the World Church and Mission Department.
 2. Assembly, in continuing the URC commitment to world mission through the Council for World Mission, welcomes the Council's emphasis on Education in Mission and looks forward to sharing in it.
 3. Assembly requests the Budget Committee and the Finance and Administration Department, in consultation with others, to consider the feasibility of increasing in real terms the grant from Unified Appeal to the Council for World Mission.
 4. Assembly resolves to seek membership of the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council in order to relate fully to the world-wide fellowship of the Churches of Christ.
 5. Assembly welcomes the happy development of new contact with the Church in China and at the same time re-affirms its fellowship with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan as part of the ecumenical family.
 6. Assembly welcomes the action of the Executive Committee in response to the approach from the Congregational Union of Scotland to open negotiations with the URC with a view to union, endorses the appointment of the URC representatives, and looks forward to an interim report to be made through the World Church and Mission Department to the next Assembly.
 7. Assembly welcomes progress made in Wales for local co-operation between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Wales, notes that Guidelines for this development have been agreed by the Synod of the Wales Province, and encourages the Synod in this co-operation.
 8. Assembly receives the document on Freemasonry prepared by the Mission and Other Faiths Committee, and commends it for study and reflection by masons and others alike.
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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Convener: The Rt Revd David Dale
Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

1. The Committee met at Church House on 4 July, 7 November 1985 and 4 February 1986, with the Moderator in the chair.

2. **Informal Churches** After further consultation the Committee received a revised paper on how the denomination should be related to small, informal churches. The paper sought to show that rather than create any separate category of associated fellowships, such groups as fulfil basic criteria should be encouraged to become local churches under the care of a District Council. The Executive referred the paper to Provincial Synod Executive Committees for their advice, and will consider the matter again.

3. **Moderator Review Groups** At two meetings the Executive considered papers, prepared by the Assembly Moderator's Advisory Committee, on how these Review Groups might improve their procedure. The Executive aimed at clarity of procedure, assurance that all should know of the process, proper care for individuals, and a good selection method. The paper is attached as an Appendix and the Assembly is invited to approve its use. (Resolution 2)

4. **East Midlands Moderator Review Group** The Executive received the report of the Group, recommending the re-appointment of the Moderator, and the resolution stands as number 3.

5. **Churches entering URC** At all three meetings Provincial Synods brought forward recommendations that new churches be received.

Lord's Hill, near Southampton	(Wessex Province)
Monk's Chapel, near Corsham, Wilts	(South Western Province)
Kingston Park LEP, Newcastle	(Northern Province)
Wark UM, near Hexham	(Northern Province)
Walton LEP, Milton Keynes	(East Midlands Province)

The Executive examined the material supplied by the Synods in these cases, and presents to Assembly positive resolutions. (Resolution 4)

6. **Secessions**

6.1 *St Andrew's, Bournemouth* The Assembly Commission visited the District and the church on 17 July 1985, and heard many expressions of the continuing desire of the members for secession. A number of precise complaints was made, and these have been taken up in the appropriate ways. The District Council and the Provincial Synod continue to seek all possible ways of growth in fellowship. The Church Meeting, on 22 January 1986 reiterated the desire of the church to secede and affirmed that until that request is granted it will remain "a viable church" within the URC. The Executive responded that it gave every encouragement to the local witness and development of St Andrew's but, in the light of the Assembly decision, could not give assistance to its request for secession.

6.2 *Trinity, Slough* The Assembly Commission met the Church Meeting on 16 July 1985. A full discussion revealed many points at which the church was critical of the URC. These have been taken very seriously and remedial action has been taken wherever possible. The District Council is considering whether it can develop its financial procedure in a helpful way, and the Provincial Moderator is discussing with the church its future ministry.

6.3 *Ruscombe, West Midlands* The Executive received a recommendation from the Synod to approve the secession of the church at Ruscombe. A Commission was appointed to visit the District Council and the church and examine the papers. The Commission reported that the chief ground for the request was the failure of the URC to provide ministry over the last decade, and recommended that a year's breathing space be used to see whether the Province and District can develop a way to meeting the pastoral need. This work is now in process and the Executive will reconsider the matter in February 1987.

6.4 *Doctrine and Worship* The Executive referred to the Doctrine and Worship Committee the question whether the URC understanding of the nature of the church indicates any specific grounds on which secession may properly be considered.

7. **Synod Officers** The Synod Clerks and Administrative Officers were invited to a meeting on 7 November, to discuss communication between Provinces and Church House, the storage of information and computers, the administrative burdens on small churches, and care for the Moderator's diary. This first meeting was considered helpful to all, and further meetings have been planned by the Synod officers.

8. **Group on Leadership** At its meeting in November the Executive received an interim report from this group and made some comments. The final report of the group stands as a separate item of Assembly business.

9. **Moderator of Free Church Federal Council** The Committee nominated the Revd John Johansen-Berg as Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council for the year 1987/8 and the Council welcomed this nomination.

10. **Negotiations for union with the Congregational Union of Scotland** On the recommendation of the World Church and Mission Department the Committee gave warm approval to the opening of negotiations. It supported the Department's statement of policy that the objective should be unity which encourages the distinctive character of the Scottish churches, and that the views of the Mid-Scotland District of URC would be very fully considered. Arrangements were made for the appointment of the URC negotiating group.

11. **World Council of Churches Assembly 1991** The Executive considered a recommendation from the World Church and Mission Department to support a British Council of Churches invitation to the World Council of Churches to hold the next Assembly in this country. The Committee heard that a provisional estimate of costs would mean that URC would find about £4,000 per annum for three years additional to the normal provision for an Assembly. The Committee warmly endorsed "the invitation to the WCC to hold its next Assembly in 1991 in the United Kingdom, and offers full co-operation to the British Council of Churches in undertaking the preparations if the invitation should be accepted by the World Council." The result of the invitation may be known by the time of the General Assembly meeting.

12. **Data Protection Act** The Executive was informed that circulars had been prepared by the Churches Main Committee on how this Act affects churches. Churches and church officers using computers for storing information about people should be aware of the requirements of the Act.

13. **Windsor URC** The Executive gave approval for the transfer of this local church from Thames North Province to Wessex Province when financial arrangements have been completed.

14. **Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee** As the initial, experimental period of service of this Committee comes to an end, the Executive recommended that it be continued with the present terms of reference and with the present membership for a further three year period. (Resolution 6)

15. **Westminster College appointment** The Ministries Department brought a recommendation to make a new appointment in New Testament Studies, and requested a decision so that the nominee could give proper notice and be available at the start of the next academic year. The Executive resolved as follows:-

1. The Executive Committee extends to the Revd John Proctor, MA, MSc, BD an invitation to occupy the Dunn Chair of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College, Cambridge, from 1 September 1986 for seven years, on the understanding that his acceptance will require the consent of the Presbytery of Glasgow of the Church of Scotland and a certificate of eligibility from the URC Vocations Committee. There will be a review after six years to determine the mind of the church, the college and the minister regarding further service.

2. The Executive Committee instructs the Ministries Department to report Mr Proctor's response to the General Assembly of 1986 and requests the Assembly to make provision for his induction as Director of New Testament Studies.

Further information about the Revd John Proctor is provided in the report of the Ministries Department. (Resolution 5)

16. Staff Vacancies, Church House

a) The Executive received the report of the Nominations Committee in November which included the recommendation that the service of the Revd Charles Meachin and the Revd Margaret Taylor be not continued after the present term ends in August 1986. The Executive passed the following resolutions:-

The Executive Committee notes that the current term of service of the Revd Margaret Taylor and the Revd Charles Meachin ends at 31 August 1986 and accepts the recommendation of the Nominations Committee that their service be not extended beyond that date.

The Executive asks the Moderator, with such helpers as he requests, to assist Charles Meachin and Margaret Taylor to examine the situation arising from the decisions made by the Executive and prepare them for future ministry.

b) The Executive noted a recommendation from the Nominations Committee that the Revd Paul Quilter be invited to serve for a further term of service from 1 November 1986 to 31 August 1991.

c) The Review Groups which had been appointed by the Nominations Committee recommended that a full-time Executive Secretary be sought for the Ministries Department, and that in the Faith and Life Department there should be, in addition to the Youth Secretary, both a new Departmental Secretary and a half-time Executive Secretary, so that greater development could be made in children's work. The Executive also heard from the Budget Committee that no increase in staff could be budgeted at present from the Unified Appeal. The Executive finally decided that two posts should be advertised, a Departmental Secretary for Faith and Life, with skills in children's work, and an Executive Secretary for the Ministries Department. The Executive further agreed that the officers of the two Departments, with the General Secretary, should seek agreement on the division of work and the relief of some of the administrative work carried by the Faith and Life Departmental Secretary.

17. **Staff Appointments in Church House** At its November meeting the Committee requested the Assembly Moderator's Advisory Committee to prepare proposals for improvement in the appointment and review procedures for Church House staff. A paper was discussed at the February meeting. AMAC was asked to revise the paper in the light of discussion. It is therefore hoped to present the results of this work to the Assembly in 1987.

18. **Effectiveness of central church programmes** The Budget Committee reported that it felt the need for methods of review of the work undertaken by the church throughout the central office, so that effectiveness could be assessed at a time of stringency in budget provision. The Executive Committee asked the Forward Policy Group, with the help of the Treasurer, to give advice on this matter.

APPENDIX

GUIDANCE FOR PROVINCIAL MODERATOR REVIEW GROUPS

Although in matters of detail each Group will find its own style of work, all Groups will follow the main pattern indicated in these notes.

1. Preparation for Meeting

1.1 The Group is appointed as follows. Ten persons, including the Convener of the Group, are appointed by the Executive Committee on the proposal of the Nominations Committee. These persons are not necessarily members of the Executive Committee. Ten persons are appointed by the Provincial Synod, which may delegate the selection to the Provincial Executive. The Synod Clerk will co-ordinate this procedure. The ten will include at least one person from each of the District Councils in the Province.

1.2 The General Secretary will normally act as secretary of the Group and will arrange the date and place of meeting. The date will most probably be in the September prior to the Assembly at which the appointment is to be made.

1.3 The national budget will meet the costs of the Executive ten, and the Provincial Synod budget will meet the costs of the Provincial ten.

1.4 The Synod Clerk will inform all District Councils of the review process, and the list of persons representing the Province. This will be done at such time that each District Council may register a view which their representative will report to the Review Group.

1.5 The Provincial ten may meet for discussion before the first full meeting of the Group, but should not attempt to reach a single view regarding the person who will serve the Province.

2. When a serving Moderator could be re-appointed

2.1 The Convener will meet the Moderator to discuss the work of the previous years and the Moderator's attitude towards re-appointment. The Convener will ask the Moderator to be available to meet the Group during its first meeting.

2.2 At the first full meeting of the Group there will be a review of the task and any changes of emphasis which seem desirable. The Convener will report his discussion with the Moderator. The members from the Province will report their consultation in District Councils and these views will be given priority in the discussion. It is likely that there will be a corporate indication of the Group's attitude to a re-appointment. The Group will then decide whether to meet the Moderator before a formal resolution is taken or after.

2.3 In coming to a recommendation, the Group will seek unanimity but in any case should note that a majority of the Provincial ten and a majority of the Executive ten are required for a recommendation to be carried.

2.4 If the recommendation is to re-appoint and the Moderator is willing, it is useful for the Group to enquire further into the Provincial Support Group or other means of personal caring for the Moderator in the Province.

2.5 If a Group comes to a decision not to recommend the re-appointment of the serving Moderator, the Group will discuss the main points that need to be made in conversation with the Moderator. It is likely that the whole Group will ask a few persons to conduct this conversation immediately after the decision, so that there can be as much help as possible for the Moderator to understand the reasons and to look forward to further ministerial service.

3. When a new Moderator is to be appointed

3.1 Each District Council will have the opportunity to suggest names or to suggest the priority regarding the gifts required, and the representatives will bring these views forward.

3.2 Provincial Moderators may send to the General Secretary the names of ministers to be put to the Review Group.

3.3 Members of the Review Group may individually bring forward names.

3.4 The Synod Clerk will arrange for consultation with the appropriate authorities of the other main churches in the area, so that an ecumenical assessment of the priorities may be brought to the Group.

3.5 At its meeting the Group will first consider the task to be done and the priorities to be set. A statement of priorities will be prepared.

3.6 The Group will then consider all the names brought forward, and will normally select one for interview by the whole Group, with reserves named should the first decline to be interviewed.

3.7 The person first named will be sent the statement of priorities and invited to an interview with the whole Group. The person should be given opportunity to meet the Synod Clerk and other Provincial officers who are members of the Review Group to learn more about the Province before the interview. If it happens that the first person is not selected for nomination, the first reserve should be invited for interview.

3.8 In coming to a recommendation, a majority of the Provincial ten and a majority of the Executive ten are required.

3.9 Following nomination, the General Secretary will endeavour to arrange preparation for the person nominated.

3.10 The Group should expect to bring its nomination to the Executive Committee in February, but failing that may bring its recommendation direct to the General Assembly by concluding its work by the end of March.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Executive Committee for debate.
 2. The Assembly approves the paper Guidance for Provincial Moderator Review Groups, here printed as an Appendix to this report.
 3. The Assembly re-appoints the Reverend John Francis Slow as Moderator of the East Midlands Provincial Synod for five years from 1 September 1986.
 4. The Assembly receives, as local churches of the URC, the fellowships known as:-

Lord's Hill	Wessex Province
Monk's Chapel	South Western Province
Kingston Park (LEP)	Northern Province
Wark (UM)	Northern Province
Walton (LEP)	East Midlands Province
 5. The Assembly requests the Cambridge District Council, in consultation with the Principal of Westminster College and the Ministries Department, to arrange the induction of the Director of New Testament Studies, the Reverend John Proctor.
 6. The Assembly continues the work of the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee with existing terms of reference and with the present membership serving a further three years.
 7. The Assembly re-appoints the Reverend Paul Quilter as Youth Secretary for a further term of service from 1 November 1986 to 31 August 1991.
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THE GROUP ON LEADERSHIP IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Convener: The Revd Principal M H Cressey
Mr J Alan Cumming
(in the event Mr Cumming was unable to attend any of the meetings owing to a period of ill health)
Mrs Jill Jenkins
The Revd R J Hall
The Revd Dr D Owen
Miss Janet Turner
Mrs M Weedon

Secretaries: The Revd Bernard Thorogood
Mrs Sheila Tull

Terms of Reference

1. The group was appointed with the following terms:
To study corporate and personal leadership in the URC, both theologically within the Reformed tradition, and practically as experienced since 1972;
To evaluate that leadership in the pastoral and ecumenical contexts of our common life;
To suggest what developments should be encouraged and whether amendments to the structure are needed;
To provide an initial report for the Executive Committee in November 1985 and thus to Assembly in 1986.
2. The group met five times, once residentially. It is a feature of URC leadership which may initially be noted that it proved impossible to find dates on which the nine of us were all available! Papers were circulated between meetings and advanced our discussion steadily. An initial report was discussed by the Assembly Executive Committee in November 1985 and was the subject of written comments by members of the Executive Committee.
3. In accordance with the remit, the group has reported on the forms and processes of leadership in the United Reformed Church. Some people, knowing only the title of the group, may have looked for an exercise of leadership by us — but we did not see it as **our** task to call the church to go in some particular direction. Nor did we find cause to recommend constitutional change (see paras. 21 and 22). Rather we have found ourselves shaping for ourselves and others questions about leadership like these:-
Do you understand what you are called to do?
How will you responsibly undertake that calling?
Have you done your homework thoroughly?
Can they hear you laughing?
Are you willing to suffer?
What kind of leaders are you?
What is Christian leadership?
— and we begin our report by trying to answer the last of these questions!

What is Christian Leadership?

4. As a group we have come to see leadership not in terms of a 'pyramid' with some people statically regarded as the top rank, but of a movement. The leader leads others in a desired direction, and often does so from within the company of those on the move, sensing the best direction for them to follow in order to fulfill their needs and hopes on pilgrimage. This picture should not be viewed simplistically. The direction may not be clear and the leader may have to enable the fixing of goals. The direction may be clear to the leader and some others but not be desired by a majority of the company on the move; the leader will then seek to persuade and motivate. Some of those who follow will have, at least potentially, greater capability and insight than the current leader; leadership can and should change.

5. We recognise that there may be much to be learnt from the techniques of leadership in secular society, but we have not made any detailed exploration in that direction. We believed that our main task was to highlight the ways in which Christian leadership differs from secular models, and can itself be offered in a diversity of styles, according to the natural and acquired gifts of leaders and the demands of different situations.

6. One distinction, arising from secular studies, which we did explore is that between representative and creative leadership. The representative leader expresses the existing life of a group or organisation; the creative leader brings a special contribution to the development of corporate existence and purposes.

7. An example from youth work may help to make the distinction clear. Someone who becomes a leader in one of the existing uniformed organisations is asked to be a representative leader, carrying out the policies already agreed; but when a Baden-Powell begins such a movement there is an exercise of creative leadership.

8. The two forms of leadership are often combined in life and indeed should be so, since creative leadership is more readily accepted if it begins in a representative way. In terms of our example, Baden-Powell was able to start the new Scout movement because he was already a representative leader in the nation through his earlier career.

9. Christians enlarge this understanding of leadership. It is not only representative and creative, but also charismatic, that is to say, derived from the 'charisms', the gifts, of the Holy Spirit. This third term represents the stress on what is directly God-given, in addition to what reflects a corporate tradition or individual human creativity.

10. The church should both welcome and evaluate leadership. Not everything that is traditional or humanly creative is appropriate for meeting today's needs. Among the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the gift of discernment, of seeing what is truly God-given. One of the criteria for such discernment is that Christian leadership will be offered as a service. Leadership that is offered in relevant service, according to God's purpose, will be received and followed with joy.

