



United
Reformed
Church

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1987

May 11th ~ 15th
ST DAVID'S HALL
CARDIFF

ASSEMBLY REPORTS

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PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REPORT

“The old order changeth”

1. This report is presented at a time of great change for the Moderators themselves. Three have served for little more than a year and a half. During the summer four more will end their periods of service and this Assembly is appointing their successors. In the autumn only five of our twelve Moderators will have more than two years' experience.
2. We shall feel the difference, for ours is in some ways a collegiate ministry in which we are able to support one another in the personal and pastoral stresses of our work. We value the accumulated experience that is shared in our meetings. Although we all contribute, there are times when we rely heavily on the wisdom of the years so, while we look forward to welcoming new colleagues, we know we shall miss the counsel of those who move on.
3. We are glad that, as he retires, Cyril Franks has been called to be Moderator of the General Assembly. We have often been grateful for the pastoral wisdom which he is now able to share with the whole Church. A former Moderator of General Assembly, Alasdair Walker, is returning to a local pastorate, and we record the value in our meetings of his experiences in this and other offices of the Church. Howard Williams and John Williamson are the last of those who took up the work in 1972. John, who goes to a part-time pastorate, has encouraged us by his experience of the ecumenical developments on Merseyside. Howard has been a trusted secretary to our meetings for many years. With their retirement a chapter closes.
4. In view of the changes it seems a good time to review some of the elements of our work, and to note developments taking place within them.

Vacancies

5. One of our responsibilities is “to suggest names to vacant pastorates” and this takes up a major part of our time together. At each monthly meeting we review about a hundred pastorates that are looking for a minister and are not yet in touch with one. There have been times in the past year when we have been unable to suggest a name to more than half of them, and each of us has known the anxiety of a pastorate vacant for far too long. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that churches and ministers should ask if there is not a better way of putting one in contact with the other, perhaps by advertising or by a direct approach.
6. There are ministries for which advertising in *Reform* may be appropriate because they provide challenges of a special kind, sometimes attracting those who would not otherwise be “on the move”, but it is our experience that advertising local pastorates is usually ineffective. In any case, every vacant pastorate is included in the list sent each quarter to all ministers on the central pay-roll.
7. The practice of some vacant churches of approaching any minister they like the look of, whatever stage of ministry he or she is in, can on the other hand be positively unhelpful. Ministers sometimes ask if we cannot protect them from such unsolicited mail. The only protection we can give is to ask both churches and ministers to trust us as we try to make the right contacts. We are always ready to make discreet enquiries about the availability of anyone a church may have its eye on, and value all such suggestions; but we hope that churches will refrain from a direct approach.
8. It is not that Moderators appoint ministers. That is not our role. But we have been called to a ministry that links together the provinces of the URC and through which appropriate introductions can be made. When we meet, we bring together our knowledge of each situation and of the men and women who might suit it. This is part of our collegiate ministry and it has served the Church well for many years.
9. Assembly was told last year that the Church could usefully deploy forty more ministers if it had them. Our experience of trying to fill vacancies and our knowledge of the possibilities of frontier and training ministries suggest that the need is greater. The gap between agreed full-time pastorates and available full-time ministers seems to grow wider year by year. We believe that the churches must continue to search out those to whom God has given gifts appropriate to this ministry and with prayer to talk to them about the call. At the same time we know that many

churches find it hard to meet the costs of paying the ministers there are, so the Church must also learn to make better use of all the ministries God provides to “build up the body of Christ”. Among these are auxiliary ministers, local lay ministers, lay preachers and collegiate ministries of elders with, increasingly, an ecumenical sharing of full-time ministry as their support. Suggesting names to vacant pastorates is only part of our work in this changing ministerial pattern.

The Retired

10. Although it is not included in the original job description of a Provincial Moderator, one of our traditional tasks is the care of retired ministers and widows. Those who have served the Church over a number of years are always appreciative of the care shown to them. But here too there is change, for their number has grown by around 40% in the last fifteen years and now represents almost eleven hundred households. Though the Church has a responsibility to them, we are well aware that it is one that Moderators cannot carry alone.

11. It has been reckoned that a Moderator may well have a larger pastoral list than in a local pastorate and that it will be spread over a hundred times the area. Crisis work takes up much of the time available, so our visits to the retired cannot adequately express the care of the Church.

12. We are grateful, as are the retired ministers and widows, for the imagination and sympathy with which the officers of the Finance Department augment pensions by seasonal gifts and welfare support. But caring needs a human face.

13. Some of us have found it helpful to have a Pastoral Aide in each District to work with the Moderator in the care of the retired. But there are Districts in which the caring and leadership resources are already stretched to the limit, so it may not always be possible. We would remind local churches that they are the primary expression of pastoral care and that the widows and retired ministers, like the serving ministers, look first to them.

14. Knowing something of the needs of the retired and of those approaching retirement, we are recommending to the Ministries Department that retirement preparation courses should be arranged on a national basis, and that all ministers and their partners approaching retirement should be able to attend at minimum cost to them.

15. Our concern is to improve the care given rather than to free ourselves from it. The visiting we are able to do is one of the privileges of our work. It is an honour to represent the Church to those who have given it so much service, and from them to receive gratitude, friendship and encouragement.

Ecumenism

16. From its beginning, the URC has been committed to the visible unity of the whole Church and is rightly expected to play a full part in ecumenical affairs. In the aftermath of the “Covenant” debate there has been considerable growth of local ecumenism and a re-appraisal of regional ecumenical structures. The Inter-Church Process *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* is bound to take these developments further. The work of the Provincial Moderators of the URC is profoundly affected by these changes.

17. Those who represent a small denomination in ecumenical activity usually find that they have to devote more of their time to it than their colleagues from larger Churches. Work that can be shared out in a large Church falls on the few in a small one. Many URC ministers in local pastorates are well aware of this as they make an ecumenical contribution out of all proportion to the size of their Church.

18. Moderators face an additional complication. In terms of area, URC Provinces are among the largest regional ecclesiastical units. Within each there may be anything from two to eight major ecumenical bodies, with Ecumenical Councils, County Sponsoring Bodies, Ecumenical Districts and Church Leaders’ meetings. All Moderators are having to devote an increasing proportion of their time to this important work. For some it is a major factor in their diaries.

19. In view of the importance given to the pastoral work of Moderators, it may seem right to ask if they cannot be freed from some of this complexity. Ecumenical Officers are often already involved in the Regional Councils. Can they not represent the URC in place of the Moderator?

The answer, in our experience, is usually no, though they are valued as colleagues. Few of our Districts coincide with an ecumenical unit and their relationship to the working units of other denominations is also complex. The Provincial Moderator is the only member of the URC who belongs to each District Council in the Province and is sufficiently involved in the oversight of local churches and the settlement of ministers to be an effective representative of the Church in ecumenical planning.

20. Some of us are involved in meetings of “Church Leaders”, knowing full well that that is not how some members of the URC would want to describe us. Although there is sometimes difficulty over the extent of our authority and over our inability to commit the URC without reference to its Councils, there is a growing understanding of the ways in which different Churches work and of the variations in the roles of “Church Leaders” within them.

21. As we play our part in the ecumenical process we increasingly find ourselves in a representative role and recognise that it is a developing facet of our ministry. If it strains our own concept of what we were called to be, and is sometimes misunderstood by our fellow church members, that is a tension we gladly live with for the sake of the growing unity of the Church of Jesus Christ.

In many ways

22. It is only fifteen years since the URC was formed, but already there are changes in its patterns of caring and ministry. In some places the focus of church life is moving towards the local search for that visible unity for which this Church came into being. In all this, there are changes in the work of the Provincial Moderators too; but the heart of it remains, and we are grateful for the confidence and support of the Church in the leadership, conduct of worship and pastoral care to which we were called.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways . . .”

FAITH AND LIFE DEPARTMENT

Convener: The Revd Tony Coates

Secretary: The Revd Terry Oakley

1. **Growth for their Sake** The Department has shared in the discussions on *Growth for their Sake* and welcomes this development. The various committees are now attempting to use the insights of *Growth for their Sake* as they determine their priorities and activities for the future. That process had already begun, but *Growth for their Sake* has given it new impetus and urgency.

2. **Voluntary Secretaries** Because of the reduction in staffing in the Department, a new system of voluntary secretaries to the department committees has been introduced. The secretary of every committee (with the one exception of the Youth Committee) now works in a voluntary capacity, although full expenses are paid. The Departmental Secretary, while actively involved in all committees, is secretary only of the Central Committee of the Department. Initial signs are that the system is working well. The fact that the administration of the Department is now less concentrated on Church House is a healthy development.

3. **Personalia** Margaret Taylor, Departmental Secretary, left the service of the Department in August, and the Department expressed their thanks and wished her well in her new appointment as minister of Doddridge Memorial Church, Northampton, and as an East Midlands Provincial Training Officer. She was succeeded by Terry Oakley.

During the year the following have taken up their work: Lesley Husselbee (Convener, Children's Work); Hazel Snashall (Secretary, Children's Work); Michael Harrison (Secretary, Christian Education and Stewardship); Michael Playdon (Secretary, Health and Healing); and Jean Holdsworth (Convener, Youth). The Director of the Windermere Centre now acts as secretary to the Windermere Policy and Planning Committee. We are grateful to them all for undertaking these various tasks.

At this Assembly, Stephen Orchard (Convener, Christian Education and Stewardship) and Colin Thompson (Secretary, Doctrine and Worship) end their period of service. Both have made a notable contribution to the Department and we thank them.

At the end of February the Department bade farewell to Betty Taylor who had served the Department as Administrative Assistant since its inception and wished her and her husband well for their retirement. For 15 years prior to that she served on the Administrative Staff of Church House and Livingstone House. She has made a great contribution to the smooth running of the Department and her cheerful and efficient presence in the office is very much missed.

CHILDREN'S WORK COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee

Secretary: Mrs Hazel Snashall

4. The Children's Work Committee shares the present great concern about the fall in numbers of children in churches. Fewer children appear to be coming to church in the first place, and many who once came, come no longer.

5. A working party has been set up to investigate the statistics behind the fall in numbers of children in church, the causes of this and possible remedies. They would like to hear of successful schemes for making contact with children.

6. We are also concerned about the shortage of people actively working at Provincial and District level to support and encourage those working with children in the local churches. Some Provinces and Districts have 'named' people who do not have the time or the resources to play a very active role in encouraging a lively programme of support for teachers. We therefore ask Districts and Provinces as a priority to encourage active and lively children's work programmes in their area, and to investigate ways of better supporting elected secretaries.

7. A consultation, "Consultation, Co-Operation, Communication" for Children's Work secretaries was held on 28 March 1987 at 86 Tavistock Place in order to investigate new ways of supporting those working at local church, district and provincial levels. The Revd Terry Oakley is hoping to visit local churches to encourage learning and group support of teachers.

8. We note with pleasure the increase in numbers of Pilot Companies being registered and the increase in numbers of children in Pilot Companies. We congratulate the Master Pilot, the Revd John Robinson and his team for the very hard work which they put in to ensure that the 50 Years of Pilots' celebration on 14 June 1986 was such a success.
9. We are giving special attention to the matter of Children and Communion, and are hoping to produce a series of leaflets to help parents and teachers prepare children for communion.
10. We continue to commend *Partners in Learning* to churches. A new syllabus was launched in March, entitled *Being God's People*, and the NEW *Partners in Learning* format will begin in October 1988.

PILOTS PANEL

Convener: Mrs Alma Kendall
Master Pilot: The Revd John Robinson

11. This has been a memorable year for Pilots, the non-uniformed children's midweek activity linked with Sunday worship, as we have celebrated our 50th Anniversary. The publicity and interest have stirred up many enquiries and the establishment of a good number of new Companies throughout the country. In addition, several Companies have extended their work and now include a younger section for 5-7 year olds as well.
12. The highlight of the year was the 50th Anniversary Celebration held in the Westminster Central Hall, London, in June, when over 2,000 children and adults crowded in to the hall. We were honoured, too, to have the Singapore Youth Choir, who played their instruments and fascinated us all. The Chief Guest was the Revd Lalamilo Kamu and his family from Samoa, who came in national dress, and brought greetings on behalf of the World Church. The drama, music and singing by the Pilots concluded with a challenge for the future by the General Secretary of the URC. A video recording of the day was made and is available on hire from the Pilot Office, in return for a charge of £2 towards the handling costs.
13. The celebrations have not been limited to London, however, and many local and district celebrations have been held nationwide. The Master Pilot has been privileged to share in a number of these.
14. Discussions have already commenced about the plans for the future development and image of the work of Pilots. In the meantime, we are pleased that the demand for Pilots in the work of local churches continues, and we see this as an important contribution to *Growth for their sake*.
15. Finally, we say thank you to Betty Taylor who concluded her work in the Department at the end of February. Betty has always maintained an active interest in the work of Pilots over the years which is much appreciated, and we shall miss her support and friendship.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Secretary: Mr Michael Harrison

16. The Committee has been encouraged by the reports of new initiatives in the training of elders after the encouragement given by Assembly in 1985. Representatives from most Provinces have met with the committee convener and Departmental Secretary to share plans and ideas and this process is to continue as part of the regular meetings to be held for provincial trainers. We would like to re-emphasise that we see elders' training as addressed to the wholeness of Christian discipleship. The concern should be for the well-being of those who are called as elders every bit as much as for the particular tasks to which elders are called. The experience gained by such programmes will be important in training all lay people and we believe that beyond the structured training of elders lies the goal of a broad Christian education for all members of our congregations.
17. We were also encouraged by the number of local churches and their members participating in the *Lent '86* study groups under the title *What on earth is the Church for?* Some of these groups have continued and plans are being made for a new set of materials to be available in Lent 1988.

The contribution of a national programme, a multi-media approach and the mingling of different Christian traditions is a powerful one and as a committee we will encourage this combination wherever it is possible in the future.

18. There were many important points on leadership in the church which were made by the group which reported to the last Assembly which, as a committee, we wished to endorse and to make more accessible to those who find the report long. We have prepared a brief discussion guide on leadership drawing from the report and suggesting how the issues can be taken up. We are also preparing brief introductory leaflets for the jobs of Church Treasurer and Church Secretary, outlining the duties and providing the basis of a discussion with those who might feel called to such responsibility. These will complement the successful leaflet on the call to eldership, *An Elder — who me?*

19. The Christian Stewardship material prepared a few years ago is still available and can serve a useful purpose for churches who have still not worked through it. We now feel the need to reflect recent thinking on the subject especially about the world context of our Christian stewardship and we have invited a small group to review what is available and make recommendations to the committee for its further work. This may take the form of a publication or further study material. We draw attention to work on church buildings by the BCC Stewardship Committee which is nearing completion.

20. The committee members were pleased to hear of the first courses at the Windermere Centre and offer their encouragement to the Director and the responsible committee. They have also received reports on relevant issues from the negotiations with the Congregational Union of Scotland and the BCC Education Consultation. As a result we are seeking wider consultation with other committees on the subjects of women's organisations within the church and school worship.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Jean Holdsworth

Secretary: The Revd Paul Quilter

21. In addition to the responsibility to answer for its work to the Assembly the Youth Committee is also accountable to the Department of Education and Science from whom it receives an annual grant to assist in its work. The DES never tries to determine our goals or the manner in which we achieve them. However, they have the responsibility of ensuring proper use of the grant and maintenance of an acceptable standard of youth work thus justifying the money given.

22. During 1986 a team of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors looked at a representative sample of the youth work in the URC and it is hoped that their final printed report will be available at the General Assembly. This is the first occasion on which a national voluntary youth organisation has been the subject of such an inspection. The Youth Committee has been encouraged both by the fact of its selection and the results of the inspection which were, in general, very positive. Nevertheless the Committee has taken seriously the challenge to improve those areas of work which have attracted negative comments or penetrating questions.

23. At the beginning of 1986 the Committee considered it necessary to determine priorities for the next five years, allowing for flexibility to respond to the HMI Report and the changing needs of the Church. The ministry amongst the under-16 age range was an area identified as needing high priority and was subsequently an area of concern raised by the HMI Report. The Committee will be considering the programme offered at all levels of church life and the appropriate resources and training necessary to enhance the quality of the work done with, and for, the lower FURY age range. The Committee continues to maintain as one of its highest priorities the growth of young people through their full participation at every level of church life. Time and energy will be given to the needs of churches and young people, particularly in urban priority and rural areas. There will be an emphasis on helping young people and youth leaders to understand and relate to people of different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

24. The World Affairs Sub-Committee started work at the beginning of last year dealing with the international aspects and CWM links of the Youth Committee's agenda. We hope to develop a youth project with the Church in Taiwan and also in Jamaica, whilst we continue our exchange programme with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The Youth Committee is particularly grateful for the interest and support given by the World Church and Mission Department.

25. One of the most important decisions taken by the Youth Committee last year was to major on *Growth for their sake*. The Committee gives its full support to the aims and aspirations of *Growth for their sake* and is anxious that young people and youth leaders participate fully in every manifestation of this major undertaking. *Growth for their sake* was the theme of the FURY Assembly held in January 1987 where it was explored with enthusiasm and commitment.

26. One of this year's highlights will be *Connect 87* where up to 1,500 young people and leaders will meet for a weekend of worship, drama, workshops and concerts, all of which will be designed to express the *Growth for their sake* theme. The venue for this celebration will be Derby from 23-25 October.

27. A new training programme called *Give and Take* is now available. This is designed to help explore ways in which the Christian faith is communicated to young people. It is hoped to publish a resource pack for churches in rural areas and to assist in the continued improvement of the youth magazine, FURY National. An audio-visual presentation explaining the nature and content of FURY activities will be available.

28. A major decision to be made concerns the future of the Ginger Group Project. This was initially set up to run for three years and by the time the Assembly meets the third group will have been selected. Requests for the services of the Ginger Group have far exceeded their availability and over twenty-five applicants have been disappointed. Reports received from those who have used the Ginger Group show exciting and encouraging signs of growth. Some of these will be published in response to requests for more detailed information about the wide range of projects tackled. The question that must now be put before the Church is: "Should the Ginger Group Project continue for a further three year period?" FURY Assembly strongly supports this idea. However, the Youth Committee feels it must ask the whole Church to find a way of continuing this ministry for growth. The Youth Committee is mindful of the financial implications of this request, but it is also aware of the continuing enthusiasm and commitment of young people to this project.

29. Last year the former Youth Committee Convener retired with the closing comment "that we do not apologise for the continuing growth of effective youth work in the URC". The Youth Committee rejoices in those words, because we see the signs of growth all over the United Reformed Church and where it matters most at District and local levels. This does not give the Committee cause for complacency but is the inspiration for continued effort and we pray that the Holy Spirit will enrich all that we do in Christ's name.

WINDERMERE POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Director: The Revd Graham Cook

Convener: The Revd Dr Robert O. Latham

Secretary: The Revd Graham Cook

30. Our National Training Centre is open and running a full programme. The Centre was ready by July 1986 and the first guest arrived on 14 July. August/September was declared an 'open month' and churches and individuals were invited to visit the Centre and spend a night there. Over 2,000 people availed themselves of this opportunity from all over the country. They liked what they found, a well appointed, suitably furnished centre with comfortable beds, good food, a friendly staff.

31. We wish to record our thanks to all who made this possible: to the architect, Mr Michael Bottomley a member of the Carver Memorial Church, for his sensitive and practical adaptation; to the builders who completed their work in record time; to the staff of the Centre and specially to the Director, Graham Cook, who was available at every point and whose advocacy throughout

the country aroused the interest of every Province. The essential contributions came from every Province and many of our churches and individuals, revealing the widespread and generous interest in this enterprise. Contributions came too from outside the URC. The first major gift was from our covenanted partner Church of the Palatinate in Germany, and others came from the Scottish Congregational Union and the Independent Methodist Church. The most significant contribution was the willingness of the church at Carver to make their Manse available. We are indebted to them and to their minister, Stephen Thornton and his family, for their willingness to find and move into a new home thus making the development of the Centre possible.

32. It was to give thanks for all this and for the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit that we met on 6 September for the Service of Thanksgiving in the Carver Memorial Church. The Moderator presided, the General Secretary preached, every Province was represented and the great thanksgiving culminated in a procession to the terrace of the Centre where we shared grapes with one another, as a symbol of our oneness with Christ. When all the promised gifts and covenanted gifts are received we reckon that £325,000 will have been given, which is about the estimated cost of the Centre. Final details can be given at Assembly.

33. A full programme of courses has been running since the end of September and by the end of 1986, the number of recorded bednights was 1,537, with people coming from all parts of the UK and some from India and America. The assessment of the courses has been good and the standards high. We are grateful for all who shared in the leadership and planning of the courses. The programme for the Spring and Summer was published in January 1987 and the programme for the Autumn 87 and Spring 88 should be available at the Assembly.

34. This is the point to report on our working methods. We have set up a Programme Committee and also a local Management Committee and they deal with the details and report to the main committee. We have also set up an assessment panel who have been asked to look at every aspect of the life and work of the Centre and to report annually. One of our main concerns has been that of securing an adequate staff. On the whole we are satisfied that the level is now adequate, although we are aware that the Director is carrying too heavy a load. Our hope is that we can secure some capable, honorary assistance in the near future. We know that we are well served by our staff and on them the good name of the Centre depends.

35. Although we have not yet completed our first year we are convinced that the Centre has already established its place in the life of the URC and its member churches, that its ecumenical importance is being realised, and that it is being used both nationally and internationally, as a centre for study, prayer and conference. We thank God for the Windermere Centre.

HEALTH & HEALING COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd D. Alasdair Pratt

Secretary: The Revd Michael Playdon

36. The principal concerns of this committee touch fundamental areas of life. These include the health and well-being of individual people; the health and wholeness of the community; and the healing, renewing and forgiving power of God. These profound issues are, of course, at the centre of all ministry. Interest in God's healing work continues to grow, and one task of the committee is to enable congregations to develop their exploration. At the same time, we encounter caution on the part of those troubled by simplistic styles of ministry that rely heavily on emotional appeal and a rather precarious theological foundation. We have recognised these issues in conferences both held and planned.

37. A **Conference for Ministers and Students** was held at Swanwick, 30 June — 2 July 1986. The Revd David Dale gave the lectures. All provinces and two colleges were represented. The participants came from varied theological backgrounds, with different levels of commitment to the work. Not surprisingly, therefore, there were tensions over style, content and emphasis. This was, however, the first serious attempt within our church to bring people together around the biblical and theological issues. The encounters were stimulating and challenging even if not every disagreement was resolved.

38. **National Conference, 10-12 July 1987**

Again to be held at Swanwick, this conference is open to all. The leadership will be in the

hands of Canon Frank Wright, religious adviser to Granada TV, and author of several books on pastoral care, including *The Pastoral Nature of Healing*. The theme of the conference is a Christian exploration of pain and suffering. For many people pain and suffering are at the heart of the problem and the challenge in the healing ministry. On the one hand we need to avoid the glib answers that trivialize deep personal concerns, and on the other we wish to affirm the victorious power of God. The need for a balanced, reverent response is expressed in the conference title — *No easy answers*. Application forms are available from the Faith and Life Department.

39. **Stress in the Ministry**

The Working Party aims to have its report available by the time Assembly meets. The report defines the causes and describes the effects of stress as they touch ministers, their families and lay leaders in the church. The implications for selection and training are explored, and ways forward suggested. It is hoped that this report will be widely discussed, and will prove of practical help.

40. **AIDS**

Government publicity and media concern has catapulted AIDS to the centre of public attention. A URC minister, the Revd Martin Hazell, has become closely involved in the care of people affected, both those who have become ill, and also their families. He is active in the work of the Terence Higgins Trust and is in the chair of an inter-faith group that they sponsor. In addition to counselling he has been invited to train groups in different spheres, and his ministry has been widely recognised and commended. Our committee is well aware that much work needs to be done to help churches to be informed, and to work their way through to helpful and compassionate attitudes. Further developments, in collaboration with other departments, are under urgent consideration as we make this report. We would strongly commend the booklet that has been produced by the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility at 60p — *AIDS: some guidelines for pastoral care*, likewise, *A Christian Comment on AIDS*, produced by the Churches' Council on Health and Healing.

41. **Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches.**

In September 1986 the Convener had the privilege of attending a CMC Consultation in Budapest on the theme: *Health, Healing and Building Community*. It was a remarkable event in that the style and content of the conference blended with location and personal encounter to express the theme as well as to discuss it.

Outstanding among the speakers was Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche — a movement to care for mentally handicapped people. Speaking of their need for and contribution to community, he conveyed the deep pain of rejection experienced by them, and pointed ways through to healing and resolution. Other issues that emerged as being on the agenda in all parts of Europe were: the importance of preventative medicine; the ways professionalism can dehumanise those it claims to serve; the spiritual dimensions of health; and the resistance of leaders in both church and health care to face their own areas of weakness and vulnerability.

42. **The Churches' Council on Health and Healing**

CCHH have produced a video, *The Healing Ministry*, which runs for 47 minutes and is available from Communication and Supplies. The Committee has seen it and warmly commends it; discussion notes are included.

During 1986 the CCHH completed the first of its training courses in the Christian Healing Ministry. This is being repeated in London, and steps are being taken to extend it into other parts of the country.

The development of the crypt of St Marylebone Church was ready for opening in February 1987. In addition to housing the offices of many of the bodies involved in the Healing Ministry, it will include a medical practice, and will further the cause of holistic approaches to health care.

CCHH also has a number of working parties studying various issues: *Whole Person Medicine* (in conjunction with the Royal College of Practitioners), *A Christian Comment on AIDS* (already published with good reviews), *Possession — a task for the theologian or psychiatrist?* *Complementary Medicine*, *The Spiritual Medicine* and *The Spiritual dimension of healing*.

43. **Poverty and Health**

Unemployment and poverty have much to say about the health of society. This is an area

that more naturally falls under the responsibility of other departments of the church, but we have considered the theological and spiritual implications for people living with fear and loss of self-worth. We have had to ask what health and healing has to do with a sick society, and how the structures of the church relate to those whose health is damaged by economic recession. Consultations are continuing.

44. Provincial Link Persons

Some Provinces and several Districts have already organised conferences and study days. Provincial Link People have now been appointed to publicize the work of the committee, and to assist Districts and local churches. These link people are:

1. Revd Stuart Brock, 2. Revd Jim Hollyman, 3. Revd Eileen Sambrooks, 4. Revd Hugh Neems, 5. Revd Tony Lee, 6. Revd Bert Jordan, 7. Revd Jeanne Pells, 8. Revd Stella Beare, 9. Revd Tony Shield, 10. Revd Colin Baxter, 11. Revd William Connelly, 12. position vacant.

The URC consultant, The Revd David Dale, is available to assist, as are other members of the committee.

DOCTRINE & WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Prof Colin E Gunton

Secretary: The Revd Dr Colin P Thompson

45. We present the fruits of our reflection on baptismal practice in the URC, following the enquiry begun last year, at the end of this Report. We have been greatly helped by those who shared with us their experiences, and have been only too aware as we formulated our findings of the pastoral and theological tensions arising from life in a Church which practises both infant and believer's baptism and seeks to honour personal convictions. Tensions can be creative. If they seem hard to bear, we must not forget that we are bridging one of the great divides of Christendom, and we ought not to expect that to be easy if we are going to take baptism seriously. Instead, we need patience and forbearance, and time to listen to one another and to God. We have not been able to make any clear or radical suggestions, because we have not heard the URC speaking to us with a definite voice. We do not believe that ours can be a final word, either. We shall be seeking to discover how other denominations have been facing some of the problems we have identified, and we are arranging a Consultation on Baptism at Windermere from 6-9 September 1988, where we hope that the whole question may be discussed in an honest, open way by people meeting other people, rather than by Committees producing papers.