11. A further characteristic of Christian leadership is that it is directed to the needs of those outside the church as well as of those already within its fellowship and care. As the *Manual* (2nd ed., p.6) puts this with regard to ministers, they are to **'give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world'**. **The Group urges that its whole report be read with this sense of direction.**

12. The pattern of leadership is seen in Jesus, in whom the representative, the creative, the charismatic and the missionary all combine, and who was servant as well as leader. In many respects Jesus had a unique role but he also taught his followers to adopt the model of leadership which he had given them. As he represented Israel, the twelve were to represent a new community; as he creatively initiated the new covenant, they were to celebrate its eucharistic meal; as he was totally available to his Father's will in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were to be filled with that same Spirit; as the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sent the disciples. When Christians study his leadership, they encounter both an example to follow and a Lordship to be obeyed.

The Limits of Leadership

13. Paul develops in his picture of the church as the body an understanding of the way in which those highly gifted and those without outstanding abilities serve together. Not all are called to lead. Christians need to accept the variety of gifts, not seeking power for themselves; but neither should they assume too readily that their own gifts are unimportant or that they can never exercise leadership. Each may lead in one area, while following in another.

14. Leadership in the early church took many forms, but there is no full agreement either historically or theologically as to which form, if any, was the central and determinative one. Hence came the long debate about the forms and proper location of oversight in the Church. Within the Reformed tradition and particularly within the life of the URC there has been a development which we believe offers much to the ecumenical scene.

Corporate and Individual Leadership

15. The apostles acted as individuals but also together in council. Each gave distinctive leadership, and together the 'apostles and elders' acted in an authoritative but not authoritarian way towards the whole church (Acts 15). Whenever the church has lurched towards the corporate

or the individual extreme, obvious difficulties have followed. If the individual has been exalted too high or claimed too much, then the Lordship of Christ has been threatened, personal feelings or grievances have taken too large a place, the fellowship has been devalued and the church has been led to expect too much of a frail and fallible person. If the corporate body (Assembly, Synod, Council, Committee) has been given the major leadership responsibility, then it has frequently become bureaucratic, lacking enterprise and initiative, unwilling to take risks and unable to appeal to the human heart and imagination.

16. The traditions brought together in the URC balance the corporate and the individual so that each may contribute to the life of the church. Leadership whether corporate or individual needs safeguards and support. The URC structures seek to provide these. This is not just a matter of prudent politics; it is also a matter of theology. Both the individual who is called to lead and the representative group acting for the whole have to learn the way of humility and service because it is Christ who reigns in the church. Both are subject to him. Both therefore need regular ways in which the direction of their leadership is critically reviewed. Both have also to learn the way of pilgrimage sustained by the gifts of the Spirit, and that requires a mutual exercise of trust. Therefore, having provided for the opportunity of critical review, the Church offers support and encouragement to those appointed to occupy leadership positions.

17. **Individual leadership** is expressed through the Moderator of the General Assembly, the General Secretary and the Departmental Secretaries, the Provincial Moderators and Synod officers, District Chairmen and officers, and through the whole work of ministry. In no sense is leadership confined to ordained ministers; leadership is offered by many gifted individuals who contribute through their preaching, pastoral work, social concern and practical skills, both within the church and in the secular community.

18. **Corporate leadership** is expressed in the local Church Meeting and the Elders' Meeting, in the meetings of District Councils and Synods and within the General Assembly and its committees. In these spheres leadership needs to be based in sound methods of management and later sections of this report must be understood as being concerned with the preconditions for the exercise of leadership. Within the framework provided by a church structure, each council needs deliberately to plan its work.

19. The two forms of leadership, individual and corporate, complement one another and must be exercised together. It is particularly important that those who offer individual leadership out of their secular experience and skills should be heard and used in the councils of the Church, especially when their words are not 'comfortable' in the Church's ears. The councils of the Church should include those whose Christian service is mainly given in the secular community.

The Present Structures

20. If these understandings of leadership are valid and are to be effective, they must be worked out in the structures of the Church. We have therefore looked at the various 'parts' of our life together.

21. A key passage of the URC Manual is section 8(3), part of the introduction to 'The Structure of the United Reformed Church' (*Manual*, 2nd ed., p.13). '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 District to be known as a District Council and of each Area of Ecumenical Co-operation to be known as an Area Meeting
- (c) The Synod of each Province to be known as a Provincial Synod
- (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'** (our emphasis).

22. After careful reflection we are convinced that the need for leadership in the United Reformed Church will best be met by utilising to the full, **in this manner and with this attitude,**

the existing structures of the United Reformed Church. We have considered some possible modifications of **office** within these structures but remain convinced that it is their **representative, creative, charismatic and missionary use that is required**, and **not** constitutional reform.

Leadership in the local Church

23. Leadership in the local church is shared by ministers, elders and other lay leaders. The traditional pattern of a minister and a group of elders has become greatly diversified. For example, there may be one minister for several local churches, each with its own Elders' Meeting; there may be several ministers, particularly where Model 1 of the auxiliary ministry has been developed from the Churches of Christ concept of the elder; there may be a team of ministers and lay leaders serving one large church or a group of churches; there may be one Elders' Meeting and Church Meeting for several places of worship (a type foreseen at union in 1972 as more widespread than has actually been the case — see *Manual*, 2nd ed., p.13, section 8(1)).

24. In many of these situations, real sharing and mutual responsibility have been developed. But it is not always so. Many ministers feel isolated or lonely and in some cases are over-assertive in their individual leadership. Elders may feel that they are almost superfluous, or, alternatively, that they are all-important and can ignore the minister's leadership. We therefore believe that all local churches should be encouraged to explore ways of enhancing the partnership of minister(s) and lay leaders. Some possibilities are these:-

- (a) regular meetings of the ministers with the officers of the local church(es) to consider pastoral needs and the implementation of decisions by Elders' and Church Meetings
- (b) an arrangement by which, within the general pastoral responsibility of all elders, some of them are asked to take particular responsibility for gathering and collating news of pastoral needs and alerting the minister(s) to them.
- (c) leading groups for particular aspects of local church life
- (d) an informal group for reflection with the minister(s) on forward planning for long-term needs; such a group could develop into a means for reviewing ministry, helping to supply needs the minister cannot meet or encouraging new approaches.

25. The development of shared leadership or support groups on these or other lines has some danger of creating an 'in-group' and inhibiting new participants in leadership, so a variety of patterns is better than a fixing of one type and the leadership group should regularly seek to draw in new people. We believe that one of the minister's tasks is to encourage the development of a team which can use the talents of all.

26. We believe that a study of discipline within the local church, as suggested in *Guidelines: Church Discipline* should be on the agenda of Church and Elders' Meetings. We remind District Councils that it is they who exercise oversight of the ministry (*Manual*, 2nd ed., p.16) and therefore need to include a review of ministerial leadership in the work of District Council visitors to local churches.

Ministry, Ministers and Members

27. The URC believes in the ministry of the whole Church, both locally and in wider councils. Within the ministry, 'some are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments' (*Basis*, section 21). The minister thus called is a leader in worship and in the pastoral care of the church, as well as in organisation and in mission to the world. Since Union in 1972, the URC has emphasised the parity of ministers and since 1981 has maintained this emphasis on parity in establishing the auxiliary ministry. Stipendiary and auxiliary ministers are trained and ordained to the one ministry of the Word and Sacraments, yet to serve in a variety of ways. Such training needs to be sustained and developed, in order to allow people with a range of skills, experience and gifts to exercise them in a diversity of ministry.

28. We acknowledge the important work done by other leaders — Church Related Community Workers, youth workers, lay preachers, Church Secretaries and Treasurers, other officers of Church Meetings and Elders' Meetings. They exercise vital leadership roles in the local church and community and should be supported by ministers and fellow members.

29. Along with an appreciation of these varied forms of leadership, we recognise that there are people in local churches with gifts in pastoral care, though not ordained or trained. Such gifts

should be fully used for the benefit of the whole congregation and should not be disregarded where stipendiary or auxiliary ministers are also working, even though, sadly, ministers often find the gifts of others a threat rather than a positive benefit. The Faith and Life Department has important tasks in nurturing the gifts of the whole people of God.

30. We note that the Ministries Department has in hand a study of the forms of the ministry and will be commenting on these to the Assembly. We also observe that there has been a shortage of candidates for those models of auxiliary ministry which focus on a team in one local church (the model based on the Churches of Christ concept of the elder) and on service as a 'worker-priest' in a secular occupation.

31. The Training Committee of the Ministries Department should consider how training in leadership skills can be widely imparted. Candidates for the ministry can be helped in leadership through the internship scheme, and post-ordination support can give guidance in the early years in which leadership is tested; it is vital that the new scheme for post-ordination support is implemented for **all** newly ordained ministers. Similar help is needed for other leaders.

32. The Vocations and Support Committees of the Ministries Department also have tasks highly relevant to our remit. While we look to these Committees for detailed work on the calling of ministers (both the initial call and call to particular service), we are aware of a concern among ministers and churches that the system for ministerial settlement is not always utilising resources of leadership in the best way. The work of the Moderators, especially through their regular meeting, has an essential part to play but we call attention to the fact, readily acknowledged by the Moderators, that names of possible ministers may come to a vacant pastorate in other ways. The role of the Moderators is to expedite ministerial settlement, not to control it.

33. The calling of a minister is one of the points at which the URC is aware of the great difficulties in discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the local church. This has always been hard when a divided vote was experienced in a Church Meeting, but it is even harder when a decision has to be made by a group of local churches, where sometimes one church is unanimous in a call but another is divided. The increase in grouped pastorates and ecumenical groupings has made it more difficult to reach the unanimity that is desirable.

34. At the very least churches should agree on a unified decision-making process for this part of their life together, even if one Elders' Meeting and one Church Meeting cannot be achieved for the continuing life and work of the group. We hope that the Ministries Department will reflect on this matter and provide some guidelines for decision-making procedures, including means for the church(es) which a minister is currently serving to express a case for that minister **not** leaving. Concurrence in a ministerial move should not be automatic and ministers should be ready to listen for a call to stay as well as for a call to move.

35. We link with all this the need to make clear to the churches the ways in which other appointments are made — of Departmental Secretaries, of Provincial Moderators, of various ecumenical officers. The whole Church needs to be aware who is responsible for making these appointments and what means are adopted to make wise decisions probable (nothing can make them certain!) and what process of review applies.

The District Council

36. The leadership of the District Council is not accepted by all churches nor by all ministers. This is partly a residue of the independency of earlier years but it is also a result of the cavalier way in which members of the Council are appointed by some local churches and the disregard of the Council by some ministers. Ministers should be asked an additional question at ordination and inductions concerning their readiness to take the part entrusted to them in all the Councils of the United Reformed Church; the District Council should be asked a question calling it to welcome and sustain its new ministerial member. The churches should be encouraged to send to District Council their most committed elders, who will be able to contribute to the meetings and to report back to the local church.

37. Synods and District Councils should use the provisions of the *Manual* (2nd ed., p.15) to keep 'a proper balance between ministerial and lay representation' in the District Council. In some areas the danger may be over-representation of ministers but where there are many group pastorates it is ministers who are in short supply for the Council's work and auxiliary ministers and active retired ministers are the more needed.

38. Within the District Council the importance of the office of Chairman needs to be recognised, for whoever is elected will represent the Council to the churches for a year (or more).

39. Some District Councils are small in number of members, yet extend over a large area, with few ministers and little strong lay leadership. In such cases we believe that after full consultation with the District Council, and with its consent, some of the burdens of its responsibilities could be undertaken by representatives of the Synod on an agreed basis, while local leadership is being encouraged and trained.

40. The actual meetings of District Council can become very depressing. While it will often be necessary for committees to be used to prepare the agenda in adequate detail, it is essential that the Council be asked to make real choices between options, not 'rubber stamp' committee proposals unilaterally presented.

41. In Districts with a large number of churches some functions of partnership should be devolved to local groups of churches to give opportunities for mutual fellowship and support and for the sharing of study and discussion based on URC or ecumenical concerns.

42. The relationship of the Provincial Moderator to the District Councils of each Province also needs to be kept before the members. These Councils meet more frequently than the Synod and it is at the Council meetings that the Moderator can share in a more detailed way in developing leadership. We call attention to the functions of the District Council which explicitly involve consultation with the Moderator (*Manual*, 2nd ed., p.16-17, functions (ii), (iii), (vi), (vii), (xii)).

43. We believe that the role of District Councils should be enhanced and suggest the following answers to our basic questions (see para. 3) in respect to District Councils. These arise from work done in a particular District.

(a) Do you understand what you are called to do?

The functions of the District Council as set out in the Basis of Union fall roughly into three categories: (i) pastoral (ii) outreach (iii) administrative and financial, and there is an important and integral relationship between them. For example, the facts that a church's membership is declining and its roof leaks are pastoral concerns to be carefully considered in deciding what its financial contribution to the wider church should be. Beyond the inevitably stylised language of the Basis of Union and its 'statutory' requirements, lie unnumbered challenges and responsibilities for every District Council. It is, however, a fact that many Councils do not see their role as anything very exciting and allow the burdens of administration to overwhelm their pastoral and missionary functions.

(b) How will you responsibly undertake that calling?

It is for the District Council to decide how it is to try to care for its ministers and congregations, order its business and explore ways of maintaining a Christian presence in its local communities. It is for the District Council to determine how many officers, committees, etc., are desirable for its own particular circumstances. Many District Councils feel themselves under a subtle pressure to conform to a structure not dissimilar to that of the Provincial or national bodies, **whether or not this is appropriate**. Where it is not, it should be resisted in favour of the choice of more relevant methods of fulfilling the District Council's responsibilities.

This 'pressure to conform' is often difficult to withstand, but District Councils should be encouraged to challenge the thinking, procedures and actions of other Councils of the URC with constructive alternatives.

(c) Have you done your homework thoroughly?

Nothing is designed to disenchant a meeting more quickly than indecisive chairmanship! Close behind this come decisions made without due consultation, recommendations ignored and deadlines not met. It is therefore vitally important that at least one of the Council officers understands URC procedures (particularly with regard to finance and property negotiations) and that the Chairman can handle the Council meetings with proper authority. These procedures can be learned, and some Districts find it helpful to compile a *Membership and Procedures* document of some kind, which can be kept for reference. Past experience in a number of instances indicates that not infrequently ignorance of the correct procedures,

hurried thinking, or the inadvertent abdication of control over a situation by a District Council have led to serious repercussions for both churches and individuals.

If the District's procedures are reliable, they can then be used as the framework for all the rest of the initiatives that may follow.

(d) Can they hear you laughing?

The ability to make people feel at ease is a much more important ingredient of leadership than is often realised. The group that always takes itself deadly seriously — the people who cannot laugh at themselves and be ready to give and receive generously will not easily survive when things are difficult.

(e) Are you willing to suffer?

Most District Councils can manage quite nicely until something goes wrong. A church wishes to spend money unwisely, or there is a disagreement between a congregation and its minister; District Council visitors discover the need to comment critically on the leadership of a local church. On occasions when it becomes necessary for the Council to take a stand, and for members of it to do or say unpopular things or spend costly hours in advising and supporting, the temptation to duck is all too inviting. It is often here that the procedures of the Council are most under strain — they can sustain, or they can themselves collapse. Under stress the Council will show its true nature — as a group that holds together in determination to find the best possible solution or as a disaffected group that ignores the problem and the people involved or as a disorganised group that muddles through, achieves very little, and leaves someone else to pick up the pieces.

The more closely the District Council becomes involved with its churches, the greater the risk of disagreement and confrontation, but also the greater the privilege and joy of sharing together in common work and witness.

(f) What kind of leaders are you?

A District Council needs imaginative leaders — people who will accept unstintingly the responsibilities laid upon them and will, through the grace of God, make things happen. Such people may not necessarily be office holders, but they will be those in whom others will vest their confidence. This kind of leadership does not flourish well in a negative situation — therefore the Council that cannot hold its imaginative leaders needs to ask itself whether its approach to its tasks is optimistic or pessimistic, and, if the latter, determine to do something about it!

44. The charge to the District Council is laid down by the URC as a whole — but the Council is given the opportunity to explore that charge and to make its work alive and relevant to the local churches it is called upon to serve.

The area meeting of an area of Ecumenical co-operation

45. We were asked to consider leadership in the pastoral **and ecumenical** contexts of the URC's life. We therefore call attention to the fact that constitutional provision has been made for shared leadership across the divisions between churches. Local ecumenical projects, Area Meetings as provided for in the *Structure*, membership in URC councils for representatives from other churches are all pointers towards a developing pattern of common life — preferably with re-drawn boundaries of dioceses, provinces, areas and districts. We recognise that such re-drawing is very difficult to achieve across the whole country, but we are encouraged by examples of adjustment made where local developments in ecumenism have clearly demanded them.

46. We believe that the existing arrangements, by which a minister of another church sometimes has pastoral care of URC members, and an Area Meeting can have oversight of local churches and LEPs, should in the future be extended so that regional bodies at Synod level and their officers, Provincial Moderators and their 'equivalents', may exercise leadership and oversight together. Such an extension could, we realise, overload Provincial Moderators by requiring attendance at ever more ecumenical meetings and consultations; it may be that ecumenical officers should share such responsibilities. We have also envisioned a national assembly of the Churches with common decision-making sessions on matters of common concern and separate sessions for denominational oversight.

47. These and other such visions should be explored through the inter-church process *Not*

Strangers but Pilgrims, of the years 1986 and 1987. Because of its experience of union, the United Reformed Church has a particular responsibility in encouraging and forwarding this process.

The Provincial Synod

48. We are aware that the leadership in and by the Synod is the point where most criticism has been expressed within the URC. We have seriously weighed those criticisms and considered afresh the main alternative, earlier discussed by URC review bodies.

49. This alternative is to change the whole pattern of our conciliar life and create a pastoral oversight unit (new style District Council) somewhere between the present District Council and Provincial Synod in size, in which the personal leadership could be provided by a minister serving one of the local churches, not separated for full-time service.

50. This has its attractions.

(a) It could coincide with a review of boundaries to fit ecumenical life together.

(b) It would bring the pastoral oversight person closer to a smaller number of ministers and local churches.

(c) It might save a little money.

51. But the arguments against it are also strong.

(i) There would be a loss of the facilities, advice and help which can only be provided by a large unit, and the sense of joy in the larger gathering.

(ii) It would leave very exposed those who live and work in our weakest or most scattered districts.

(iii) We doubt whether a smaller unit, with fewer skilled people, could deal as well with such issues as those surrounding candidature for the ministry or decisions on property, where some distancing from a local situation is needed.

(iv) It would also place upon a minister appointed as the one with pastoral oversight an additional problem regarding the use of time, the needs of the pastorate served, and the relationship between the one local pastorate and all the others — independence of judgment could be very difficult.

(v) Such a change would also require a new financial apportionment exercise (which is daunting to contemplate when the 1972 one is still not complete) and much administrative work which could detract from pastoral roles and the taking of new initiatives.

52. It is for these reasons that we believe the present pattern of Provincial Moderators and Synods should continue (though not necessarily their present geographical locations).

53. The Synod was introduced in 1972 as a level of conciliar structure unfamiliar to either of the uniting bodies. It is not a 'court of reference' like the Church of Scotland Synods; it comes between the General Assembly and the councils similar in size to Presbyteries and County Unions, namely the District Councils. But though unfamiliar before, it was designed to preserve something well known and highly prized — namely the direct representation of every local church on a council covering a wide geographical spread. This feature was lost from the General Assembly in order to keep its size within the bounds of a feasible deliberative, debating forum, and was transferred to the Synods. Synod resolutions can, as has been evidenced in the last few years, directly and persuasively influence the thinking of the General Assembly. The Synod can therefore be seen not as an extra burden on local churches but as a means of making a voice at regional level clearly audible at the General Assembly.

54. There is an element of isolationism in local churches, so that they may react against the discipline of sharing in a broader fellowship (we as a group know the same feeling in ourselves!). But we believe there is also a real desire in local churches for the broader fellowship. Where churches and/or ministers have experienced the help of the Synod and/or the Provincial Moderator in times of crisis or been guided into new ways of service, where encouragement has stirred new hope — there the work of the conciliar church is seen at its best.

55. We consider that the Synod needs a Provincial Moderator, woman or man, giving a leadership that is 'in council'. Such leadership relies on the co-operation of and is often guided by District Council pastoral committees as well as meetings of the Synod. When the Moderator presides at an ordination service it is as a representative of the whole Church and of the District

Council to which the whole Church gives authority to ordain and induct. Yet there are times when the Moderator must be prepared to act alone. The acceptability of such decisions depends not only on the wisdom shown but on relationships built up over the years by the Moderator and previous Moderators. The Moderator will sometimes offer individual counsel to Synod, District Council, local church or ministers, knowing, as do those advised, that there is answerability of the Moderator to the Synod and the General Assembly. In a similar way the minister in a local church provides a clearly individual leadership, but is within the corporate bodies of elders and members with whom the minister serves.

56. The emphasis of Moderatorial service must be on spiritual and pastoral guidance, rather than administration. The work of District Secretaries, Synod Clerk and Personal Assistant or Administrative Officer should relieve the Moderator of what otherwise would be an overwhelming burden of administrative detail. While we do not believe that any one system of support for the Provincial Moderator should be fixed for every Province, we do urge that every Synod should provide a 'structured' support system for its Moderator. In some Provinces an experiment may be appropriate whereby some persons in the District Councils are given an individual oversight role within the District in collaboration with the Provincial Moderator and/or form a team with the Provincial Moderator.

57. Leadership, in these ways, is seen to be a sharing in collective action and therefore itself 'participatory and collective'. We call attention to the comments on this made in the Moderator's Address 1985 of the Right Revd David Dale (*Ministry as Leadership* published in *Moderator's Address and Assembly Prayers*; see pp.6 and 9). We acknowledge our indebtedness to the Address for insights and direction in our work.

The General Assembly

58. The General Assembly depends for the exercise of its leadership as 'the central organ of the URC's life and the final authority . . . in all matters' (*Structure*, section 9(5)) upon a blend of the corporate and the individual. Without the individual contributions of its officers, the conveners of Departments and Committees, the speakers in debates, nothing could happen; but without the assent of the Assembly as a body nothing could take effect. Even those members who never speak make their contribution to the corporate action by their prayerful attention and their voting.

59. It is therefore very important that the Assembly should in its composition be truly representative of the Provinces and District Councils. Constitutionally this is secured by the rules for election of members but in practice there are considerable limitations on the range of persons who can exercise the role of Assembly membership. They have to be available for several days continuous attendance; even holding the Assembly at a weekend would not remove this limitation unless it were a Bank Holiday weekend. They have to have enough interest and knowledge to take a useful part in the work. District Councils naturally ask that they be able also to report back to the Council and the local churches. Many Assembly representatives have to bear the costs of attendance, over and above those reimbursed by the Assembly; and this factor, particularly the loss of earnings experienced by some lay persons and auxiliary ministers, can prevent people from accepting appointment. We are glad to hear that some District Councils and Provinces do provide funds to help overcome this financial barrier.

60. Nevertheless, finding representatives is not easy. Every year some places are left vacant. The group calls attention to the fact that '**representatives** of District Councils' (*Structure*, section 9(5)) does not mean the same as **members** of District Councils. Those who are not members of a Council may yet represent it if they are willing to familiarise themselves with the Assembly agenda and report back afterwards. There is also the option of appointing persons from another District within the same Province. Every effort should be made to fill all places and also 'so far as possible' to 'make such appointments in rotation from local churches within the District' (District Council Function ix). This rotation is one way of ensuring that local churches feel that the Assembly knows of their concerns and cares for their life.

61. The fact that ministers can only expect to be at the Assembly every three or four years and that local churches are only directly represented in rotation is a serious limitation on the sense of the Assembly being a participatory council. Direct representation of every local church has therefore been suggested. This, however, would reduce participation in another way by making the Assembly of unwieldy size for real debate. It has been put to us that this argument can be met by the realisation that not every church would send a representative and so the size of the Assembly

would not be too great. This strikes us as a very bad principle on which to arrive at the composition of the Assembly. Its members must be chosen in a way that includes all churches through their sharing in the District Councils but still limits the total size. The Assembly is a decision-making body and so must be both representative and restricted in size; even the present size is large for the purpose, but a further restriction would remove the Assembly too far from the local churches. Churches not represented in a given year could send visitors to the Assembly at their own or the local church's expense and some information sessions with Departmental Secretaries and others could be arranged for such visitors alongside the Assembly meetings.

62. The fact that we thus argue strongly for retaining the present pattern of the General Assembly does not imply any regret at particular adjustments to its membership made in the past e.g. to include youth representatives. Nor is our advice intended to preclude adjustments to the number of representatives.

63. **After** a meeting of the Assembly great efforts must be made to share its decisions with local churches. Members of Assembly should take responsibility for sharing its work not only with the District Council that appointed them but also with their own and other local churches. **Before** a meeting of the Assembly local church meetings should, ideally, have time to discuss the agenda. Members of Assembly are representatives, called to reach decisions together after prayer, mutual attention in debate and deliberate choices; they are not mandated delegates, unable to respond to points of view other than those of their home District (or even their local church). But they ought to know the views of those who appointed them and this is difficult under the present time scale, when reports are published in April for a May meeting. An alternative plan would be to publish reports in May for a July meeting.

64. This would allow a longer period, from September to the end of March (rather than mid-February) for preparing reports, and eight weeks instead of three weeks for local churches to consider them. The Assembly Record could still be available in time for the autumn 'season' of local church programmes. A July Assembly would be more difficult to 'house' in terms of the availability at acceptable cost of halls and hospitality but not impossibly so.

The General Secretary

65. The group considered the role of the General Secretary. As in the other Free Churches, the General Secretary is entrusted with a role of personal representation of the URC in many ecumenical and national relationships. The role is continuous, while the Moderator of the General Assembly only holds office for a year (with a year of preparation and one of 'de-briefing'). Some Reformed Churches elect a Moderator for a term of several years so that the Moderator can exercise a longer term leadership and the group gave thought to this possibility, which would imply a more administrative/executive role for the General Secretary. On balance, however, the group preferred the present arrangement. A General Secretary has to earn the trust of the Church for a personal role that depends on great sensitivity to the feelings and decisions of the councils of the URC. It is, we believe, evident to other Churches that the role is representative rather than authoritative and is meaningful only within that blend of the corporate and the individual which is emphasised in the URC understanding of the church. All this implies that a General Secretary who has earned the Church's trust should be supported in the personal role by the prayers and the considered backing of the councils.

The Moderator of the General Assembly

66. The office of Moderator of the General Assembly is not at present clearly defined, but it is recognised that election is a call by the Church to give leadership, both inspirationally and in the chair of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee, during a one-year period of office. We consider this length of service, with its preparation period, to be appropriate. A longer term would certainly preclude those in full-time secular employment and would require the separation of a minister from pastoral charge.

67. Our discussion of the Assembly Moderatorship revealed that we severally had in mind different 'models' of what it is to be the Moderator. Probably the drafters of the Scheme of Union operated with a Presbyterian model but many in the United Reformed Church have never had any familiarity with that and have formed their own image of the office, influenced by experience of presidential leadership in our other traditions and the pragmatic experience of the office since the URC was formed.

68. There seems to be two chief 'models' that could be used for the Moderatorship. One of these is based on the view that the link between individual and corporate leadership is strengthened by emphasising that a Moderator 'moderates' a council by regularly occupying its chair. While past holders of the office may preside on occasions e.g. when the Moderator has some other role to perform, such as Committee Convener, continuance in the chair is a recognition of the importance of all the business of the Assembly and enables a leadership akin to that of the orchestral conductor. This model applies also to the chairing of Synod, District Council and Elders' and Church Meetings. Some of us believe it to be a creative opportunity, not lightly to be set aside, which holds together the inspirational and the administrative.

69. Others advocate another 'model'; this would see the chief role of the Moderator as inspirational, ceremonial and representative, on occasion prophetic and visionary. Some could exercise the office in this way who would not be good at presiding over the business of the General Assembly; and those who combine both kinds of gifts are sometimes constrained in the use of some of them by occupying the chair, with the necessary restriction on individual intervention. This style of leadership could be explored and developed in a variety of ways, e.g. by releasing Provincial Moderators and local ministers from the chair of meetings so that they can operate more like a Provincial Moderator at a District Council, when the District Council Chairman is presiding.

70. As another means such exploration, the group offered to the November meeting of the Assembly Executive Committee a proposal with regard to presidency at the General Assembly. This would have involved the election of a panel of three Presiding Officers, who would take the chair at Assembly meetings, as and when the Moderator requested, and would in rotation preside at meetings of the Executive Committee. There was some support from the Executive Committee for this idea or for a reversion to the practice of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, which elected a Chairman of the Assembly and its executive body and a President of the Church. However, the written comments sent to us after the Executive Committee meeting were, by a clear majority, against such change.

71. On reflection it seems that we can do justice to both 'models' of Moderatorship within the present system, provided that the Moderator is explicitly permitted to invite to the chair **any** past Moderator (not only the immediately past Moderator). This is a point on which we discover there has been uncertainty. Such a permission:-

- (a) gives the Moderator freedom not only to take a period of rest but also to leave the chair to participate in a discussion;
- (b) frees the Assembly to elect someone whose gifts are such that he or she would not wish to be continuously in the chair on the first 'model' above;
- (c) provides for the availability of skilled and experienced chairing, since the list of past Moderators is acknowledged to contain those with that particular gift (who would be the sort of person elected to a presidential panel if it had been agreed!).

'Over to you'

72. The proposed resolutions which are attached to our report summarise and focus its conclusions. They also, we hope, make clear our belief that within the present structures of the United Reformed Church there is ample room and opportunity for the kind of leadership that the church needs. Whether it will in fact be offered depends on the insight, hard work, dedication and prayerful seeking of every member and every Council. It is clear to us that what can be achieved by our small group has now been done.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the group on leadership in the United Reformed Church and commends it for study in the Councils of the URC, in the light of section 8(3) of the *Structure (Manual, 2nd ed., p.13)* (see paras. 21 and 22).
2. The Assembly invites the Faith and Life Department and the Ministries Department, in developing their departmental policies, to consider the report and particularly the section on *Ministry, Ministers and Members* (paras. 27 to 34).
3. The Assembly instructs those responsible for appointments to any leadership role in the

United Reformed Church to ensure that the responsibility for and the method used in making and reviewing such appointments are made clear to the church, locally, regionally or nationally, as is appropriate (para. 35).

4. The Assembly encourages District Councils to review their work in the light of the suggestions and the questions in the section of the report on *The District Council* (paras. 36 to 44).
 5. The Assembly requests the Doctrine and Worship Committee in revising the services of ordination and induction to include questions as suggested in the first paragraph of the section of the report on *The District Council* (para. 35).
 6. The Assembly encourages members of the URC participating in the inter-church process *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* to explore with members of other churches the opportunities for shared leadership across the divisions between churches (paras. 45 to 47).
 7. The Assembly re-affirms the value and importance of the Synod, of the office of Provincial Moderator and of the office of General Secretary as these are set out in the relevant section of the *Manual* and of the group's report (*Manual*, 2nd ed., pp. 18, 19, 72, 73 and report paras. 48 to 57 and 65).
 8. The Assembly draws the attention of District Councils, in appointing representatives to the General Assembly, to the considerations set out in the section of the report *The General Assembly* (paras, 58 to 64).
 9. The Assembly refers to its Business Committee the suggestions concerning the month in which the Assembly should be held (paras. 63 and 64).
 10. The Assembly draws the attention of all the Councils of the URC to the discussion concerning the chairing of meetings and the particular role of the Moderator in the section of the report on *The Moderator of the General Assembly* (paras. 66 to 71).
 11. The Assembly ratifies the practice by which the Moderator of the General Assembly may invite to take the chair of the Assembly any former Moderator of the URC Assembly, whether to enable the current Moderator to have a respite from the chairing of the meeting or to permit the current Moderator to participate in a discussion from the floor (para. 71).
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FORWARD POLICY GROUP

1. The Forward Policy Group was established by the Assembly in 1984 as a consequence of the proposal of the Long Range Policy Group that there should be 'a small national group to stimulate, support and comment on the forward planning of the Church at all levels'. The Group, envisaged 'as a continuing exercise without a terminating date', first met in October 1984 and so far six meetings have been held. It recognises that it need be in no undue hurry to reach conclusions; we have to take stock of the present position in the United Reformed Church and then look into a future that some of us will possibly never see.
2. We are a small but mixed group: women and men; ministerial and lay; young, middle-aged and old; some church officers and others not. We have worked well together despite — or perhaps because of — the diversity of our backgrounds, and on many occasions we have benefited from the participation of the General Secretary, Bernard Thorogood. Sheila Tull has acted as Secretary and Co-ordinator and has produced valuable summaries of the disparate discussions that we have had.
3. Right at the outset of our meeting together we recognised that we needed to know more about the central organisation of the Church as represented by Church House. As a result we have visited all the Departments and met many of the staff, for whose friendship and tolerance we are grateful. We think we now appreciate what happens in the different offices and know to whom we may address some of our questions; and we feel that we have acquired an understanding of the links between Church House and the local churches. We have asked ourselves questions about the sizes of committees and the nature of representation but these matters call for study in depth and none of us has yet reached firm conclusions about them.
4. From the Executive we received a specific request, confirmed by the Assembly, that we should 'consider the role and effectiveness of the office' in Church House and this has encouraged us to do something about which, in other circumstances, we might have been hesitant. We have looked at the Brown/Everard Report of 1975 on the organisation of Church House and we have been told how far its suggestions have been acted upon. We are actively addressing ourselves to these organisational problems and we hope to be very positive in our recommendations.
5. In all our enquiries to date we are conscious of the possibility of duplicating work done by Committees and Departments of the Church so in many cases we are passing our queries to them, at least in the first instance; and as we proceed, we shall rely heavily on the individual experience of many others in the Church.
6. The nature of the ministry has been studied by this Group, recognising this as one of the keys to the growth of the Church and the qualities of its churchmanship in years to come. A very thoughtful paper on the subject was prepared by one of our ministerial members. We shall be returning to many aspects of the ministry later on in our deliberations.
7. The Long Range Policy Group in its Report *Preparing the Way*, had numerous suggestions on which we hope to take action, and one of these was *Refreshing our Hearts in the Bible*. This was the subject of our first residential conference which enabled us to get to know one another much better through time spent together at Westhill College in Birmingham. We had the privilege of having our thinking guided by Lesslie Newbigin, and Bernard Thorogood was also able to spend much time with us. Despite the diversity of views, in the Group as well as in the Church as a whole, about the interpretation of the Bible and its relevance to the lives of individuals and of the Church, all of us are in no doubt as to the Bible being the key to the progress of the Christian Church in the future to which we are looking.
8. Among the questions that we find ourselves asking are:-
How do we measure effectiveness as a denomination?
What is the distinctiveness of the URC and what has it especially to offer to the Church Universal, to Britain and to the world, as a result of the bringing together of three reformed churches?
What is the role of the URC in the light of the growth of local ecumenism?
9. And there are many other questions to which we shall need to direct our attention in the coming months. So far, as this report will show, the Group is very far from reaching conclusions,

but we hope that the Assembly will bear with us as we think through some at least of the problems that have faced the Church for many years. This is but an interim report, and we are very conscious of the need to sharpen the focus as we look closely and carefully — and prayerfully — at aspects of our church life which will determine whether the URC does indeed move forward in the years to come. We believe that we as a group are progressing and our hope is that a year from now we shall be more certain and positive in what we have to say.

10. The membership of the Group is as follows:-

Stephen Brown (*CND Officer*); Revd Elizabeth Caswell (*Minister, Hemingthorpe URC, Rotherham*); Revd Arnold Harrison (*Minister, Bramhall URC; former Synod Clerk, North West Province*); Professor Malcolm Johnson (*Professor of Social Work, The Open University*); Ian C M Maxwell (*Elder, Kenton URC*); Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (*Secretary, Basingstoke URC*); Professor Robert W Steel (*retired Principal of the University College of Swansea; Elder, Manselton URC*). Stephen Brown has found it necessary to resign from the Committee in view of his commitments with CND and the difficulty of attending meetings of the Group. It is hoped that the Nominations Committee will bring forward the name of another younger member of the Church as active and positive as Stephen has been.

PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REPORT

1. The Moderators' role is basically a pastoral one and this year we would like to share some of the concerns which arise as we seek to support and care for Ministers and local churches in our Provinces.