46. The new Certificate of Membership, mentioned last year, is now available. It seeks to make good a lack which a number of churches have felt. It comes in two parts — a baptismal section, which follows the wording of the Ecumenical Certificate of Baptism (though there has not been space to indicate all those Churches which accept it), and a section to be filled in at entry into 'the full privileges and responsibilities of membership' (ie Profession of Faith, Confirmation). For a baptized infant, the certificate is a reminder that the process of membership of Christ's body has to be completed, and details of the original baptismal certificate can be copied on to the new as and when that takes place. For a person baptized as a believer, the two parts will be filled in at the same time.

47. Much of our time has been spent on revision of the Book of Services. We have made good progress on Orders for Baptism, Renewal of Baptismal Vows and the Lord's Supper, and hope to have our final drafts of these for next Assembly. We have started work on the Ordination and Wedding Services. Each time we engage in detailed drafting work (and each Order passes through many drafts) we see the benefit of holding doctrine and worship together.

48. During the year, we suspended for the time being the Hymnody Group (a sub-committee of Doctrine and Worship). It will resume its work when the new hymn book is published. Some of its members are on the Editorial Committee, and it seemed wise to let it rest for a time.

49. On the ecumenical front, we have been looking at Ministry in the Welsh Covenant and have helped towards formulating a URC response. We have maintained links with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and our Secretary had a happy and useful meeting at home in the summer with his counterpart from the Uniting Church in Australia. There too the experience of union is reinvigorating church life and worship. Although *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* has faded from

the foreground, we would very much appreciate hearing from any local churches whose lives have been affected by it in particular ways. We continue to be represented on the Joint Liturgical Group and the Standing Conference for Unity in Prayer, which produces the Unity Octave materials.

50. During the year new work has been begun. Donald Norwood is preparing Guidelines on Church Meeting for us, and David Thompson, a retiring member of the Committee, is overseeing the publication of *Declarations of Faith*, which will bring together for the first time in an easily accessible form those statements of faith which are constitutive of our life and identity as a Church both Catholic and Reformed. We have begun to think about our relationships with other faiths, at the request of the World Church and Mission Department, and have identified two areas which we think need further thought and work — marriage and remarriage, and the ministry of eldership. We hope that Assembly may encourage us to pursue these, preferably with other Departments.

By next Assembly, the membership of the Committee will have altered substantially. Those of us who are leaving it are grateful for the opportunity to have served the Church in this way. You have worked us hard, but we have found it to be work both enjoyable and rewarding.

Musicians' Guild (General Secretary: Mr Don W Gray)

51. The URC Musicians' Guild has been very active during 1986. The Branch meetings in various parts of the UK have been generally well attended. The programmes have been exciting, sometimes ambitious, and have proved great value to ministers, organists, choir leaders and members, and members of our congregations who enjoy music in worship. It is good that programmes continue to include training as a major activity. We hope to form a branch in the NW Province during 1987 and trust we shall have the same enthusiasm and co-operation that has accompanied the formation of other Branches in recent years.

52. We welcome the preparations for a new 'mainstream' hymnbook. The hymn 'explosion' of recent years has produced some interesting, sometimes exciting, publications but how many will stand the test of time for regular Sunday worship?

53. As an extension of the Organ Advisory Service we shall compile a list of organs which, for any number of reasons, are no longer required in the buildings in which they are installed and are probably redundant. A huge amount of capital is tied up in these instruments and if they can be used elsewhere, there are sizeable savings to be made. Such a scheme requires two-way communication. First the information for the register, and secondly knowing where to obtain copies of the register. The second is straightforward — the Guild secretary will be pleased to send up-to-date copies. The first requires churches to send the details of such instruments available. Co-operation of all concerned is requested.

54. One of the major frustrations of our organists is that the voluntaries are often played in competition to loud conversation from the congregation. The organist does not require an attentive audience in the theatrical sense. The congregation equally must have opportunity to greet friends and should not necessarily be expected to maintain silence on entering the sanctuary. However, the two or three minutes which precede worship and also follow the Benediction should be a time when there is no talking and contemplation of the presence of the Holy Spirit is allowed full sway. The organist can, with the right choice of music, do much to create the right atmosphere. The guild hopes that, in 1987, churches may find a way of incorporating such ideas into their worship pattern.

Baptismal Practice in The United Reformed Church

55. Baptismal practice in the United Reformed Church has been under continuous discussion since the union of 1972, discussion intensified by the unification of Churches of Christ with the United Reformed Church in 1981. Three positive convictions have been widely recognised as the shared approach to the issues still under discussion. As stated in the 1976 report of the negotiations between Churches of Christ and the then URC, these convictions are:

“a) Baptism is first and foremost a proclamation of God's gracious act of redemption in Christ. God's action is primary. The basis for baptism is thus the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism signifies dying to sin and being raised to new life; it marks a union with Christ in faith; and in it is promised the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. In each baptism God's continuing work of reconciliation is proclaimed.

b) Baptism also requires the response of faith in God's gracious action. It is administered by and within the Church, which is the community of faith. When a believer is baptized, he

is required to make a personal confession of faith and repentance. When an infant is baptized, his parents are required to confess their faith and commitment to the vocation of Christian parenthood; and admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church depends upon a personal confession of faith at a later date. In both believer's baptism and infant baptism the church declares its faith.

c) Baptism has to be understood in the context of the Church — the Body of Christ. It is always more than an individual act; it is an act of the Church. It is the sacrament of entry into the Church and its corporate ministry, and as such it is a once-for-all event in the life of the Christian. Within the Church the baptized person is nurtured and equipped for the service of Christ: this is as true of the believer as it is of the infant, for the process continues throughout life. At each baptism the congregation renew their own commitment to Christ.”

56. The 1976 report went on to indicate that the major topic of comment on the proposals for unification had been the subject which has again become of concern, “the vexed question of *rebaptism*”. Following the resolution of the 1985 General Assembly a *REQUEST FOR HELP* was circulated by the Doctrine & Worship Committee, asking local churches to report on their baptismal practice and on difficulties and opportunities experienced in that area of their ministry. Particular attention was drawn to the question of responding to requests from persons baptized in infancy for baptism as believers.

57. The committee is grateful for the responses received numbering so far about a hundred. This is a small fraction of the churches and ministers of the URC but the responses express a variety of deeply felt concerns and reveal the great complexity of the pastoral issues. Even this number of such responses make it clear that the Wessex Synod was right to bring these issues to the General Assembly rather than discuss them with one local church as though its concerns were not widely shared.

58. The Revd Martin Cressey made a detailed analysis of all the replies received and with the Revd Kate McIlhagga and Dr David Thompson prepared this report, which was then revised by the whole Committee. The report reflects the fact that the responses frequently echo the shared convictions stated above. They are not negative in tone; those, for instance, who are most insistent on their sense of obligation to seek baptism as believers do not despise the expression of God's love for them as children in what they now see as a sign of that love but not a baptism. On the other hand those most convinced of the rightness of infant baptism express sorrow at the failures of instruction and pastoral care which have made possible a neglect of baptismal grace and require a pastoral care now for those who feel in spiritual need.

59. The Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to one long-term need and to four areas of concern on which there seems to be an immediate need for advice and/or action.

A Long-term need

60. It is first clear to the Committee that there is a continuing need to use educational material concerning baptism, material which will encourage informed decision-making in elders' meetings and church meetings and also be available for ministers in counselling parents who desire baptism for their children and candidates for baptism as believers. The *Guidelines on Baptism* published by the Committee should be widely used, in connection with the ongoing discussions of baptism in the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The Committee will also be listening to the debate in the churches as it revises orders of service for a second edition of *A Book of Services*. The Committee regards this work of education and of liturgical guidance as meeting a long-term need.

Four questions

61. More immediately the committee now addresses four questions —

- a) What is the relevance of the URC 'conscience clause' (Basis of Union clause 10) and of the final sentence of Basis clause 14 to questions arising in relation to clause 14 on baptism?
- b) How can the URC respond, other than by offering baptism itself, to those, who, having been baptised as infants, seek baptism as believers?
- c) What should be the place in the practice of the URC of the *Act of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child, the Dedication of Parents and the Blessing of Children*?
- d) What is the relation between Baptism and Holy Communion?

The conscience clause

62. It is evident that a number of local churches and ministers believe it is open to them to grant requests for what they realise is a *second* and therefore (according to the URC Basis and the general practice of the world-wide church) an irregular baptism. They believe this in relation to the provision that the URC should “uphold the rights of personal conviction” (Basis, clause 10) unless those rights are asserted in a way that disturbs the harmony of the church as a fellowship, “to the injury of its unity and peace”.

63. Those who write in these terms usually have in mind the harmony of the local church fellowship; the Committee thinks that they do not sufficiently consider the effect of irregular baptisms on the URC as a whole or on its ecumenical relations. Local churches which have carefully followed the policy articulated in clause 14 of the Basis of Union feel hurt when other local churches appear to treat the Basis lightly; and the churches with which the URC has ecumenical relations nationally and internationally may feel that the URC lacks integrity when it announces a policy in its Basis but some of its local churches follow another course.

64. The Committee takes the view that clause 14 of the Basis, laboriously drafted and responsibly voted upon in the process of the unification of Churches of Christ with the URC, is already a judgment of the URC as a whole as to what baptismal practice will maintain the harmony of its life and, by implication, what variations of practice disturb that harmony. The final sentence of clause 14 is an application of the general conscience clause 10: “no one shall be required to administer a form or mode of baptism to which he has a conscientious objection, nor shall the form or mode of baptism used in any instance be one to which conscientious objection is taken by the person seeking baptism or by the parent(s) requesting baptism for an infant.” Freedom is given to avoid doing things contrary to one’s conscience, but the positive parts of clause 14 state clearly that two patterns of Christian initiation are recognised by the URC and that both forms of baptism shall be made available in the life of every worshipping congregation. That means that a minister personally unwilling to administer one pattern of initiation or form of baptism must be ready to arrange for another minister to do so and that one’s own objection to receiving a particular form must not lead to its being denied to another person who desires it. No local church of the URC may exclude from its life either of the forms of baptism.

65. The Committee would therefore, in general, advise local churches that the conscience clauses offer a wide and positive liberty of action but do not afford further relief on matters already decided for present policy by the General Assembly.

66. The present enquiry has, however, drawn the attention of the Committee to individual cases which local churches believe to have special features, not covered by the general decision expressed in clause 14 of the Basis, namely:

- a) the doubt of conscience among some people about the reality of their baptism as the infant children of parents who were themselves of little or no Christian experience: one response describes an instance in which the parents were encouraging their now adult son to seek baptism as a believer *because* they acknowledged that they had not understood infant baptism and had gone through it as a formality;
- b) the doubt of conscience felt by some concerning the mode of their baptism, when that has not been immersion, which they have come to regard as the mode enjoined in Scripture and symbolically appropriate. It has been put to the Committee that in such cases, both a) and b), there is room for doubt whether baptism occurred in infancy and therefore room for a conditional baptism as a believer.

67. The Plan of Unification between the URC and Churches of Christ contained at one stage, in relation to requests for *second* baptism, the sentence (Report for 1974, pp 8 and 9) “such guidance would not exclude the possibility of a service of believers’ baptism”. Some believe that the withdrawal of that sentence in 1976 was a decision not to use a particular form of words but not a definite precluding of that practice. The Committee cannot accept this view. The 1976 report includes the clear statement: “the (joint) Committee propose that any suggestion of a baptismal rite for those who have already received infant baptism be dropped”.

68. What has caused the Committee to consider with great care the individual cases put to it is not, therefore, the 1974 report but a broad consideration of the history of Protestant teaching on baptism. Since the Reformation debate between paedobaptists and believer baptists, Protestant

teaching on infant baptism has evidently sought to keep a balance between an insistence on the objectivity of god's gracious action and the need for a response from the human participants in baptism. It is therefore appropriate when questions arise about a particular baptism to give attention on the one hand to its objective form and the words used and on the other hand to the intentions and beliefs of those involved.

69. The committee has been led by thus attending to all aspects of particular baptisms to ask itself whether the factors described in para 66 would in some instances justify the administering of conditional baptism, a possibility ecumenically accepted in at least some cases. The Committee has concluded that it would *not* be justified. Conditional baptism has in the past been administered where the *church* has been unsure whether baptism (infant or believer's) has occurred but *not* on the basis of conscientious doubt in the mind of a potential recipient of conditional baptism. The church should not act as though it doubted that baptism has occurred where a local church and its minister(s) have followed with integrity of faith the due order for a service of baptism. Furthermore, to raise doubt as to whether baptism has been administered in such circumstances would undermine the ecumenical agreement on baptism into which the United Reformed Church has entered with sister churches in Britain. The Committee therefore sees the way forward in terms of encouraging other forms of response to requests for baptism as believers by persons baptized in infancy.

Other forms of response to requests for baptism

70. Various suggestions have been made by correspondents for such other forms of responding to those who seek *second* baptism. Some were ready to agree to their being baptized at a local church of another denomination and continuing in their URC membership: some URC/Baptist Union Churches feel it is right to act as their Baptist "self" when confronted by such requests; some other churches are willing to offer a service involving use of a sign of washing or immersion which the church declares is not a baptism (because of the earlier infant baptism) but regards as a renewal of commitment. This was the approach that underlay the sentence quoted above from the 1974 report; "such guidance would not exclude the possibility of a service of believer's baptism but would bring out the importance of maintaining the integrity of the church's action in baptising infants".

71. The Committee has carefully considered these suggestions. They all seem to avoid the issue. A local church ought to make up its own mind about requests for baptism, not pass them to another denomination. URC/Baptist Union Churches must act in a way that respects both their "selfhoods". And the Committee cannot see its way to devising a service which would be sufficiently like a baptism to relieve troubled consciences but sufficiently unlike it to maintain the church's integrity.

72.. The committee therefore urges that local churches should meet the spiritual needs of those requesting a "*second*" baptism in the following ways. It should first be recalled that the grace made explicit for a particular person in baptism is repeatedly reaffirmed for that person at the Lord's Supper. Use may also be made of the *Act of Commitment* prepared for the Iona Community (available from the Bookshop or - Wildgoose Publications, the Abbey, Iona, Argyle PA76 6SN) or of a covenant service of the Methodist type or of a service of Easter renewal of baptismal promises (the latter two options were mentioned in letters from local churches which have made use of them). Within such services particular individuals could have opportunity to make a personal statement concerning renewal of faith and life. There could also be experiment with symbolic actions, such as anointing with oil, and foot-washing, which are already used on a Scriptural basis by other churches, sometimes in a baptismal context, sometimes in the setting of renewed commitment to Christian service.

The Service of Thanksgiving and Dedication

73. Without doubt the issue concerning baptism which is most troubling the churches who have corresponded with the Committee is not the policy to be followed in respect of requests for "*second*" baptism, but the question of how to respond to requests for infant baptism from parents who have little or no Christian faith or experience. These churches are already discovering the value of careful discussion with such parents and of being able to offer them more than one option rather than simply granting or refusing baptism. The *Act of Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child, the Dedication of Parents and the Blessing of Children* is widely valued and is seen to be appropriate for all who wish to express their sense of gratitude to God for the birth of a child and to pray for God's help in its nurture. Such a wish may come from those unable to undertake the responsibility

of a believing parent at infant baptism and also from those with Christian convictions who have hesitations about infant baptism.

74. The following four points, in particular, have emerged:

(i) Too ready an acceptance of requests for infant baptism is held by many to be a major cause of later requests for “second” baptism;

(ii) some churches are finding the service of thanksgiving the right solution for the problem;

(iii) others encounter resistance from parents who feel they are being offered a second-best;

(iv) there seems to be considerable confusion about the word “dedication”. Some think the child is being dedicated to God’s service in the manner of Hannah’s dedication of the infant Samuel; others object to this idea even in the form of speaking of a commitment of those baptized in infancy. It should be noted that the title of the URC service deliberately distinguishes the thanksgiving for the birth of the child, the blessing of the child in God’s name and the dedication of the parents ie both the parents’ self-commitment and the church’s acceptance and support of it.

75. Points (iii) and (iv) are being carefully considered in the revising of the *Book of Services*. The Committee notes with approval points (i) and (ii); it also notes, in relation to point (iii) (the feeling of being offered a second best) that several churches are using the thanksgiving service with *all* parents, members or non-members, who bring their children to that church. The way thus remains open for appropriate pastoral response to a) those who are satisfied to have expressed their gratitude and do not seek any form of baptism but can still be kept in touch with the church b) those who hope that their children will in due time make their own profession of faith and be baptized as believers c) those who seek infant baptism on the basis of serious instruction and personal commitment by the parent(s).

76. The Committee believes that when parents have received instruction in the meaning of baptism and the nature of the commitment involved it must be for the minister and those parents, on the basis of a policy worked out by the elders’ meeting in consultation with the church meeting, to decide whether the child should be baptized or the service of thanksgiving be used. This does not preclude the minister consulting the elders’ and church meetings on issues arising from particular cases.

Baptism and Communion

77. The discussion of the admission of children to communion and the dual baptismal practice of the URC have raised in a small number of churches difficult issues about the relation between baptism and communion. Does an open invitation coupled with admission of children lead to receiving unbaptised communicants? Does this matter? Or, again, is it desirable, as some correspondents suggest, to have a step intermediate between infant baptism and confirmation, as in Roman Catholic practice with first communion? On these points the Committee wishes to reflect further in consultation with the Children’s Work committee, in its “Children and Communion Enquiry”. The Church of Scotland is also discussing these matters and has been reflecting on the Lord’s Supper as a “converting ordinance” in which communion might, at least in some circumstances, be offered to unbaptised adults as they came to a response of faith on a particular occasion, which would be followed later by baptism as a believer.

Conclusion

78. In fulfilling its remit from the General Assembly of 1985 (to “undertake an enquiry, for report to the General Assembly and possible Assembly action..”), the Committee has undertaken the enquiry, presents this report and has considered at length possible Assembly action. In the light of the responses from local churches, its own deliberations and the variety of views presented both in the responses and those deliberations, the Committee advises the General Assembly that the United Reformed Church should abide by the present clause 14 of the Basis of Union, recognising the implications of it spelled out in this report. The Committee also calls attention to the work being done by the British churches together in furtherance of the report *One Body, Many Members*, which is before the British Council of Churches as a means of building upon the achieved ecumenical agreement on baptism.

HYMNBOOK EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Dr David Thompson

Joint Secretaries: The Revd David Gardner
Mr Alan Haywood

79. The Hymnbook Editorial Committee has met several times, including two residential meetings. There has been a very good response to the Convener's invitation in *Reform* to submit suggestions and material, and all of these will be considered. The Committee is working on the preparation of a first list of hymns to be included, and it is hoped to publish this towards the end of the year, when comments will be invited. Work on the music depends to a large extent on the decisions on words, but the Committee is anxious to avoid a situation where the music work is rushed because too leisurely a pace has been set in relation to the words. The Committee has already received a good amount of new material, and is prepared to consider more; but it is important that those who wish to submit further texts send them to Mr Alan Haywood, c/o Faith and Life Department, Church House, as soon as possible.

80. A question was asked at last year's Assembly about the Committee's policy on inclusive language in the new hymnbook, particularly in the light of the General Assembly's resolution on this subject in general of 1985. It is the Committee's intention that normally the hymns it chooses by contemporary authors will use inclusive language, though the law of copyright means that if changes are involved they will require the author's consent. In choosing hymns written in past generations the Committee, recognizing that minor changes of language have been a constant feature of hymnbook editorial policy for 150 years, will seek to preserve the poetic integrity of the text and will normally retain the author's language except where very simple changes of wording can remove problems: but, again following the example of previous books, the committee will seek to avoid using hymns or verses which may cause serious offence because of changing sensitivities in the understanding of human society. This last consideration also extends, for example, to certain types of military imagery and to the attitudes to those of other faiths and none expressed in certain 'missionary' hymns of a former generation. Nevertheless the Committee believes that the most successful and long-lasting hymnbooks of the past have been those which sought to represent a wide range of Christian experience and to avoid too strong an editorial line in any particular direction. In the end it sees its task as that of providing a selection of hymns which gives congregations and leaders of worship the range of choice which they need in the many different contexts in which our churches find themselves.

PRAYER HANDBOOK

Secretary: Mrs Helen Lidgett

Editor: The Revd Edmund Banyard

81. The 1987 Prayer Handbook, *The Power and the Glory*, with prayers written by Revd David Jenkins, was published in August. It completes a two-year cycle of prayers and meditations on lectionary themes. 16,000 copies have been distributed. Excellent sales of the 1986 book produced a slight surplus which enabled the Prayer Handbook Group to sponsor people attending the workshop on *Writing Public Prayers* held at the Windermere Centre in March 1987.

82. The 1988 book *Encounters* with prayers by Revd Kate Compston will be published in August. The Revd Edmund Banyard has been invited to serve as Editor for one further year, until August 1988, with responsibility for producing the 1989 book. The Revd Graham Cook will succeed him as Editor, serving from July 1987 until August 1991 and be responsible for three books, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

FORUM

Chairman The Revd Michael Dunford

Co-ordinator The Revd Terry Oakley

83. In 1986 the challenging theme of *Working towards the 90s* was tackled with the aid of the Revd Tony Addy (one of the Directors of the William Temple Foundation), and workshop leaders who encouraged a lively and exciting exploration of the theme, e.g. using simulation games, and the creative arts.

84. In 1987 (22-28 August) Forum will be *GROWING TOGETHER* at the Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire. The leadership team includes Stephen Orchard, now of the Christian Education Movement, as the theme presenter; Stephen Thornton as worship leader; Brenda Stephenson as music enabler, and Michael Dunford as Chairman. This theme not only expresses what Forum is all about — the whole Church family being together, but also picks up the *Growth for their sake* emphasis. The workshops will explore growth in worship, learning, the ecumenical scene and in the world community.

85. The cost of £85 (with reductions for children and families) though not inexpensive, compares favourably with other full-board family holidays, and there is the added dimension of the learning and growing in a Christian fellowship.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

URC Representative: Mrs Joyce Smith

86. The 1986 service *Choose Life* was well received and the straightforward challenge of its theme was appreciated. The draft copy was prepared by women in Australia.

87. Once again many branches invited choirs or soloists from local schools and churches to sing during the service. This provides a better opportunity to use that music from the country of origin which is not known here.

88. The booklet *Together in Prayer* which includes an anthology on the Theme is a regular publication now and No. 3 sold well. No. 4 edited by Maureen Gooden is available from the Maidstone office.

89. Day conferences have been held in different parts of the country, some arranged and organised by local groups. The National Committee planned three this year, at each the 1987 Theme *Come and Rejoice* was used and they ended with an *Agape* when grapes were shared and prayers offered for the concerns of countries in all parts of the world.

90. Our grants to *Christian Literature* were increased again, over £60,000 being made available thanks to the generosity of those attending Day of Prayer services.

91. We said good-bye to Margaret Rustling at the AGM in June — she had served us very loyally and very efficiently. Our new secretary is Cherry Headon, she takes on a big job and needs our prayers. We have also been giving consideration to the future and we are grateful to the Bible Society who have been acting as consultants. The movement has grown considerably over the last ten years, and now seems a good time to re-assess the work. With a new office, at 62 London Road, Maidstone, a new secretary and after June 1987, a new Treasurer, we step into our second century with enthusiasm and prayerful trust in God.

92. Every 4 years the International Committee meet to agree future Themes and select countries to prepare the draft service. Last year 1986 was special for it started the Centennial Celebrations. It was appropriately held in America for that is where the Movement began back in 1887. Our representatives were our Chairman, Avery Limmer and our Vice President, Jean Whillis. One important item of business was the election of a new international chairman to replace Margaret Williams whose term of office had come to an end. Please pray for the new chairman, Alice Jean Finlay, of Canada.

93. Our own event to celebrate 100 years of the World Day of Prayer movement was held in the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday 21st March and had an international flavour.

94. So this ecumenical, world-wide movement enters its second century. May the Day of Prayer continue to bring people together to pray for one another and to work for peace with justice for all.

World Day of Prayer in Scotland

95. Jean Tinto reports:-

- a) grants were made of £13,500 to Feed the Minds, £6,000 to the National Bible society of Scotland, and £5,000 to the Karibu Centre;

- b) the Children's Service grows in popularity;
- c) many groups now use the Bible studies as preparation for the Day;
- d) good coverage is given by local and national radio and television in Scotland;
- e) sixty day conferences were held in preparation for the Centenary Celebrations, as a result people are better informed; and
- f) a national celebration will be a service in Duablane Cathedral on 28 May.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Faith and Life Department for debate.
 2. Assembly asks Districts and Provinces to appoint, if they have not already done so, an active Children's Work Secretary to liaise with local churches, to encourage training events and to support those involved in training in their area.
 3. Assembly notes with great satisfaction the inspiration and influence of the two Ginger Group teams and expresses appreciation for the FURY efforts to fund the project. Assembly asks the Youth Committee to explore how the project can be continued for a further three year period and ways in which the whole Church could provide a measure of support.
 4. Assembly welcomes the study undertaken on *Stress in the Ministry* and urges ministers, elders and all with responsibility for their selection, training and care to discuss the issues raised by it.
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CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Convener: Dr Mary Ede

Secretary: The Revd John P Reardon

1. Christian scripture and tradition emphasise both the unique worth of each person and the importance of life in community. Human beings are made to be interdependent. Any society which allows and encourages the independence of some people while others are forced to lead lives of dependence and severe restrictions is a flawed society. Extremes of wealth and poverty are a consequence of sin and the church which proclaims a gospel of restoration and transformation must witness in society against all forms of injustice. It is against this understanding of the church's role that the Department chooses its priorities and directs its work. It believes that the Church must help people to cherish the ideal of interdependence and to work against all those tendencies which over-emphasise independence. Personal liberties and well-being for everyone can only properly be safe-guarded in societies which are specially concerned for the plight of the poorest and most disadvantaged people. Public policy must err on the side of them rather than on developing and reinforcing choice and freedom for those who are already comfortable and advantaged.

2. **Growth for the World's Sake** The Report *Growth for their Sake* made the Department, together with others, re-examine priorities and methods of working. That report challenged the Department to recognise again how often the signs of God's Kingdom emerge from the struggles and suffering of the poor and powerless. In the revelation of God in Christ in the child in Bethlehem, in the hidden ministry among the ordinary people of Galilee and supremely in the crucifixion we see how the Kingdom comes often through weakness and apparent failure. In any programme of growth for their sake much more emphasis by the whole Church will have to be given to the search for peace, to poverty throughout the world, to the world-wide search for a new relationship between people of different ethnic origins and to a new community of women and men in church and society. Emphasis will have to be given to political and social change designed to create communities in which all have opportunity to share and make their contribution and in which all have their basic needs secured. Local churches must seek to become centres of community life and action with special involvement with poor and often ignored groups like mentally handicapped people, homeless people, those who are terminally ill and their carers, unemployed people, young offenders and all who are lonely and frightened.

3. **Welfare State** Welfare provision is high on the political agenda. In all the main areas of public life regarded as being part of the Welfare State — social security, health, housing, social services and education — there is change taking place. That is also true in those other public services which many would regard as essentially part of welfare — transport, police, employment and environmental services. In its report, *Not Just for the Poor*, (Church Housing Publishing, 1986, £4.95), the Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England has shown just how serious the crisis in the provision of welfare services is. The original objective of the Welfare State to create a more equal society is being undermined by international pressures, national and local policies and changes of attitude in the population. Yet the lessening of commitment to the ideals of the Welfare State could be disastrous for society as a whole. There is no doubt that the National Health Service, to take but one example, has both enhanced the quality and extended the length of the lives of most people.