"Burnout"

2. *Clergy burn-out* is one of those expressions which has arrived recently on our shores from the other side of the Atlantic. It has been defined as "a progressive loss of idealism, energy and purpose experienced by people in the caring professions". It is identified by decreased efficiency, lack of interest in work and fall in performance. It expresses itself physically and emotionally in ways that are potentially disruptive. It is linked with stress. Some stress is, of course, inevitable and can be creative if correctly handled, but "burn-out" is the result of mismanaged or overwhelming stress.

3. A good deal of thought is being given at present to this question and a working party set up by the Healing Committee is looking at it on behalf of the URC. It is not our intention, therefore, to prejudge their work.

The role of the Minister

4. A major cause, however, is said to be uncertainty about the Minister's role. The Moderators are certainly aware of the problems which arise when the expectations held by a Minister and by his or her congregation differ widely. For example, there are Ministers who have abandoned what they regard as the "milk round" of routine pastoral visiting (as distinct from emergency visiting in cases of sickness or trouble), yet many pastorates regard this as a high priority.

5. We are well aware of the variety of pressures on Ministers and the temptation everyone has to give priority to those things they prefer doing or are best at or which appear to be the most pressing.

6. The average number of members per Minister in the URC is relatively small (the URC, with 130,000 members, has as many local churches as the Church of Scotland, which has about a million). Yet Ministers serving small churches, where there may be few competent lay leaders, often have to undertake duties not required of those in larger churches. The continuing shortage of Ministers and the consequent grouping of churches means they are also more likely to be responsible for two, three or even more churches. Their energies are therefore thinly spread and they have the additional pressures caused by the duplication of meetings, travelling between centres and serving communities in which they do not live. They may also have to take more responsibility for the care of buildings, which may be too large for today's congregations, unsuitable for current needs of church and community and showing their age. Buildings may be listed, with all the extra problems that brings!

7. It is not surprising in the circumstances that, with an ingrained tradition of "one Minister, one church", it is difficult to find Ministers willing to consider pastorates of certain types or in certain areas and this is frustrating and depressing for the churches concerned.

8. Do church members and even Elders realise the extent of the demands made on their Minister? How many really know what their Ministers do? Do many Ministers try to tell them? They see Ministers at services and meetings and know they do some visiting, but how many realise the extent of their involvement in the community? In addition we hear some Ministers criticised for their work for District, Province or Assembly. Local churches must recognise that they do not own their Minister and that all must be willing and available to take a fair share of the total work load. At the same time the URC as a whole needs to be careful not to overload those who are willing or specially gifted.

9. It would be useful if a greater understanding of the distinctive role of the ordained Minister could be developed and this would also help us all in our application of the ministry of the whole Church.

Ministers' families

10. Our second area of concern is with Ministers' families. A recent research project in the Province of Wales re-affirms that many Ministers have a partner and children who play a full part

in the life of the Church, who recognise the demands made upon them by their calling and who give them every support and encouragement in the ministry. We are grateful for the strong witness made by such manse families. Though few wives would see themselves fulfilling the traditional "Minister's wife" role of yesteryear and indeed a good many of them and practically all Ministers' husbands have their own full-time jobs, the vast majority give their partner full backing in the home and in the church.

11. However, we are alarmed at the pressures which exist and the breakdowns in some manse marriages. Perhaps District Councils and Moderators need to be more alert to danger signals so that appropriate help can be sought and offered before a marriage comes to crisis point.

12. Maybe as a Church the URC also needs to think through its attitudes to separation and divorce within the ministry and to review the sort of support and assistance which can be offered to Ministers and their families and to local churches when this occurs. Congregations have high expectations of their Ministers and find it difficult to cope with marriage breakdown in the manse, which sometimes proves to be a contentious and divisive issue.

13. We are indebted to a Minister in the Mersey Province for her survey "Motherhood and Ministry", which examines the position of mothers who are serving pastorates. Whilst this project has not uncovered any disastrous inadequacies in URC care for women Ministers with children and indeed many of those questioned appeared grateful for the understanding and support they have received, there is clearly a need for local churches, District Councils and Moderators to be sensitive to the special circumstances of such Ministers, particularly during pregnancy and following childbirth e.g. the provision of adequate maternity leave, and the appointment of an Interim Moderator or neighbouring minister to provide cover for the congregation.

14. Although in this section we have concentrated on Ministers' families, we are aware of the different but very real pressures on Ministers living alone, both male and female. Single Ministers have opportunities for concentrating their energies and time in ways that provide great advantage to their pastorates, as is recognised in the Roman Catholic tradition for a celibate priesthood and the concept of ordination as a kind of marriage. But such Ministers also need the help of a personal support system which is provided within the Catholic system but is totally lacking in the URC. Should our Church not give thought to the special problems single Ministers face within our family-dominated pattern of ministry?

The pastoral care of Ministers

15. Our third concern is that we do not always feel the support and pastoral care available for our Ministers is adequate. First of all we recognise that this must be a high priority in our own work. However, with the number and spread of those in our care (including retired ministers, the widows of Ministers and the growing number of Auxiliary Ministers), we feel that at times we are limited to dealing with crises and the movement of Ministers and we are not always able to give the more general encouragement and support which is needed.

16. In the Scheme of Union it is clear that the pastoral care of Ministers and churches is to be a responsibility shared between Moderators and District Councils. Many District Officers, Pastoral Committees and others exercise a loving care and support within their area. Some Districts have appointed "Pastoral Aides" to supplement the personal involvement of the Moderator with Ministers.

17. Moderators are well aware that for some there appears to be a conflict in our role. We are pastors, and this includes the task of introducing Ministers to pastorates. However, not all Ministers will share their intimate confessions and problems with someone who may be able to influence their future opportunities, which saddens us. We are also dismayed when, shortly after visiting a manse and finding all apparently well, we learn that the Minister has a major difficulty in the home or with the local church, which has not been shared.

18. We are aware that URC Ministers derive a good deal of personal support in other ways, for example through denominational and ecumenical fraternals, friendships and outside interests and, of course, from the officers and Elders of their pastorates. We sense that more formal support structures (e.g. the Anglican *Joint Working Consultation* process or the Roman Catholic *Ministry to Priests Programme*) would be contrary to the rather independent ethos of the URC and may be resisted by some. However we are anxious about those who are isolated and too independent,

particularly when tensions arise within the local fellowship and we look for deepening partnership between District Councils and Moderators and for an increased sense of mutual concern and support amongst Ministers.

Some questions

19. We have shared these matters with you because they take up a good deal of our time, our thoughts and our prayers, both at our monthly Moderators' meetings and in our day-to-day work in the Provinces. We certainly do not wish to give the impression that there is any major and new crisis in the URC ministry and indeed we rejoice in the large number of Ministers who faithfully and consistently serve the pastorates of our denomination and for all the positive and encouraging signs we see in the worship and witness of the churches as we travel round. But we hope that, by sharing our concerns in this way, the whole Church may become more aware of and responsive to the stresses which affect some of our Ministers.

20. In the light of the concerns expressed in this report we would like to leave four questions with Assembly in the hope that they will become issues for wider discussion in the Church:

1. Believing that all church members are engaged in *ministry*, what is the distinctive role of the ordained Minister and how can we ensure that Ministers are free and able to exercise that particular ministry?
2. Is a Minister primarily Minister of a local pastorate — or a Minister of the URC as a whole, serving a particular pastorate?
3. How can the Church corporately, and particularly the Elders in the local church, exercise a more caring and supportive ministry to Ministers, especially when there are unusual pressures in the home and personal life of a Minister?
4. Is it possible for District Councils and Provincial Moderators to share more effectively in exercising their pastoral care and oversight of all Ministers in their areas?

The past year

21. We have welcomed three new colleagues: John Waller, Bill Gathercole and Nelson Bainbridge. We are grateful for the insight and experience they bring to our meetings and we are glad to share with them the privilege of serving the Church as Provincial Moderators. We have also enjoyed the company of three Synod Clerks: George Thomas, Douglas Thacker and John Simpson, who have deputised for Moderators and we have been grateful for their contribution.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPLIES COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Netherwood

Secretary: Miss Alma Wade

PUBLICATIONS

Annual URC Books

1. The third annual book, Richard Hall's *For Everything a Season*, will be launched at Assembly and the author has agreed to be available to sign copies.
2. The aim of this series is to produce a book every year which can be read with enjoyment by people in the URC and to give a special focus each year to our thinking.
3. Previous books in the series by Bernard Thorogood and Colin Evans have sold well and copies are still available. The poster featuring all three books will be mailed in the June Information Service.

Reform

4. We still regard *Reform* as one of the best means of communication among all members of the Church. There is wide participation in the *Letters* columns and the editor tries to give space to the many topics of current importance, from test-tube babies to children's Christian education and from inner-city unrest to computer technology.
5. About one member in every seven buys *Reform* so probably about one-third of our membership reads at least part of it. We suggest that the remaining two-thirds could be reading it with profit — and pleasure!

Year Book

6. The 1985/86 edition included church telephone numbers (where available) as well as addresses, and dialling codes for all telephone numbers. We are at present in discussion with the printer and Church House Office Management Group with a view to computerising the main part of this publication to reduce the amount of annual checking and re-checking of the detailed information by the editors.

Assembly Publications

7. The new format of *Reports to Assembly* and *Record of Assembly* was well received. It is hoped that by next year computerisation will obviate the proof-reading of the Reports and possibly enable them to be written nearer the date of Assembly.

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLIES

8. Cyril Lowden was appointed Distribution and Supplies Officer (part-time) in March 1985 and the appointment was confirmed in June.
9. Bookstall takings at 1985 Assembly were £7,939 compared with a previous 'best' of £4,517 (1984); takings at Forum 85 were £1,713 compared with £1,078 (1984).
10. The scale of postal charges shown in the catalogue was adjusted and when advertising new books we now give actual postage. Books reviewed in *Reform* over £2.95 value are now sent post-free if *Reform Reviews* are mentioned.
12. We try to stock books and other material required by URC churches but not necessarily available from local Christian Bookshops. Books from other publishers may be ordered through us and we are always happy to consider suggestions of titles we might usefully stock. Our aim is still to give the best possible service to our churches whilst running within our budget.

PRESS AND PUBLICITY

13. Revd Philip Schofield, who has chaired the Publicity Group for several years, and Mrs Mary Schofield, Honorary Press Officer and a member of the Group, have retired and moved to the Chester area. We thank them for their dedicated service over the years and wish them a long and happy retirement.

14 We are happy to report that Revd Brian Cooper has agreed to take on the Press/PR role on a part-time basis. He will combine his work for us with his college lecturing job and other journalistic work. He expects later to leave the lecturing post and to take on a part-time (Baptist) ministry. As he is not able to be present at Assembly this year, he is preparing Press Releases beforehand, and Revd David Netherwood will handle Press and Local Radio matters during Assembly.

URC Logotype

15. The logo has been well received and many churches, Districts and Provinces have adopted it in their letter-heads and other printed matter. Of the logo goods, ties have been the best-seller; new lines have been and will be added from time to time.

Communications Leaflets

16. Leaflet 8, *I think it's that a-way!*, urged churches to ensure that visitors to their area would know *where* to find them and the times of their services. Leaflet 9 tried to give some answers to the question *Why have a bookstall?* and No 10, intended for mailing in the June Information Service, will deal with Video and how it can be used by local churches. We are considering updating earlier Communications Leaflets, incorporating some previously issued by Thames North Communications Panel, and making the whole 'package' available in some form of file or binder.

Publicity Group

17. When the Publicity Group met in March, primarily to make detailed arrangements for Assembly, a re-statement of the aims and purpose of the Group was considered, together with names of people having communications skills or experience. The informal Group will continue to report to Communication and Supplies Committee.

FLOW OF INFORMATION

Church Returns Forms

18. Some changes were made to the form after lengthy consultation with the Departments concerned and taking into account the comments from Provinces and churches about the form distributed in 1984. We are now receiving comments about the form sent out in 1985 and will give these consideration for 1986.

Updating and Amending Information

19. Procedures for passing on to all concerned changes to information contained in the Year Book and other records have improved over the past year.

20. These were two of the items discussed in November with Synod Clerks and Administrative Officers under the general title of *Flow of Information*, resulting in discussion on the use of computers.

21. We now subscribe to *Church Computer*, the Newsletter of the Church Computer Users Group, and can supply for reference the current issue, Directory and some back numbers, together with the Kubernesis Booklet, *The Data Protection Act and Church Computing*.

INFORMATION SERVICE

22. The Information Service is controlled by an inter-departmental group (not by Communication and Supplies) but is, of course, one of the main channels of communication between Church House and local churches, and was discussed at the meeting with Province officers.

23. Many churches find it useful to have additional copies of the I.S. (still only £3 p.a.), as well as the complimentary set sent to the Church Secretary. On the other hand, if the standard set of information is difficult to cope with, the 'Small Church Pack' should be requested.

VIDEO

24. We have a small collection of titles available for loan to churches, which we advertise in *Reform* or in the Information Service from time to time. The programme requested most often is the Church of Scotland's *Choosing the Way*, a 4-part pre-confirmation series.

25. Our Committee is of the opinion that the use of video by churches will increase, and we shall

continue to publish information on the subject although we do not plan to increase greatly the number of programmes we purchase for loan while take-up is slow.

LOCAL RADIO

26. We have been represented on the committee which planned the Lent '86 Course *What on Earth is the Church for?* which is itself a preparation for the Inter-Church Process *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*. Over fifty local radio stations, both BBC and ILR, used the course and the response, involvement and participation of our local churches throughout the country was encouraging.

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES EXHIBITION, February 1986

27. Last year we were criticised for not taking a Stand at this exhibition. This year it was agreed we participate on an experimental basis and carry out a careful evaluation afterwards.

28. We have the comments of visitors to the Stand which were entered in a small visitors book at the time of the exhibition, and about twenty letters from the Stand volunteers, sent at our request, and representing a more considered judgment. Most of our correspondents take the view that it is important for the URC and other denominations to be present at this event. Although some question the expense, several think we cannot afford to be absent from it. These views, together with details of in-house resources affected, will be put to the Committee at their next meeting.

ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

29. The Association for Christian Communication suffered a serious set-back this year in the sad death of the Revd Peter Brooks. Their new Communications Officer, however, is proceeding with the Directory of Christian Communication (Radio, Television and Video) which should prove a useful tool, and we expect to continue our involvement with AFCC.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives this report for debate.
 2. Assembly encourages Communication and Supplies to continue to produce an annual book.
 3. In order that our churches may make the best use of radio, video and television, Assembly encourages Communication and Supplies to continue to keep in touch with current developments in these media and to give consideration to co-operation with other Churches as and when opportunities arise.
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INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING PARTY ON EVANGELISM

Convener: The Revd David Marsden

Secretary: The Revd Donald Elliott

“GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE”

1. God means his Church to grow as a sign of the coming of his Kingdom. He is looking for growth in the URC,

- growth in numbers of Christians,
- growth in work with children and young people,
- growth in spirituality,
- growth in dialogue with people of other faiths,
- growth in encounter with people of no faith,
- growth in the planting of churches.

God seeks growth that will be even more fruitful in service and ministry, especially among the poor. Such growth in this generation will often be by sharing in mission ecumenically. The URC has a part to play in extending the Church into places and sectors of life which it has not reached or from which it has retreated.

2. Growth is not for the URC's own sake, not for fatter or more 'successful' churches. Nor is growth simply to ensure the survival of the URC: that is in God's hands. But growth is for the sake of people, because each individual has a place in God's love.

3. Staring at us today is the hard face of pointlessness, powerlessness and violence. The features of this face are lined with racial bigotry, redundant talent, broken family, drug abuse, nuclear threat and avoidable poverty. God has revealed a way of caring that calls to birth a just and peaceful community in which all people have a place and meaning. This community is imprinted with the face of Jesus, crucified and risen, (Ephesians 1:9-12).

4. The Church exists to present God's Kingdom as a real option for everybody. To do that we need more people who have been converted and are committed to that Kingdom, people with the love and hope born of living faith in God.

5. So we need to grow — not for our sake — but for the people's sake. It is GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE.

6. In 1983 the General Assembly called for a new emphasis on evangelism. A Working Party representing all Departments of the URC was set up. We quickly decided that the main resource to help local churches to reach out must be people. We chose not to produce paper and packs. Instead we started by asking for Teams of Mission Enablers to be set up in every Province, and by providing learning weekends for them. With the help of very many people, nine Provincial Teams have been formed, with at least two more on the way.

7. **Arising from the experience with the formation, training and work of the Teams, we believe that the time has come for the URC to inaugurate a concerted programme for growth. We are proposing that the Assembly asks its Departments and invites the Provinces to plan accordingly.**

8. Over recent years the URC has received a number of reports, each the product of devoted labour, and all of them analysing our situation and helping us to see the tasks that lie before us:-

<i>Seeking the Truth in Love</i>	1980
<i>Towards Renewed Confidence</i>	1981
<i>Good News to the Poor</i>	1982
<i>Preparing the Way</i>	1983

Common themes run through them, calling the URC to use the human resources it has in the confidence of the Spirit. We need to take these reports seriously and now work out their implications.

9. There are several new signs of mission and evangelism in our midst. The Youth Committee's Ginger Group is one. The expected establishment of the Community for Reconciliation in the

Midlands is another. From the Provinces comes news of experiments large and small in outreach. The Teams of Mission Enablers have been welcomed and encouraged. In order to support this work, the time is ripe for a national pledge by the URC to GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE, so that we may play our full part in mission alongside our sister churches in this country and overseas.

10. At Union the URC pledged itself to unity for the sake of mission. One way in which this has been worked out recently is by local church participation in the British inter-church process called *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* with its Lent '86 series *What on Earth is the Church For?* emphasising the missionary calling of the Church.

11. The Council for World Mission has embarked on a new Education in Mission programme *equipping local congregations for mission*. As a member of CWM, the URC can participate in the world-wide fellowship by sharing the experience of planning for evangelism and mission through visiting teams helping churches.

12. We find our concerns echoed in the ecumenical affirmation on *Mission and Evangelism* adopted by the World Council of Churches in 1984. This states at its outset:-

'In a world where the number of people who have no opportunity to know the story of Jesus is growing steadily, how necessary it is *to multiply the witnessing vocation of the Church!*'

'In a world where people are struggling for justice, freedom and liberation, often without the realisation of their hopes, how important it is *to announce that God's Kingdom is promised to them!*'

'In a world where so many find little meaning, except in the relative security of their affluence, how necessary it is *to hear once again Jesus' invitation to discipleship, service and risk!*'

13. Experience with the URC Teams of Enablers suggest that clarity about the purpose of the Church comes with faithfulness to missionary calling. We have witnessed that where there is a real concern to engage in mission and evangelism, people with differing theologies and different approaches to the interpretation of the Bible can come to a common purpose. They discover that they are given the necessary gifts and faith. Thus confidence emerges in local churches that they do indeed have faith and vision to share.

14. We believe that *what we have learned with the Teams in their relation to local churches provides necessary indicators for preparing the whole URC for mission:-*

1. Sharing personal faith and vision and praying together, at whatever meeting;
2. Working out together an agreed Purpose which determines priorities;
3. Clarifying that Purpose into measurable objectives which can be regularly evaluated;
4. Visitors who offer sustained guidance on a limited front, with
5. Leadership that listens but insists on realism and precision;
6. Making time to wait on the Spirit with expectation.

The proposals we make emerge from this experience.

15. In putting forward our proposals for GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE, we believe that we are reflecting some of the varied Biblical understandings of growth, as for example in Matthew 13. We include notes for a Bible Study on this passage so that they can be looked at alongside this Report.

16. We hope very much that all local churches and District Councils together with Provinces and Assembly Departments will discuss this Report and do the Bible Study so that Assembly will be ready to make clear decisions in May 1987.

IMAGES OF GROWTH: a Bible Study on Matthew chapter 13

The study can be made either by a GROUP or by an INDIVIDUAL.

Suggestions about how to get the best out of it follow:

I

Read the whole chapter carefully.

IN A GROUP each member might read it through silently.

II

Now note the structure of the chapter.

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL this will involve re-reading the chapter. IN A GROUP it can be done more dramatically. Someone can read Matthew's narrative bits, e.g. verses 1-3 and the first words of verse 4, 'He said', and so on. Another voice can read the words of Jesus, whilst the original reader breaks in with all the narrative connections. Others can read the questions of the disciples.

As in the Sermon on the Mount, in chapters 5, 6 & 7, here too Matthew depicts Jesus in a formal teaching role. Jesus is sitting down. All the teaching this time is in parables. The questions that the disciples ask about the parables reflect the way that the Church in Matthew's time used the parables. It seems that the populace who first heard them marvelled at Jesus's wisdom!

Matthew sees himself as presenting an integral slice of Jesus's teaching when he strings together these parables. What could he see as the unifying thread? They are all of course parables of the Kingdom. The first four, the Sower, the man who went to bed after sowing, the mustard seed and the yeast, all depict the Kingdom in an organic process of growth. Do the last three, the treasure discovered, the pearl found and the dragnet filled, also speak of growth? Hold on to that question as your study proceeds.

III

Next, concentrate upon the first three parables.

These represent the activity of the Kingdom of God (in Matthew's terminology, of heaven) as seed. When the farmer has sown the seed it grows 'How he does not know'. The outcome lies in the inter-action between seed and soil. The hazards of this process are spelt out in the parable of the Sower, but no lessons are drawn that suggest the need for some improvement in his agricultural technique. He is not under criticism. Whilst the situation is set out as it is, the assurance of harvest is always emphasised.

In the story of the man who went to bed to sleep with the innocence of faith in growth, another intrudes with a different sowing. But still the seed must make its own way. The servants are advised against trying to safeguard its growth by weeding. That would be too great a risk to the eventual harvest when each person's work will be clearly identifiable, ('A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears', Matthew 12:33 and see I Corinthians 3:13). But notice that in another picture of growth (John 15:2), cutting out dead wood and selecting the future growing-points is presented as the way God works.

In the parable of the mustard seed the size of the seed is contrasted with the resultant plant and its potentiality.

As an image of growth the seed is full of surprise and always presents the challenge of 'wait and see'. It can deceive with its rapid results if the ground is too shallow. While it is at risk of choking by other plants, it can also win through regardless.

Whatever be the vagaries of the tale of the seed, it consistently has the plot of death and resurrection. 'A grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest' (John 12:24).

The yeast fulfils its purpose only when it is mixed with the flour; then, in its growing, distinction between itself and its context vanishes.

IF YOU ARE AN INDIVIDUAL studying the chapter, you might now find it helpful to contemplate these questions:-

Imagine yourself as the sower or the baker. Your seed is precious, so is your yeast. What are the impulses at work in you? What are you trying to achieve? What are the risks involved?

Imagine God as the sower or the baker and yourself as the seed or the yeast. Inside the husk that is you is the living germ of faith. Can you believe that? What is God likely to be doing with you as the vessel of faith? What risks is he taking? What then is the risk to you?

IN A GROUP you might discuss what sort of growing Jesus expects the Kingdom to be in your neighbourhood and church. In what ways can you imagine what your church does as sowing, or even baking? What is the nature of the soil that it has been given you to work with? In Jesus's parable it is not all tough! Whilst avoiding finding excuses for complacency, discuss the significance of the 'hundredfold or it might be sixtyfold or thirtyfold' for understanding what is happening, or what might be happening, in your locality and church. There is much talk of dying churches nowadays. Try to tease out in discussion the difference between the dying that Jesus speaks of in John 12:24, and the dying of the seed that is shrivelled up or gone mouldy. Try to understand what is happening in the church you know in terms of these two sorts of dying. Remember one is essential for growth, the other is disaster.

IV

Turn now to the last three parables

The following questions can be contemplated if you are studying INDIVIDUALLY, or discussed together in a GROUP:-

Consider how the purchase of the field and the pearl can be an investment for growth. How is this aspect of the Kingdom present in your life and in the life of your church? Consider both the requirement to make the purchase and all that is involved in doing it 'for sheer joy'.

As for the dragnet, what is the significance of the statement that 'fish of every kind were caught in it'? The parable is about a way of fishing that seems to be a daily procedure of sorting the catch out, yet Matthew suggests that as a picture of the Kingdom the process waits until the 'end of time', pulling this parable into line perhaps with the parable of the weed-ridden field. Is he right to read it like that? Or is there a sense in which the harvest is discerned and gathered in in the shorter term as well as the long term? If so, what does this bifocal view mean for living the Christian life and for the service of the Church today?

This brings us the focal point of interest for all these parables: the **purpose that is in view**.

Once more the same questions can serve for INDIVIDUAL contemplation or for GROUP discussion.

What are these parables showing us about the objective that God is working for?

What vision of the future do these parables have for our own Country and for your locality today?

What has study of this chapter told us about the way God may be expecting the United Reformed Church to grow?

Parables, like the seeds they tell about, are offered with a specific purpose in mind. Like seeds they germinate over a period and have stages of growth — in the case of parables, in the soil of the mind, the will and the feelings. Parables are meant to disclose the ways of God in such a manner that the hearer is challenged to trust, to obey and to hold him in honour. They are given their forms so that they might cut through the blindness and resistance of prejudice and complacency.

PROPOSALS

1. Assembly receives the Report of the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism.
2. Assembly accepts the challenge of GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE.
3. Assembly invites the Moderator-elect to convene an early meeting with Conveners and Secretaries of Departments and with representatives of the Provincial Moderators and the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism to initiate the process of responding to the Report.

4. Assembly asks the Departments to take whatever steps are necessary to formulate specific proposals in relation to agreed priorities for growth.
 5. Assembly submits the Report to Provinces for their consideration and comment.
 6. Assembly charges the Moderator-elect and the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism with receiving the responses from the Departments and Provinces by 1 January 1987 so that discussion can take place at every level of the church prior to the 1987 Assembly when a detailed programme will be considered.
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FAITH AND LIFE DEPARTMENT

Convener: The Revd Richard F Taylor
Secretary: The Revd Margaret T Taylor

1. The review group for Faith and Life appointments described the work of the Department as enabling local churches to nurture and care for people in the church and in society through the whole cycle of family life, and in particular for children, youth and adults.
2. This is a very wide ranging definition of the task. Clearly the Department has to reach an agreement about specific priorities. Last year these were set as the Elders' Training Programme, the Windermere Centre and Youth. Substantial progress in each of these three areas has been achieved, and is recorded in subsequent paragraphs in the Committee reports. The recurrent emphasis of the department is "growth" in its many aspects, including growth in discipleship, spirituality, stewardship and membership.
3. There is now a widespread demand for more attention to be given to work among children, in the context of Christian Education. The Review Group recommended that Children's Work becomes a growth-point, as Youth Work and the Ministry of Healing have been growth-points in recent years. However, the Budget Committee has been unable to accept the recommendations of the Review Group for a half-time appointment to facilitate this expansion. The URC, as a whole, should be deciding what are the growth areas for expansion. The Department can point to the many achievements of Youth Work made possible because of the investment of resources. Until the Church is clearer about the direction it is being called to take it will be in danger of spreading its scarce resources of talent and finance too thinly over too many programmes.
4. As the retiring Convener, I want to express my warmest appreciation to all the members of the Departmental Committees and Staff for their commitment, their stimulus and their concern. It has been a continuing source of excitement to work with them over six years. I owe a very special debt of gratitude to Margaret, our devoted Secretary, for all that she has attempted and achieved in the application of Christian Education during these last years. Thank You!

Richard F Taylor

CHILDREN'S WORK COMMITTEE

Convener:
Secretary: The Revd Margaret T Taylor

5. The committee, through its *Equipped to Teach* sub-committee, has continued to provide resources, encouragement and training for tutors. Response to the resolution passed at Assembly in 1985 at first appeared slow but latterly we have been encouraged by an increase in the number of students registering and by news of Districts seeking to form groups of students to follow the course. We are glad to report that the first student, Mrs Helen K Wilson of Cherry Hinton, has successfully completed Part C of the *Equipped to Teach* course. We have given careful consideration to the question of assessment raised at the Assembly last year. We recognise and share the desire to encourage and not to judge which prompted the question but we are also aware of the poverty of much of our Christian nurture of children in the church. We will continue to monitor our assessment processes and seek to find better ways but believe that, for the present at least, we must give priority in the *Equipped to Teach* course to the needs of the children rather than those of the students and therefore cannot recommend a change from the present practice of national assessment. Any student whose work is not of the required standard is asked to try again in the light of the comments made. We leave to tutors and local churches the task of encouraging the students and offering them pastoral care, and if necessary helping them to find some other task to which God is calling them.
6. Guidelines, for parents and others, on using the Bible with Children have been drafted and plans are in hand for their publication by the British Council of Churches on behalf of the Consultative Group for Ministry among Children. We hope that these guidelines will prove to be a valuable aid in helping local churches to nurture children in the Christian faith.
7. The committee was asked for its support for a research project sponsored jointly by the National Christian Education Council and Birmingham University Education Department. The project will employ a research fellow and possibly also an assistant for a period of two years to

carry out research into how Christian families actually share their beliefs and practices with their children. It is hoped that a group with theological and educational skills will then prepare appropriate resources for parents to use.

8. The committee was interested to hear of work being done by Dr John Hull in which children are being strengthened in their own faith through learning about other faiths and entering into dialogue with those who believe in them. We plan to explore this further in consultation with the Mission and Other Faiths Committee of the World Church and Mission Department.

9. We welcome the publication of the booklet *Let Love be Genuine* by the Baptist Union working party looking at the Church's care for mentally handicapped people and especially children. We have been made aware during the year of some local churches where imaginative care is being given and we would be glad to hear of others. We would encourage all churches to find out whether there are mentally handicapped children in their own community whose need for Christian nurture and worship is not being met and to consider ways of meeting that need.

10. The current crisis in the state education system, and the consequent anxieties of teachers, parents and pupils, has sharpened our concern about the relationship of Church and school. While we believe that most action in this area must be on an ecumenical basis, we believe that there is a need for the URC to provide pastoral support for those of its members most involved and to enable local churches to approach this matter with the necessary understanding and sensitivity. We will be taking up this concern in consultation with the Church and Society Department.

11. Another matter of great concern to the committee, is the question of 'missing children', that is those children who at one time met through Junior Church or mid-week organisations who no longer have contact with the Church and little with the Christian faith. We hope to give high priority to this in the coming year. Meantime we recognise the important part which Pilots can play in this outreach to children as well as in the nurture and encouragement of those who already belong in some way to the Church.

12. The Children's Work Committee was disappointed that the Church did not appoint a new convener until February 1986, so leaving it without leadership for nine months at a time when there is general concern about the Church's work with children.

PILOTS PANEL

Convener: Mrs Alma Kendall

Master Pilot: The Revd John Robinson

13. The non-uniformed organisation for children aged 7-14, of United Reformed and Congregational churches provides mid-week activities, alongside worship and teaching on Sundays. There is a continuing demand in our churches for the programme of activities which Pilots provides, and it can often be a means by which children establish a link with a local church, for the first time.

14. Each Pilot Company is linked with a Provincial Pilot Officer, who provides the link with Church House. The Pilot Office is always willing to help with the provision of materials and training. Again, the Master Pilot has led several training days for officers in various parts of the country, and staff from the office have visited the National Camps.

15. On the advice of the Pilots Panel, the Children's Work Committee has reappointed Mrs Alma Kendall as Convener of the Panel for a further period of 3 years.

16. 1986 is a special year for Pilots, as it is the 50th Anniversary of its founding. The voyage this year is a special project written by Mrs Betty Taylor to enable companies to explore the history of Pilots and to prepare for the Anniversary Celebration in Westminster Central Hall, London on Saturday 14 June 1986 at 2.30pm. Everyone is invited to share in this Celebration; admission is free, but by ticket. Children and adults from all parts of the country are preparing to be present and combine in this Celebration. A day not to be missed! (Available from the Pilots Office — Voyage, £1; souvenir handbook and programme, 50p; tickets, enclose sae. Other souvenirs are available from Provincial Pilot Officers.)

17. Increasing numbers of local churches are looking for mid-week activities which will catch the imagination of the 7 to 14-year-olds, many of whom now have little or no contact with the Christian

faith. As it moves beyond its 50th Anniversary with confidence, Pilots can form a bridge between children and the Church. The Pilot promise is still relevant: 'I will learn, pray and serve all I can in the world-wide Church of Jesus Christ.'

YOUTH COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Duncan Wilson
Secretary: The Revd Paul H Quilter

18. The public's view of young people in what has been the International Youth Year (IYY) will be very mixed. On the one hand hundreds of groups have identified with and produced imaginative and generous schemes to support Band Aid, Live Aid and many more manifestations of the concern of young people for the world in which they live. On the other, scenes of young people running riot at Brixton, Handsworth and Tottenham and the sickeningly familiar story of football violence have left us with bitter memories. Our committee believes that it is important for us to know what it is that brings out the best in young people and what it is that gives rise to the worst. It should concern the whole Church and the Nation.

19. The Youth Committee realises that it and the whole Church has far to go if it is to reach young people in both inner city areas and rural communities with the good news that is meant for the impoverished. We are making efforts, in view of this, to find and learn from examples of effective youth work in such areas.

20. We can, nevertheless, point with gladness to many encouraging developments within the work and outreach of our committee during the year. We have aimed for growth; growth in the number of young people and their groups, in the quality of youth leadership and the personal and spiritual development of young people themselves. No-one can remember a better FURY Assembly than the one with which we launched 1986. 50 more young people than ever before attended, almost two-thirds for the first time. The IYY handbook had been sold out by the middle of 1985. Nearly 900 gathered for CONNECT 85 at Coventry with 1,100 receiving communion in the Cathedral. Young people and their Districts have demanded a more frequent and regular national gathering of this kind. But if it should grow, how would we cope? This is the kind of problem we like to have to solve!

However, IYY did not catch the imagination of the United Kingdom in general and in a significant number of churches it seems to have been ignored.

21. Following upon the great encouragement given by the General Assembly in 1985 the Ginger Group was formed. The first team is now well established in the manse at Yardley Hastings, Northamptonshire. After a month of training, preparation and simply getting to know each other, the group began answering the many requests from local churches, Districts and various other groups to lead or take part in a wide range of events. By mid-August of this year they will have taken part in 40 projects ranging from one day to two weeks in length. This talented and deeply committed group has generated a very positive response everywhere. Assembly can assist us again, if it will, by encouraging local churches to continue their financial support. We have insufficient funds to cover the next two years and if the project continues to be so successful can we maintain it beyond its intended three years?

22. Peace, Participation and Development were the themes of IYY and linked to them were three special happenings. Summer in Southall, a joint URC/Methodist event gathered twenty young people, and the 'Irish Happening' another twenty at the Rostrevor Centre near Kilkeel and Newry. They proved to be excellent meetings of young people from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. 12 URC young people participated in a five nations Peace Camp held in West Germany which was initiated by the Youth Committee.

23. The wide range of annual events organised by the Youth Committee continues. They often leave a deep and lasting effect. Coming from the local to the national activity or conference is found stimulating and broadening. Many who are now in positions of leadership and responsibility in the local life of the Church recall the important effect that their attendance had upon them. Having said that, few churches or ministers seem to be sufficiently aware of the range of activities or to make the effort to encourage their young people to take part. The lack of funds, sometimes offered as a reason for not joining events, can be overcome. The Secretary will be glad to give details.

24. From 4 to 14 August 1986 we are holding a new event. It has two major aims. First to give an 'adventure camp' type of Christian experience to a lower age group, 11-14s, and second to give leadership training and experience to 18-25-year-olds. There will be experienced staff support.

25. Information about this and all events is now to be found in the FURY NATIONAL magazine, also a new development in 1985. It is compiled by young people and youth leaders and incorporates all important 'Youth Office' news. It is published three times a year.

26. 'Touch and Go' was our major discussion/action project for the year. Clearly, some groups have yet to use it, many find that they have not exhausted its resources. Material has been reprinted, some has been adopted by other organisations, some churches use it with adult groups. For these reasons in 1986 'Touch and Go' goes on.