4. **Welfare Alert** The Department believes that the crisis in the Welfare State must form a central part of its work over the coming year and it invites local churches to share this concern through a programme, *Welfare Alert*. The Department will produce material to help local churches to study changes in welfare services, to equip them to question candidates in the next General Election, and to enable them to respond to local and national proposals for changes. During the year the Department will work on a set of principles against which trends, developments and changes in the provision of health and welfare services in the state, voluntary and private sectors can be measured and it will seek to involve as many as possible in this exercise with a view to offering these principles to the General Assembly next year.

5. **Divided Britain** The debate about welfare is the more urgent because of the divisions in British society which have become more acute in recent years. We have all become used to the assertion that Britain is a divided society. The Bishop of Liverpool speaks about comfortable Britain in stark contrast to the poverty which so many now experience throughout the country.

Others speak about the division between north and south while others point to the haves and the have-nots in our society. Poor housing, unemployment, racism and so many other ills threaten community life and must feature high on the agenda of churches which take seriously the community dimension of their faith and their evangelism.

6. **Housing** Good housing is fundamental to personal well-being and healthy social relationships. Yet as a nation we are witnessing escalating homelessness, worsening housing conditions and the deterioration of the nation's housing stock. Growth in owner-occupation has been at the expense of those who are unable to meet the costs of purchase or maintenance. Stringent limits on public investment in housing have crippled many Local Authority programmes and shifted priorities from long-term planning to crisis-management.

7. **UN International Year of Shelter for the Homeless** has provided the stimulus at national and local levels to examine the root cause of housing problems and create the will to implement solutions. The Year gives a timely reminder that housing is not just about bricks and mortar, but also involves sensitive management. Overseas the emphasis is on learning from self-help schemes where the poorest communities use local materials and skills to construct housing and improve their environment. The leaflet *A Year of Hope — The Churches and IYSH* encourages local churches to think how they can contribute to the Year.

8. The Department has been involved in a joint venture between Church Action on Poverty and the British Council of Churches to produce a series of six Wallcharts and Leaflets on topical housing finance issues, including the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people and mortgage interest tax relief.

9. The Department welcomes Housing Rights Campaign as the voice of those who do not have access to satisfactory housing, and for the opportunity it presents to encourage political support for the draft Housing Rights Bill.

10. **Manpower Services Commission** The Department, working closely with Ministries Department, undertook a survey of URC churches employing people for work in the community. The responses showed a heavy dependence upon Manpower Services Commission as a source of funding. A Working Group convened to prepare guidelines for churches has produced a pack *Working With: MSC and Community Work*. In many cases, even though communities have often benefited from these employment schemes and churches have developed good systems of management, there are questions raised about the purpose and value of them for the participants. It is essential to develop ways of evaluating the schemes so that the people involved and the communities they serve can assess their worth.

11. **Racism** The persistence of racism in British society is reason for returning to this issue. Many Christian bodies are re-examining their employment and training policies with a view to combatting racism. The inter-departmental Working Group on Racism which has members of various ethnic origins is exploring ways in which more anti-racism training can be available for the churches and is hoping to encourage greater participation in church life at all levels by black people. Many of those local churches which have black members can testify to the joy and challenge which working together brings, but this same experience is largely denied to the Church as a whole. Why is it that black people do not play much part in District Councils, Provincial Synods or General Assembly?

12. **Declaration on Racism** The Department believes that the Church should reaffirm its commitment to ridding church and society of racism. It therefore offers the following declaration and commends it for study at all levels of church life in the hope that it will encourage initiatives, policies, and programmes against racism:

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image, free and equal in his sight.

Racism results where prejudiced attitudes of superiority over others are combined with the power to shape society.

Western civilisation is, and has long been, seriously flawed by racism.

British society nurtures racism through assumptions, stereotypes and organisational barriers which deny black people a just share of power and decision-making.

The Church displays racism by failing to adapt so that black people can share fully in its life, its outreach and its decision-making.

There is cause for celebration in church and society when black and white people learn to cooperate, share power and make decisions together and where new forms of community life are thus discovered.

The United Reformed Church commits itself to challenge and equip all its people to resist racism within themselves, within the church and within society as a whole and to train people and devote resources to this task.

The United Reformed Church pledges itself, as it shares in action against racism, to monitor and review at regular intervals what progress is being made in church and society.

13. **Faith in the City** Many of the issues already raised in this report were featured in the report of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City*. The Department commissioned and serviced a study of that report by an interdepartmental working group. Many of the criticisms of the Church of England contained within the report were found to apply also to the URC and the Department has passed on the findings of the group to other Departments and Provinces for their attention and appropriate action. *Faith in the City*, if its findings and recommendations were taken seriously, would lead to a radical re-examination of the training and deployment of ministers, of the form and content of Christian education in the churches, of the style and content of church assemblies and decision-making councils, of the programmes of mission and community action and of much else in church life.

14. **Alcohol** Public policy and personal life-style so often impinge on one another. Concern about alcohol use and abuse brings together the Department's emphasis on the public and personal aspects of human behaviour. At a time when much public attention is being given to high levels of alcohol consumption and the alcohol factor in so much social malaise, it is important that this issue should not be neglected by the churches. In particular churches should ask themselves how responsible it is to serve alcohol at church events. The Churches Council on Alcohol and Drugs, whose new Chairman is Dr Douglas Acres, is to be congratulated on arranging a day seminar at Lambeth Palace last December on this subject.

15. Many politicians supported the Private Member's Bill to allow pub opening hours to be extended and, although it did not survive the procedures of the House of Commons, it seems likely that such a Bill will be re-introduced. The Department, however, believes that the Government should make no piecemeal changes to licensing laws before a more thorough study of the likely consequences of change. In recent years the number of retail outlets for alcohol has dramatically increased at a time when alcohol consumption and abuse have been rising steeply. Public opinion on this matter is influenced far more powerfully by advertising and trade campaigning than by health education programmes. The costs to society of the present high level of alcohol consumption are not taken as seriously as they should be. The Department commends the booklet *Licensing Law: What kind of change?* for study by the churches supplied from the Department for 2 x 13p stamps.

16. The Churches Council on Alcohol and Drugs has also produced a discussion paper, *No Alcohol at the Wheel?*. Churches could play an important part in public debate and the forming of public opinion on the issue of drinking and driving.

17. **AIDS** Another issue where personal life-styles and public policy interact is that of AIDS. Government consultation with the Churches involved the Departmental Secretary who has also been cooperating with colleagues in the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union in the preparation of a booklet outlining the facts about AIDS and exploring some of the short and long term measures which have to be taken to stop the spread of the virus which causes AIDS. There are important moral and pastoral challenges to the whole community in the present spread of AIDS and the Department is cooperating with other Departments and Churches in pursuing them.

18. **Star Wars** In response to the resolution at last year's General Assembly calling for guidance about the development by the United States of its Strategic Defense Initiative, often more popularly called Star Wars, the Department's Peace Advisory Group published a discussion paper in the Autumn. That paper, which was sent to every local church, outlined the nature of the Star Wars programme, the problems and questions that it poses and some of the Christian principles

by which it may be judged. The Department urges all churches to study this matter and to make their views known to politicians and candidates in the General Election. The Department believes that the way to peace lies not in the development of complicated and enormously costly weapons systems but rather in the patient and persistent effort of building bridges of mutual trust between nations and working towards agreements for arms control and disarmament.

19. **South Africa** The situation in South Africa has seriously deteriorated this past year. Not only has progress towards reform been halted but thousands of citizens, many of them innocent children, have been detained without charge and without trial. The news censorship means that nothing is now reported in the mass media which has not been scrutinised or approved by the South African authorities. This has led a number of Christian bodies in the UK to establish their own South African information service, Southscan, making use of news which comes direct from South African sources without prior censorship.

20. Among those detained for months without trial has been the Revd Jean-François Bill, the Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, well known to some in the URC and a leading member of the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA). He is typical of so many white people in the South African Churches who have given themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of justice for the black community. Black and white Christians are united in their abhorrence of apartheid and increasingly the multiracial churches in South Africa are openly espousing the call for economic sanctions by the outside world. That call has now come from the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa. The courage of individual Christians and the Churches in South Africa challenges the churches throughout the world to redouble their efforts to bring pressure to bear to end apartheid. It is no longer possible to plead ignorance or to express reservations in the face of the courageous and costly witness of fellow Christians there who risk imprisonment, torture and death in their protest against apartheid.

21. **Northern Ireland** The Department has maintained its links with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and last summer welcomed a delegation which included the Moderator, Dr John Thompson. The delegation shared their frustration about the lack of political consultation with the majority community in Northern Ireland. Such lack of consultation only serves to strengthen the voices of extremists and creates no viable middle way for the majority to pursue. The Anglo-Irish Agreement which has been so welcome to the majority of people in the rest of the United Kingdom continues to be regarded by the majority in Northern Ireland with suspicion and rejection.

22. **World Poverty** The faithful support of so many churches for the World Development 1% Appeal means that the 1985/86 total of over £260,000 was able to support the poor in their struggle for long term community development in some twenty countries. The Appeal also continued to support the World Development Movement pressing for higher priority in government policies for overseas aid and development, and was used to strengthen development education in Britain, particularly through One World Week to which the Department gives whole-hearted support. The One World Week theme for 1987 *Who gets the Credit?* will enable churches to consider not only the plight of poorer countries now crippled by debt but also the similar plight of many families in Britain.

23. **Continuing Work** The Department relates to three Divisions of the British Council of Churches: International Affairs, Community Affairs and Christian Aid, and works closely with them. Current concerns in those Divisions about East-West relations, Central America, the forthcoming visit of a delegation from Cuba, the projects fund of the Community and Race Relations Unit, future ecumenical cooperation in community work, consideration of forms of local and national government in Britain, and the threat of famine in Mozambique, all take up the time of Departmental staff and members. They cannot be reported in detail because space and time does not allow it, but the Department is always ready to share these issues and concerns with the churches. In addition the Department maintains correspondence with churches and individuals on a range of other matters and, in particular, about religious education in schools, marriage and the remarriage of divorced people and the resourcing of children and young people doing project work in religious education. To equip it for this broad ministry the Department maintains extensive contact with a wide range of religious and secular bodies.

24. **Special Requests** The Department also tries to respond to special requests and opportunities. In February it was able within a few days to disperse £2,000 in the form of heating

stamps to a few local churches to help some of those most seriously affected by the harsh winter weather. The money was made available under emergency plans in the European Community. During the Autumn the Department Secretary was invited to visit the NATO Headquarters in Belgium with a group of church leaders to meet the staff and learn about NATO policies. The Assistant Secretary has been invited to share in review procedures for particular community work posts.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives this report for debate.
 2. The Assembly welcomes the Church and Society Department's concern for the future of the Welfare State and invites all churches to take part in a year's programme, *Welfare Alert*.
 3. The Assembly urges churches to take part in local action in support of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and, in particular, to raise local and national issues of housing and homelessness with candidates in the General Election.
 4. The Assembly adopts the declaration on Racism and commends it for study and action and as a future point of reference throughout the Church.
 5. The Assembly urges Her Majesty's Government to undertake a comprehensive review of the liquor licensing laws and to give adequate opportunity for informed public debate and consultation before introducing or allowing changes in those laws.
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THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd A J Wells

Secretary: Mrs S M Tull

Our major piece of work over the past year has been undertaken on behalf of the Executive Committee, and has resulted in a report on the development of General Assembly. We are grateful to all who submitted material and to the members of the Committee for their hard work and willingness to attend additional meetings. That report appears as an appendix to the report of the Executive committee.

We have also given thought to the question of a fully residential Assembly (which was rejected three years ago), and believe it is right to seek approval for such to be held in 1989. It would best be regarded as an experiment rather than the first of a whole series. Our investigations have shown that other churches which hold such assemblies invariably have found them helpful, and should our 1989 experience be the same then decisions could be made about the future. Without such an experiment we shall never know whether or not it is good for our own Church.

A fully residential Assembly would have a different style and programme. We envisage rather more informal sessions. We would seek an opportunity for working in groups. The opportunity for making new friends would be greater and this would be good for the spirit of the Church. We have considered the additional cost which, for a 4-day Assembly, is in the region of £90 per person. Our suggestion is that each member would make a personal contribution of £25 with the balance being raised by Districts and Synods in whatever manner they wish; the central budget of the Church would continue as at present and would meet all travel costs. As this involves raising money, the recommendation of the Committee enables the Councils and Synods to think about this before making a final decision at Assembly 1988. In order that such a decision, if in favour, could be operative, a provisional booking has been made at York University for Friday 7 to Monday 10 July. This can be cancelled if the decision is negative.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

1. That the report be received for debate.
 2. Assembly commends the proposal for a fully residential Assembly in 1989, referring it to Synods and District Councils, preparatory to an Assembly decision in 1988; and proposes that the costs be divided, with the Unified Appeal meeting the usual amount, including all travel, and the accommodation cost being met by a personal contribution per member of not more than £25, with the balance to be borne by Provinces/District Councils in ways to be determined by each Provincial Synod.
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INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING PARTY ON EVANGELISM

Convener: The Revd David Marsden

Secretary: The Revd Donald Elliott

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

1. At the General Assembly of 1986 the United Reformed Church accepted the challenge to grow for the sake of God's Kingdom in the world. The Departments and Provinces of the URC were asked to look at what this might mean for the immediate future. This report is the result of reflection and a start on the setting of priorities. It is addressed to every level of the URC: Local Church, District Council, Provincial Synod and Assembly Department.

THEME

2. We begin by asking: What is Christian Growth for us? Three things at least we see.

God loves the world. He made it so that his Kingdom of justice and peace should come and grow here. There is room for all who would enter as his children. None of our terrors, injustice or loneliness can destroy this love.

God loves the church. It grows out of the life-offering of Christ. The Holy Spirit forms us to be his body. This community of faith holds us in fellowship. As we witness to his Kingdom in our society, God can increase us in numbers and holiness.

God loves me. He has come to me in Jesus Christ. He knows me through and through, yet he forgives me and calls me to serve him. With others I would grow in faith and love.

3. These three dimensions of God's call cannot be separated. They are all the treasure of the Gospel. As individuals we grow in faith as we share in prayer, praise and service with the church. The church only grows through the dedication of people and as it looks outward from the circle of faith. The world needs the church to reflect the presence of Christ. So for us growth is always by the grace of God towards the new Jerusalem where a separated church is no longer needed, and Christ is the sun for all.

4. The Gospel shows us that there is no cheap or easy progress for those who are obedient to the way of love. Christ was fully part of this painful world, strung up between thieves because he was faithful. The growth God gives is so that we may offer more hope to the world. Like Christ, we have to be alongside those who are hurt or cast aside by the world, for the Kingdom of Heaven is among them. *Emilio Castro*, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, says, "Church growth makes the churches all the more useful as they live in solidarity with the poor", (in his book *Sent Free WCC, 1985*).

PROCESS

5. So the United Reformed Church has embarked on a process of *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* at every level of its life. It is expected that each Local Church, District and Province will take part, as well as all the Assembly departments.

6. It will work like this: each Province is asked to set its own objectives for growth in mission in whatever way it sees best. It will involve each District Council in a similar exercise. The District will help each local church to do the same. By Assembly 1989, it is expected that every Province will be able to provide a first progress report. Many Provinces have already started, and Assembly Departments have begun to shape priorities for growth in terms of measurable goals and attainments. (See paragraphs 18 and 19 below.)

7. It is intended that *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* shall be a permanent and recurring agenda item for our churches for the foreseeable future. Assessing achievement will be in-built.

8. As far as possible, *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* should take place bearing in mind ecumenical relations either established or possible. But the pace must be dictated more by mission needs than by inter-church relations.

9. Such an intense concentration on mission demands careful and coordinated resourcing by the whole URC. For this, people must come before other kinds of resource and be freed as far as possible from other commitments. Teams of Mission Enablers must be increased, equipped and supported, and linked with other training networks. *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* means that more money will be needed for mission, and ways found to generate it.

10. Printed and visual materials that will assist with *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* are being prepared in partnership with the Council for World Mission. These link *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE* in the URC with the world-wide family of churches who are all involved in a similar process. This means that we shall be able to exchange ideas and stories with churches in many different parts of the world enriching us all. It will help us make connections between our struggles and those of others. This material will probably best be used with the help of Mission Enablers acting as consultants.

11. The CWM printed material for us in Britain is to be called **MISSION PURSUIT**. It is being designed with at least our older children in mind, so that they can take a full part. Young people are often the experts about the local community! It is to be loose-leaf so that local churches can copy what they want. We expect it to be available from June.

12. The CWM outline consists of a spiral of questions which can be used by a Local Church or a wider council. They are intended to be taken in sequence over a fair period. And to be returned to again and again over the next years.

- Look** — WHERE is your church set?
For whom might you be responsible under God?
Where are the boundaries of your locality?
- Listen** — What are the deep hopes of the people?
Where are they blocked?
Where is there innocent suffering?
What are the CAUSES of frustration locally, regionally, nationally, internationally?
- Think** — How do you see GOD AT WORK in your area and wider world?
Where is 'death and resurrection' taking place?
What demonic structures are being confronted?
Where is healing happening?
- Decide** — What might be the role of your fellowship?
How must your church develop?
What should your PRIORITIES be?
How and by whom will the decisions be made?
- Gather** — What RESOURCES have you to help you, of spirit, skill, fellowship, facility, finance?
What PARTNERS do you have here and abroad: other churches, faith communities, caring agencies and pressure groups?
- Act** — What, then, might your overall Objective, Targets, and specific PLANS be?
Who will do what, and when? And why?
How will you worship? How will you be sustained?
- Check** — How do you EVALUATE your growth in mission?
How do you cope with success or failure?

13. To help with evaluation many churches in Britain are now talking about 'Mission Audit'. So the material includes a *CHECK-LIST FOR GROWTH IN MISSION*. It will help us assess performance against aspiration. For example

- (1) *Local knowledge*. Neighbourhood, Area, Region: other churches, faiths, secular groups, people at risk . . .
- (2) *World outlook*. Exchanges, International interests, Peace endeavours . . .
- (3) *Spiritual life*. Prayer, Reflection, Use of the Bible . . .
- (4) *Mission purpose*. What is your church/council/committee for? Priorities and Targets in mission over the next 3 years . . .

- (5) *Equipping/Re-education*. Ministers, Elders, Adults, Youth, Children . . .
- (6) *Ministry/Leadership*
- (7) *Numerical increase*. Contacts, Enquirers, Members, Churches, contributions to funds

14. The Church of England's 'Audit for the Local Church' (£1) could also prove useful. The Milton Keynes Christian Foundation publishes a big 'Mission Audit Pack' at £5. Both are obtainable through the URC Bookshop.

Pointers

15. Out of the responses to *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE* submitted by Provinces and Assembly Departments in December 1986, several common strands seem to us to emerge. Are these pointers to what the Spirit is saying to the United Reformed Church as we answer his call to grow for the Kingdom? Are these the strands of God's pattern for us in the years ahead?

Lively worship and everyday spirituality

Mission imagination and motive

Attention and sensitivity to community

Church unity in mission

Changing society by identifying with the powerless and hurt

Coordination by theme in each Province and at Assembly

16. In particular, more attention has to be paid to helping all of us share the actual faith and vision God has given us. Personal evangelism must be retrieved as a possibility for our church fellowships. It must stop being 'the hard sell' which disregards the outlooks and insights of others. Nor should it be thought of as the opposite of concern for social justice.

17. Provinces will probably want to think about planting churches in new places or in places from which the Church as a whole has withdrawn. The sort of churches planted could in some situations be fellowships with a fresh style. The guiding principle shall be human need rather than church convenience. In particular, deprived communities or abused or ignored groups should have priority. The unchurched children of our generation are a special case.

18. In response to *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE*, Provinces report many plans. The Yorkshire Synod is developing a PROVINCIAL STRATEGY FOR MISSION. It says, "evangelism and the use of . . . a trained team should be seen as part of a provincial strategy and not a 'one-off' isolated activity". The North-Western Synod is going INTO THE 90s, with a proposal for 12 commissions to consider specific questions of development. The Commission on growth will consult with selected churches which have shown signs of growth in order to discover what lessons may be learned. Thames North is MOBILISING FOR MISSION on the understanding that "mission and indeed evangelism are essential elements of being a Christian". The Northern Province is seeking to grapple with the "concept of the Church as a group of believers come together to proclaim the Kingdom as individuals and in their common life". The East Midlands Synod is convinced that "Christ is sending every Christian out to share with other people God's love for them and all Creation, by whatever means, according to his or her gift". To enable this in local churches the Province is planning a year's emphasis on Worship and Prayer, working through the implications of a "this-worldly spirituality". The South-Western Province wants church growth to be seen as involving "growth of churches into living, changing fellowships in Christian discipleship; growth in the Church's ministry of Christian service; and growth in the numbers of Christians". The Eastern province has a series of Synod meetings on 'Growth', and its Church Extension Committee has reported on "Growth in group pastorates and team ministries". West Midlands has a PROGRAMME FOR GROWTH with specific priorities for action over the next two years with suggestions for what this might mean for Ministers, Elders, Lay Preachers and Members. The Wessex Synod has a Provincial Strategy Group; its three priorities are Growth in Spirituality, Growth in Outreach and Growth of Understanding and Involvement in National, International and Social Issues, and in the life of the World Church. In other Provinces local churches have been encouraged to consider their life for the sake of those around them. Most Provinces have been developing Teams of Mission Enablers, though geography and manpower are often problems.

19. As a result of the resolutions at last year's Assembly, its Departments have been working to set priorities under *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE*. No doubt this examination is reflected in each report to General Assembly this year. It seems important to summarise them here as first steps in concerted *PLANNING FOR GROWTH*.

FAITH & LIFE:

1. Encouraging enriched, imaginative and lively worship;
2. Making new and renewed contacts with children;
3. Promoting the Child's rightful place within the Church;
4. Encouraging children and adults in continuing commitment;
5. Continuing the effects of the youth Ginger Group project;
6. Exploring 'stewardship' in a 'mission' context;
7. Training Elders within the goal of wholeness of discipleship;
8. Helping the Church deal maturely with the AIDS issue;
9. Enabling local churches through visits and Provincial network;
10. Emphasis on thematic and co-ordinated approach in all work.

MINISTRIES:

11. Higher profile for the "Caring Church";
12. Discovering ways to touch the untouched;
13. Ministry as bridge between church and community;
14. Goals for recruitment of more ministers;
15. Leadership trained in motivating care and sharing faith; so
16. Enabling membership to care and communicate today;
17. Collaborative leadership engaging and harmonising skills;
18. Examining ecumenical aspects of ministry;
19. Considering our message in today's society;
20. Contextual training for ordinands; Induction programmes for ministers in new situations;
21. Recognising the need for varied ministries.

CHURCH & SOCIETY:

22. Strategies for tackling world poverty;
23. Rooting out racism in and through the church (eg. clergy courses).
24. Firmer commitment against sexism in church and society;
25. Transforming local churches to become centres of community life and action, especially with deprived groups; and
26. Reflecting this into action for social change at local, national and international levels;
27. Mutual exchange with people abroad struggling for peace;
28. Rediscovery and reapplication of the principles of equal opportunities to contribute to and be secure in society;
29. Greater concern for aspects of society ignored by churches.

WORLD CHURCH & MISSION:

30. Helping people make witness locally as partners in ecumenical fellowship at home and abroad;
31. Listening and responding to local mission needs;
32. Resourcing *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* and Mission Enablers;
33. Linking them up with CWM's 'Education in Mission' process;

34. Doubling number of Local Ecumenical projects by year 2000;
35. Relating 'evangelism' to 'dialogue with other faiths';
36. Furthering mission with the poor in urban & rural Britain;
37. Targetting overseas exchanges for mutual help with mission;
38. Thematic General Assembly on Mission in Divided and Plural Britain, by 1991;
39. Ten more special ministries for ordained and lay personnel for "frontier" situations paid for centrally;
40. Encouraging young people in mission leadership;
41. More mission content in lay and ministerial training.

There is much here about Departments' responsiveness to local churches in their mission, and the need to coordinate those responses, so as to give an encouraging lead without multiplying burdens. FURY (the national Fellowship of United Reformed Youth) is helping by making *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE* their major theme.

PRAYER

20. There is little doubt in our minds that *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* could be nothing but a brave but futile attempt to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. So we must stand on grace: the Kingdom is God's, the mission is Christ's, and it is the Spirit who gives growth. One vital strand identified above was "Lively worship and everyday spirituality". The process we are embarked upon is a long one, not easy to sustain, and in its very essence an exercise of faith. So we end our Report with three prayers for us all to use.

21. Jesus Christ, grow in me.
 Holy Spirit, bind us in love
 Jesus Christ, call us again today,
 Holy Spirit, fill us with joy,
 Jesus Christ, speak through your church,
 Holy Spirit, touch many hearts.
22. Loving Father,
 lead us by your Spirit to witness to our faith in Christ.
 May what we do build up the fellowship of his church.
 May how we live speak his Word to the world.
 May what we say testify to our life in him;
 So that,
 as we know and love him more,
 others may come to know and love him too.
23. Wonderful and ever gracious God,
 you planted the seed of faith in our hearts.
 May your harvest come.
 May the whole world know your re-creating power. Amen.
24. It may be helpful in our prayers to focus on a growing plant, and — over several weeks — let the Spirit speak to us of growth. Alternatively, imagine yourself as a small seed — cold in the soil, feeling towards the light, entering the sunlight, growing in the warmth and the refreshing rain, bearing fruit. This personal picture could be placed alongside our prayers for growth in the locality, and the wider world and Church.

PROPOSALS

Assembly receives the Report.

1. Assembly commends the Report *PLANNING FOR GROWTH* to every level of the Church's life for prayer, examination, discussion and action.
2. Assembly requests the Moderator to convene at least one meeting of Conveners and Secretaries of Departments to continue throughout 1987/88 the co-ordination of their planning of priorities for *GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE*.

3. Assembly calls upon every Province to set its own objectives for growth involving every District within its bounds.
4. Assembly calls upon Districts to help each Local Church set its own objectives for ***GROWTH FOR THEIR SAKE.***
5. Assembly asks every Province to present a report to the Assembly of 1989 on progress in the setting of objectives for growth in its own life and in the life of the Districts and Local Churches within it.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr Ray Heritage

Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

1. With the Moderator presiding, the Committee met on 3 July and 4 November 1986 and 5 February 1987, with 55, 59 and 50 members present.
2. **Windsor URC** The Committee approved the transfer of this local church from the Thames North Province to the Wessex Province, on the completion of financial arrangements.
3. **Staff Appointments** The Committee had considerable discussion on central staffing matters and the following is a summary of the paper which was adopted as a general statement of Executive Committee policy.
 - 3.1 The Committee has considered the policy and practice of the Church in making appointments to Church House, in order to clarify procedures and ensure that these are appropriate for effective service and for pastoral concern for individuals.
 - 3.2 The Committee has re-affirmed the system adopted at the beginning of the URC to appoint senior executive secretaries for fixed terms; noting that this presents greater difficulty for lay people than for ministers, and asking the Nominations Committee to watch this balance. Procedures for lay people appointed for fixed terms will follow the Employment Protection Acts of 1978 and 1980. The Committee accepts as guidance that re-appointment for a second term should normally be the limit in one post.
 - 3.3 The Committee was concerned to establish more adequate review procedure so that any re-appointment after the first term be approved only after careful consideration of all the issues involved, including the personal circumstances of the officer concerned, the present and future work of the department, and, as far as possible, the needs of the whole church. This procedure is being developed in two ways. An annual appraisal system is commended for all who work in Church House. Departmental Secretaries will undertake this with those in the Department, and Departmental Conveners will undertake it with the Departmental Secretaries. This regular process, in which both parties fully share, will then feed in to the review which takes place at the end of a fixed term. The Convener of the Nominations Committee will prepare notes on the review process, so that all involved may see how the Nominating Group will undertake its work.
 - 3.4 In-service training is being encouraged with equal opportunities for lay and ordained staff.
 - 3.5 Varied resources are available for the pastoral care of staff. These include local church membership, the Departmental Secretaries, the Administrative Secretary, the General Secretary and the minister of Regent Square Church.
4. **Departmental organisation** The Committee considered the work to be undertaken by the incoming Executive Secretary in Ministries Department. It was agreed that his work should be within the Ministries Department only, and that within the Faith and Life Department the various committees should seek voluntary secretaries so that the Departmental Secretary may give attention to the whole working of the Department. The Executive also ensured that job descriptions for the communications post in World Church and Mission and the Secretary for Communication and Supplies were co-ordinated.
5. **Future pattern of the General Assembly** The Committee received the Resolutions passed by Assembly relating to the composition and style of the Assembly. The Business Committee was asked to take this matter up and to consult widely. In February, that Committee presented its report and this is attached as Appendix A. In the Executive meeting it was made clear that the Forward Policy Group was coming to conclusions which point in a different direction, particularly as regards the Executive Committee. The Forward Policy Group will be suggesting that this body should be made smaller rather than larger if it is to work effectively. The Executive decided that the Business Committee Report should be presented to Assembly with the request that it be referred to Synods, District Councils and local churches for discussion, and that the Forward Policy Group will contribute to that discussion. In the light of all the comments received, the Business Committee will frame resolutions for action at the 1988 Assembly.
6. **Cases of discipline concerning ministers** The Committee considered the procedure that has operated since 1972, prepared some suggestions to ensure that individual rights are fully protected while avoiding unnecessary public debate of cases, and passed these to the Vocations Committee

of Ministries Department for detailed consideration.

7. **Retirement of Auxiliary Ministers** The Ministries Department brought forward proposals that Auxiliary ministers should be invited to continue in active service after the age of 65 only through a District Council review along the same lines as in operation for stipendiary ministers. The Executive agreed to this.

8. **Synod Clerks** The Executive has encouraged occasional meetings of the Synod Clerks and Administrative Officers. In September 1987, a Windermere course for this group has been arranged.

9. **National Appeals** The Committee received reports of local churches which, without any authorisation from a District Council or Synod, had made widespread appeals for money to all parts of the URC. It was agreed that churches wishing to make national appeals for finance should first seek authorisation from General Assembly or the Executive Committee, and should not make such appeals without that authorisation.

10. **Hymnbook Committee** The Executive agreed that the Congregational Union of Scotland be invited to appoint an observer to this Committee.

11. **Informal Churches** The Committee continued its discussion of the way in which new or experimental fellowships may be helpfully related to the URC. A paper had been discussed by the Synod Executive Committees and comments received were incorporated in the work. The guidelines suggest that certain basic conditions apply to all such groups seeking association in the URC, but that it is not necessary for the whole structure of the local church to be in place before an application is made. The central questions to be asked are about membership, worship and readiness to accept oversight. The Executive agreed to distribute the paper to District Councils as guidance, but realised that experience may well lead to reconsideration.

12. **Congregational Union of Scotland** The Committee heard reports of the negotiations and encouraged those involved to continue in the work.

13. **Provincial Moderator Review Groups** The Executive received reports regarding the Mersey, Northern, Southern and Yorkshire Synods and the resolutions are appended to this report. The Committee, in noting the end of long periods of service by Provincial Moderators in these Synods, expressed great appreciation for all that has been given to the churches by Cyril Franks, Alasdair Walker, Howard Williams and John Williamson. The Church looks forward to the continued sharing of their gifts in other ways.

14. **General Secretary Appointment Group** The Group was convened in accordance with the Manual provision, the Moderator presiding and with 35 members. The report of the Group was received by the Executive and approved. The principal recommendation is appended to this report. In addition, the Executive agreed "that there is need to provide additional help to the General Secretary so that he/she may fulfil the leadership role and wider ministries, and therefore recommends that the Appointment Group for the post of Administrative Secretary re-define that post and decide on its title" with the aim of a new appointment prior to the 1987 Assembly. It was also agreed that some of the General Secretary's committee work be re-distributed and that sabbatical leave should be granted as soon as convenient.

15. **Local Churches applying to enter the URC** The Executive received a recommendation from Thames North Province regarding Woodhall Farm, Hemel Hempstead and from South Western Province regarding Shaw and Westlea, Swindon. All three churches have an ecumenical character, with a considerable URC contribution and with District Council oversight. The Committee recommends that these churches be welcomed with joy.

16. **The Revd Ian Meredith** The Ministries Department sought approval for this minister, from the Elim Pentecostal Fellowship, to receive a Certificate of Eligibility, and this was agreed.

17. **Secession**

17.1 During the year the Committee heard reports about earlier cases and considered a request from West Midlands Province about Ruscombe which has been seeking secession. After full enquiry the Committee decided that it saw no grounds on which secession could be recommended, and has asked for further work by Synod and District Council to offer some ministerial help.

17.2 The Executive has reviewed the situation and policy of the Church as regards secession. The paper attached, Appendix B, sets out the history of this matter and the present understanding of the Committee, and asks that this be received as an explanation of the current position.

18. **Central Church Funds** The 1986 Assembly instructed the Finance and Administration Department to consider the way in which the church seeks contribution to the two main central funds, so that more attractive and effective presentation of needs might be made to church members. In response there have been discussions between departments and the major responsibility for appealing for funds is seen to lie with Communications rather than with Finance. The Executive noted these discussions and approved a Central Funding and Advocacy Group, with cross-departmental membership plus three persons with local church involvement. This Group is to examine the present funding method, to propose how it might develop in ways which engage the enthusiasm of church members, represent the Christian concept of giving and enable the church to maintain its commitments and also develop new enterprise. It will also look at the educational and advocacy methods. It is hoped that a report may be available for next Assembly.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the Report of the Executive Committee for debate.
2. The Assembly appoints the Revd Eric Stanley Allen, BD, Moderator of the Mersey Province Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 1987.
3. The Assembly appoints the Revd David Leslie Helyar, MA, Moderator of the Southern Province Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 1987.
4. The Assembly appoints the Revd David Jenkins, BA, BD, STM, Moderator of the Northern Province Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 1987.
5. The Assembly appoints the Revd Donald Harold Hilton, BA, Moderator of the Yorkshire Province Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 1987.
6. The Assembly re-appoints the Revd Bernard George Thorogood, MA, General Secretary and Clerk of the General Assembly for a period of seven years from 1 September 1987.
7. The Assembly receives the fellowships known as Woodhall Farm, Hemel Hempstead; Shaw, Swindon; Westlea, Swindon, as local churches of the URC.
8. The Assembly refers to Synods, District Councils and local churches the report on the future constitution of the Assembly and Executive, and invites comments to reach the secretary of the Business Committee by 31.12.87 (Appendix A)
9. The Assembly receives the statement on the position of the URC regarding the secession of local churches. (Appendix B)

APPENDIX A

REPORT ON ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATION

1. The 1986 General Assembly passed the following resolutions—
 - a. The Assembly asks the Executive Committee to arrange for a review of representation to the General Assembly and to propose ways which might encourage greater participation from the floor at its meetings.
 - b. The Assembly instructs the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Budget Committee, to bring to the Assembly as soon as possible a report setting out possible changes to the structure of the URC as would provide for each local church to be represented at General Assembly each year and the implications for the church of such changes.

The Executive Committee instructed the Business Committee to prepare a report on these matters. In dealing with the question of representation the Committee has had to consider closely related subjects which bear on the effectiveness of the Assembly as the central council of the Church. After 14 years with our present constitution, the Committee welcomes the opportunity to look at the structure and the style of Assembly, recognising that there are values in our present

arrangement which should not be thrown away, but that there are also new considerations arising from our life together as a Christian community.

2. The size of the Assembly

2.1 We note that the present constitution provides the following composition of Assembly:

District Councils		500
Additional Synod Representatives		36
Synod Moderators		12
Synod Clerks		12
Synod Treasurers		12
Departmental and Committee Conveners		29
Theological College Representatives		6
Fury		2
CWM		1
Forces Chaplain		1
Missionaries on Furlough	up to	12
Other Denominations	up to	12
Former Moderators, Chairmen	up to	45
		<u>680</u>

2.2 The first suggestion considered was that each local church should be directly represented. This could be done by one person alternately lay or ordained, or by two people, one ordained and one lay, or by a number varied according to the size of the church. The lowest figure would provide an Assembly of 1882 plus ex-officio members. A higher figure could be in the region of 2600 with each local church having a representative plus all serving ministers.

2.3 Another suggestion was that each "pastorate" should be directly represented. The chief difficulty here is that the URC has no generally accepted definition of a pastorate, and it is not a constitutional unit. While the meaning may be clear where there is one minister/one congregation, or where there has been a recent grouping exercise, there are many cases where the meaning is not at all clear. For example, many small churches in isolated places are not "grouped". In some cases there are two ministers for seven churches in a group. In others there is a complex ecumenical situation. It is thus impossible to state with any accuracy how many pastorates there are. A suggestion of 1000 has been offered.

2.4 There are obvious practical difficulties in moving to a very large Assembly as in 2.2 or to an Assembly based on such uncertain units as in 2.3. One difficulty, which is more than financial, is the method of meeting the cost. If the costs were to be placed directly upon the local church, we believe that this would become a reason for some not to attend. Richer churches and those closer to Assembly would be favoured. We would lose some of the representative character of Assembly. It is also probable that if 2.2 were followed, then a considerable proportion of local churches would not bother to attend, and they would be totally unrepresented. That is not crucial in a Assembly which is chiefly an inspirational and fellowship event. It is crucial for a body which is deliberative and which carries authority for the national expression of our life and witness.

The Committee notes that the Synod and the District Council are the councils of the URC in which there is direct representation of every local church. This fact can give great weight to Synod and Council decisions. We believe these to be the appropriate meetings for such representation.

2.5 It needs to be mentioned that very considerable costs would be involved. A larger Assembly would not be able to use the hospitality method which we have enjoyed so far, for there is no evidence that any locality could offer more beds than now needed. We would therefore have to use a fully residential site. The cost per person of a 4-day Assembly with average travel, is this year in the region of £97 to £134. So for an 1800 member Assembly, the cost would be between £174,000 and £241,200. We do not believe that the scale of increase on central expenditure would be either feasible or right.

2.6 At this point we need to mention the frequency of Assembly, since a less frequent meeting may be an answer to increased cost. Having considered the possibility of a larger Assembly every two years or every three years, we remain in favour of the present annual meeting. There are two reasons. First we believe that the momentum of our denomination as it works out an important programme or develops an inter-church policy or seeks its own constitutional change would be

seriously hindered by a less frequent Assembly. Secondly, a less frequent Assembly would inevitably mean that more decisions, and decisions of real importance, would be taken by the Executive, and thus fewer people would be doing the central work of the church.

2.7 As we recognise the desire for greater local participation, we have therefore turned to amendment of the present constitution of Assembly as a practical way forward. Through the District Councils we ensure that every part of the Church is represented, but at present the difficulty in some places is that ministers attend only once in 4 or 5 years.

We therefore propose that the ratio of District Council representatives be changed; we recommend one representative for 6 churches plus one for each 600 members, in place of one representative for 8 churches plus one for 800 members.

This ratio would result in the following numbers of representatives per Province:-

		(1986)
1	50	34
2	62	48
3	40	32
4	50	38
5	42	34
6	52	40
7	50	38
8	50	40
9	54	42
10	56	46
11	72	58
12	50	36
	<u>628</u>	<u>486</u>

This can be expressed as one representative for every 215 members of URC, rather than 270 as at present.

The additional travel cost of 128 District representatives would be in the region of £2,500.

The overall number of Assembly members would be 738, not counting ex-Moderators and Presidents. If the Congregational Union of Scotland and the URC were united, there would be another 65 members.

2.8 At the same time, we recommend a reduction in present voting membership.

It is proposed to reduce the present three Synod members to two per Synod. The Synods could be invited to fill, according to the lay/ministerial rules, any District Council places, if such vacancies occur.

2.9 The Committee considered the ways in which District Council representatives may relate more directly to local churches. Many Councils are already working on this. Within a District, each representative may be assigned to a church or group of churches, with a responsibility to visit them and to report afterwards. A Council may gather its representatives before Assembly to examine the agenda together, and also to share views received from local churches. Each Council is different but we consider that all Councils must encourage the effective use of representatives so that there is maximum local input and reporting.

2.10 One way in which representatives at Assembly are handicapped is if they attend for one meeting only. **We therefore recommend that District Councils should appoint representatives for 2 meetings, with half being changed each year.**

3. The Style and Content of Assembly

3.1 The Committee believes that the programme of the Assembly has been considerably improved by the inclusion of daily bible study and the open meeting on one evening. The greatest weakness has been too much pressure on time. This creates a difficult task for the Moderator who has to curtail discussion, and thus good debate on important issues can be lost. A sense of frustration results. It is the Committee's view that more time can be found in two ways.

3.2 At present each central Department presents its material each year, and these presentations are the major use of Assembly time. **The Committee recommends that of the four programme Departments only two should present their report each year, though the other two would write a**

report which would not be debated. For example,

Year A
Year B

Faith and Life,
Ministries

Church and Society
World Church and Mission

There would thus be about four hours of Assembly time released. The two reporting Departments would each be limited to 45 minutes to present their reports and resolutions but they could launch a more comprehensive debate of major policy issues and members of Assembly would have more opportunity to participate. Part of the time saved could also be used for more extensive presentation of guests from other churches. Other central work has to be presented to Assembly every year. This involves Moderators' Report, Finance Department, Executive Committee, Budget Committee, Communications, Business and Nominations Committees. The programme also has to include Synod Resolutions and we consider that more adequate time must be allowed for these. It will be seen that this pattern of reporting applies to an annual Assembly and could not work if the Assembly were to be at longer intervals.

3.3 The Committee has also reviewed the actual content of the resolutions presented at Assembly and believes that a good deal of the material could well be entrusted to the Executive when it is of a formal character or continues an already-approved programme. For example, we see no need for Nominations Committee to bring forward all the Committee lists for approval at Assembly, but to bring forward nominations only for the senior national officers for appointment by Assembly. It is not an easy matter to differentiate between items which need Assembly approval and those which should be dealt with by the Executive, and the officers of Assembly should not have to make those decisions.

We recommend:

- a. **that the resolutions to be presented by all Departments should be submitted to the Business Committee, which will decide if they should go before Assembly or be dealt with by the Executive.**
- b. **that in the year when a Department is not presenting its report to Assembly but nevertheless wishes to bring a resolution on an urgent matter, the Business Committee will decide if it may do so. In cases of urgent resolutions the Business Committee will meet at a time before Assembly which will enable the Department to plan its Assembly presentation.**

'Urgent' means both what is a matter of immediate public policy importance, and what is necessary to be done *this* year for the life of the URC and cannot wait.

- c. **that if a Synod presents more than one resolution to Assembly then it will state the order of priority of its resolutions and the Business Committee may, if time in Assembly is short, refer those having lower priority to the Executive Committee.**
- d. **that persons appointed by Synods to move and second Synod Resolutions should normally be allowed by the Synod to accept amendments at their discretion.**

The Committee believes that these provisions would release the Assembly from a good deal of routine work and so encourage more serious debate on larger issues.

The Committee would endeavour to arrange "hearings" for those Departments not reporting verbally in any year.

3.4 The Committee has touched on the question of a fully residential Assembly, but this has not been a primary subject of debate, since the Committee will be bringing a specific proposal for such a meeting in 1989.

3.5 We seek to ensure that those members of Assembly speaking from the floor will be able to face the Assembly and not the platform. We also intend to improve the way in which the Assembly is called to order at the start of each session, so that there is better order when the Moderator takes the chair. We aim to keep the overhead projector system which we believe has assisted towards the fuller understanding of the members.

4. Executive Committee

4.1 The present composition of the Executive is as follows -

The Moderator, four representatives of each Synod including the Moderators, together with the Moderator-elect, immediate past Moderator, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, Assistant Clerk, Legal Advisor, Conveners and Secretaries of the five Departments, the Conveners of the Business, Nominations, Budget and Communications and Supplies Committees,

the Convener of the Forward Policy Group and the Secretary of Business and Nominations Committee. *Total 72*

4.2 In order to relate the work more closely to the local churches and to improve communication, **we recommend that the words “four representatives of each Synod” be deleted and be replaced by—**

“a. the Moderator and Clerk of each Synod

b. one representative of each District Council, appointed by Synods after consultation with District Councils, and with due regard to the balance of representation. Should any Provincial Synod plan to increase the number of District Councils this provision will not automatically apply and the Synod Clerk will discuss the situation with the General Secretary. *Total 112*

4.3 In order that the Executive can deal with more routine Assembly business, **we recommend an addition to its terms of reference:**

To carry out routine work on behalf of the Assembly when such work does not entail changes of policies set by the Assembly and at its discretion to refer matters to Synods, Districts and Churches for further study.

4.4 At present the Executive meets in February, July and November and the cost of travel is approximately £1,000 per meeting. Since recommendation 4.2 will increase the travel cost, **we recommend that the Executive normally meet twice a year. It is expected that at least one of these meetings will be a residential one.**

The dates would probably be in September and February, if Assembly remains in May. If Assembly moves to July the dates would be October and April. The Committee believes that the District Council representatives should be appointed for two or three years. Such an Executive would become more responsive to local churches and would also develop a greater degree of fellowship life. The increase in cost we estimate at £3,000 per annum.

4.5 The Business Committee will regard the introduction of these reforms as requiring considered reflection after an experience of three years' work, and will set in process such a review.

5. Process

The Committee seeks the wide discussion of this report.

In the light of comments received, the Committee will frame resolutions needed to implement the report. These will be introduced to Assembly in 1988 and if any of them amend the Structure of the URC they will require ratification in 1989. Those which alter the Rules of Procedure could be adopted in 1988 but it might be preferable for efficiency for all to be implemented together.

6. Conclusion

The Committee is well aware that the planning and structure of the Assembly is no guarantee of spiritual life and vigour. The latter is something which none of us can guarantee. But we believe that the affirmation of the fully representative character of the Assembly, the careful adjustment of its membership, the relief of the agenda so that we are not too rushed, and the good use of Assembly members within the local churches are ways towards greater effectiveness and unity.

APPENDIX B

The Secession of Local Churches from the URC

1. The history.

1.1 **1972 Events** In the preparation of the Basis of Union the Joint Committee deliberately made no provision for secession by local churches and no procedures for it were described. The Parliamentary Bill was necessary to deal with the trusts and properties of the uniting bodies. A number of individuals lodged objections to the Bill and it was therefore considered by a committee of the House of Commons. Those opposing the Bill were seeking to amend it with clauses providing a right to secession by local churches. Those promoting the Bill resisted such amendment and pointed out that within the functions and powers of the General Assembly it would be able to permit secession and will be the council of the church with final authority in such matters. The Committee agreed to the next stages of the Bill unamended, and accepted the statement of the promoters that the URC 'will give very careful consideration to requests made in due form of individual churches to secede taking with them their property'.

1.2 **1972 to 1980** Subsequently, the General Assembly did receive such requests and in some cases agreed to secession. The numbers were: 1975: 1, 1978: 5, 1979: 1. The grounds cited in these cases were mainly that the uniting procedures of 1972 had been misunderstood, or were in error, or that the character of the new URC was radically different from what they had been led to believe. The main problem that arose was that the Charity Commission asserted that, in the absence of express statutory authority, they had no power to alter the trusts of property of a seceding church.

1.3 **1981** Therefore, the opportunity of the 1981 Act was used to include a clause which sets out how Trust responsibility would be dealt with. This clause is set out at the end of this paper.

1.4 **1981 to 1986** In the following years the General Assembly received requests and agreed to secession in some cases. The numbers were: 1982: 4, 1983: 3, 1984: 2, 1985: 1. In some cases the grounds cited were confusion regarding the uniting process, but also included were cases where the local church claimed that it had not received from the URC the basic ministry of Word and Sacraments that is assured in the Basis of Union. In these latter cases the evidence of District Council and Synod was received that indeed the URC had failed to provide such pastoral care, because of the isolation of a very small fellowship. These arguments were dealt with in the Applications Committee which reported to Assembly. In 1983 the Committee reported that it regarded the time as now passed when the events of 1972 could any longer be cited as adequate ground for secession.

2. Present Understandings

2.1 **The meaning of Secession** Churches are voluntary bodies. Individuals may join or leave according to personal decision. A group may decide to leave at any time, and no conciliar process of the church is required to give approval or disapproval. Church history is full of such schismatic movement. But secession has meant a congregation acting as one whole body, and moving into a different denominational allegiance, and remaining in the same church property and transferring that property to the new allegiance.

2.2 **Theological understanding of the URC** From its inauguration the URC has not understood itself to be a federation of independent congregations, but to be one corporate whole within which the various councils are given specific authority to act in the sphere which is their concern. The URC has seen itself as embracing people of several cultures and traditions. It confesses itself to be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Its congregations are part of Christ's body, its fellowship open to all people, regardless of sex, race, class or culture.

There are various consequences for the question of secession. Some would argue that secession is impossible because the corporate body can never give up hope of reconciling those who wish to part. Others would consider that there may be extreme cases where the wholeness of the total body of Christians may justify a separation. Severance is a very serious matter, demanding a careful process of consideration, not to be rushed.

It may happen that a congregation moves from the understanding of the faith accepted by the URC to a quite different perception, and seeks secession to join another denomination. This is not a ground for secession that can be accepted. Either the congregation should seek to win the URC to its new confession of faith, or it should leave its property to enter another centre of worship, so that the URC witness may continue.

2.3 **Property** As noted in paragraph 2.1, local church property is a major factor. Within the URC the local church manages local church property but is not the sole authority. The property is seen as a trust for the whole body of the denomination and the 1972 and 1981 Acts spell out the methods by which District Councils and Provincial Synods share with Church Meetings the final or major decisions about property. The Church Meeting is, in a sense, the steward caring for what has been received from previous generations and passing the property on to the future. This perception is necessarily a brake on any removal of church property outside the URC. But since human relationships rather than property is the centre of church life, the movement of property has been made possible in the 1981 Act so that if the Assembly is satisfied about the issues concerned with people then the property may follow.

2.4 **Ministry** At the induction of a URC minister to a pastoral charge a promise is made to exercise ministry in conformity with the statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC. This does not mean that a minister then has to approve of every action or statement of the whole body. Any minister may seek to reform the body. But it does mean that a minister cannot, in good

conscience, serve in a pastoral charge and at the same time lead the congregation to a position on faith or order which has the direct result of a plea for secession. The URC has room for a wide diversity of style and understanding. We have confidence in the councils of the church to discern the limits of diversity and to uphold the peace and unity of the church (Basis 10).

2.5 Ecumenism The URC is committed to the greater unity of the whole church for the sake of faithfulness to Christ and effective mission in the world. The URC has an identity and a tradition which is its contribution to the wholeness of the church. Therefore, in questions of secession, the URC will wish to ensure that the wholeness of the church is not being further damaged by the action, and that no new sectarianism is arising. The URC will wish to discuss with other sister churches in the area the movement of a local congregation with its property into or out of the URC.

2.6 Process If a local church reaches a decision to seek secession, it discusses the issue with the District Council and Provincial Moderator. Every effort will be made to discern the roots of the problem and to seek a resolution of differences. If the Council is unable to achieve this, it passes the matter to the Synod which again seeks a resolution. If it fails, it passes the matter to the General Assembly through its Executive Committee. The Executive will investigate the matter and, through representatives, will hear the parties involved before making a recommendation to the Assembly. Representatives of the local church are enabled to share in the Assembly debate under the Standing Order for Access to Assembly by named parties. The decision of the Assembly is final. (Structure, Section 12).

2.7 Considerations on which a decision can be based

- (a) **Reasons expressed for secession** The Assembly will need to be satisfied that there are reasons strong enough to justify a final break in fellowship.
- (b) **Has the local decision been a proper one?** The Assembly will need to be satisfied that it is not a matter of emotionalism, nor a sudden attempt to avoid obligations, nor a financial matter, nor the effect of one individual's leadership, but a settled and thoughtful direction of faith and life in the whole fellowship.
- (c) **What follows?** The Assembly will need to be satisfied about the consequences of the action. For example, would secession mean that the local fellowship would have no oversight or association? Would secession help or harm the missionary witness in the locality? Would it strengthen or weaken the ecumenical life of the churches? Would it lead to serious damage to other parts of the URC?

3. All the councils of the URC will take great care not to act in a hasty way nor out of pride to oppose a church's desire to secede. The search will always be to seek ways in which we may live and worship and serve God together. If the case is pressed to the Assembly and the decision there is not to permit secession, then there is an additional burden on the whole church to express care for the congregation and to meet any particular complaints that have been shown to have a basis. Should a congregation, as a last resort, vacate its building in order to begin life outside the URC, then the District Council and Synod will need to decide on the future use or disposal of the building.

The only real antidote to secession and the bitterness that is likely to accompany such a process, is awareness of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which we are never living out our discipleship alone but always as part of a wider community which supports, teaches and holds us to Christ.

URC ACT 1981

CLAUSE 21 SECEDING CHURCHES.

- (1) In any case where the General Assembly passes, or before the commencement of this Act has passed, a resolution permitting —
 - (a) a local church which immediately prior to the date of formation as defined in the Act of 1972 was a uniting church as defined in the said Act; or
 - (b) a local church which after the date of formation as defined in the Act of 1972 was admitted to the United Reformed Church in pursuance of section 28 of the said Act; or
 - (c) a local church which immediately before the date of unification was a uniting church as defined in this Act; or

(d) a church, not being a uniting church, which immediately prior to the dissolution of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland was a member church thereof and was admitted to the United Reformed Church in pursuance of section 17 of this Act; or

(e) a church being a daughter church or a former mission station of any such local church as is referred to in paragraph (a) above;

to secede from the United Reformed Church, then, subject to the provisions of this section, as from the date of such resolution, or the date of the passing of this Act, whichever is the later —

(i) the property of any such church as is referred to in paragraph (a) above shall be held upon the same trusts and for the same purposes as it was held immediately before 5th October 1972;

(ii) the property of any such church as is referred to in paragraph (b) above shall be held upon the same trusts and for the same purposes as it was held immediately before the date of its admission in pursuance of section 28 of the Act of 1972;

(iii) the property of any such church as is referred to in paragraph (c) above shall be held upon the same trusts and for the same purposes as it was held immediately before the date of unification;

(iv) the property of any such church as is referred to in paragraph (d) above shall be held upon the same trusts and for the same purposes as it was held immediately before the date of its admission in pursuance of section 17 of this Act;

(v) the property of any such church as is referred to in paragraph (e) above shall be held for the benefit of such church upon the Congregational Model Trusts (General) or the Congregational Model Manse Trusts, as the case may be, as defined in the Act of 1951;

Provided that in any such case for references in such trusts to bodies dissolved by section 5 of the Act of 1972 there were substituted references to the trustees for the time being of such daughter church or former mission station.

(2) In any case where the General Assembly passes, or before the commencement of this Act has passed, a resolution permitting a local church which immediately prior to the said date of formation was a uniting congregation as defined in the Act of 1972 to secede from the United Reformed Church, the provisions of section 5(2) and section 15 of the said Act shall apply to the church and its property as though the church were a non-uniting congregation within the meaning of that Act and as if for references therein to the Session with the concurrence of a meeting there were references to a meeting of the congregation.

(3) Nothing in this section shall be in derogation of the power of the Charity Commissioners to make schemes under the Charities Act 1960.

(4) For the purposes of this section “property” means in relation to any such church as is referred to in subsection (1) of this section, property held in trust for or for the purposes of or in connection with any such church.