27. Training is, perhaps, our major emphasis. The growth of youth work is dependent upon it. Confident, skilful, sensitive and creative leadership is our great resource and the foundation of our hopes of better youth work throughout the URC. We have now introduced a Tutor Training Course, a further course designed to help leaders through the minefield of communicating our faith to young people, a course for ministers entitled *Ministering to Youth and Living in Britain Today* designed to deepen awareness of the variety of ethnic, religious and cultural characteristics and attitudes around us in modern Britain.

28. We have, the church has, a full team of Youth Leadership Training Officers. They are an invaluable resource and although already overworked we commend churches to make use of them. Developing the training programme and supporting the team now requires a new approach and method. This could be greatly facilitated by the creation of a full time National Youth Training Officer post in place of the present half-time YLTO Team Leader post. The Youth Committee has good reason to be sure that this can be done without calling upon the Church for any further funding. The Department will be bringing an appropriate recommendation to the Assembly.

29. During the last year the Youth Committee has been assessing its work and attempting to determine its priorities. It seems clear that we need to give special attention to the needs and opportunities presented by inner city areas and rural districts. We sense the need to give greater emphasis to the younger FURY age group of 13-15-year-olds, a critical period of growth both physically and spiritually. In this we hope to work closely with the Children's Work Committee. It is also suggested that we need to strengthen the identity of FURY, building upon a greater feeling of belonging that has slowly developed. And perhaps the whole church needs to take more seriously the stewardship of its human resources and potential leadership by offering a more specific opportunity and challenge to young people to ask "What, in God's name, shall I do with my life?"

30. We are already and increasingly aware of the valuable effect of international exchange. A new sub-committee, the World Affairs Sub-Committee, has been created and will work closely with both CWM and our World Church and Mission Department. It will help prepare, monitor and evaluate our overseas activities and help develop a greater awareness in FURY of our international dimension.

31. The Department of Education and Science has chosen the URC, and its Youth Committee to be the subject of an inspection by three of its HMIs. The Youth Committee welcomes them and looks forward to receiving their report in November.

32. Our last note is one of rejoicing. The life and gifts of so many young people, so many dedicated leaders and a fine team of trainers makes us thankful and, yes, proud. We trust the church will make good use of them and the Lord of Life inspire them.

33. Finally, the Youth Committee records its immense gratitude to the retiring Convener, The Revd Duncan Wilson. Duncan has been a superb Convener, leader, inspirer, and pastor to the Youth Committee and countless young people during his six years of office. We give thanks that God inspires such a high standard of leadership within the life of the denomination.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard

Secretary: The Revd Margaret T Taylor

34. The work of the Christian Education and Stewardship Committee this year has focussed on elders' training and in particular on developing appropriate links with those with responsibility for such training in provinces, as we indicated in our report last year. However, other areas of concern have not been ignored. Much of our work is slow to come to fruition and we recognise that many people do not yet understand or share our vision. We are heartened, nevertheless, by evidence of a growing interest in many local churches in finding ways in which members can foster spiritual development and discipleship skills. An Assembly committee has only a limited part to play in this task of Christian nurture and we are aware of the contribution of others, in local churches, districts and provinces and in other Assembly committees and departments. We appreciate in particular the co-operation with the Evangelism Working Party and its teams of Evangelism Enablers, with the World Church and Mission Department's secretary for communications and with the Church and Society Department.

35. There has been an encouraging response to our publications, *On the Way, Setting Out, Choosing Our Elders* and *An Elder, Who, Me?*. Churches appear to be finding them useful and we hope will continue to do so. Both *Being a Member* and *Being an Elder* have been thoroughly revised and reprinted during the year. We are grateful to the small group who publish the Adult Study Programme on our behalf and would again commend its use. We would also add our commendation of the British Council of Churches Lent study guide *What on Earth is the Church for?* and encourage local churches who perhaps do not have regular study groups to take this opportunity of beginning a practice which they would find of value for their future life and fellowship.

36. Some of the stimulus for our work comes from *ecumenical involvement* and the sharing of resources, inspiration and skills with those in other denominations. In particular our membership of the Christian Association for Adult and Continuing Education brings us insights from the rapidly developing area of secular adult continuing education and community education and puts us in touch with those who can help us to develop our skills. One exciting development is the possibility of an Open University part course on *The Christian Experience*. Authorisation for this is at present being sought and trusts will then be approached for funding.

37. A suggestion was made to the committee that the URC should help to make available simple resources for *drama in worship and in learning*. Although there is material available, it is not always easily obtainable by those in local churches who are beginning to take an interest. The committee suggested therefore that it might be possible to set up an informal network or association of URC people interested in drama with the aim of publishing short sketches in a simple, cheap, form; of disseminating information and generally encouraging the use of drama in the URC. Anyone interested is invited to write to the Secretary.

38. The committee has been concerned not to lose sight of the particular emphases of *stewardship* in the wider concerns. We are grateful to Michael Harrison who represents us on the BCC Stewardship Committee and keeps these concerns before us. During the coming year we will be looking at what publications and training resources are available and what are needed. Meantime we would suggest that local churches wanting material should look at a new booklet with suggestions for study and discussion published by Oxford Diocese, *The Steward — A Biblical Symbol for Today* abridged by Michael Crowther-Green with study guide by Keith Lamdin. Copies are available from the URC Supplies Department.

39. We have been greatly encouraged by the response from Provinces to our initiatives in regard to *Elders' Training*. Nine provinces were represented at a consultation with committee members and representatives of other departments to consider what is expected of elders and the training, support and resources offered to them. Provinces vary greatly in the help they give at present but all are concerned to develop training and support. Provinces and URC Departments share the committee's recognition that elders meetings are vital to the church's life, witness and service. Representatives from provinces and members of the committee enthusiastically committed themselves to follow up actions suggested and asked to meet again in late Spring 1986 to report progress and explore further action. Contact will also be made with those provinces which were not represented at the consultation. The work of the teams of Evangelism Enablers is closely

related to that of provincial training teams and committees. The committee welcomes the opportunity to co-operate with the World Church and Mission Department in enabling people to develop and articulate their faith.

40. Because so much of our work concerns long-term developments, the committee feels that it is particularly unfortunate that the change of departmental secretary should coincide with the change in departmental convener and an extended period without a convener of the Children's Work Committee.

FORUM

Director: The Revd Margaret Taylor

Secretary: Mrs Betty Taylor

41. FORUM is a meeting place where old friends meet and new friendships are made; a place for hearing old and new ideas expounded, for discussion and argument and where opinions are exchanged — as was the Forum of ancient Rome, so is the Forum to the URC. It gives people a sense of belonging to the Church at a different level from their own local Church, enabling young and old, singles and married, to experience Christian fellowship in a new way; deepening faith, enlarging horizons — all this and more.

42. Yet Forum changes and each theme leader guides us in a particular way. In 1985 we looked at and found new *Visions of Hope* to challenge us as Christians in Britain today, under the leadership of the Revd Dr Jack McKelvey.

43. Forum 1986 (23-30 August) held at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire, will be an opportunity for us, with a wide variety of backgrounds, to share our concerns and signs of that hope as, following on from Forum 1985, we look at *Working towards the 90s — jobs, wealth and the human spirit*. This theme will be presented by a team led by the Revd Tony Addy, Director of the William Temple Foundation. We will be challenged about the idea that work is only about paid employment. We challenge churches to make practical recognition of the contribution we can all make by enabling some people who are unemployed to come to Forum. All of us have a contribution to make whether our work is in paid employment, in the home, or other unpaid services to the community — we will explore the implications of this. Our worship will be led by the Revd Dr Paula Whitmore from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States, and presently a member of the staff of Coventry Cathedral with special responsibility for the arts in worship.

44. The cost will be £82 (including Bank Holiday surcharge) with reductions for children and families — but its real value, however, is in the vision it gives to those who come and the new life they encourage to develop in their local churches when they return home.

WINDERMERE CENTRE NATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Director: The Revd Graham Cook

Convener: The Revd Dr Robert O Latham

Secretary: The Revd Margaret T Taylor

45. Our National Training Centre is nearly ready. In 1984 Assembly agreed to appoint a Director and launch an appeal. In 1985 Assembly gave the *go ahead* for the building programme to commence. In 1986 we report that progress is such that everything should be ready a couple of months ahead of schedule.

46. By the time Assembly meets the building works should be complete. It only remains to be decorated, furnished and fitted. By July we expect to be in a position to 'test the system' by using it for holiday bookings, during that month and August.

47. The Centre is scheduled to be opened in September. There will be a service of Thanksgiving on 6 September when we hope every District and Province will be represented. For the whole of the rest of September the Centre will open to be visited by the people and churches of the URC. We hope they will come in large numbers to make this Centre their own. A special low charge will be in operation during this month to enable people, especially those coming from a distance, to stay overnight (one night only at the special rate) and taste the facilities to the full.

48. The programme for the first year of the centre's life has been worked out in response to a long process of consultation. It is now available at Assembly or from the Windermere Centre, Carver Memorial Church, Lake Road, Windermere, Cumbria, LA23 2BY.

The programme is designed to meet the Centre's objectives:-

- (i) To enable the people of the United Reformed Church, along with others, to come together and learn from each other to develop a faith which is relevant to their life and time.
- (ii) To enable local congregations to discover their role and functions in the communities in which they are set and in which their people are prepared for mission and evangelism.
- (iii) To provide a place where Districts, Synods, denominational committees and departments can meet to consider policy and where ecumenical planning may take place.
- (iv) To provide a place in which vocational consultations may take place, where national issues may be considered and international conversations may be initiated.
- (v) To be a place of prayer, refreshment and renewal for the whole Church and of reconciliation for the nation.

49. The Windermere Centre has come into being by will of the Assembly and by the generosity of the Churches, Districts and Provinces as well as many individuals. It has attracted the support of Christian people in Germany and America and of Trusts and businesses throughout Britain.

50. We offer it, its work and its staff for God's purposes, we commend it to the prayer of our people and open it to the use of our churches.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HEALING

Convener: The Revd D Alasdair Pratt
Secretary: The Revd Charles K Meachin

51. As the significance of the Ministry of Healing has come to be more widely understood in all branches of the Church over the last decade or more, so the perception of the breadth of its concerns has widened. Prayer and the laying on of hands remain central to the Ministry of Healing. Increasingly, however, the Church is also being led to see that its work touches not only the individual but also the community and it must therefore seek to understand its task more broadly. The causes of sickness, the responsibility given to people to be good stewards of their own health and the ever increasing interest in complementary medicines and therapies are only some of the areas which have brought us to see that many things contribute to human wholeness.

It is for these reasons that the Committee has asked the Department that it be renamed the Committee on Health and Healing.

52. Because the concern for health and healing has been growing very rapidly in recent years, the Committee wishes to place on record its appreciation that the facilities of Church House have been available during this first period of growth and expansion. Without this, the work would have been considerably hampered. It has been good that at a time when no-one would have anticipated the development which has taken place, our Church recognized this work as a priority and thus enabled it to grow and develop. It is our conviction that, if the work is to continue with vitality, it remains essential that we have the services of a Secretary in Church House.

53. Over these years, the particular emphasis in the URC has been to retain the balance between 'signs and wonders' and a responsible, theological concern for the issues of suffering and death. We have sought to move beyond a mere academic recognition that Jesus performed miracles of healing, while at the same time not falling over into some of the more emotional manifestations. The Committee continually seeks to clarify its understanding of the distinction between curing and healing. It has in the course of this year tried to recognize that some Christians declare the authority to heal 'in the name of Jesus Christ' while many others petition the Lord rather than affirm his power. The New Testament clearly charges the Church to heal the sick. The expectations and responses in today's Church vary very widely.

54. Partly because debate on these issues is growing in the church and partly in response to the request of students who attended the National Conference in 1985, the Committee is planning a *Conference* specifically for *ministers and ordinands* to be held at *Swanwick, 30 June — 2 July 1986*. The Revd David Dale, URC Adviser on Health and Healing, will lead biblical and theological studies. It is hoped that a wide range of attitudes and commitment will be represented.

55. **National Conference 1987**

The Committee plans a fourth conference to be held in the summer of 1987 on the theme of suffering and its place within God's purpose of wholeness and well-being for his creation.

56. **Stress in the Ministry**

While still seeking a preferable word to 'Burnout', a Working Party was established with the following terms of reference:

To research, identify and define the phenomenon of 'Ministerial Burnout' and suggest ways in which the causes and effects of this can be attended to by practical, educational, therapeutic and spiritual means.

We have come to recognize that the central issue is 'stress'. It is primarily this condition, rather than the more negative and limited word 'burnout' to which the group is addressing itself. It is already very apparent that the effects of mismanaged stress, leading to distress, is increasingly recognized in all churches as well as in other walks of life. All worthwhile tasks carry a measure of stress and ministers could not function effectively without the challenges of their work. At times, however, some can show distress to a degree that reflects itself in the breakdown of effective working, marriage and home life. The Working Party includes the wife of a minister and representatives of the Moderators Meeting and of the Ministries Department. We acknowledge the importance of full consultation and will welcome submissions from those wishing to contribute to our enquiry which, it is hoped, will be completed in time for the next General Assembly.

57. **Churches' Council for Health and Healing**

The work of the Council continues to develop. A six month Training Course in Christian Healing Ministry is running in London. The course was substantially over-subscribed. Thought is being given to the possible extension of such training in other parts of the country.

The Rt Revd David Dale has become Chairman in succession to Bishop Maddocks and his influence both within and beyond the URC has been warmly acknowledged by the CCHH.

58. **The Role of Hospital Chaplains in the Healing Ministry**

Three hundred or so URC ministers have part-time hospital chaplaincies which are serviced by the FCFC. The Committee has given thought to the degree to which Chaplains are recognized within hospitals as part of the therapeutic team. Situations vary enormously. Experience has shown that where the Chaplains work as a team, the authorities tend to take them more seriously. In rare cases, Services of Healing have been held in hospital chapels attended by doctors and nurses. In most situations, this would not be considered possible, or even desirable. However, the Committee would be glad to know of ways in which 'ministry', as distinct from 'chaplaincy', is being recognized by hospital authorities.

Chaplains are encouraged to take up the training offered and, in particular, to enlist the support of their own congregation.

59. **Mentally Handicapped People**

Following the debate at the last Assembly, very helpful material was received from areas and churches setting out, on video and in leaflets, ways in which churches and communities could serve the needs of handicapped people. We are particularly indebted to the Council for Christian Care in Devon. Clearly considerable information is available for those needing it.

60. **Publications**

A revised and enlarged edition of the well-received *In Hospital* has been produced. Further to the concern raised two years ago about the care of parents of stillborn babies, two leaflets have been published — *Looking forward to a baby — hopes and fears* and *Miscarriage — Stillbirth — Neonatal Death — A Paper for Ministers and Hospital Chaplains*.

A major publication came from the Methodist Church. *In search of Health and Wholeness* is a

workbook adaptable for small groups or large conferences. Wide ranging in its concerns, it offers discussion, activity and study material. Our Committee commends it as complementary to our own Health and Healing Kit.

61. The Revd Charles Meachin

The last fourteen years have seen the Healing Committee develop from working group to independent committee. Throughout this time, Charles Meachin has served the Committee as its secretary and brought vitality to discussion, efficiency to business, enthusiasm to advocacy and a warm pastoral care for all the members of the Committee. We place on record our deep appreciation for all his work and the manner in which he has done it.

As he moves from Church House, so also his own secretary during that period Mrs Eileen Pelling, retires. Together, they have made a strong team and we wish them both every happiness in their new spheres.

PRAYER HANDBOOK

Secretary: Mrs Helen Lidgett
Editor: The Revd Edmund Banyard

62. The 1986 Prayer Handbook *The Word and the World* was published at the end of September. The prayers, compiled around the lectionary, were written by the Revd David Jenkins.

63. 16,000 copies have been distributed. The 1987 book will be a continuation of the first book, with prayers by the Revd David Jenkins based on the other half of the lectionary. The Prayer Handbook Group are seeking to ensure that publication is in August 1986. Plans are in hand for the 1988 book, with the Revd Kate Compston as writer. The Group are concerned to encourage more and especially younger people to write and publish prayers. They are therefore planning a workshop at Windermere in the spring of 1987 for those interested in developing skills in writing prayer and worship material.

DOCTRINE & WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Prof. Colin E Gunton
Secretary: The Revd Dr Colin P Thompson

64. The tasks given us by last year's Assembly have rightly dominated our work since then. Two of them — the question of a possible new hymnbook for the URC, and a response to *God's Reign and our Unity* (the report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, 1984) — require the most careful consideration and we therefore bring as full an account as we can of our thinking.

65. First, however, we need to report on other matters. We have begun the enquiry into baptismal practice in the URC since 1981, and hope to bring our findings to next year's Assembly. There has been a good response to the *Request for Help* leaflet which was circulated with the November Information Service, and we are very grateful to those who have written to us, often in detail and with serious attention to the issues. Several churches have promised responses during the next few months, and the secretary will be pleased to receive them (addressed to 86 Tavistock Place) up till the end of October.

66. We have corresponded with the Baptist Union about *Baptists and Reformed in Dialogue*, mentioned last year, and agree with the view they have expressed that we do not at this stage need to set up a bilateral study of the text, since we are in close contact and co-operation. Nevertheless, we should be glad to hear from any local churches, especially United Reformed/Baptist united churches, which have looked at the document and would like to comment on it.

67. During the year we are hoping to publish in one volume 'The formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and members of Churches of Christ' to which *The Scheme of Union* refers in its confession of faith (17). We have also prepared a new two-part membership certificate for baptism (using the ecumenical certificate) and confirmation/profession of faith, in view of several requests for this, and following the failure of the British Council of Churches to agree on an ecumenical second part.

68. We have received new material on the theology of eldership which remains on our agenda. Part of the difficulty we face is that there is no single view of the elder in the Reformed tradition.

We have begun detailed work on revision of the services in the Book of Services. We are glad not to be working to a deadline, because this leaves us free to take the utmost care instead of risking making mistakes because of excessive haste. When drafts reach their final form, they will be offered to Assembly.