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 1986.** The Budgets for 1986 approved by Assembly 1985 (Record pages 68 and 69) provided for expenditure which was to be financed by contributions of £6,000,000 to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and £1,359,000 to the Unified Appeal. Both of these amounts were a little more than the Provinces considered they would be able to bring, and in the event the amounts received were a little less than the Provinces had offered.
2. The Contributions received are shown in Appendix 1. They fall short of the Budget requirements by just over £5,000 as regards the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and nearly £30,000 as regards the Unified Appeal. Neither of these figures is large in relation to the total amounts involved but they illustrate how fully stretched we are as regards contributions to both funds.
3. Once again the loyal support of the local Churches and the hard work of Provincial and District Officers has provided the money which enabled us to pay the basic stipends, salaries and expenses that are essential to the work of the Church at all levels. We offer our sincere thanks to all those involved in this process and to the local Churches who are the source of almost all our funds.
4. **Expenditure on Central Activities 1986 — the General Fund.** The Accounts for 1986 had not been completed and audited at the time of writing this report but we expect the expenditure on the General Fund to be about £1,515,000, £1,000 less than the budget but £109,000 more than for 1985. The comparative figures for the last seven years adjusted for inflation are shown in Appendix 2.
5. **Stipends of Ministers Holding Assembly Appointments.** Information about the stipends and the conditions of service of ministers holding Assembly appointments is given in Appendix 3.
6. **Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 1986.** The accounts for 1986 will be published separately when the audit has been completed and, to reduce presentation time at Assembly, will include a short report by the Treasurer. The report and accounts will be carried to the Record of Assembly in due course.

MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Waller

Secretary: Revd George Hooper

7. **An overall look at the year.** The Committee has shared in the renewed debate within the Ministries Department about preaching fees and been represented on an inter-departmental group looking at the matter of national fund raising. Some time has also been given to looking at the various allowances available to ministers under the Plan to make sure that there is fair treatment of ministers in varying circumstances. The Committee will take up certain issues raised by the proposed union with the Congregational Union of Scotland.
8. For first time in some years the Fund had a deficit on the year's working. This was due to a number of factors, the main ones being a small shortfall in contributions from churches and the cost of full-time ministers' stipends being slightly over budget. The deficit has been met from reserves. Whilst the deficit has caused no embarrassment to the Fund at the moment, it is worth observing that if churches' contributions continued to fall below what they offered earlier then we would have a serious problem.
9. **How goes the Plan for Partnership?** The Plan appears to be running smoothly. Even so, the Committee is anxious to be made aware at the earliest opportunity of any difficulties being experienced in the working of the Plan and of any ways in which it could be improved. The Provincial representatives on the Committee have been asked to look into these matters. The Committee is not necessarily looking for change but neither does it wish to become complacent.
10. One area of occasional difficulty was noted immediately. The problem here is not so much

with the Plan as with the way in which it is operated in some cases. Some local churches have been unhappy with the contribution asked of them by their District Council and have not found it easy to discuss the reasons for their unhappiness. Dialogue is of the essence in the Plan for Partnership. The Committee wishes to urge local church treasurers and those responsible for MoM matters in District Councils to make sure that discussion continually takes place in both directions.

11. **Level of Stipends.** The Committee has noted a number of comments in *Reform* and elsewhere which have criticised the 7.5% increase in stipends which has been paid since July 1986. That increase, and the further increase to £6,108 p.a. (approx 7%) which the Committee has agreed from 1 July 1987, are indeed above the level of inflation. They are also above the level of increase in state pensions. But both are more or less in line with increases in national earnings. It was deliberate policy to have a general phased increase in the real value of the basic stipends. (See 1986 Report to Assembly, page 33). Even now the Committee has not felt able to go as far as it would have wished.

12. The reason is that there is evidence that local churches are finding difficulty in their ability to pay contributions over the rate of inflation. This is especially the case in those parts of the country that are economically depressed. When considering the budget for 1988 a majority of the committee believed that a 5% increase in stipend from 1 July 1988 would be appropriate. However it was found that provincial offers were not quite sufficient to pay a 4% increase. In view of the 1986 deficit and the projected deficit in 1987 the committee felt it unwise to make any further claims on reserves, and therefore the Budget for 1988 provides for a 4% increase in that year. If this situation were to be repeated in the following year, we could find ourselves depressing stipends as the means of balancing church budgets. Local Churches are urged to bear this point in mind in considering their contributions to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund.

13. **Pensions.** In Reports to Assembly both in 1984 and 1985 reference was made to changes intended to be made in the field of State Pensions which could considerably affect the provision of pensions by private funds such as the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. Members of our Fund are entitled to State Earnings-Related Pensions (SERPS) which are now to be reduced to 80% of the present level from the year 2010, the reductions being scaled down from 100% in the year 2000. This will mean that the decision taken by Assembly with effect from April 1978 to reduce the scale of our own pensions on the introduction of SERPS will not deal adequately with our members retiring after the year 2000.

14. Alterations in National Insurance contributions to meet the changed benefits will not commence until April 1988, but it is possible that the result of a General Election might lead to further delay.

15. The Social Security Act, 1986, makes other far-reaching provisions. One of these gives the right to present members of funds and to future employees not to join their employer's fund, but to set up a personal pension scheme. The employee would have to make a contract with an approved financial body (insurance company, unit trust, building society, bank etc) and all monies for investment would pass from the employer to the approved financial body via the DHSS. The MoM Committee is considering all the implications of this, which might in several ways add to the actuarial deficit of the URCMPF. It is intended to send a detailed statement to all members of the Fund and to provide opportunities for consultation.

16. Another change affects the payment of additional voluntary contributions, both from employees within schemes and those contracting out. Your Committee has been examining our current levels of benefit and intends to introduce a system under which final benefits from URCMPF at retirement are related to our actual financial and investment experience over the period of contributions, retaining the actuaries certified table as a minimum benefit.

17. In general terms, all the actual and proposed changes and the Regulations made, or to be made, under the Acts of 1985 and 1986 are being considered by our actuaries and legal advisers. Amendments to the Rules of URCMPF will follow.

18. **Pastors' Superannuation Fund and Pastors' Widows Fund.** Discussions have continued with the Charity Commissioners regarding the future, and draft new schemes have been drawn up. In the meantime the funds are being administered in the best interests of all who qualify for benefit. Rates of benefit have again been increased in 1986.

19. **Preaching Fees.** The Committee has continued with its discussions with the Ministries Department and brings to Assembly a resolution (No 4). This will extend the range of circumstances which will rank for reimbursement of preaching fees, paid during a time of pastoral vacancy, to take account of the 'knock on' effect, and also the situation which arises where a preacher of another Church, in which preaching fees are customarily paid, takes a service in a United Reformed Church.

20. **The Revd E. W. Todd.** The Committee is very conscious of the loyal and efficient service given to its work by Mr Todd in the first years of the United Reformed Church's life. His sudden death on 15 June 1986 gave reason for sadness, but also for renewed thanksgiving to God for his life and service.

TREASURERSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr Alan Cumming

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

21. The Committee is responsible to URC Trust for the management of the portfolios of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund, (Value at 31 December 1987 £14.7 million) the Common Investment Fund (£6.6 million) and the Investment Pool (£5.3 million). The investments have been managed through an Investment Sub-Committee of the Treasurership Committee, advised by two firms of stockbrokers. The Committee has reviewed these arrangements from time to time and it decided in 1986 to put the funds in the hands of professional managers and to monitor their performance by means of a re-constituted Investment Sub-Committee. The new arrangements were still under negotiation at the time of writing this report but are expected to be in operation by the time Assembly meets.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Julian Macro

Secretary: Mr Tegid Peregrine

22. 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.

23. After a long period of uncertainty the issue of ecclesiastical exemption from listed building control seems finally to have been resolved at least in principle. With the agreement of the Churches Main Committee (on which the URC is represented) the Government have decided that partial demolition of listed non-anglican churches will henceforth require listed building consent. This decision was taken during the passage of the Housing and Planning Act through Parliament in Autumn 1986. The details of the new legislation including, it is hoped, a definition of what constitutes partial demolition for the purposes of the Act, are expected to be spelled out in Regulations which will be put before Parliament in due course.

24. The guidelines for giving financial assistance from the Church Buildings Fund remain unchanged from 1986. They are as follows:-

1. Assistance will be given to those projects recommended by Provinces which the Committee deems appropriate in all the circumstances.
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 loan 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 of 7%.
3. Applications for loans for building works 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.
4. Current resources will not permit the making of further grants.

25. Eight applications for assistance from churches were approved in 1986 amounting to £112,000 for building works and £15,000 for professional fees. The sum available for loans in 1987 is likely to be of the order of £200,000.

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd David Skidmore
Secretary: Mr Bob Carruthers

26. The Committee's overall responsibility for retirement housing covers properties owned by the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited and the United Reformed Church Trust; the latter includes Retired Ministers Housing Fund Properties.

27. The URC Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited owned and/or managed 197 properties at the year end. As in previous years the denomination has provided some administrative services without charge and this, coupled with the willingness of people to work for the Society with little or no reward, has kept administrative costs to a minimum.

28. The Society has continued to provide housing in localities where applicants seek to live within the limitations imposed by purchase ceilings. In the light of the general increases in house prices the ceilings have been increased for 1987 to a maximum contribution of £33,000 from Society/Trust Funds and a purchase ceiling of £49,500 where the applicant or other persons, contribute not less than the balance in excess of £33,000. As before, vacant properties in localities in which known applicants do not wish to live, have been sold.

29. In 1986 housing was provided for 17 ministers and 5 widows while four widows were rehoused in properties more suited to their requirements. There were no delays in the provision of housing and all qualifying applicants were given assistance. During the year 24 properties were purchased: of these 19 were purchased jointly. Sixteen were joint purchases by the tenant and/or Province with the Society or Trust while two properties were joint purchases involving CWM. Another property was purchased jointly with contributions from the tenant, Christian Aid, two Provinces and the Society.

30. During the year 7 properties were sold and at the year end there was one property sold subject to contract.

31. The 1982 Survey indicated that within the four years 1983 to 1986 some 82 retiring ministers would require housing. The actual number housed in that period was 75. The Survey forecast that in 1987, 21 retiring ministers would require housing whereas at 31 December 1986 there were 22 known applicants requiring housing in the ensuing 12 months.

32. During the 12 months to 31 December 1986, £67,472 was received in donations for retirement housing and £149,184 in legacies. In the same period the amount on loan from within the denomination increased by £167,428 to £615,928 of which £561,000 was by way of loan from the Memorial Hall Trust Grants to the United Reformed Church. The Committee is grateful to the Treasurership Committee for the provision of the loan facility and urges Provincial Synods and District Councils to encourage regular giving. At the commencement of 1987 the short-fall in capital funds necessary to meet housing demands in the first six months of the year was £500,000: this indicates the need for a higher level of giving by a greater number of Churches and members than hitherto.

33. The current level of rents which took effect from 1 January 1986 will be maintained throughout 1987.

34. The oversight of properties and tenants has continued throughout all the Provinces but there is a need for more members of local Churches to make themselves available for this most important work. During the year the Principal Officers of the Society visited 5 applicants, 58 tenants and 9 vacant properties.

WELFARE & EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Michael Whitehorn

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

35. In this year while continuing to have the valuable help of the General Secretary, we have been pleased to welcome Mrs Judy Stockings as our Secretary and thereby to relieve the General Secretary of one of his duties. We remain grateful for his special service in the past. Mrs Stockings has brought her expert knowledge of ministerial stipends and pensions to our concerns, and we value her new service. We are also grateful to Mrs Jeanne Armour and Mrs Barbara Brettell on their retirement from the Committee after many years of helpful service.

36. The Committee's work has again been to try to respond to many requests for financial help and advice, mostly brought to us by the Provincial Moderators, and we have been glad to be able to respond in most cases from the 8 funds available. These are mostly for ministers and their widows or families, and a list of the various funds has been made available to each of the Provincial Moderators to guide them in their requests.

37. Through these and the Christmas distribution to widows and some retired ministers with smaller pensions, we hope that we have been able to meet the chief needs of our people, though we realise that some may not come to our notice. The Church seeks to be a community in which no minister or minister's family has to face personal or financial crisis alone.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT APPENDIX 1

Contributions to Maintenance of the Ministry and Unified Appeal 1986

Province	Maintenance of the Ministry		Unified Appeal	
	£	% of amount promised	£	% of target
1. Northern	485,000	100	110,544	100
2. North Western	570,000	100	127,949	101
3. Mersey	425,000	100	88,242	93
4. Yorkshire	416,000	100	100,274	104
5. East Midlands	346,000	100	80,528	99
6. West Midlands	480,000	100	103,014	96
7. Eastern	454,000	100	105,375	100
8. South Western	385,000	100	90,214	100
9. Wessex	*567,139	99	*124,004	100
10. Thames North	*702,307	100	*162,150	100
11. Southern	875,000	100	204,016	100
12. Wales	<u>290,000</u>	100	<u>31,123</u>	82
Total from Provinces	5,995,446	100	1,327,433	99
Other receipts	—		<u>1,640</u>	
			1,329,073	
Amount required by Budget	<u>6,000,000</u>		<u>1,359,000</u>	
Shortfall	<u>£4,554</u>		<u>£29,927</u>	

* The amounts promised by Wessex and Thames North were adjusted when Christ Church, Windsor, was transferred from Thames North Province to Wessex Province.

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	1,406,000	959,000
1986 (provisional)	1,515,000	978,000

APPENDIX 3

Ministers holding Assembly Appointments

Stipends and Conditions of Service from July 1986

- Provincial Moderators.** The stipend of Provincial Moderators is £7,608 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 Central Office (86 Tavistock Place).** Stipends range from £7,608 per annum for Assistant Secretaries to £11,256 for the General Secretary (plus any children's allowances). The other arrangements are similar to those for Provincial Moderators but fares between home and Central Office 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 £7,608 to £8,328 per annum (plus any children's allowances). The housing provisions are the same as those for Provincial Moderators.

RESOLUTIONS

- Assembly receives the report of the Finance and Administration Department for debate.
- Assembly receives the report of the Treasurer and adopts the Accounts for 1986.
- Assembly approves the Budget of the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund for 1988 noting that it allows for an increase of 4% in basic stipend from 1 July 1988.
- Assembly amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, with effect from the date of the passing of this resolution, by the addition in paragraph (b) of the Plan set out on page 24 of the Record of Assembly 1984 of the wording shown in heavy print in the following paragraph, which will then read:-
 - Reimbursement for Preaching Fees (together with appropriate travelling expenses) will be paid in the case of:-
 - bona fide students for the ministry of the URC;
 - retired ministers;

- (iii) **retired ministers or bona fide students for the ministry of the URC who preach in a church in order to allow its minister to conduct a service in a vacant church;**
 - (iv) **preachers of those other denominations which normally pay their preachers fees in addition to expenses;**
 - (v) **exceptional situations (if any) established by the local church, endorsed by the District Council and approved by the MoM Committee.**
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BUDGET COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Robert Latham

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

1. Your committee is finding it increasingly difficult to present a balanced and reasonable budget. For the year 1986 we presented a balanced budget showing income of £1,516,000 and expenditure of the same amount. At the time of drafting this report, the expenditure figure for the year was £1,000 under budget, while the income figure was £19,000 less than budgeted, so we finished the year with a deficit of £18,000. This is approximately 1% of the total estimate and, as such, is good estimating. It would have been better if it had been 1% over rather than under. We are grateful to all who contributed to the Unified Appeal through each of our churches, and to the Provincial Treasurers who have been our advocates. We are grateful too to the Departments who have kept within the strict limits of the budget and still have carried through their heavy and exciting programmes as their reports to Assembly bear testimony.

2. For 1987 we tried to balance the budget again, but the Provincial Treasurers warned us that they did not expect to be able to raise the additional sum required to meet an inflationary factor. We therefore considered the possibility of decreasing the departmental programmes, and had to advise that no additional staff could be employed. But we felt that Assembly, and our member churches, should be made aware of the situation and challenged to make a more generous response. Therefore, we presented a budget which carried a possible deficit of £42,000. This was accepted by Assembly with the clearly implied responsibility of seeking to raise the additional money. Moreover, Assembly instructed us to make a substantial increase in our giving to CWM.

3. 1987 is not quite half-way through. The Budget Committee had to complete its work on the budget for 1988 by February. CWM was consulted by the World Church and Mission Department and an additional figure of £23,000 was agreed. There was as always an inflation factor which was unavoidable. It covers rates, postage, printing, salaries, committee travel etc. We consulted the Provincial Treasurers and they could not promise to meet even this amount of increased expenditure. Therefore, we began a rigorous examination of each item of expenditure with the intention of cutting out every provision which may not be called upon during the year 1988. An example of this was the reduction in the allocation to Ministerial Training by £16,000, and £3,000 to St. Andrew's Hall. At this stage we were not suggesting that work and projects should be cut, but that the over-provision which may not be needed, be deleted from the 1988 budget. The final result is the Budget we now present, which includes the increase for CWM, and is only £47,000 more than the budget for 1987. The total is £1,694,000, from which we could deduct dividends etc of £184,000, leaving £1,510,000 to be found from the Unified Appeal. The target which the Provincial Treasurers felt able to accept amounted to only £1,488,000, leaving a shortfall of £22,000, which follows a shortfall in the budget for 1987 of £42,000. We are concerned at the size of these shortfalls, but feel that they can be accepted in view of the exceptionally large legacies received in 1986. However, we cannot rely on legacies to clear our deficits every year, and we must strive to attain a more balanced budget for 1989.

4. Unless there is an expectation of an increase in giving to the Unified Appeal, we shall have to consider reducing expenditure by, for example, reducing the scope of Departments, decreasing staff, calling fewer and smaller committees, and generally scaling down the service which Assembly authorises to the churches. Or, we could cut our contribution to CWM substantially.

These delicate issues will have to be thought through during this coming year. My successor as Convener will have the privilege of guiding the committee through this challenging maze of possibilities. My appeal to you at this Assembly is to accept the Budget for 1988 as presented, for £1,694,000, and do all you can to exceed target accepted by the Provincial Treasurers for 1988.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the Report of the Budget Committee.
2. Assembly approves the Budget for 1988 which provides for an expenditure of £1,694,000.

MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT

Convener: Revd Anthony G Burnham

Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

1. We present the work of our Vocations, Training and Support Committees. We also report on progress in relation to three major issues considered by our Central Committee on the basis of research undertaken by specialist working parties and sub-committees: Church-Related Community Workers, Preaching Fees, and the Nature of Ministry in the URC. Finally, we shall record the fact that we appreciate service offered in a team which represents all the Provinces and particular skills and interests charged with the responsibility of providing ministries in our Church.

VOCATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Michael B Stolton

Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

RECRUITMENT

2. Responding to the need for more ministers both auxiliary and stipendiary, the committee has been responsible for two national Enquirers' Conferences this year and has lent support to a number of other vocational events. The most notable of these has been another Ministry Experience Week, led very effectively by the Southern Province. A similar pattern of recruitment is planned for the current year, and we urge the churches to encourage more to respond to the Call. To facilitate this effort we invite churches to participate in a Vocations Sunday in November, as we ask everyone to consider the need for ministry both at home and overseas. (Resolution 2)

PUBLICATIONS

3. Considerable effort is now being put into a revision of the leaflets which we make available to those who express an interest in candidating for the ministry — thus providing them with attractive material and helpful information. In all this we endeavour to reflect the diverse patterns of ministry we now enjoy and the wider range of training patterns now made available.

ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES

4. The Assembly Panel of Assessors continues to serve the church in this very demanding yet immensely rewarding service to our Church. Learning from our experience and that of other major denominations and fields of society, we are currently reviewing our methods and running a new style conference for a trial period of one year. Its basis will be to combine a series of interviews with rather more informal sessions, with the omission of some elements in our conferences which have caused anxiety in the past, together with those which have actually made decision-making harder.

CERTIFICATES OF ELIGIBILITY

5. After a careful scrutiny of their applications, Certificates of Eligibility have been granted to 11 ministers of other churches. We now use a standard application form, and have brought in a medical examination system similar to those who candidate within the URC.

RECRUITING FROM CHURCHES OVERSEAS

6. We have agreed to take responsibility for the Overseas Recruitment Scheme, involving applications from The Church of the Palatinate, the United Church of Canada, the Disciples of Christ USA, the United Church of Christ USA, the United Presbyterian Church USA, and the Presbyterian Church in the United States, formerly supervised by the Personnel committee of the World Church and Mission Department.

MINISTERS OF OTHER CHURCHES

7. We note that a significant number of ministers of other churches serve the URC. The current Year Book records the names of 200 ministers, many in united congregations. We have prepared Guidelines to help District Councils who are called upon to arrange such settlements which at times involve payment from Maintenance of Ministry funds.

ADMISSIONS TO THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

8. (a) By ordination - stipendiary

Michael Armstrong, James Bolton, Adrian Bulley, Gordon Connacher, Susan Durber, Peter Elliott, Andrew Fairchild, Janet Flawn, Derek Galloway, Terry Hinks, Kenneth Jones, Philip Jones, Elizabeth Kemp, Martin Manley, Colin Marsh, Martin Nicholls, John Rees, Nigel Rogers, Stuart Scott, Gregory Thompson, John Vickers, John Wadhams, Martin Whiffen, David Whiting, Celia Whitman, Stephen Wilkins, Joan Winterbottom.

9. (b) By ordination - auxiliary

John Hetherington, Denis Kirby, Helena McKinnon, Stephen Sawyer, Sheelah Stevens, Philip Stewart, James Tarrant, Thomas Taylor, Anita West.

10. (c) By Transfer from other Churches:

Revd Hamish Walker (Church of Scotland)
Revd James Guthrie (Church of Scotland)
Revd Lawrence Squires (United Church of Canada) (R)
Revd Colin Furse (Baptist)
Revd Eric Waugh (Church of Scotland)
Revd Susan Roberts (Congregational Federation)
Revd John Proctor (Church of Scotland)

DELETIONS FROM THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

11. (a) By resignation:

Revd Kenneth Forrest
Revd Richard Austing
Revd Sheila Massey

12. (b) By transfer to other churches:

Revd Harold Tonks (Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz)
Revd Nigel Uden (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa)

13. (c) By committee decision with the approval of the Executive Committee:

Revd Graham Stephenson

MINISTERS OF OTHER CHURCHES SERVING THE URC

14. Revd Edward Hasler (Moravian Church)

Revd Graham Byrne Robson (Baptist Union)
Revd Gerald Huff (United Church of Canada)
Revd Allan Widerquist (United Presbyterian Church of USA)
Revd James McAdam (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)
Revd Dorothy Buchanan-Barrow (Presbyterian Church USA)

CERTIFICATES OF ELIGIBILITY

15. These have been granted to 11 ministers.

RESIGNATIONS AND DELETIONS

16. It is our sad responsibility to record the deletion from the Roll of Ministers the names of those who wish to leave us. At times this is to service elsewhere and they go with our good wishes. There are ministers who feel it right to resign for personal reasons and we respect that decision. Very occasionally we have to share in cases of ministerial resignation involving questions of discipline and we have found this responsibility a difficult one to fulfil. The advice of the Executive Committee has been sought and together with them we are working on an appropriate procedure which will clarify the adequate and fair representation which is available to all those concerned in these situations.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

Convener:

Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

17. The committee responds to the needs of the church for trained leadership. We therefore have listened to the views expressed through debates in the Departmental Committees, and by Provincial representatives on the Central Committee; to views made known in meetings and congregations round the country and at Assembly itself. We also respond to ideas coming forward from the colleges and the ecumenical training bodies, both those of staffs and students. We have clear before us the policy on ministerial training laid down by the Review Group in 1982, and consider that much of what we talked about then has now become a reality. Finally, we have been reminded by the Evangelism Working Party of our underlying purpose as a Church — to help the whole church membership to grow for the sake of our mission to the world. The following paragraphs will set out the main areas of our work over the past year, and present Assembly with some matters of real importance and advance.

CAMBRIDGE VISITATION

18. In January 1986, the URC participated in an ecumenical visitation to Westminster College and the Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges. Our visitors were Mrs Joan Boulind, Revd Alan Dunstone (who acted as Senior Visitor at Westminster) and Revd Bill Mahood, together with the Revd Graeme Watson of Taunton from the Church of England.

19. The report on the college is included in an appendix together with the Recommendations to the Training Committee arising from visits both to the Federation and Westminster College. Considerable progress has since been made to take seriously what has been stated, and to take necessary action. In particular we hope that a new pattern of administration at Westminster will enable members of staff to concentrate more on teaching and provide a support service to both staff and students which does not rely too heavily on the goodwill and sacrifice of a few. However, tribute must be paid to the contribution of Mrs Richardson as she retires as College Secretary and Domestic Bursar, having first served Cheshunt College and then Westminster College, for over 20 years. She will be sorely missed. The Revd Kate McIlhagga, who serves as the Community Minister at St. Ives URC, has been appointed as College Chaplain, and the new position will be reviewed this summer. Whilst the problem of finding accommodation for an increasing number of married students with families is an enormous one, efforts have been made to increase our provision by dividing up one of the staff houses and to improve the standard of other units. The whole matter will be kept under review as part of a long-term plan. Finally, and within the context of the training provided throughout the Federation, the matters of a core curriculum, teaching and assessment methods, integrated training using contextual placements, and the value of exploring some kind of university recognition, are being taken forward by committees both locally and within the wider Church. (See Appendix)

PATTERNS OF TRAINING FOR THE STIPENDIARY MINISTRY

20. As patterns change, so the original designation of training courses as Course I, II, III and IV no longer become either helpful or accurate. We need to reflect these new patterns, and find ways also of indicating to potential candidates the wide range and the flexibility of the programmes now adopted. We therefore submit the following for adoption by Assembly:

Designation of Training Programme for the Stipendiary Ministry

Introduction.

21. All ministerial training aims to provide a method of learning by which contemporary events are questioned in the light of the Christian tradition and the Christian tradition is questioned in the light of contemporary events. They seek to understand traditional Christian affirmations in the light of the world as well as the Church, and to help students choose the most appropriate response to the gospel in a given situation. This method is sometimes described as 'contextual training' and is commended by the General Assembly.

The possibility of a congregation-based Programme along the lines of the Alternative Pattern of Training in the Baptist Union is currently being explored.

22. Three Programmes

1. Basic Programme

This consists of four years of study in a theological college. For many it will include a theological degree, and in all cases it will include an Internship Year. The contents of the course will take account of previous academic qualifications, experience and individual gifts. For those who are over 30 and have the necessary academic background and Christian experience, the course may sometimes be arranged so as to be completed in 3 years; i.e. two years academic work followed by one year of internship training.

2. Alternative Programme

For those over 30 and where circumstances make the residential Basic Programme impracticable, it is possible to arrange an Alternative Programme. This is still college-based and lasts 4 years, including an internship element, with one or two years spent full-time at college. The other years would be spent in college-directed training. The colleges may use one of the local ecumenical training courses for this part of the training. The extra-mural part of the training may be shortened to allow for the candidate's experience or age.

3. Community-Based Programme

In this college-directed programme, academic work is done in parallel with work in the community and in a local church. The method employed involves the students in working on academic and practical subjects while undertaking work in the community and the church. The amount of time assigned to each area varies from year to year, and staff, equipped not only in theological expertise but also in community analysis and church life and practice, work with the students throughout the course to ensure the maximum reflection and integration. (This course is currently available only at Northern College, Manchester). (Resolution 3)

Internship Training

23. At the 1986 Assembly we set out the details of Internship Training, the fourth year for stipendiary ordinands, and indicated that a question had arisen in relation to the conduct of the sacraments. The committee has described the present position in the following terms:

1. All those preparing for stipendiary ministry are now required to complete a period of training working in a local church, either during the internship year or concurrently with their academic course.
2. The aim of internship training is stated as being 'to enable students to experience the full range of ministry in the context of a local congregation and to reflect theologically on that experience within the college community'.
3. The students' experience of ministry may need to include that of presiding at the sacraments, not only in order that they may learn by doing and by reflecting on experience, but also in order that their pastoral relationship with the congregation in which they are working may be as complete as possible.
4. We therefore consider it appropriate that District Councils should be encouraged to regard such situations as instances of 'pastoral necessity' and to authorise such students to preside at the sacraments in the congregations in which they are working, when applications are made by the churches concerned. (Resolution 4)

THE RECOGNITION OF COLLEGES AND COURSES

24. In 1983, the General Assembly called for a review of the relationship whereby Memorial College, Aberystwyth and Bala-Bangor College, Bangor are recognised as bodies training students for our stipendiary ministry. Because of a number of local developments in Wales, only a brief statement was brought to the 1986 Assembly and no decisions were called for. The time has now come when the situation should be regularised, bearing in mind that neither of the two colleges has been used for the purpose for which they are recognised since the inception of the URC.

25. Any analysis of the situation must take into account a number of changes in the sphere of ministerial training, and resulting decisions must relate to a broader context. As a result of the Review of Ministerial Training in the URC (*Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Ministry*, 1982) a number of decisions were taken about the nature and styles of training considered to be necessary in these days. With the union of the URC and the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ in 1982, Overdale College joined the Congregational College, Manchester, which itself has now become Northern College, within the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry, each stage bringing a new richness as the result of development and change. The Federation of Theological Colleges in Cambridge, of which our own Westminster College is a part, and the ecumenical teaching team who serve Mansfield College, Oxford continue to flourish, and the new Internship training has begun. We have a small but continuous flow of students to Queen's College, Birmingham, which provides the basic programme, to be followed by an Internship Year elsewhere. The introduction of the Auxiliary Ministry training has led us to take advantage of a number of diocesan and ecumenical courses of part-time ministerial training, and some elements of these are available to our stipendiary candidates as well. In Wales, the Welsh covenant is raising many important questions about colleges and training programmes in the future and, within the URC, the Welsh School of Ministry is beginning to make its own contribution to the local scene. Discussions taking place between the URC and the Congregational Union of Scotland hold out the desire and possibility of a new union and we are in discussion with the Congregational College, Edinburgh, which trains their students.

26. In a constantly changing situation, it is only possible to take one step at a time, whilst recognising significant trends with long-term implications. Having engaged in a long conversation with the Ministry Committee of the Province of Wales with an invitation extended to representatives of the two Welsh Colleges, we can see the possibilities for utilising their skills and resources in particular and specialised ways in relation to the Welsh context of ministry. We also see the advantage now of recognising the worth of many other courses which can offer particular training around the country, to enrich and broaden the basic training programme that we have had across the years. We believe the *present* situation should be best expressed in the terms of the resolution set out below. (Resolution 5)

27. As far as the Welsh situation is concerned, we note that there is a change of relationship, which does not deny the possibility of future growth nor present possibilities. The relationship must be kept under review by the Training Committee and the Assembly, particularly if there is any change in the nature of the colleges, or the possibility of a Federation of Welsh Theological Colleges becomes a reality.

28. As far as the part-time courses are concerned, there are developing relationships with training bodies which can be monitored by the Training Committee through its Board of Studies for the Auxiliary Ministry, who can advise the Assembly from time to time.

STUDENT GRANTS

29. We are concerned about new difficulties facing our students in the colleges, arising from recent legislation, and have already sought to respond to individual cases of hardship. The students, through a joint representative group, have submitted their views concerning the current situation, and the whole basis on which we work. We have begun a process of research and analysis which we hope will lead to improvements.

WINDERMERE CENTRE

30. The Director of Windermere has joined us as a Staff Consultant, and we are in process of planning together a wide range of activities which will fit into the programme for students preparing for auxiliary and stipendiary ministry, for lay preaching and other ministries. Here will be one of the places where we can begin to see our programme as an inter-related connected whole. It will also be a valuable focus for some In-Service Training.

POST-ORDINATION TRAINING

31. We are glad to report that the new programme, which is designed to support and encourage ministers during the first three years, is well under way. Our committee has provided guidelines for the running of the scheme, including the appointment of Pastoral Advisers, and asked the Synods, in consultation with District Councils concerned, to work out a programme for each individual that will be appropriate and truly supportive.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

32. Once again we can report a good take-up of opportunities for further training and refreshment, and 150 ministers have been helped during the year from central funds. Many others have been able to arrange finance from other sources, and have also taken part in events arranged by their Province. We consider it a good time to institute some research into the ways ministers have been taking advantage of the Sabbatical Leave programme. We believe it has been of benefit to both minister and members.

LAY PREACHERS

33. The Lay Preaching Committee under the leadership of Mrs Sylvia Owen, continues with its task of looking after the insights, education and training of the lay preachers under its care. Our course material is widely used by other denominations throughout England, Scotland and Wales. The committee is very grateful to assessors, tutors, and all who help students throughout their period of study and, not least, for the spiritual and welfare guidance provided by so many caring people. District Councils submitted 45 names this year for inclusion in the Register of Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers; 1139 are on the register.

34. The enquiries and ultimate enrolment for the *Exploring the Faith* course continue to flourish, largely due to the District Lay Preaching Commissioners and their constant vigil over those in their care. It is a valuable method of study recognised as the qualifying course for the URC Lay Preachers' Certificate and as a permitted alternative to the Methodist Church Local Preachers' Examinations and for the relevant sections in the Baptist Union's Christian Training Programme. 23 Students completed the course this year.

35. The winner of the Shergold Prize was Mr Geoffrey Townsend, Northants, North Beds and North Bucks District, who gained the highest overall mark in 1986.

36. The annual Joint Anglican/Methodist/Congregational/United Reformed and Baptist Conference held in April each year is very popular; all places for 1987 are taken. The students' study weekend in May 1986 was well attended and a URC National Lay Preachers' Conference is in the planning stage for May 1987 at Swanwick. The Lay Preaching Commissioners hold an annual consultation day when they assemble together for worship, study and discussion, proving a satisfactory liaison between the Lay Preaching Committee and Commissioners.

ANNUAL REPORT ON COLLEGES AND COURSES

NORTHERN COLLEGE, MANCHESTER

37. The college community is now well established in its new premises and working closely with its partners in the NORTHERN FEDERATION FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY. Living, working and worshipping on the one site has greatly facilitated mutual understanding and co-operation.

38. One particular area of co-operation is the Core Curriculum. This three-year course of training in practical subjects and theological reflection has now been running for 3 years and is currently being evaluated and reviewed.

39. The staff have also been reviewing the community-based training. This innovative course has so far been a pilot project and Staff are now anxious to make it more widely available. The introduction of a part-time BA degree in theology at the University is also proving to be an attractive option for the students on integrated training since this allows for forms of training in which academic work and placements in church and community can run together and be used to interpret each other.

40. Some very creditable results were achieved by students in the end of session university examinations. We congratulate Nicholas Stanyon in winning the Bishop Lee Greek Testament Prize.

41. The College and its partners in the Federation have invested in video equipment and hope to use this for training in different skills.

42. Our overseas student for one year, the Revd George Stephen of the Presbyterian Church of Sri Lanka, made a valuable contribution to the life of the whole community.

43. The year under review has seen the appointment of the first Mona Powell Fellow. Funded largely from a generous legacy of the late Miss Powell of Worsley, the Fellowship aims to enable younger persons of academic ability to undertake further study at the Faculty of Theology at Manchester. Our first Fellow is the Revd David Stec, MA. After nine years in his first pastorate in Chester-le-Street URC church, Co. Durham, he is undertaking research on the Book of Job.

44. Staff and students keep up their preaching and speaking engagements. This year fifteen students are exercising ministry in churches under the internship training scheme.

MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

45. The total number of students registered in the college is 160, 30 of whom are in theology, and 14 of these are URC ordinands. Two ordinands received Distinctions in the University Certificate in Theology.

46. After the retirement of the Revd Dr John Huxtable as Chairman of the Board of Education, an Honorary Fellowship was conferred. The new Chairman of the Board is the Revd Bernard Thorogood.

47. Revd Justine Wyatt taught at Andover-Newton Theological College for four months. This is the oldest Congregational seminary (now UCC and Baptist) in the States. She helped in the Field Education programme and was able to gain new insights for the Internship Year at Mansfield which she organizes. She continued her research into Reformed spirituality, enjoyed Boston life and New England clam chowder. Revd Charles Brock is the new Chairman of the Joint Committee of Oxford's twelve theological colleges. Many ventures in working together are being explored with much goodwill on all sides.

48. The college has offered a new training scheme for local churches. When invited, staff and/or students go to a church or district meeting and, in consultation with the people there, work out an evening or afternoon on topics such as 'making ethical decisions', 'planning worship', 'developing your spiritual life', etc. There have already been a number of takers.

49. At the close of the Centenary Year, the Appeal stands at £680,000. The Centenary celebrations were a great success with many activities throughout the year, culminating in June with a Ball and a splendid Service with Dr John Marsh as the preacher. Other preachers during the year were Viscount Tonypandy, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Margaret Hebblethwaite, Ray Heritage, Fred Kaan, Kenneth Slack, David Cave, Vaughan Jones, John Barton, college staff and leaving ordinands.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM

50. Our group of students is small and yet effective enough for each member to be encouraged by the others. Together they play their full part in the life of this largely Anglican and Methodist ecumenical college of some 70 students. The staff has been glad to welcome the Revd Iain Torrance from the Church of Scotland, and all are preparing to express thanks to the Revd Principal Dr Gordon Wakefield, a Methodist, as he retires at the end of the current academic year. Under consideration for our students is the possible introduction of a fourth internship year in line with the other URC-related colleges. At present the intention is that they would transfer to another college at that stage.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

A new phase in college life

51. Since the Assembly Report this year contains the report of those who visited Westminster College and the Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges on behalf of the three sponsoring Churches, this report from the college to the Assembly can be very brief.

52. With the Induction of the Revd John Proctor to the Dunn Chair of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology, the staff team is again complete and can take its part with colleagues in the Federation in the implementation both of particular responses to the Visitor's Reports and of developments called for by the changing situation both in theological education and in the Church at large. In parallel with these steps in curriculum development and training patterns, the college management committee is supervising a needed programme of repairs to the college buildings, though fortunately the re-roofing of 1972 left the buildings in a basically sound

condition. Nevertheless, current building regulations for scaffolding and the like make even general repairs expensive. No 2 the Bounds has been converted into a staff house and student residence, thus adding one unit to the accommodation available for married students with children.

The College Chaplain

53. A welcome addition to the college community is the appointment by the Board of Studies of the Revd Kate McIlhagga, community minister at St. Ives Cambridgeshire, as College Chaplain. She visits the college regularly on Thursdays in term and is available to students as a counsellor. The appointment is for one year so that it may be reviewed as an experiment in chaplaincy by a minister who is not a teaching member of the staff. Students have already expressed appreciation of the new arrangement.

BOARD OF STUDIES FOR THE AUXILIARY MINISTRY

Convener: Revd Alan Dunstone

National Director of Training: Revd Michael Dunford

54. We are currently responsible for 32 students on the URC Course, and 40 on other courses of an ecumenical nature, under our Training Programme. We take pleasure in the fact that they represent all age groups and come from a variety of backgrounds and offer a variety of gifts. Relationships with ecumenical training bodies are growing and we have learnt the value of training in a broader field, and with the opportunities for group study. It is rare, however, even under the URC Course, for anyone to be going it alone.

55. We are extremely well served by twelve Provincial Directors of Training whom we list as follows:

Northern:	Dr John Derry
North Western:	Revd David Jenkins
Mersey:	Revd Stuart Jackson
Yorkshire:	Revd Brenda Hill
East Midlands:	Revd Colin Plumb
West Midlands:	Revd Bill Mahood
Eastern:	Revd Kenneth Summers
South Western:	Revd Kenneth Hibberd
Wessex:	Revd Michael Jackson
Thames North:	Revd Roger Scopes
Southern:	Revd Aubrey Lewis
Wales:	Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris

They guide the local councils of the church, help each student through their personal programme, and meet together on a regular basis to share in policy-making and research into new training methods.

56. We acknowledge a debt to an army of local Tutors who are responsible for the week-by-week care of the students on the URC course. We are arranging another training day during the year.

57. Of benefit to all students are the annual Summer Schools where a sense of fellowship and dedication becomes even more apparent. Two are held each year in different locations around the country, each led by a team of Directors, and attended by a Moderator who pays particular attention to the preparations for their ordination.

58. Along with everyone else in the training field, we are aware of the pressures accepted by students whose commitments are, for the most part, three-fold — work, home and study, and pay our tribute to those who have responded to a Call to a very special type of ministry which is already beginning to support and encourage the ministry of the whole Church.

59. STUDENTS IN TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY 1986/87

(as at February 1987)

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

John G Kingsley (Northern)

Auxiliary

Kenneth Aitchison (URC), Douglas McFarlane (NEOC), Margaret Smith (URC)

NORTHERN WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Joseph Clemson (Westminster), Robert Jones (Westminster), Stephen Brown (Northern), Sandy Mailer (Northern), Arthur Climpson (Northern), Edmund Fallows (Northern), Ian Ring (Northern), David Legge (Northern), Peter Meek (Northern).

Auxiliary

Barbara Plenderleith (MCI), Andrew Lonsdale (MCI), Denise Megson (MCI) Brenda Ford (MCI), Betty Roe (MCI), Tony Cottam (URC), David Lee (MCI), John E Thompson (MCI).

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

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

Auxiliary

Katherine Stocks (MCI), Martyn Poole (MCI), Peter Brown (MCI), Susan Flynn (MCI), Robert Thomson (URC)

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Richard Pearson (Westminster), Peter Clarkson (Northern), Paul Ellis (Northern), Christopher Elliott (Northern), Susan Henderson (Northern), Trevor Holborn (Northern), Michael Moss (Northern).

Auxiliary

Steven Knapton (MCI), Julia Martin (URC), Eric Rogers (URC/Sheffield), George Perrott (MCI), Tresna Fletcher (MCI).

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Colin Biggs (Westminster), Cecil White (Westminster), Andrew Willett (Northern), Betsy King (Mansfield), Cecil Macaulay (Mansfield), Christopher Strong (Westminster), Enid Slater (Northern & EMMTC), Christopher Ball (Mansfield), Nigel Hezel (Mansfield).

Auxiliary

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

WEST MIDLAND PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Thomas Bayliss (Westminster), Josephine Williams (Queen's & WMMTC), Gillian Gibson (Northern), Janet Loveitt (Mansfield), Jane Stranz (Mansfield), Peter Lovett-Hargis (URC)

Auxiliary

Margaret Renton (URC), Lewis Reynolds (URC), Ronald Webb (URC), Roger Woodall (MCI), Christine Key (URC), Stanley Dews (MCI) Doreen Vick (URC)

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Simon Ellis (Westminster), Craig Bowman (Northern), Bill Thomas (Mansfield), Nick Stanyon (Northern).

Auxiliary

Joyce Benfield (URC), Colin Knight (URC), David Robertson (EAMTC) Julia Stone (URC)

WESSEX PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Gethin Rhys (Queen's), Daphne Williams (Mansfield), Darren Wimbleton (Northern), Edward Boon (Northern), David Walker (Northern), Brenda Russell (Northern).

Auxiliary

Kathleen Pryde (SDMTS), Pamela Richardson (SDMTS), Nina Mead (SDMTS) Frank Cochrane (SDMTS), Emily Browne (SDMTS)

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Peter Southcombe (Westminster), Erica Beglin (Queen's), Samantha Caton (Northern), Ian Knowles (Northern), David Pickering (Mansfield)

Auxiliary

Tom Bush (SWMC), Evelyn Ridout (URC), Dora Frost (URC), Mary Wheatley (URC), Heather Pencavel (URC), Gillian Brown (SWMC), Leslie Phillips (URC), Isa Napier (URC), Andrew Pugh (URC), Yvonne Oldfield (MCI).

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Charles Croll (Westminster), Audrey Proffitt (Westminster), Ruth White (Westminster), Simon Thomas (Northern), Mia Kyte (Mansfield), Nicola Lowen (Northern), Keith Hagon (Northern), Yvonne Workman (Mansfield), David Witts (Westminster), David Yule (Westminster), Michael Hodgson (Northern)

Auxiliary

Brenda Denvir (Southwark), Laurence Dixon (Oak Hill), David Jenkins (URC), Michael Potter (Southwark), Margaret Williams (URC), Malcolm Childs (Southwark), Edward Delasalle (Oak Hill), Gordon Hearne (Southwark), Martin Legg (Oak Hill), John Walker (St. Albans), John Maitland (Southwark)

SOUTHERN PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Paul Bedford (Westminster), Jean Black (Westminster), Paul Breeze (Westminster), Russell Furley-Smith (Northern), Brian Stops (Mansfield), Raymond Singh (Northern), Simon Copley (Northern), Colin Foreman (Northern), Rudolph Dixon (Westminster), Jeanne Ennals (Westminster), David Hilborn (Mansfield), Sally Beck (Northern)

Auxiliary

Mary Read (Southwark), Marie Thistle (URC), David Allonby (Southwark), Karen Street (URC), John Hall (Southwark)

PROVINCE OF WALES**Stipendiary**

Andrew Mills (Westminster), Julian Thomas (Northern), Russell Gordon (Northern), Wyn Evans (Westminster), Tracey Goddard (Northern), Shirley Mountcastle (Northern).

Auxiliary

Marina Kennard (URC), John Ellis (URC), Nancy Morgan (URC)

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Gwen Collins (Westminster)

CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

Graham Ghaleb (Thames North), Simon Loveitt (West Midlands), Kate Breeze (Eastern), Theresa Mansbridge (West Midlands).

Auxiliary Courses

CDTI	— Carlisle Diocesan Training Institute
MCI	— Manchester Christian Institute
EMMTC	— East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC	— North East Ordination Course
Oak Hill	— Oak Hill Non-Stipendiary Ministry Course
SADMTS	— St. Albans Diocesan Ministerial Training Scheme
SDMTS	— Southern Dioceses Ministerial Training Scheme
SOC	— Southwark Ordination Course
SWMTS	— South West Ministry Training Scheme
EAMTC	— East Anglian Ministry Training Course
WMTC	— West Midlands Training Course
URC	— URC Auxiliary Ministry Training Programme

60. TRAINING STATISTICS

	Total in Training at Feb. 1986	Total in Training at Feb. 1987	Entry into URC Ministry			1990	Actual Nos entered service 1986/7
			1987	1988	1989		
Westminster	23	24	5	7	5	8	10
Mansfield	16	14	2	4	6	2	8
Northern	36	41	15	4	13	9	7
Queen's	2	3	—	—	2	1	1
Totals	77	82	22	15	26	20	26
Auxiliary Ministry	69	72	26	23	15	8	11
CRCWs	3	4	1	2	1	—	—
Grand Total	149	158	49	40	42	28	37

APPENDIX

CAMBRIDGE VISITATIONS

January 13—19 1986

(A) VISITATION TO WESTMINSTER COLLEGE

Introduction

1. It was a privilege to share in the Visitation to the Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges; and we give thanks for the warmth of our welcome. We shared in the Report covering the Visitations to the Federation and would endorse its comments and recommendations, many of which were outlined in our report.

2. It was also a great privilege and pleasure to spend a week living in and visiting/inspecting Westminster College. We thank the staff and students for their generous and open welcome. We tried to listen to every *vibe*, but will inevitably have missed something: for any oversights we apologise in advance.

3. We divide the Report under the headings suggested by the Bishops' Committee on Inspection; and we shall collate our recommendations at the end.

The aims, objective and general ethos of the Institution

4. The Principal's response to the Inspection Questionnaire was full, adequate and acceptable. It emphasises the aim of an educated evangelical ministry within the parameters set by the URC Basis of Union. It speaks of thorough academic rigour, of spiritual discipline and development and also of pastoral understanding; these are paramount among the aims of the college in its training programme.

5. The college is involved in the wider life of the denomination and of the district of the URC. The staff have cared for In-Service training for the denomination and are represented on many of the committees involved in ministerial training. They also act as interim-moderators in pastorless churches and receive many invitations to preach in many parts of the country. Thus the college has a presence and an image in the whole life of the denomination; and the Principal is internationally known and respected as a clear-minded and dedicated ecumenical leader.

General Administration

6. The URC lays responsibility for the college upon the Training Committee of the Ministries Department

7. Responsible to that body are:-

Senatus

The Management Committee

The Board of Studies

The House Committee

8. It amazes us that a college of such scope can run with only one full-time paid employee apart from the academic staff. She is secretary to the House Committee and teaching staff, secretary to the Cheshunt Foundation and Domestic Bursar (responsible for the employment and supervision of all domestic staff, oversight of kitchen and cleaning arrangements, letting of rooms, married accommodation and conference bookings)! That such plans can run so efficiently fills us with admiration. But we know that sometimes extra work, however willingly and effectively done, can take its toll of mental, physical and spiritual health. We also note that the extra demands of administration (in the library, in correspondence, in maintenance) act as a severe brake upon the opportunities for research which is rightly asked of all academics — and of which our staff are fully capable, given the necessary freedom from other important duties. We therefore ask the church to examine the use of resources and if necessary make available as a priority extra funds for the employment of administrative staff, in the office and also in the library.

9. **Kitchen** The food is of a good standard. A new cook was appointed last September and has settled very happily into the life of the college. The students have spoken of a marked improvement in the quality of the food. The kitchen staff are kept busy, but are able to cope well with the demands made upon them. The kitchen is clean and well equipped. Some of the equipment is old, but in good working order. The whole operation in the kitchen appears to run smoothly.

10. **Cleaning** The college is kept clean by a small staff of cleaners. The relationships between them and the students are very good and there is an air of warmth and friendliness.

11. **Married accommodation** While the four flats above the Principal's house are favourably regarded, two annexes in the college grounds are still damp, even though one is fitted with a humidifier.

12. For those living out of college, the chief problem is that there is little accommodation available for purchase or rent in the immediate vicinity. House prices in Cambridge have outstripped those in many areas of the country. Therefore the creation of more family flats should be a priority. (The matter was raised at the Board of Studies while the visitors were present). One of us was able to spend three hours with a family living in a village out of Cambridge. There is a genuine sense of isolation, a problem with which both single and married students are trying to grapple. It should remain on the agenda.

13. **Library** There are 25,000 — 30,000 books, about ten thousand being in the working section, the remainder being in various collections. About £2,700 has been spent on new books and periodicals during each of the past two years.

14. The Librarians of the Federation Colleges meet at the beginning of each term to consider the purchase of books, buying according to the expected needs of each college and of the Federation as a whole. Westminster has a Library Committee consisting of the Senatus together with the senior student and two students who work in the Library. For the past two years all new books acquired by each Federation College has been entered into each college catalogue, indicating where each book can be found.

15. A recent gift of £4,000 has enabled the college to maintain its expenditure on books to the present level, by the injection of one thousand pounds from this sum towards the current expenditure. £3,000 is being put into the endowments.

16. A library of this size and standing could well be served by having a professional librarian caring for it; and the librarian himself feels that some paid help would be desirable.

17. **Maintenance** An architect has been appointed to have oversight of the college buildings. The most recent major expense was on the conversion of the boiler from oil to gas. A handyman looks after day-to-day problems; and a gardening contract ensures that the gardens are not untidy.

18. The electrical wiring is still being replaced, but on a piece-meal basis. One minor niggle: if in chapel we are intended to sing and say the correct words without squinting, further lighting would be appreciated.

19. **Finance** We looked at the books for 1985, not then audited. (They will of course be presented to the appropriate committees of the URC). The chief accountant of the URC was in Cambridge for the annual review of finances, so we were able to speak with him. There seems to be no major problems in relation to the books, which are kept in order with part-time help for the secretary.

The Learning Experience

20. **The overall syllabus** The syllabus offered by the Federation is remarkably wide and embracing. It requires careful study; and some of the students initially find it difficult to chart their way round its complexities. If a little more time were allotted at the beginning of the whole course, pressure might be lifted, though we are fully aware that time taken from one area has to be balanced with loss in another. The only serious hole seems to be in the practice of evangelism and outreach. The short course on evangelism, inspirational in nature, did not examine and test methods of evangelism. We are delighted to learn that students go on a 'mission' fairly regularly; and would suggest that every student should have an experience at least once during the stay at college.

21. **Examinations** We greatly appreciated the analysis of the exam results for the Federation. We are fully aware that examinations are not the only barometer of success, but we know that the staff are monitoring their effect. We congratulate the college on the generally good results obtained in the Federation exams. We are glad that alternative methods of assessment are being used and congratulate the staff on the sympathetic way in which they liaise with students as to the best ways of assessment. We have a few suggestions under this head:-

- (i) there is an urgent need for a core curriculum, leading to a Federation Diploma, that is something more than the present certificate;
- (ii) there is a longer term need for External Validation, especially for students without a degree, or without theological qualifications;
- (iii) the director of study in a college has the major responsibility for ensuring that students cover all they need to: is too much laid on that person?

22. **Short Courses** The short courses arranged by the Federation at the beginning of the Michaelmas and Lent terms provide an excellent opportunity for students to be introduced to basic skills which can be developed later. It is important that they should be led by people who are skilled and experienced in their field — and that students be encouraged to see them as an important element in their training.

23. **Methods of Training** During the first three days we saw a variety of teaching methods and we note that it is not only those professionally qualified as teachers who have the gift of teaching in relevant ways. While the lecture is not totally outdated, yet we attended some where a summary of one or two pages could have been given — and then significant areas for discussion highlighted. The content of one in particular could have been gleaned by reading a couple of chapters of any appropriate text book. We were impressed by the seminars, where the students had carefully prepared and the staff responded wisely, skilfully and sympathetically.

24. **Skills among students** One great resource at our college as against most in Cambridge is the wealth of experience among candidates for the ministry. (This was one of the most hopeful signs for the church, compared with our Oxbridge colleges of thirty years ago). While some initially

feel that they wish for a while to break away from their professional roots, yet at some point every student must have some worthwhile resource to bring in. Efforts are made in this direction. We would encourage more conscious attempts to pool this wealth of experience and learn from it for the benefit of the whole community, staff and students alike.

Practical Training

25. **The Internship Year** This is an exciting new development in the life of the college. Already it is clear that it is an important element in the training programme. Students undertake the Internship in their third year so that it is separated from the concerns of 'preaching with a view' and receiving a call. This is different from the system at Northern College, in Manchester. The URC should monitor both patterns. The Internship scheme will help to develop the college's relationship with the churches in the area; but it is good that contracts are being sought in a much wider area and in a greater variety of situations. (When further away, one student at least feels a pull between his home, his intern church and the college. This system must inevitably be subject to review).

26. The weekly Report sheets, along with seminars with students, provide ample opportunity for discussion and reflection. They are also a token of encouraging staff-student rapport. The Report sheets could indeed have a wider reference and be adapted to In-Service training of ministers.

27. **Pastoral Studies** The place of Pastoral Studies in the curriculum of the college and the Federation is of increasing importance. It helps to provide the proper balance between education and training. The students must be helped to see it not simply as skill development, but also as personal development; and that both in terms of understanding people better and also of their own growth in spirituality.

28. It is about their encounter with others and with God. It should make demands; and time should be given, along with the necessary help, in order to work through fears and worries, so that students will be equipped for the demands of ministry.

Worship

29. It was good to see worship as a regular and important part of the daily life of the college. The Reformed tradition is maintained in the morning; and one is reminded that the URC is itself a blend of three traditions. Through the evening worship students are brought into contact with the ecumenical dimension of the Federation.

30. We were privileged to share in one of the weekly prayer groups that meet regularly in the college. It is good to know that students from a variety of traditions and of theological outlook are learning from each other and growing together in their understanding of corporate spiritual life.