69. Musicians' Guild

The URC Musicians' Guild, Secretary: Mr Don W Gray, in support of their declared objectives to give encouragement, training and support to church musicians of all abilities, continued to organize a very wide range of activities in 1985.

70. Under the title of *Let the People Sing* two hymn/anthem singing events were organised under the direction of Dr Lionel Dakers, the Director of the Royal School of Church Music. To say these events were well received would be an understatement. The singers were essentially members of the congregation who had a greatly enjoyable and instructive day. Such occasions are particularly helpful to small congregations and churches without choirs.

71. The seven Guild Branches in the UK organised imaginative and sometimes ambitious programmes which included choir training, singing and instrumental instruction, as well as giving opportunities to listen to music performed by experts in their art. There was good fellowship, fun and opportunities for our musicians to participate in worship without the distraction of playing an instrument.

72. Membership of the Guild is increasing and we are pleased to welcome more ministers on to our role. However with about 450 members we are still a long way short of representation from all UR churches in the UK. We welcome enquiries from Districts or Synod meetings and individual churches, not just for advice on organs etc, but to give practical help by organizing training for other events useful to them.

God's Reign and Our Unity

73. The Doctrine and Worship Committee warmly welcomes and commends to the URC *God's Reign and Our Unity* (the Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission) and its attempt to go behind the historical and traditional problems which have divided the two communions since the Reformation and put the quest for unity in a new perspective, that of the Kingdom of God in which the missionary and eschatological context of the Church as the "sign, instrument and foretaste" of the Kingdom is central. The Report should be considered in the light of the recent WCC Lima text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), and the URC Response to it.

74. We welcome the Report's aim to encourage small advances towards unity by the two communions, especially in terms of local schemes of union expressing locally (ie at town and country level) the principles of the great catholic unity of the Body of Christ, and we accept with all due humility its analysis of what keeps Anglicans and Reformed apart. But we consider a more detailed examination than the Report offers of why so many recent schemes of union between two communions have failed is essential.

75. We accept with thankfulness the proposed dynamic understanding of the nature of the Church as God's pilgrim people "called to a journey whose goal is nothing less than God's blessed Kingdom embracing all nations and all creation" and the consequent need to make the Church a more credible sign, instrument and foretaste of God's reconciling purpose in Christ. We see the spelling out of the demand that the quest for Christian unity lead to the reconciliation of humanity itself as one of the most valuable features of the Report. We welcome the Report's demonstration that evangelism, social justice and church unity are not conflicting but complementary aspects of the one mission of God, and its understanding of ministry, baptism and Eucharist as, respectively, leadership in, commitment to, and continual renewal of commitment to, mission. But we wonder whether the respective activities of God and of man in this understanding of mission have been adequately distinguished and correlated, and whether the consequences of this understanding of mission are sufficiently reflected in the practical suggestions.

76. The stress on the need to unite orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxis (right action), the relevance of this for contemporary issues (eg apartheid) and the consequent necessity of proper discipline in the Church (including excommunication) are matters we accept must be treated with utmost seriousness. We welcome the treatment of baptism and the Eucharist, particularly the

exposition of the once-for-all nature of the former and, in the case of the latter, the eirenic understanding of the real presence which embraces both historic approaches. But we see the need for a more detailed investigation of the nature of and relationship between baptism, membership, confirmation and admission to the Lord's Supper (a scriptural term for and understanding of the Eucharist whose absence we regret).

77. We note the Report's assertions that the Eucharist is the proper form of worship for the weekly assembling of the Church on the Lord's day and that it should be accepted as the norm in both traditions. However, this obviously goes beyond what BEM suggested and may well cause genuine difficulty for many URC congregations.

78. But the crux of the Report we consider to be the chapter on ministry in the Church. It attempts to hold firmly to its missionary and eschatological perspectives, to stress the ministry of the whole Church and see the present ordained ministry (which we note does not seem to embrace elders) as something to be cherished, adapted and reformed in accordance with the Spirit, Scripture and present-day missionary needs, are plainly not matched by the practical suggestions.

79. The concept of priesthood is not satisfactorily defined and seems to overshadow other understandings of ministry, and ordination is discussed almost entirely in terms of presidency at the Eucharist. As with BEM, a rather unsatisfactory defence of and appeal for Reformed acceptance of the so-called "classic" threefold ministry of bishop, presbyters and deacons is coupled with a much more relevant and welcome analysis of the necessary personal, collegial and communal dimensions of ministry, as conforming to that of Christ. The practical suggestions — the Reformed accepting bishops-in-synod (to which URC Provincial Moderators largely correspond already), Anglicans reforming their diaconate and accepting elements of the Reformed eldership, and both involving the whole membership more in Church governance — seem a lame and ill-fitting conclusion. They ignore the need to adapt and reform *all* ministries in the light of the new perspectives. Moreover these suggestions assume the historic model of ordained clerical ministry to be the continuing norm and entirely overlook the whole field of diaconal ministries to the world.

80. However we unreservedly welcome the Report's acceptance of the ordination of women as in agreement with its understanding of ordained ministries. Moreover we believe we may be specially called to make good the failure up till now to consider seriously the distinctive contribution of women to the ordained ministry which the Report highlights.

81. We believe that the URC can only welcome the argument that union should be discovered and actualised at the local level; our own experience of local unions and covenanting is surely relevant here. We also commend the Report's suggestion that it be studied by both communions together at every level. We believe that the final recommendations and questions do more justice to the new perspectives of the Report than the practical suggestions, which seem to have lost sight of the original vision, and we urge that a serious attempt be made at every level of our Church's life to consider and answer them. It may well be that, as Christians from the two communions catch this vision and study the recommendations and questions together, they will discover their own practical suggestions and put them into action.

82. **A New Hymnbook**

In May, 1985, the General Assembly passed the following resolution:

Since stocks of Congregational Praise will shortly be exhausted, Assembly instructs the Doctrine and Worship Committee to bring proposals for a new main hymnbook to Assembly in 1986.

The Doctrine and Worship Committee asked the United Reformed Church Hymnody Group, under its Convener, the Revd David Gardner, and enlarged for this purpose, to prepare a report for Assembly.

83. **A Hymnbook for the United Reformed Church**

The Hymnody Group believes that the United Reformed Church needs a main hymnbook which draws on the riches of the hymnody of the Church Universal, across all boundaries of age, nation, race and denomination. It needs a book distinguished by the particular inheritance of the traditions united within the United Reformed Church, a book which gives a special place to its psalmody, its sacramental theology, and to the relationship between the local church and the whole church.

Even more, it needs a book which, respecting the integrity of the poetry of the past, reflects the expectations and the hope of those who gather for worship in the closing decade of the twentieth century and the opening of the twenty-first. In particular, the book must take full account of the hope of unity within the family of God, of contemporary concerns regarding style and language, and of the desire for an adventurous reaching out to the world in prayer and praise. In all, the book should be biblically grounded and biblically comprehensive, accessible to as many worshippers as possible, and suitable for use whenever Christians gather.

84. A creative opportunity

84.1 The proposal of the group is that Assembly should commission a new main hymnbook, drawing upon the best in *Congregational Praise*, *The Church Hymnary — Third Edition*, *The Christian Hymnary*, *New Church Praise*, *Hymns and Psalms*, and other national and worldwide sources. We believe that for the United Reformed Church to produce such a book would be in itself a creative thing for us to do at this stage in our united life, enabling us to share with one another and the wider Church that lively tradition of hymnody and psalmody which has been and remains a particular glory of our confluent traditions.

84.2 We have looked carefully at the other options — viz: to re-publish *Congregational Praise* or to adopt another existing collection — and we set out below our thinking about these options and our reasons for preferring a new book.

84.3 The question of cost has understandably weighed heavily in people's minds. However the willingness of two major publishers (as indicated later in this report) to publish a hymnbook on behalf of our Church and to assume the major proportion of costs involved clearly adds financial viability to our recommendation. If Assembly accepts that recommendation, we hope it will be in a spirit of thankful and adventurous response to what God has done and is doing among us.

85. Congregational Praise and Church Hymnary — Third Edition

85.1 *Congregational Praise* has served its generation well, and has been widely regarded as an outstanding book of its time: it has perhaps been unique in receiving equally high acclaim for its textual and musical editing. Nevertheless we believe that it would be a mistake to commit ourselves for a further period to a book which no longer reflects the current state of hymnody. Its deficiency in contemporary material is inevitable in a book published thirty-five years ago, before the hymn 'explosion' of the 60's and 70's: inevitably, too, some parts of the content have turned out to be less useful to congregations than others.

85.2 **Church Hymnary — Third Edition** will continue to be used by a number of our churches for some time. It is a book which has its own distinctive qualities, but its contents do reflect only one of our traditions. It was approved in draft form as long ago as 1968 and therefore shares *Congregational Praise's* lack of really contemporary material. Moreover, great eighteenth century hymn-writers, such as Watts and Wesley, are inadequately represented. For these reasons the Group does not feel able to suggest that Assembly should recommend *Church Hymnary — Third Edition* as the main hymnbook for all our churches.

86. Other existing hymnbooks

86.1 The United Reformed Church is committed to the quest for 'such visible unity for the whole Church as Christ wills and in the way he wills' (*The Manual*, p.11). With this commitment in mind the Group has considered how a new main hymnbook might show forth our ecumenical concern. One possibility would be the recommendation of an existing main hymnbook. *Hymns for Today's Church*, *With One Voice* and *Hymns and Psalms* all describe themselves as 'ecumenical' hymnbooks. However, the policy of textual emendation adopted by the editorial board of *Hymns For Today's Church* has resulted in an attitude to the hymns of the past which seems to lack respect for their poetic integrity: neither is the selection of hymns in the book as wide as we require in a book to be used by the whole United Reformed Church. *With One Voice*, produced by and for the Australian uniting churches, consolidated the then existing hymnody of the churches involved without reaching forwards or outwards. A significant new hymnbook has very recently appeared in the United States — *Rejoice in the Lord* — edited by 'our own' Erik Routley shortly before his death. It is indeed an impressive book, with many echoes of our churchmanship. It does, however, inevitably reflect American culture and the American church scene rather than our own, and its inter-lining of words and music does not commend itself.

86.2 The 150 or so United Reformed/Methodist local partnerships would clearly be pleased and relieved if the Assembly could unequivocally recommend *Hymns and Psalms* for use by all our

congregations. Such a recommendation would also be another strong statement of our willingness to share significantly in the life of another denomination. After careful consideration the Group has concluded that, although members of our own and other denominations were deeply involved in the work of the Main Committee for the new Methodist hymnbook, *Hymns and Psalms* is a book more suitable for use by Methodist than by United Reformed Church congregations. The book does contain many hymns, both new and old, which we would wish to have in a new United Reformed Church book: yet it also contains hymns we would not need, and excludes hymns, from our own and other traditions, which we would wish to see included in a book intended to serve the needs of the whole United Reformed Church. *Hymns and Psalms* does indeed reflect a broad spectrum of hymnody, but it also contains the tradition of *The Methodist Hymnbook* in fostering Methodist devotion, theology and ecclesiology. It may well be a suitable choice for some Methodist/United Reformed congregations but not for the whole of our Church.

87. The Ecumenical Factor

87.1 Some people have suggested that to publish a hymnbook for the United Reformed Church alone is to go back on the ecumenical commitment of the Church and cause confusion and dismay in united congregations and local ecumenical projects, some of which have already adopted one of the books discussed above. But the Group does not believe that, at this stage, when the prospect of further moves towards organic union has receded significantly, a decision to publish a new hymnbook for the United Reformed Church would be an impediment to the ecumenical movement. The experience gained through our involvement in *Hymns and Psalms* should be built upon, not ignored. We believe that the ecumenicity of a hymnbook lies in the balance of its contents as much as in its hymns considered separately, and a new United Reformed Church book would enhance the range of choice available to every congregation using it as a replacement for *Congregational Praise*, *Church Hymnary — Third Edition* or *The Christian Hymnary*. Members of our Church will differ on how they balance the ecumenical advantages of using *Hymns and Psalms* (which we see as the most serious alternative to the production of a new URC book) against the advantage of a selection not weighted quite so strongly in a Methodist direction: but we believe it would be better now to go for a new book, embodying the strengths of *Hymns and Psalms* (in the sacraments section, for example) but with a different mix, particularly among hymns from the 19th and 20th centuries.

87.2 A new hymnbook is being produced for use by Baptist churches, and the Group recommends that, should Assembly decide to set up an editorial committee to work on a new United Reformed Church book, conversations with The Methodist Publishing House and the Baptist Psalms and Hymns Trust on matters of common interest should continue.

88. Outline Proposals for a United Reformed Church Hymnbook

The group believes that Assembly can make a reasoned judgment on these issues only if it has before it some concrete proposals for a new United Reformed Church hymnbook — covering policy, publishing and cost.

a. General

The Group makes the following proposals:-

That the book be published by Easter 1990

That the book's contents be shaped by the considerations set out earlier in this report (viz *A Hymnbook for the United Reformed Church*)

That the editorial committee be set up, of approximately 15 members (including chairman and secretary) with small texts and music sub-committees, plus invited consultant/advisers.

Consideration should be given to inviting other denominations, perhaps those who will also have to decide on how to replace *Congregational Praise*, to send representatives.

That opportunity be given to local churches and individual members to comment on the proposed contents.

b. Publishing

The Group recommends:-

that the book contains at least 650 items, and that the full music edition would be comparable in size to that edition of *Congregational Praise* or *Church Hymnary — Third Edition*;

that, preferably, there be only two editions: a full-music edition, and a words with melody edition, but that the needs of the poor-sighted must be taken into account;*

that a small, separate publishing and marketing group be set up.

* *Some have suggested a loose-leaf book. This may be a useful format for a small supplement but is not practicable for a full-size book. Such a publication would be more expensive to produce, more cumbersome to handle, and more prone to wear and tear.*

c. Publishing options and costings

Two established hymnbook publishers are prepared to publish a hymnbook for the United Reformed Church. The Church would retain full editorial control. Both publishers have already discussed terms. Broadly speaking, an outside publisher would meet all capital expenditure, negotiate copyrights, and hold stocks. Then the only expense to met by the Church would be the cost of editorial committees which is of the order of other committee costs and should therefore be containable within the total Unified Appeal budget without major increase. Royalties would be paid to the Church on the basis of the number of copies sold.

One of the publishers has indicated that the retail price of single copies of the full music edition would be £8-9; of a melody edition, about £4 (at 1985 prices). The book could also be subject to discount, for churches purchasing in bulk.

89. Conclusion

89.1 The Group believes that the main options open to the Assembly are these:-

- (i) to take no further action but to leave local churches to make their own choice from existing hymnbooks;
- (ii) to recommend strongly the use of an existing hymnbook;
- (iii) to produce a new hymnbook for the United Reformed Church.

89.2 There are two options which the Group strongly feels should not be entertained: one, to delay a decision in principle; the other, to defer a major decision to the Executive Committee — on this issue, the Assembly itself must decide.

90. Further Information

A paper will be available at Assembly giving further factual information which is not available at the time of printing of this book of reports.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

URC Representative: Mrs Joyce Smith

91. The Order of Service for 1985 was prepared by the women in India on the theme *Peace through Prayer and Action*. Response to the service was varied. Some thought there was political bias, whilst others found any reservations disappearing in the context of worship. Thanks were expressed to the Indian women for making us think seriously about these issues.

92. The imaginative ways in which some branches help the worshippers to think about the theme and the country of origin makes interesting reading and shows how much thought and time is put into preparing for this Day of Prayer in many localities.

93. The children's service was well used, and one branch arranged a United Sunday School Service. *Together in Prayer No.2* sold well and seems to be much appreciated; No.3 edited by Rita Milne with an anthology by June Lunn, is now available.

94. A number of day conferences have taken place including two organised by the National Committee, one in York and the other in London. Over 300 women were at each. The theme was based on the 1986 service *Choose Life*.

95. Over the last four or five years the committee has been engaged in re-drafting the constitution to enable us to include in our allocation of monies, grants for other forms of Christian communication in addition to literature. The new Constitution has been approved by the Charity Commissioners, and has been circulated to all branch secretaries. 1987 is the centenary of the Day of Prayer Movement, the service has been drafted by the International Committee. Celebrations are being planned and the Royal Albert Hall has been booked for Saturday March 21st 1987.

96. Once again we were able to increase the grants made to Christian Societies. The total sent was £56,860.

97. We have a number of issues to face this coming year. The most pressing is that we must find new office premises very quickly. This May our secretary retires and at the end of the year the treasurer also. Please pray with us that we will be guided along the right way to ensure the future of the world-wide movement in this country.

98. The Australian women have prepared the 1986 service on the theme *Choose Life*.

RESOLUTIONS

The Assembly receives the report of the Faith and Life Department for debate.

1. Assembly commends the work of Pilots to all local churches and encourages members to accept the invitation to join in the Anniversary Celebrations on Saturday, 14 June 1986 at 2.30pm in the Westminster Central Hall and so to share in the thanks which the URC and the Congregational Federation will give to God for the work of Pilots during 50 years.
2. Assembly gives approval for the creation of a National Youth Training Officer post subject to adequate extra external funding being secured.
3. Assembly resolves:-
 1. To authorise the production of a new hymnbook for the United Reformed Church,
 2. to set up a hymnbook editorial committee immediately,
 3. to place the responsibility for publishing in the hands of a major hymnbook publisher.

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Robert Latham

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

1. The Budget Committee is given the task of preparing a budget for the Church almost two years in advance. This is an exercise of faith and of careful calculation. Faith because we trust the churches of our order to continue to share the vision of mission and service on a national and international scale, and to care for one another in the process. We believe that we are called to this ministry by the Lord of the Church, whose servants we are, and whose gifts we have in trust from him. Our faith is that he will continue to provide through his people for his people, wherever they may be. The careful calculation is part of our stewardship. We have to act responsibly, so we look at what has been provided in the past years. We consult with Provincial Treasurers and representatives who have the confidence of the member churches. We consult with the various departments set up by this Assembly for the service of our churches in this country and abroad. We then proceed to make our recommendations which we place before you.