Spiritual Life and Personal Development

31. We warmly welcome the recent appointment of Janet Sowerbutts as Director of Pastoral Studies. As the first and only female member of the teaching staff, she returns to the college where she trained less than ten years ago, with experience of a pastorate in an inner city. She therefore brings to the college recent pastoral insights and experience; but she is also being used by students as a counsellor.

32. We were present at the Board of Studies when there was consideration of the appointment of a chaplain (specifically not a member of staff). We noted with pleasure that a group of staff and students had met to think about this and make suggestions. It appeared that there are needs of both spiritual direction and counselling which at present are not being met.

33. When the chaplain is appointed, it is hoped that he/she will be able to offer particular help and expertise in the field of prayer and spirituality, both individually and corporately. There is evidence among some students of a search for wider variety in patterns of spiritual experience, including contemplation, retreats and reading spiritual classics. (A further echo of *Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Ministry*).

34. From discussions with students it appears that some would welcome more help in the matter of spiritual and vocational guidance at the commencement of their time in college. It is felt that

more emphasis could be laid on theological training as a period when faith is tested — not least because of the intellectual demands of rigorous Bible study and exegesis.

35. We are concerned in this connection with the role of spouses as partners of those called to be ministers. Many of them today would welcome more opportunities of sharing in the discussion of pastoral growth. They are also interested in the particular difficulties and pressures that arise in pastoral situations where human support is meagre. It is usually in such situations, if no other, that a spouse can be minister's most effective support.

Conclusion

36. A week with antennae up from breakfast to bed is exhausting; but we thoroughly enjoyed our week together. The two URC members would like to express their gratitude to God that the planners of this Visitation arranged that each team should include one from outside the denomination of the college. Not only did we achieve immediate rapport, but we were constantly stopped in our tracks by comments and insights that might not have been made by indigenous URC people. (That we did not also include as originally planned a woman and a lay person was nobody's fault).

37. We were most encouraged by the visit. Compared with our time at college, we were thrilled at the variety among the students in background, voice, accent, colour, sex, race, experience and qualification. We rejoice that all this variety is being offered to the Lord. We believe that this college has taken seriously the recommendations of the last visitation and the report *Preparing Today for Tomorrow's Ministry*. Inevitable changes in staff and students over quite a short period of years means that the Lord is always making all things new. Having visited and shared fully in the life of the college for a week, we shall be able more intelligently to commend it to the interest and prayers of those we met in the URC and in the wider Church. Thank you and God bless you.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TRAINING COMMITTEE

38. We recommend that:

1. all such future visitations should include in the team at least one Christian from outside the URC, one woman and one lay person;
2. the URC find the finance for the appointment, in consultation with the college, of additional administrative staff;
3. the present two annexes in the college grounds be inspected by the House Committee and necessary work carried out to render them properly habitable;
4. urgent consideration be given to the provision of further married accommodation in the vicinity of the college up to a reasonable level (bearing in mind that the proportion of married students is likely to remain as high as at present).
5. urgent consideration be given to the possibility of sharing a professional librarian with Wesley, (just as the two Anglican Colleges share a librarian). That if Wesley will not afford this, that consideration be given to Westminster employing a part-time librarian, (possibly a retired person on an honorarium basis);
6. urgent consideration be given to the mapping out of a core curriculum, leading to a Federation Diploma;
7. the URC sets up a specific body to monitor the development of the Internship Programme in all its feeder colleges;
8. that the URC consider the wider use of the Report-sheets on practical training and their adaption for the In-Service training of ministers;
9. the college considers appropriate ways of assessing its daily worship, with a view to its enrichment and greater vitality;
10. the college be encouraged to pursue its search for an appropriate chaplain outside the teaching staff; and that the *job description* should include the ability to lead into further areas of prayer and spirituality.

Alan S Dunstone (Senior Inspector) (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)
Bill W Mahood (Rugby)
Graeme C H Watson (Taunton)

(B) INSPECTION OF THE CAMBRIDGE FEDERATION OF THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES

39. Alongside visits to the individual colleges and as part of a total integrated exercise, an Inspection of the Federation was carried out by an ecumenical team of visitors. Each college, Ridley Hall, Westcott House (Anglican), Wesley House (Methodist) and Westminster College (URC), was inspected by a team of three, of whom one belonged to a denomination other than that of the particular college, and in addition, all the Inspectors were asked to co-operate in inspecting the working of the Federation, of which all four Houses are part.

40. The Inspectors wrote:- "The Report of the Visitors in 1980 ended its section on the Origin and History of the Federation with a reference to the Covenant Proposals of that year. The failure to achieve agreement on those proposals might well have led to a lessening of commitment by the Churches concerned in the Cambridge Federation, and to a disillusionment with the ecumenical co-operation which it represents and seeks to foster. We are very glad to be able to report that, on the contrary, the Cambridge Federation seems during the five years which have elapsed to have made considerable progress. The Staff are committed to working together, and we found only a tiny minority of students who did not welcome the opportunities it affords for meeting across denominational barriers and sharing in the common activities and life of a large community comprising people of several different traditions".

41. The committees of Westminster College, the URC Training Committee and the Joint Liaison Committee of the Federation itself have already considered the full report, and are now paying particular attention to the recommendations of the Inspectors which are as follows:

1. that a Moderator be appointed for the Federation;
2. that the Liaison Meeting be strengthened by increasing the representation of the Governing Bodies to three from each House;
3. that the process of consultation concerning staff appointments should be given higher priority and be more formally structured;
4. that a firm decision should be taken on the form of Federation evening worship;
5. that each term, in addition to the weekly Eucharist, there should be one or two occasions of corporate Federation worship;
6. that a more regulated structure of courses should be devised by the whole academic staff of the Federation;
7. that the staff should pay constant attention to the recommendation of the Visitors in 1980 "that the Federation programme for the teaching of theology should be directed towards more explicit encounter between theological traditions";
8. that a further attempt be made to secure help with the Pastoral Studies course from those with professional expertise in this field and Christian experience;
9. that pastoral attachments and placements should be planned jointly by Directors of Pastoral Studies, with the aim of ecumenical participation whenever possible.
10. that the need for regular meetings of the whole academic staff should be recognised.

SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Peter J Brain
Secretary: Revd Michael C Diffey

61. This first full year of the committee's life has been divided, in accordance with our terms of reference, between inherited responsibilities and new opportunities, between consolidation of good practice and rediscovery that 'paths are made by those who walk on them'.

'SPECIAL CATEGORY' MINISTRIES

62. Within the overall responsibility for ministerial deployment, which is currently exercised by the Central Committee of the Department, our responsibility for 'special category' ministries is being taken seriously.

63. These fall roughly into three categories: most, just over a half, are in priority areas, e.g. new towns or the inner city; about a third are in educational or industrial chaplaincies; about a sixth are in one-off special posts. We are keen to support new work; this may mean encouraging applications from places or groups who may not have considered the possibility of a 'special category' ministry.

64. We have prepared and authorised a new procedure to help those considering applying for a new post or seeking an extension of an existing one. The applicant group is expected to describe the task to be done, the community or institution to be served, the theological basis, the support for the minister and the financial viability of the post. Not too much to ask? Copies of these papers have been sent to every Province.

MINISTRIES IN THE COMMUNITY

65. The main input from this sub-committee has been the drafting of a considered policy statement on Church-Related Community Workers for the Department to consider. This appears in its revised form elsewhere in the report.

66. The sub-committee has also agreed a set of guidelines for those thinking of seeking URC approval for a project. These will apply especially where it is intended that a CRCW will be employed or URC funds sought, but will be found useful wherever the church embarks on community work. Again, Provinces have copies. In co-operation with the Church and Society Department, the sub-committee is reviewing the overall involvement of the URC in community work nationwide, and how it can be interpreted and developed.

'EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE'

67. A working party has begun its task to "clarify where the responsibilities of a 'model employer' lie within the structures of the URC and to suggest how they might be better exercised for the well-being of ministers and of the whole church". One early task has been to send a questionnaire about terms and conditions to a random sample of 110 ministers; 88% replied promptly, indicating (at the very least) the relevance of the task! This working party will consider the findings of other groups and the views of key individuals, within and outside the URC; it hopes to bring a report to Assembly in 1988.

SPECIALIST MINISTRIES

In Higher and Further Education

68. There are many styles of ministry exercised by URC ministers and members in the different worlds of higher education and further education. During the year, the sub-committee on Ministries in Higher and Further Education has sought to support existing, more traditional patterns through the student Link-Up scheme, supporting the pastoral care of staff and students, backing student conferences and playing our part in the ecumenical training of chaplains.

69. We are also beginning to explore some different methods of ministry. A questionnaire to some students will allow us to "see ourselves as other see us". Prompted by the Anglican report *Christian ministry in Further Education* we are starting to examine our involvement there, aware as ever that this is a ministry for the whole people of God. We have a deepening conviction that the Church has much to say in the world of education, but also much to hear. In the year ahead we hope to further that conversation.

In Industry

70. Though the issues addressed by Industrial Mission are treated on the pages of the Church and Society Department report, those URC ministers engaged in it have certain distinctly 'ministerial' concerns.

The work requires some continuity, if not of person, then of post; not easy when the criteria of 'special category' ministries imply relatively short-term support. And when vacancies are declared, it is proving very difficult to fill them. Yet this is specialist, not eccentric ministry.

71. A visit in 1986 by 5 URC ministers to their counterparts in French industrial mission was most stimulating and useful. We congratulate Elizabeth Nash, Industrial Mission representative on the Committee, on election as Chair of the Industrial Mission Association for 1987/9.

In the Armed Forces

72. The United Board, overseeing URC and Baptist chaplains, is represented on the committee by its Secretary, Philip Schofield. The Board is concerned to have names of ministers who would be interested in this work as there is an imbalance between URC and Baptist chaplains. There are 10 Baptist ministers commissioned but now only 4 URC. Revd Alan Finch retired last year and we join the Board in thanking him for his six year's service.

73. In addition to these commissioned chaplains, with 5 in the Territorial Army, there are many URC ministers who serve as 'officiating chaplains' and we shall seek to establish some useful link with them.

Deaconesses

74. There is at present one deaconess in the full-time service of the church, Mrs Kay McIntosh (née Salvage), to whom go our good wishes on her marriage to Peter last December. We again remembered with Christmas gifts the four retired deaconesses.

CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

75. Report

1. General Assembly in 1986 resolved to consult Provinces and Departments of the church with a paper about the future of CRCWs. Seven Provinces had replied by the due date: two by letters from Synod Executive Committees, three by forwarding reports presented to and (presumably) accepted by Synods, two by sending reports of meetings specially convened. Letters from two other provinces arrived in January. In addition we had a letter from the General Secretary in response to a query from Leicester District and a response from Michael Diffey.

2. These responses were the basis of a draft paper from the Ministries in the Community sub-committee which was redrafted by the Support Committee at its meeting on 13 January to include reference to the report of the working party on CRCW training and a paper on CRCW accreditation.

3. The Central Committee of the Department, having made further amendments, offers this report as a position paper on CRCWs within the URC.

76. Ministry

1. There is general agreement among all respondents that the work done by CRCWs is an authentic ministry. Such workers enable the church to become involved in the development of their community in the context of the coming/building of the kingdom of God. (Resolution 6)

2. They are properly trained professionals using that training to forward the total mission of God in a manner complementary to the ministry offered by others (stipendiary and non-stipendiary).

3. The ministry of CRCWs includes an element of leadership of the church, enabling members to listen, reflect and work in ways that are appropriate in that local community; this can be a learning and growing experience for the church.

4. Some of the Provincial responses make allowance for more short-term projects for CRCWs; but all would recognise the possibility of CRCWs exercising a lifelong ministry. It can be a flexible career in and with the church. We would encourage this, recognising that the actual work being done would change as society changed over the years, with retraining as necessary; this is necessary to avoid the risk of 'institutionalising' the CRCWs.

5. In the wording of the Assembly paper, CRCWs are not seen as representing "the beginnings of a contemporary attempt to restore the diaconate". This is a new diaconal lay ministry; certainly it is more than "that ministry exercised by every member".

77. Mission

1. There is a general awareness that some 'new wineskins' are needed. Few of the responses spell this out in any detail; two or three begin to expound why community development (as distinct from other social work or outreach) is an essential part of building the kingdom in today's Britain.

2. We agree that the resources of the church in terms of its paid professionals must be deployed with greater flexibility and a fresh appreciation of the situations being engaged.

3. We want to endorse the point made in our Support Committee discussion of the theological implications of CRCWs on 23 September 1986:

“There is a need to look at concepts of ministry and at the functions of a CRCW alongside the ministry of word and sacrament. Christ’s ministry should be seen through each. Recognition must be given to the diversity of function in the contemporary world. What is the church called to be and to do, in our society? . . . The function of the CRCW must be seen as part of the one ministry of Christ.”

78. Distinctiveness

1. The Assembly paper called for comment on the special church-related nature of this community work. Building from the description of community work set out in the Assembly paper, we affirm that there is a proper distinctiveness which is based on a number of things. We use ‘best practice’ to illustrate our points; it is accepted that experience will fall short of this:

2. The CRCW should be able to call on the human resources of a local church (or district, or ecumenical group, etc.). Allied to this, the CRCW has a base within the church-as-community; secular, statutory workers often lack this.

3. The CRCW, while not an evangelist, is a representative of the church and can properly interpret the situation from a theological perspective. This can work as a disadvantage, of course, when the church does not behave with sensitivity or even wisdom, or is perceived as too judgemental or aggressive; difficulties can also arise when the local authority or the workers in the same community are suspicious or hostile to church (and other voluntary) organisations.

4. The CRCW should have a position independent of the whims or regulations of a secular authority and able to take the ‘longer view’ without constant pressure to deliver measurable results. This point has implications for local management.

5. The CRCW, in the best tradition of voluntary bodies, can deal with ‘undeserving’ or hitherto unrecognised categories of need; there is a pioneering role.

6. The CRCW, from a standpoint of faith, can think the unthinkable about social change, not succumbing to the cynicism sometimes found in secular workers, considering deeper questions and therefore likely to offer more profound (albeit radical) answers. For example, a CRCW may assist a community to understand how to respond creatively to corporate suffering.

7. The CRCW will not condemn the philosophical base of secular community work — indeed will seek to work in partnership with statutory and other non-statutory workers — but should draw on the distinctiveness outlined here.

8. However, whether the distinctive church buildings available to the CRCW are an asset or a liability depends entirely on circumstance!

79. Policy

1. There is general agreement among respondents that a national policy is required to achieve and maintain a balance between the number of trained CRCWs available and the posts which they might fill.

2. We recommend that the Ministries in the Community sub-committee be charged with responsibility for the overview of CRCW policy. Within the Department, the Vocations, Training and Support Committees will each have their part to play.

3. The Ministries in the Community sub-committee is currently seeking to monitor and evaluate what community work is being done throughout the URC; only a small proportion of such work involves CRCWs.

4. When it comes to seeking URC ‘recognition’ of a proposed piece of work — (and the benefits that might flow from such recognition) the sub-committee will expect to receive thoroughly worked-out applications, with Provincial involvement and sponsorship, using the guidelines which have now been approved. We shall be pleased to explore the possibilities with any prospective applicant group.

80. Assessment

1. We believe the procedure for dealing with candidates should be only a little different from that for would-be ordinands. Candidates should have the same academic, age and church membership qualifications.

2. We recommend a 4-stage process of assessment for candidates:

- (a) The District Council in consultation with the local church should commend the candidate on the grounds of known character and sense of call.
- (b) The Province should interview, involving at least one interviewer with personal experience of community work.

Either at this stage or at the next, every candidate should be interviewed by someone competent in character and personality assessment, to check against future problems under emotional or other stress.

- (c) At present the Provincial interview (with representatives of the Department involved) is decisive. We suggest that, as soon as is practicable, there should be a national assessment, this to be normally included in a ministerial assessment conference. The assessors should include at least two people with qualification and experience in community work.

The Department will compile a list of those able to offer such qualified assessment; this list to be approved by Assembly as is the list for ministerial assessment.

- (d) The final acceptance should be by the Province in close consultation with the Department.

For the foreseeable future, the group of CRCWs will retain a national identity with support, etc. being given from the Department centrally; (see above, on Policy).

81. Training

1. In line with Provincial responses, we must ensure that the best professional training is given. The report of the Central Committee's working party on CRCW training emphasises this.

2. That working party reviewed the training programme of former students. The current pattern is that CRCWs must have a standard (nationally recognised) diploma or certificate, together with the experience of suitable theological education and opportunity for reflection.

3. This is currently provided, for those without qualifications, through a 3-year full-time foundation course under the direction of the Principal of St Andrew's Hall, Birmingham, comprising the Selly Oak Colleges 1-year Certificate in Mission followed by a 2-year Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) or 2-year Certificate in Community and Youth Work (CCYW). The full course can, even now, be adapted to suit the previous experience or qualifications of a candidate.

4. The aim is a fully integrated 3-year theological and community training programme for those candidates entering training 'from cold'. The ecumenical possibilities are being explored but if they are impracticable at this stage the URC will move as quickly as possible towards such a course for its CRCW candidates, given the goodwill being shown at St Andrew's Hall.

5. The position of those candidates, who are already professionally qualified and seek the necessary theological element in their training, is somewhat different and is the subject of continuing discussion.

6. One Province specifically mentioned the peculiar difficulties of funding CRCW training; two others recognised the possible cost for the church. If we are intending the 'normal' CRCW to be anticipating lifetime service for the church, it will be necessary to investigate the possibility of making available the funds for ministerial training to CRCW trainees who are unable to secure statutory student grants. The financial arrangements should be made clear to all candidates on application. In-service training opportunities should be provided and funded on the same basis as for those serving in the stipendiary and auxiliary ministry.

82. Accreditation

1. On the basis of the distinctive nature of community work outlined in the Assembly paper and earlier in this paper, we would wish to see a Roll of Accredited CRCWs kept by the Department.

2. This would contain the names of those who:

- (a) have gone through the assessment procedure and been accepted as a candidate;
- (b) have satisfactorily completed the prescribed training;
- (c) have been appointed to a project approved by the URC.

3. This Roll would be maintained by the Vocations Committee on the advice of the sub-committee and the Support Committee. The names of those accredited CRCWs currently not in a post would be separately listed.
4. Those whose names have been added to the Roll should be welcomed by General Assembly.
5. Those who are in training or who are awaiting their first appointment after training and are not yet accredited will come under the care of the Department and be invited to attend CRCW meetings.
6. Accreditation will imply certain responsibilities, e.g. participation in the councils of the URC, representation and advocacy on occasion.

83. **Funding**

1. Eight of the nine Provincial responses (with some dissent registered in one of the two letters received in January) agree with the comment of one of their number: "the URC . . . cannot have CRCWs without paying". Five of the Provincial responses mention the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund as a proper source of salaries for CRCWs; some regard it as a more immediate possibility than others. Three other Provinces call for central URC funding of CRCW posts. It appears that there is widespread agreement that this will be required.
2. We welcome indications that other Departments, as well as Ministries, are supportive of the notion that the MoM rules should be amended by Assembly to enable other salaries to be paid from that fund. This would signal that the URC acknowledges that this is authentic ministry; as we say above, a new form of diaconal lay ministry.
3. In the light of this development we would recommend that the normal terms of employment for accredited CRCWs in recognised posts should be equivalent to those of stipendiary ministers, save that a housing allowance (calculated according to the rules) shall normally be offered in lieu of accommodation, within the local terms of settlement. This remuneration should include a pension provision similar to a minister's. Thus any MoM support must be reckoned at the level of 'true cost of ministry'.
4. We fully appreciate the constraints on the fund and its cycle of planning two years ahead. We would regard an 'allocation' of a number of posts to be filled by CRCWs as preferable on several grounds to the present provision of a sum of money from which grants can be made. Given the lead-time of CRCW training and the length of time required to set up an acceptable project, and assuming a national policy to plan ahead for a balance between available CRCWs and suitable posts, we believe that a developing programme involving CRCWs could be manageable, once the decision on the principle of payment was made by Assembly. Such a programme might include four or five CRCWs to begin with, adding perhaps one a year over a period.
5. We are very concerned at the remaining problem of raising the non-salary costs of such work, including housing, running costs, capital purchases, etc. Too often this is the stumbling block, as it is also in some 'special category' ministry applications. Two Provinces specifically mention the need to seek outside funding, though one traditional source (the local authority) is now less likely; we would not wish to rule out the search for other funding, except when it takes a disproportionate amount of the energy of staff or supporters. One response calls for "partnership from Provinces such as ours helping those areas which are in greater need". We therefore recommend that the Department, in tandem with the World Church and Mission Department should establish a means whereby projects with a budget shortfall which is hindering the work can draw upon such promises.

(Resolution 7)

REIMBURSEMENT OF PREACHING FEES

84. We are very much aware of the confusion and disquiet resulting from the 1984 Assembly conclusion that preaching fees should no longer be reimbursed from central funds to churches in vacancies. There was a narrow majority of only three votes and ever since the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee, charged with the responsibility of drawing from the Fund in the limited number of situations that still remain, have heard many expressions of unhappiness.
85. The age-old custom of paying fees is not dying out; it raises problems of determining; exceptional circumstances, particularly where it is difficult for a church to find preachers, or a visiting minister has to provide a fee for a replacement in his or her own church (the 'knock-on'

effect), and the distinctions between stipendiary and auxiliary ministers and also lay preachers, are highlighted.

86. At the 1986 Assembly, Thames North Province sought to bring a resolution on the matter, but this was disallowed under 'Standing Orders'. The Convener of the Ministries Department, aware of the sensitivity of the matter, undertook that the Department would consult with the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee and other interested parties. This has now been done.

87. The Maintenance of the Ministry Committee have assured us that they can amend the present scheme to take account of some circumstances which were not envisaged back in 1984, and are prepared to do so at this Assembly.

88. However, we have not yet fully determined the broader issues related to ministerial remuneration, particularly now that we have the auxiliary ministry to consider. Once the present scheme has been amended to take account of some present difficulties, we will continue to look at the whole question.

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY

89. Considerable research has been undertaken by a working party which has been considering the Nature of Ministry in the United Reformed Church at a time of great change and development in our thinking. This is the necessary background against which the auxiliary ministry is developing and the CRCW programme is being advanced. A discussion paper has been produced, first to be shared with the Ministry Committees in the Provinces before a statement is presented to the Assembly. As part of the debate we are inviting a number of people representative of the many interests involved to join us in a consultation at Windermere.

PERSONALIA

90. It is with regret that we have heard of the news of the resignation of Mrs Joan Boulind, Convener of the Training Committee, through family circumstances and a very busy life of service in many areas. We have appreciated her leadership and the benefit of her experience in the fields of education and administration, and record our own thanks for her work amongst us.

91. The Department is especially grateful to Michael Dunford for the extra work put in during 1986; this implies a heart-felt welcome for Michael Diffey who has now begun his service as an Executive Secretary. Our gratitude extends also to Doreen Gallant and Grace Main, together with the newcomer in our midst Julie Stevens, all of whom have carried additional responsibilities.

92. Finally, we acknowledge the work of the committees of the Department and our debt to all who have worked with us throughout a busy and productive year.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Ministries Department for debate.
2. The Assembly encourages churches to recognise 15 November 1987 as Vocations Sunday thus reminding all members of the need for ministry both at home and overseas.
3. The Assembly encourages the new designation of the training programmes now available in the colleges, as set out on page 140 of the 1987 Book of Reports to the Assembly, and formally adopts them as training options which satisfy the ordination requirements for stipendiary ministry of the United Reformed Church.
4. The Assembly encourages District Councils to authorise students on internship training to preside at the sacraments as part of their ministry to a local church, where the student and the congregation are so willing.
5. The Assembly notes the statement on colleges and courses as set out in the report of the Training Committee, and in particular recognises:-
 - (a) the following residential colleges as training bodies which may be used to provide basic training programme for stipendiary candidates, specialist courses for auxiliary candidates and in-service training:

Mansfield College, Oxford
Northern College, Manchester
Queen's College, Birmingham
Westminster College, Cambridge.

(b) the following residential colleges as training bodies which may be used to provide specialist courses suitable for stipendiary and auxiliary candidates, and in-service training:

Bala Bangor College, Bangor
Memorial College, Aberystwyth
The United Theological College, Aberystwyth

(c) the following non-residential courses as training bodies which may be used to provide basic training for auxiliary candidates and courses used by the URC-related colleges as an element in the Alternative Programme:

Carlisle Diocesan Training Institute
East Anglian Ministry Training Course
East Midlands Ministry Training Course
Manchester Christian Institute
North East Ordination Course
Oak Hill Non-Stipendiary Ministry
Southern Dioceses Ministerial Training Scheme
Southwark Ordination Course
South West Ministry Training Scheme
St. Albans Diocesan Ministerial Training Scheme
West Midlands Ministry Training Course

6. Assembly acknowledges that in Church-Related Community Workers (CRCWs), properly trained and appropriately employed, the Lord Jesus Christ is giving particular gifts for a particular ministry and is calling such individuals to exercise them in an office which is duly recognised within His Church (76.1.)
 7. Assembly
 - (a) instructs the Ministries Department, through its sub-committee for Ministries in the Community, to plan for and monitor the required balance between the supply of trained CRCWs and the demand for their ministry in suitable posts (79-1.2.)
 - (b) adopts the procedure for the assessment of CRCW candidates (80-1.2.)
 - (c) instructs the Ministries Department, through its Vocations Committee acting on the advice of the sub-committee for Ministries in the Community, to prepare and maintain a Roll of Accredited CRCWs (82-1.2.3.)
 - (d) resolves that, with effect from January 1st, 1989, the following paragraph shall be included in the 'Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration', as paragraph (5.14) "Accredited Church-Related Community Workers serving in post recognised and designated by the Ministries Department". (83-2.3.4.)
 - (e) instructs the Ministries and World Church and Mission Departments to examine and report on those situations where a budget shortfall is hindering the work of ministry and mission (83.5.)
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WORLD CHURCH & MISSION DEPARTMENT CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow

Secretary: Revd Donald Elliott

1. The World Church and Mission Department is concerned with unity negotiations, ecumenical projects, inter-church relations, matters affecting the appointment, settlement and resettlement of missionaries both here and overseas, dialogue with other faiths, and support and education for the Council for World Mission's work. In these reports from the Central Committee and the four committees of the Department there is an account of over forty pieces of work in which they are engaged; about thirty other items have been mentioned in the minutes of committees. This is a reminder of the scope of the Department's work — from the Conference of European Churches to rural mission in Lancashire, from the detail of the URC negotiations with the Congregational Union of Scotland to a Sikh-Christian consultation, from the world-wide concerns of the Council for World Mission to caring for returned missionaries, from a visit to Romania to the celebration of twenty-five years of work in the Ghanaian Chaplaincy — we all have *A precious gift to share*. This is the title of the Department's first popular report which has been widely praised.
2. The Department commends to Assembly the work of the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism and sets out in proposed *Resolution 2* plans for the church's continuing concern for evangelism and mission. In doing so the Department records its thanks to the Revd David Marsden (Convener), the Revd Donald Elliott (Secretary) and the members of the Working Party for their clear-sighted and sustained work.
3. The Department wishes to be able to recruit from the United Kingdom and overseas both lay and ordained people to fill the five 'special ministry' posts allocated to the Department. Such posts are funded by the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee under the *Plan for Partnership* and hitherto have only been able to be filled by ordained ministers because of the rules of the Plan. In one or two 'special ministry' situations the Department would have wished to appoint a qualified lay person because she/he was right for the job and therefore it seeks the agreement of Assembly in asking that the rules of the *Plan for Partnership* be altered in this limited fashion to enable qualified lay or ordained persons to occupy any of the five 'special ministry' posts allocated to the Department, (proposed *Resolution 3*).
4. Among the concerns of the Department this year have been
 - a) the increasing number of contacts that the URC has with churches both of the Reformed tradition and other churches in Europe. Is it true that 'the British church-goer knows more about churches in other continents than about the remainder of Europe'? Look at the Missionary and Ecumenical Work Abroad Committee's report and then re-assess your local church's contacts with the world-wide Church.
 - b) the hope of the Personnel Committee that churches will use the experience of returning missionaries and invite people from overseas to fill the five 'special ministry' places available to the Department.
 - c) the continuing stress by the Mission and Other Faiths Committee on the principle of dialogue in our relationships as Christians with people of other faiths.
 - d) the conversations between the URC and the Congregational Union of Scotland with a view to unity between the two churches. Members of Assembly are asked to study the Appendix to this Report so that they may be informed about the proposals and able to respond to the proposed Resolution asking members to encourage and endorse the Interim Report (proposed *Resolution 9*).
5. The Department wishes to thank the members of District and Provincial World Church and Mission Committees for their work during the year. It is the practice at meetings of the Central Committee of the Department to hear reports from Provincial representatives on ideas and events in their Provinces. As a Departmental committee we have been encouraged by the work undertaken. There have been reports on new County Ecumenical Sponsoring Bodies, a conference on the South African Kairos document, discussion on the question of deprivation in

the midst of affluence, links with personnel overseas and planning a strategy for mission with targets for growth in the next five years.