2. This year, we have once again been encouraged by the excellent response from all the Provinces to the Unified Appeal. This is set out in Appendix 1 of the report of the Finance & Administration Department. You will see there that 11 Provinces contributed 100% of their target or more, and the twelfth 98%. Assembly will want to carry a message of gratitude and thanksgiving to every member church. This is a positive sign of our strength and our discipleship. This response was slightly better than the Provincial Treasurers had been able to aim for but it still left a shortfall in contributions of £19,000. This was covered by a welcome increase in other income and savings in costs and we ended the year with a modest favourable balance of approximately £25,000, according to the latest draft of the accounts available when this report was drafted. If you look arithmetically at that balance you will see that it is less than 2% of our total budget. We are working to a very tight budget.

3. During the year the Nominations Committee presented proposals for filling staff vacancies, which involved an increase in the budgetted expenditure. The Budget Committee gave this careful consideration but felt compelled to advise the Executive Committee that the increased budget provision for this purpose could not be provided. The Executive Committee accepted this advice. The Executive Committee also considered how the Budget Committee might be assisted in making difficult decisions between competing claims on our Unified Appeal resources. The result is a reference to the Forward Policy Group which is invited to recommend methods of assessment of central church work.

4. CWM also needs a larger allocation but we can only authorise more if the giving of the churches increases. Similarly with Church Related Community Workers, for whom we have provided £25,000 for the first time in 1985. We now have Church Related Community Workers as an annual commitment in our budget.

5. This Budget Committee is responsible to the General Assembly. We cannot sanction expenditure for 1987 of funds which have not been acknowledged as reasonable by the Provincial Treasurers and representatives. If, therefore, Assembly decides to increase expenditure significantly on any item, it must find the means of providing that money. It could be through better publicity or advocacy. It could be through special appeals such as Windermere and Milton Keynes, although these were limited to one year. There are no hidden resources on which we can draw. Our funds are the faithful gifts of our people. We can rob Peter to pay Paul, but we cannot add even another apostle to the staff without both the sanction and the resources approved by Assembly.

6. For the Budget for the year of grace 1987 we have in general restricted increases to an inflationary factor of less than 6% over 1986. We have the acknowledgment of this from the Provincial Treasurers who will endeavour to advocate a budget providing for expenditure of £1,647,000, and have accepted targets of £1,428,000 for the Unified Appeal. After taking account of other income this leaves a possible shortfall of £42,000. This possibility is the ground for Assembly urging every church, and every church member, to increase their giving to the total work of the Church.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the Report of the Budget Committee.
2. Assembly approves the Budget for 1987 which provides for an expenditure of £1,647,000.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY

Annual Report 1985

1. The Annual Meeting was held at Crowstone United Reformed Church on 30 April 1985. A stimulating and informative paper was given by Mr Ronald Bond on the subject of Nonconformist archives in the Essex Record Office. In September we met for a study day at Mansfield College, Oxford, when our morning speaker was Miss Elaine Kaye whose topic was C J Cadoux. After a tour of the college and various places of interest in central Oxford we went to visit Summertown URC and heard a paper on its history by Revd Donald Norwood. This was a well-attended and fascinating day, when it was pleasing to see some younger people taking an interest in the Society.
2. The busy routine of the Library continues. Mr Fred Keay is building up an index of all ministers in the United Reformed Church from 1972. The cataloguing of our holdings of Congregational Union records is under way and we are trying to locate the whereabouts of all records of the former Congregational County Unions. We do appeal to everyone in the church to see that records, however unimportant they may seem, are offered to local record offices when their immediate usefulness is past. The Society would be glad to advise in this matter.
3. The retirement of Dr Buick Knox from Westminster College has also meant his relinquishing his honorary post as one of our Editors. We shall miss his company and wisdom. The Council are recommending to the 1986 Annual Meeting that he be elected a Vice-President in honour of all that he has done for the Society.
4. The Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday 8 May 1986 at 5.30pm in Blackpool. There will be a week-end study conference at Dunford House, Sussex, from 5-7 September 1986 and non-members of the Society are welcome to join us. Details can be obtained from the Secretary.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Mr D C F Haggis
Vice-Chairman: The Revd A J Knight
General Manager: Mr D Jones
Secretary: Mr B R Mullinger

Like all Housing Associations, the United Reformed Church Housing Association exists to meet housing need. The evidence submitted to the Duke of Edinburgh's Inquiry into British Housing makes it clear that while immense progress has been made since the 'Royal Commission into the Housing of the Working Classes' published its report in 1885, real housing need still exists, especially for people with low or limited incomes.

The summary of the evidence makes disturbing reading:

- the number of people classified as homeless is increasing, as is the number of people on local authority waiting lists.
- many elderly people live in unsuitable housing.
- disabled people, the mentally handicapped and frail elderly all face a shortage of suitable housing.
- many properties still lack basic amenities and the number of properties in serious disrepair is increasing.
- many old and unsatisfactory properties need to be demolished and replaced with new stock, but at the present rate of demolition every house must last over 800 years!

The United Reformed Church Housing Association continues to make a modest contribution to the meeting of housing need, and through its contact with local churches and local management committees, helps to create an awareness of housing need in particular communities.

During the last year our oldest property (in Poplar) has been improved with financial help from the Housing Corporation and the estate landscaped (a grant from the London Docklands Development Corporation has made this possible). A sheltered housing project at Ray Lodge, Woodford, is nearing completion and our first venture into shared accommodation for the elderly

— of the 'Abbeyfield' style — will receive its first residents at the end of the year. Work has started on schemes for the elderly in Chertsey and Catford and a number of sites have been acquired.

By the time the Assembly meets we expect that the property and assets of the Churches of Christ Housing Association will have been transferred to URCHA. This will involve properties in Liverpool and Leicester and a welcome link with the local groups who will retain responsibility for the day-to-day management of the schemes.

The Association, in trying to meet housing need, is indebted to many people: to members of the Committee of Management and its sub-committees, all volunteers, who give a great deal of time to the work of the Association; to members of local management committees, most of them members of United Reformed Churches; to consultants and builders; to officers of Provinces and Trust Bodies, and, of course, to our own staff. Kathleen Brown has left us following a move to another part of the country, but her place has been taken by Debbie King as Administrative Officer. More recently Basil Mullinger has joined our staff as Secretary and Financial Manager.

These are still difficult days for Housing Associations and we are grateful to those individuals and churches who have made short-term interest-free loans available to us.

The tape-slide presentation mentioned in our last report is now available and we hope that local churches and District Councils will make good use of it in the year to come.

SCHOOLS LINKED WITH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

1. In 1985 the Heads and Governors of the Five Schools met as usual in May and in December. The May meeting was a conference at Wentworth Milton Mount to consider two themes: careers education, and perspectives on schools with a Christian foundation. The speakers were Revd W Workman (Chaplain, University of London), Miss Anne Barry (Head of Careers, Beacon School, Crowborough), Dr Mary Ede (Bath College of Higher Education), Revd J MacKelvie (Richmond Hill URC).

2. The Schools gratefully acknowledge the grants made by the United Reformed Church from its share of the Memorial Hall Trust, and by the Milton Mount Foundation. The grants made by the URC are used wholly to educate the children of URC ministers and missionaries, both serving and preparing for ordination.

3. The Schools conscious of the educational responsibility which has been vested in them, warmly acknowledge the continuing opportunity to serve the Churches.

4. The School report as follows:

CATERHAM SCHOOL

5. Founder's Day was celebrated with a Service in Caterham URC — the visiting preacher was Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow. During the year we had visits from the Rt Rev D K Mahanty, Bishop of Cuttack, CNI and Rev Iorwerth Thomas, who spoke about our prayer link with the diocese of Barrackpore. We welcomed the Mission and Work Abroad Committee when the Rev Fred Kaan conducted morning assembly, using one of his new hymns! The Church Army again conducted a mission in the School.

6. The demand for boarding places in the Preparatory School was such that an extra dormitory had to be built. The growth of the Sixth Form meant that 70 pupils matriculated last summer and have gone on to universities or polytechnics. Four were sons of ministers — John Grimshaw goes to Oxford to read Botany (he has an article in the RHS Journal!); Andrew Setchell, now at Manchester reading Pharmacy; Paul Martin at Liverpool reading Computer Science and Andrew Barker reading Engineering Science at Surrey University.

7. Phase 2 of the Centenary Appeal is now under way with plans for the new Music School, and building will commence during 1986.

8. The Headmaster has been given Sabbatical leave in 1986. He and Mrs Smith are going to Hong Kong and Malaysia to visit schools and discuss educational schemes and pupil sponsorship with government departments. Then to India to see something of the CSI and CNI, returning to Siksha Sangha near Calcutta (where they worked) during the School's Diamond Jubilee year.

9. The School records its thanks to Mr Martin Briggs, OBE, OC, who retired from the Board after many years' service which included a period as Chairman.

10. During Industry Year, the School is making use of speakers from Industry and over 50 pupils are getting industrial work experience of one kind or another.

ELTHAM COLLEGE

11. Eltham College enjoyed another happy and worthwhile year in 1985. The School strength stands at 700, of whom 18 are the sons of missionaries or ministers from Baptist, Methodist and Anglican churches.

12. In addition to the daily chapel services, special services were held at the end of the Spring Term when the Rev J C Rackley was our speaker and at the beginning of the Autumn Term when the Rev Michael Rees, Chief Secretary of the Church Army, spoke at the Parents' Association Service.

13. The Junior and Senior School Carol Services were held at the end of the Autumn Term, and were very well attended.

14. The Appeal Fund for £600,000 — to build a new Drama and Music Centre was launched in the Summer Term by the Appeal President, Lord Willis. There has been a very encouraging response, and by the end of the year over half of the Fund's target figure had been contributed.

15. The School Play this year, in aid of the Appeal Fund, was John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. The play was performed on four nights to encouragingly large audiences.

16. Awards at Oxford and Cambridge are no longer made, but 23 pupils gained entrance to these two Universities under the new entry procedures.

17. The School's Rugby, Cricket, Athletics, Swimming and Tennis teams had excellent seasons.

SILCOATES SCHOOL

18. The number of pupils in the School has now reached 530, a record number. We have been glad to welcome as members of the School community, not only the sons of ministers of the URC, but also the sons of men and women at present preparing for ordination to the ministry. Of 23 children of ministers, 13 are from the United Reformed Church. There are also 20 Congregational Federation, 1 Baptist and 7 Church of England.

19. An ecumenical service of Confirmation was conducted in the School Chapel by the Bishop of Wakefield and the School Chaplain.

20. The Board of Governors has welcomed Mr Alan Scriven as representative of the Mersey Province and has co-opted Rev Alan Gaunt to membership of the Board.

21. The School has had a particularly successful year on the games field. Two boys played for England at rugby football, while others represented West Yorkshire in a variety of different sports. The Rugby Club was one of four representatives of English Schools which took part in an International tournament at Brentwood College, Vancouver Island, Canada.

22. The School has worked very hard to create links with the local community by making its facilities available to a variety of organisations, among the local cubs and scouts, a variety of sports clubs, and social groups. There is an active Community Outlook group which has offered assistance to nearby organisations requiring help of many kinds. We were also delighted to welcome representatives from churches from all over Yorkshire at the Provincial Family Day in June.

WALTHAMSTOW HALL

23. We were delighted to welcome Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow, Convener of the World Church and Mission Department to present the prizes on Speech Day in July. She reminded us, in a vigorous address, that privileges such as we enjoy bring great responsibilities in their train.

24. We now have two URC ministers' daughters in school, as well as six daughters of missionaries from other denominations and nine daughters of clergy.

25. Much hard work throughout the year has gone into raising money for charities. Like every other school in Britain, we filled sacks with food-stuffs for Live-Aid and collected for both Ethiopia and the Colombian earthquake fund. Houses continue to support their individually-chosen charities and the whole school contributes to the Peckham Settlement. We were shocked into awareness of the need for our help when the Open Day to which we were invited had to be cancelled because of street riots.

26. We were pleased to receive a grant from the SFIA Educational Trust which is enabling us to fund music scholarships for the first time. We celebrated this with a musical evening in our Victorian dining hall. Drama has been varied, ranging from the boarders' musical *My Fair Lady* to the major school production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

27. A team of sixth-formers won the Times Educational Supplement photographic competition with their presentation of slides and tape on sixth-form life at Walthamstow Hall. The Upper Sixth have now taken possession of a wing of study bedrooms with a small kitchen of their own.

28. The girls maintain a very good standard academically and we were pleased with our high pass-rates in public examinations and our university entrance successes.

WENTWORTH MILTON MOUNT

29. The Board has welcomed three new Governors: Dr R Emmerson, B.Sc (Department of Education, Southampton University), Revd E Lord, BD (former Chief Inspector of Schools, DES) and Dr C J H Williams.

30. There are 322 girls aged 11-18 in the School, including 172 boarders. There are 12 daughters of ministers.

31. The Visitor of the Day at Speech Day 1985, was Rev Dr Kenneth Slack, MBE.

32. Representatives of the Governors, parents, staff and girls took part in the service which the School conducted at Richmond Hill URC on Advent Sunday. The Lindisfarne Choir has led worship at other local churches also.

33. There were pleasing successes in the 'O' and 'A' level examinations and our Upper Sixth leavers have gone on to an interesting range of courses, including International Studies, Geography, French and Russian, Accountancy, Mathematics, Medicine, Biochemistry and Computer Science.

34. A new boarding house system for girls in years 1-4 has been introduced giving a mixture of age groups in each House.

45. Extra curricular miscellany — the School play was a musical version of *1066 and All That* with a cast of fifty. There have been School trips to Germany and Switzerland as well as local study visits. A notable development in the interest in athletics led to some girls gaining places in the County team. We have girls singing in the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and playing in the Bournemouth Youth Orchestra. The senior Public Speaking team won the Rotary Club area competition. As part of our Social Service, girls have sung for 12 hours to raise money for a local centre for the rehabilitation of drug addicts and stayed silent for 12 hours to raise money for children in need in Africa.

STANDING ORDERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft resolutions prepared by its Departments and Committees, resolutions submitted by Provincial Synods, and resolutions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

The Business Committee shall prepare, before each meeting of the Assembly, a Draft Order of Business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

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

- (i) resolutions of the Department or Committee of which due notice has been given,
- (ii) any relevant Synod resolutions,
- (iii) duly seconded resolutions submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

If notice has been given of two or more resolutions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same resolution, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the General Secretary.

2. Presentation of Business

- 2a. All reports of Departments and Committees, together with the draft resolutions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be annually determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 2b. A Provincial Synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than six weeks before the commencement of the annual meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice should include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly. If the motion introduces new business to the Assembly, the Synod may, subject to the agreement of the General Secretary and the Chairman of the Business Committee and at its own expense, circulate a statement in support.
- 2c. A local church or District Council wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its Provincial Synod for consideration and, if thought fit, 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 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 Business 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 Executive Committee or a Department or Committee of the General Assembly or a Provincial Synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly.

The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.

3. Resolutions

- 3a. When a report has been presented to the Assembly the first motion on the report shall be "That this Report be received for debate". On this being passed, and before any consequent

recommendations are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion. It shall not be in order to move an amendment or a reference back motion to this motion. The passing of this motion shall not be deemed to commit the Assembly to the acceptance of any matter contained in the report.

- 3b. During a meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Department or a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the General Secretary of any new resolutions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of resolutions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such resolution or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of a 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 resolutions presented on behalf of a Department or Standing Committee, of which printed notice has been given, do not need to be seconded.
- 3d. A seconder may, if he/she then declares the intention of doing so, reserve his/her speech until a later period in the debate.
- 3e. It shall not be in order to move a resolution 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. infringes a decision reached by the Assembly within the preceding two years, or
 - v. is not related to the report of a Department or Committee and has not been subject of 21 days' notice under 2d.

The decision of the Moderator on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

- 3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion.
- 3g. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment not to the like effect may be moved.
- 3h. An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 3i. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter a motion or amendment he/she has 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 competent for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.

4. **Speeches**

- 4a. Speeches made in presentation of the report and resolutions of any Department and its committees shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, and speeches made in support of the report and resolutions of any other non-departmental committee having direct access to the Assembly shall not in aggregate exceed 20 minutes, save by the prior agreement of the Business Committee. 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

Business Committee or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in the debate shall be allowed 5 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise.

- 4b. When a speech is made on behalf of a Department or Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by stating his name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 4c. Secretaries of Standing Committees and full-time officers of Departments who are not members of the Assembly may speak on the report of the Department when requested by the Chairman concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.
- 4d. 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 of reply, but must strictly confine himself/herself to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matter. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- 4e. The foregoing Standing Order (4d) 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. In the course of the business any member may move that "The question under consideration be not put". Sometimes described as "the previous question" or "next business", this resolution takes precedence of every motion before the Assembly and as soon as the member has explained his/her reasons for proposing it, and it has been seconded, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that such a motion is an unfair use of the rules of the Assembly. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly proceed to the next business.
- 5b. In the course of any discussion, it is competent for any member to move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as "the closure motion". Unless it appears to the Moderator that this motion is an abuse of the rules of the Assembly, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment as the case may be retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.
- 5c. The resolutions described in Standing Orders 5a. and 5b. 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.

6. Voting

- 6a. Voting on any resolution 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 9(5)(xi) of the Basis of Union (cf. The Manual).
- 6b. Unless the Assembly decides that there shall be a ballot, every other question shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of hands.
- 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 that is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint Tellers for each Assembly.

7. Questions

- 7a. A member may, if two clear days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary,

ask the Moderator or the Chairman of any Department or 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 in his/her place and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on his/her doing so 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 the censure of the Assembly.

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by him/her at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise in his/her place 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 him/her to fall within the provisions of paragraph 7(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 Chairman of the Business Committee may be distributed within the meeting place of the Assembly.

11. Records of the Assembly

11a. A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such manner as the Executive 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 session. The minutes of the closing day of the Assembly shall normally be submitted at the close of the business and, after any necessary correction, approved.

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 business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
 - 12b. Resolutions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Business Committee for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or in case of urgency, by the Executive Committee). The Business Committee may itself from time to time suggest amendments to the Standing Orders, which shall be subject to decision by the Assembly.
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