6. Mrs Helen Lidgett is leaving her post as Communication Secretary in the World Church and Mission Department. We thank her for skilful work in presenting the mission of the church culminating in the Department's report *A Precious Gift to Share*. We wish her well in her next appointment as Secretary for Education in Mission within the Conference For World Mission of the British Council of Churches.

COMMUNICATION

Secretary: Mrs Helen Lidgett

7. The year was marked by a new venture — the production of a full-colour, illustrated popular report on the Department's work entitled *A Precious Gift to Share*. In its pages people involved in initiatives of mission, unity and relations with people of other faiths in Britain and in other parts of the world share their experiences and their enthusiasm. The Department hopes that others will be inspired by their stories.

8. There has been an emphasis during the year on equipping people with the skills needed for mission and dialogue. The 1986 Department Conference drew together people involved in interfaith relations at local level to share ideas and experiences. The 1987 Conference will introduce the CWM Education in Mission process to District representatives who will then be responsible for sharing these insights with the churches of their District. The same theme was explored at the 1986 Swanwick World Mission Conference, which attracted 350 people to work with the Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh on *Doing With Christ — Equipping Local Congregations for Mission*. Conference members made a commitment to carry on the work in their local areas. A group gathered at Windermere in November to discover ways of *Making Mission Lively*. A number of Provinces, Districts and local churches ran training weekends involving Department staff and people with overseas experience as leaders. A few people were able to take this search for skills into the ecumenical arena by participating in the joint Conference for World Mission — Roman Catholic National Missionary Council Conference on the theme *Acting Locally — Thinking Globally — One Mission for One World*.

9. The Department continued its involvement in the Prayer Handbook and prepared the supplement *Partners in Mission* with information about CWM churches and missionaries.

10. The 1987 Swanwick World Mission Conference will be held on 8th-14th August on the theme *Church under Fire*. Revd John Reardon will lead an exploration of the ways churches around the world are passing through the fire of persecution. Christians with experience of Latin America, South Africa, Eastern Europe and the Far East will contribute to the Conference and the worship will be led by Revd John Bell and colleagues from the Iona Community.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK ABROAD COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Derek Wales

Secretary: Revd Donald Elliott

11. A great part of our time this year has been given to the continuing growth of links with other European Churches. One visitor from Eastern Europe expressed a belief that the British church-goer knows more about places in other continents than about the remainder of Europe. The redressing of that imbalance may well follow from the numerous relations being established at every level of our church life with other European Christians.

12. The Revd Susan Armitage was our representative to the **Conference of European Churches** (CEC) which met in Stirling in September 1986. Her report pointed to the part that CEC plays in strengthening Western Protestant and Eastern Orthodox understanding, and to its concern both for mission in secularised Europe and for Christian-Muslim relations. We felt that the URC should in future give stronger support to CEC than it has in the past, while not ignoring the Christian Peace Conference.

13. We received reports of the visits of the Revd John Humphreys (at present working with the

Reformed Church in Hungary) to the **Romanian Reformed Church** and of the Revd Dafydd Jones, as a member of a BCC delegation, to the **USSR**. We appointed two young people to attend the **Kirchentag** in Frankfurt in June 1987 and made plans for a URC delegation to participate in a programme organised jointly by the **Reformed Churches in the Netherlands** and the **Netherlands Reformed Church** in March 1987. We were urged by the Revd Josef Hromadka, of the **Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren** to seek ways by which members of that church might study in this country.

14. We received reports from the Revd John Humphreys and the Revd Philip Woods on a visit made in November 1986 by four members of the URC to the **Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU)** in East Germany. We discussed the value of our links with that and other churches in Europe as contributing to the growth of our understanding both of the churches and of the wider issues of European culture, communism, and the process of peace-making. There is a clear desire in the EKU for closer links with British churches and we look forward to the development of such links with them and other churches at every level of our church life, (proposed *Resolution 4*).

15. Two staff members of the Department made visits to churches overseas in company with groups of an ecumenical and international character: Mrs Helen Lidgett in March 1986 visited the Presbyterian Churches in Ghana in company with a delegation from the Church of the Pfalz in West Germany, and in May 1986 the Revd Donald Elliott attended a consultation in **Nanjing, China**, as one of a delegation from the Conference for World Mission of the BCC. The consultation, called *Nanjing 86: Ecumenical Sharing; a new Agenda*, was held at the instigation of the China Programme of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA.

16. **The CWM European Regional Conference** held in June 1986 considered its response to the Education in Mission initiative. Mr Geoffrey Duncan was appointed to the post of Regional Co-ordinator for Education in Mission for one year from September 1986.

17. The Revd David Dale reported on his visit, as Moderator of the General Assembly, to the **Congregational Union of Guyana** ('rich in soul but poor in things') and to the **United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman** in March 1986. We were glad to hear of the appointment of a minister of the United Church of Zambia to work in Guyana.

18. At the instigation of the General Secretary of the BCC, the Revd Dr Philip Morgan, we agreed to URC participation in the selection and funding of a Free Church minister to work in the **Falkland Islands** for up to three years. The aim would be to assist the development of an ecumenical understanding by the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Churches and to help them realise their potential for giving a global context to local affairs.

19. We received the report of the group established in 1985 to review the **URC Chinese Work** in London and gained acceptance of its recommendations from the Department's Central Committee. The chaplain's work will now focus on community projects among the Chinese community and on part-time student chaplaincy. As with the Ghanaian Chaplaincy the chaplain will be 'earthed' in the URC as an associate minister of a local congregation and he will be supported by the URC Chinese Chaplaincy Committee.

20. We rejoiced in the **25th Anniversary of the Ghanaian Chaplaincy** which was celebrated with an exhibition and a joyful thanksgiving service in London in November, (proposed *Resolution 5*).

21. Further concern for students from overseas is expressed in our representation on the **Churches Commission on Overseas Students**, formerly through the Revd Dr Leslie Green and now through the Revd Norman Healey.

22. We heard with regret the news of the death of **Mr Percy Grimble** whose untiring efforts as organiser of the URC Stamp Bureau raised large sums for the support of CWM. We invite the Assembly to record its appreciation of his work, (proposed *Resolution 6*). The new organiser is Mr. Len Ager.

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

General Secretary: Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh

23. In September 1986, the Secretariat of the Council for World Mission welcomed the Revd

Roderick Hewitt as the Associate Secretary for Education in Mission. Mr Hewitt, a minister of the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman, comes to the Council with a period of cross-cultural experience in mission through serving the URC in South Aston and a passion for the renewal and advance of the Church's youth in mission.

24. Most of the member Churches have responded positively to the Council's invitation to implement a mission-education programme at the level of their local congregations. Though the nature of the programme differs considerably from Church to Church, it is hoped that the inter-Church and inter-cultural sharing of mission experience and stories would enhance the mutual building-up of all those involved.

25. During the year under review, an *Action Reflection* pack has been produced to enhance the education in mission among the youth. With a view to facilitating greater involvement of the youth in specific actions in mission, a Youth in Mission Fund has also been instituted. A leaflet describing this Fund is available.

26. The Executive Committee gave approval to starting the Training In Mission programme again in September 1987 with clarified objectives and process. Shorter mission-workshops to expose a larger number of young people at regional level are being explored.

27. During 1986 member Churches in the Third World demonstrated greater commitment to multidirectional sharing of persons in mission. Of the eight persons sent out as missionaries since May 1986, four were from member Churches in the South.

28. As ways of sharing mission insights and experiences, the Communication Unit produced during the year, several materials including a slide-tape presentation on *Mary's Song: A Manifesto for Mission*, a revised audio-visual aid catalogue and a new pictorial leaflet *CWM is...* The publication, *Love's Poverty Prevails* makes available the experience of member Churches in mission with the urban poor.

29. Common sharing of CWM's resources continues to express the Council's commitment to mission with the disadvantaged, outreach and leadership development. The leaflet *Sharing Resources — 1986* illustrates some of the projects of the member Churches assisted by the CWM's common pool. Leadership development in many of our member Churches seems to be very urgent in the light of the reported phenomenal growth of the Church in many parts, particularly in Southern Africa.

30. Several countries suffered natural calamities in 1986. CWM responded in each case with an emergency grant to assist with relief. Severe drought in South India, cyclones in Madagascar, Solomon Islands and Cook Islands are examples.

31. The Solidarity and Action Fund, established in June 1986, was put into action by responding to the series of crises in South Africa. The extent of the Fund depends upon the immediate response of member Churches to specific crises, indentified by the Council from time to time. It is hoped that several Churches will respond to the special appeal for solidarity and action in relation to South Africa.

32. The ecumenical commitment of the Council was expressed through continued grants to ecumenical bodies and assisting the URC in its involvement ecumenically both in sending teachers of English language to China through Amity Foundation and in the appointment of a person to work with the Hong Kong Christian Council.

33. By July 1987, the CWM will complete ten years of its journey as a community of Churches exploring the new model of sharing resources in mission. In addition to the act of thanksgiving and rededication for renewal and advance in mission, the Council also plans to explore new directions in sharing of 'non-material' resources and newer forms of exchange of personnel. It is hoped that many of our member Churches will take the opportunity to commit themselves anew to CWM's vision and model of partnership in mission for the coming into being of one common humanity in Christ Jesus.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Mary Marsden
Secretary: Miss Sheila Rudofsky

34. The Personnel Committee is concerned with people who respond to the challenge to serve God and his Church in countries other than their own.
35. We rejoice when the Committee completes the arrangements for a missionary to come to our shores in response to a request from one of our URC churches, as we hope to do soon in Southall. That leaves two other requests in the pipeline, yet not all of our five special ministries for people overseas are filled. Why are these opportunities not taken up by congregations and districts? Has your church ever considered the possibility?
36. We rejoice too with missionary candidates when all the selection procedures are over, the training completed, and the arrangements made for them to leave for work with one of our partner churches. Most recently we shared Martin Vickerman's joy on his appointment to Beru, an Island in the Kiribati group, too small to appear as a dot on a map of the Pacific. Pray for him in his isolation. But many posts advertised in CWM's NewShare remain unfilled. Why do you think this is so? Are you or your church able to do anything about this?
37. Each year there are missionaries home on furlough to be cared for, sometimes with special requests; for extended leave because of illness, their own or in their family; or for special study. Others are coming home to resettle in this country — a very different country from the one they left, and they are changed too. Returning ministers sometimes ask for study leave. At certain times of the year short term 'debriefing' courses are available, and we do use these, but a whole term of study demands financial support from the World Church and Mission Department. If a ministerial missionary has served for ten years this can be compared with a sabbatical, but in other cases the Committee has to decide what is appropriate. Recent experience suggests that few returning ministers are settled in a church within the URC at the end of their two months furlough, and the World Church and Mission Department continues to pay their stipend for some months. This can be a very frustrating time for a minister and family, with temporary arrangements for accommodation and children's schooling, and with no work for the minister to do.
38. Some missionaries returning to this country tell us that part of their difficulties and frustrations arise from the feeling that people in the churches are not interested in hearing about their experiences overseas. What relation does this have to the feeling, so often expressed by overseas Christians living here, that our churches are not really interested in them and what they have to contribute from the experience of their home churches? Many missionaries nowadays do not spend all their working life overseas, but return expecting to contribute to the life of the URC from their missionary training and experience. How can we, the Personnel Committee and local congregation, enable them to do this?
39. After each Committee one member volunteers to write to all URC missionaries, sharing the concerns of the Committee, and we value the responses we receive. For example in a discussion on 'What is a missionary?' someone wrote back — "I am sure much of the answer is to be found in our understanding of 'going out into a foreign environment' whether it be in the URC or in rural Africa . . . Maybe if we are prepared to feel 'uncomfortable' and 'unsure' we open ourselves to the possibility of learning new approaches, responding to new challenges, and to change." How pertinent to life of the URC today!
40. The Committee itself has been enriched by reports presented to it by World Church and Mission Department staff and others who have made visits overseas. Much of this material can be read by Assembly members in *A Precious Gift to Share*.
41. Mainly about People is a recurring item on our agenda and the Committee records its gratitude to the Personnel Secretary, Miss Sheila Rudofsky, who executes with energy and love the caring brief of the Committee for all missionaries, scholarship holders and others travelling to or from the URC under the auspices of the World Church and Mission Department.
42. The Committee has been happy to be involved once more with other denominations in Britain through the Conference for World Mission of the British Council of Churches in recruiting more teachers to work with the Amity Foundation in China.

43. Progress has been made in confirming short term experiences with the Reformed Church in Hungary and another which is linked with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. It is hoped that more opportunities will become available on a 'volunteer' basis with partner churches.

44. Ministers able to respond to the summer pastoral exchange programme with churches in the US have gained much from their experiences. The requests from the US churches are very great and we are unable to meet them. We therefore encourage ministers to consider these opportunities.

45.1 People appointed to serve overseas:

Through CWM — Mr Anthony and Mrs Susan Gay of Pontypridd, Wales Province, to Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

Through the Amity Foundation, as part of a team sponsored by member churches of the BCC — Mr John and Mrs Jean Johnson of Heaton Chapel, Stockport, North Western Province, to Fuzhou University, Fujian, People's Republic of China.

45.2 Short term experiences overseas:

Mr Elystan Miles — 1½ years at Debrecen with the Reformed Church in Hungary.

Mr Neil Thorogood — 2 years at Tung Hai University linked through CWM with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

45.3 Candidates in training at St Andrew's Hall for service overseas:

Mr Martin Vickerman of Sheffield, Yorkshire Province.

45.4 Missionaries who have completed their service with churches through CWM:

The Revd Raymond and Mrs Amanda Adams: Taiwan

Miss Audrey Fletcher: India

The Revd Pearce and Mrs Catherine Jones: Jamaica

Miss Judith Rogers: Papua New Guinea

The Revd Kenneth and Mrs Mavis Maltus Smith: Botswana

Dr Ronald and Mrs Gillian Turner-Smith: Hong Kong

45.5 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

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 Charles and Mrs Ruth Reid: Presbyterian Church (USA)
Pastoral ministry at Kirkham and Elswick, Lancashire

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

45.6 People from overseas receiving scholarship support from the URC:

Miss Chuang Shu-Chen: Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

The Revd Wolanyo Godfried Kwadzo Dei: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

The Revd Huh Shick: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

The Revd Johnson Apenad Mbillah: Presbyterian Church of Ghana
all at St Andrew's Hall.

45.7 A full list of missionaries appears in the Year Book.

ST ANDREW'S HALL: REPORT FOR 1985/1986

Principal: Revd David Grainger

46. Dan and Joyce Beeby were farewelled by colleagues and friends in the Summer of 1986 and now live in their own home nearby. I took office in September and am glad to report that high student numbers have been maintained and that the tendency towards a gradual widening of the

range of courses offered through Selly Oak College continues.

47. Margaret Quinn from USA has joined us for six months voluntary work in our library. We are in the process of examining provision for families at St Andrew's Hall, in terms of accommodation, academic life, community participation and recreational facilities for children.

48. Martin Conway, the new President of Selly Oak Colleges, has brought his gifts to bear on the challenges of growth in numbers and the introduction of new courses. In September 1987 the Diploma in Mission will be offered, in cooperation with the University of Birmingham.

49. Apart from missionary candidates and bursary students from overseas some ministers have used the College for sabbatical leave and others have attended a number of week long modules offered by the Department of Mission. We continue to offer training to a number of Church Related Community Workers. In September 1987 a group of ten young people will be participating in the Training in Mission programme offered by the Council for World Mission. They will spend one term at St Andrew's Hall.

MISSION AND OTHER FAITHS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Roger Tomes

Secretary: Revd John Parry

50. The third consultation between Sikhs and Christians held in November 1986 was a further reminder that no one practises faith in a social vacuum. Those present continued to explore the scriptures and spirituality of each faith, but the Sikhs also spoke with some pain about growing discrimination against teachers and pupils of Asian background and about the failure of the Christian churches to make a public protest against the new visa regulations for people entering Britain from certain countries, including India. They welcomed the publication of *Faith in the city* and were encouraged to comment on its findings and to support their implementation.

51. The consultation between Jews and Christians held in January this year also concentrated on matters of common concern largely in the public sphere: racism, feminism and the role of women, and the Holocaust. There was a paper from a Jew and a Christian on each topic, and it is hoped that these will be published.

52. In a consideration of *The community of women and men in the church* the Committee noted that many participants in its consultations and conferences were women, and reflected that women have a key role in dialogue, since they have access to entire families.

53. In response to the resolution at last year's Assembly, the Committee has discussed with the Youth Secretary how young people can best be helped to understand the process of dialogue and encouraged to take part in it. The subject is certainly being discussed at provincial and district youth conferences, and the Ginger Group has lived and worked in interfaith situations. However there is no substitute for the experience of dialogue. Some opportunities already exist — such as **Summer in Southall** — but local initiatives are equally important. The Wolverhampton interfaith group invited pupils from local schools to come and comment on a new RE syllabus, and the result has been a group of young people of different faiths who have continued to meet.

54. Some young people in the URC (and older people too) are still wary of dialogue, not being sure that it is compatible with loyalty to the gospel. It may be admitted that the Christian tradition has not developed a ready made theology of dialogue, though it does provide significant examples of it, and there is now an increasing number of Christians who are convinced that the dialogue they have experienced is of profound theological importance and indeed God given. The Assembly in 1983 was sufficiently convinced to adopt 'as its own' the Guidelines on Dialogue formulated by the British Council of Churches. Our Committee has approached the Doctrine and Worship Committee with a view to our reflecting together on the theological significance of the experience of dialogue.

55. The Committee welcomes the emphasis in the inter-church process *Not strangers but pilgrims* on meeting with people of other faiths as one of the areas for local ecumenical cooperation; the inclusion in *Growth for their sake*, the proposals of the evangelism working party, of dialogue as one of the ways in which it believes God wants the URC to grow; the stress in the CWM initiative

Education for mission on the sharing of stories about interfaith dialogue among the member churches of CWM; and the challenge of the consultation on *Mission with the poor in urban/rural Britain* to make sure that dialogue does not evade the issues of poverty and deprivation.

56. Sooner or later the experience of dialogue must find expression in our worship. This does not necessarily mean interfaith services: people of other faiths often have greater reservations about these than Christians do. But our prayers and hymns should show an awareness of these neighbours. Our Committee has asked both the Doctrine and Worship Committee and the Hymn Book Committee to bear this in mind in their future productions. We are also compiling some guidance for those who have to conduct baptisms, weddings and funerals where one of the parties professes another faith.

57. In response to a number of requests we have produced a leaflet whose aim is to help people understand Jehovah's Witnesses. It explains how they use the Bible, describes what goes on in a Kingdom Hall, and offers some advice on how to handle a doorstep conversation.

58. At this Assembly the Committee loses the services of Dr George Chryssides and Mrs Helen Lidgett. They have both worked extremely hard and they have both been pioneers in aspects of our work. We are very grateful to them.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK AT HOME COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Slow

Secretary: Revd Bernard Thorogood

59. Several ecumenical initiatives have each reached an important stage during the past year: in particular, our conversations with the Congregational Union of Scotland, developments by the Covenanted Churches in Wales and the Inter-Church Process *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*. These have given the Committee an exciting but demanding agenda.

Scotland

60. **Reformed Churches in Scotland** This grouping (Church of Scotland, United Reformed Church, Congregational Union of Scotland, United Free Church of Scotland, Methodist Synods of Scotland & Shetland) has agreed on the style of a common church membership certificate.

61. **Multilateral Church Conversations** In the light of the Church of Scotland's rejection of the specific basis for a union scheme, progress in this direction is unlikely at the moment. However, interest and involvement in *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* may encourage new initiatives.

62. **Congregational Union of Scotland** The negotiations endorsed by last General Assembly have moved significantly and quickly. Four 2-day meetings of the Joint Negotiating Group have been held, involving a considerable amount of work in between them. The first meeting, held at Durham in June 1986, led to the publication of *A Proposal to Advance the Unity of the Church by the Joining Together of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom and the Congregational Union of Scotland*. A resumé of the main sections of the document is attached to this Departmental Report as an Appendix, (although preparation of the Scheme to unify the two bodies is proceeding, which will inevitably show developments). Copies of the Proposal were distributed to the other Assembly Departments and to the Provincial Synods. The Assembly Executive Committee at its November meeting noted the report and progress being made in the Joint Negotiating Group and encouraged the continuance of the work.

63.1 The Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland gave general approval to the Proposal in September 1986 with a 73% vote in favour, and asked that a scheme be prepared for discussion and decision in both churches. The Joint Negotiating Group has undertaken some major work on this and a final document will become available in early summer.

63.2 The unifying process within the United Reformed Church is outlined as follows:

The Scheme for unifying the two bodies will be circulated before the General Assembly (probably in 1988) and at the Assembly will be presented for approval, and will require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass. If approved, the Assembly will then resolve to refer the proposals to Synods and District Councils. If more than one-third of the Synods or the District Councils resolve before the end of the calendar year to oppose the proposals, the matter will not

proceed. If there is no such opposition, then the General Assembly the next year will reconsider the proposals. The views of the Mid-Scotland District Council, following full consultation with its local churches, will be specifically reported to the Assembly. The Assembly will be invited to ratify the proposals, a simple majority being required.

63.3 The negotiations have been consolidated by the increasing contact between the departments of both denominations. This is already well advanced in World Church & Mission matters and youth work. The Committee encourages the strengthening of our links with the Congregational Union of Scotland in every way possible.

Wales

64. **Ministry in a Uniting Church**, the latest report of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, provides a means whereby a fully reconciled ministry could serve in a united body. The method of reconciliation is similar to the North India scheme and the pattern of ministry builds on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the Anglican/Reformed dialogue, *God's Reign and Our Unity*. The Committee has discussed the document on three occasions and encourages the Welsh Synod to continue the debate within Wales requesting the Synod to make its response at its meeting in October 1987, so that the matter may be brought before the General Assembly in 1988. (*Ministry in a Uniting Church* is available from Tavistock Bookshop).

64.1 Even if all the Covenanted Churches agree to move towards a Scheme of Union, a Uniting Church could be at least a decade away. However, it is vital that future debate on matters of substance should be within agreed guidelines. Assembly is asked, therefore, to approve the following procedure.

64.2 The first formal discussion of a Scheme of Union will be in the Welsh Synod. If that body votes by a two-thirds majority in favour, a proposal will be brought to General Assembly. Provided Assembly also votes by a two-thirds majority in favour, the Scheme will be referred to all the Provincial Synods, and to District Councils and local churches within the Province of Wales. If more than one-third of those church meetings, District Councils or Synods register a vote against the Scheme, it falls. If no such opposition is recorded, then the matter will return to the next General Assembly for a final vote which would be by a simple majority.

65. **Not Strangers but Pilgrims** The Inter-Church Process of 'prayer, reflection and debate' has been gathering momentum and is entering a crucial phase. The task before the churches now is to evaluate and assess all that has been happening since the participating denominations began to share their understanding of the nature and purpose of the church. It is estimated that approximately one million people in local churches across the country took part in the Lent '86 programme *What on earth is the Church for?*.

65.1 To stimulate the ecumenical debate, three important handbooks have been published jointly by the British Council of Churches and the Catholic Truth society:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>Reflections</i> | — how twenty-six churches see their life and mission
£2.95 |
| <i>Views from the Pews</i> | — the popular account of what those who took part in the Lent '86 programme are saying to the churches
£2.00 |
| <i>Observations</i> | — on the church from Britain and abroad, a contribution to the debate by people within, on the fringe of, or outside the churches. They include observations from house churches, Christian communities and Aid agencies as well as international sources
£2.95 |

65.2 These are available from the Tavistock Bookshop. As valuable resource material for the continuing debate, these books need to be read and discussed at every level of denominational and ecumenical life.

65.3 The handbooks, together with a working document prepared by the Inter-Church Meeting of the participating denominations in November 1986, will provide the material for the national Spring Conferences in Nottingham, Bangor and St Andrews. These Conferences will prepare findings and recommendations as additional material for the British Conference to be held at Swanwick in September. (The substance of the working document has been widely distributed as

a newspaper insert).

65.4 The Swanwick Conference will have some vital things to say to the churches:

- a) in seeking unity in shared mission, how should denominations respond to the challenge of change at local, regional and national level, and
- b) what ecumenical instruments are needed to enable us to make significant strides forward together — no longer strangers but pilgrims?

The report and recommendations of the Swanwick Conference will be available for Assembly 1988.

65.5 Members of the United Reformed Church, with all their partners in the Inter-Church Process are asked to use the worship and study material available from the British Council of Churches. We invite all members of the United Reformed Church to make the *Not Strangers but Pilgrims* Prayer their daily prayer:

Lord God, we thank you
For calling us into the company
Of those who trust in Christ
And seek to obey his will.

May your Spirit guide and strengthen us
In mission and service
To your World;

And may we be Strangers no longer
But Pilgrims together
On the way to your Kingdom.

Amen

65.6 A video, suitable for discussion in ecumenical house groups and councils of Churches, is available from the British Council of Churches.

65.7 A study guide to the URC Statement on the nature and purpose of the Church (which was prepared for *Reflections* and included in last year's Assembly Reports) has been prepared by the Revd Christopher Baker, Training Officer in the East Midlands Province. Suitable for elders and church meetings and house groups, it is available from Tavistock Bookshop and the East Midlands Province Office.

65.8 A small working party is already making plans for another combined Lent course in 1988. Most of the local radio stations which took part in Lent '86 have indicated their willingness to be involved in a common theme.

Ireland

66. Following a report on the visit of the Provincial Moderators to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland last summer, the Committee, recognising the links already made with that church by the Church and Society Department, invited the Revd David Nesbitt, Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Committee and an ecumenical representative to the URC General Assembly, to attend its January meeting. The sharing of his experience and concerns led to discussion about how links between our two churches may be developed and strengthened. The present youth exchange programme and the building up of personal contacts already made are obvious ways forward. Other possibilities include short-term ministerial exchanges, participation in training courses and the twinning of congregations.

67. **One body, many members**, a discussion document on the theology and practice of Christian initiation and church membership, has been prepared by a working party set up by the British Council of Churches. The Committee, in making an initial response, expressed appreciation for the work undertaken, while pointing out that the working party seemed not to have taken sufficiently seriously the ecumenical atmosphere in which so many of our young people are coming to faith and then seeking entry into the one church of God.

67.1 More positively, recognition is given to the new context of Local Ecumenical Projects. Joint confirmations are desirable in LEPs leading to a joint membership roll acknowledged by all the churches. We welcome the comment that it is the local minister who should normally represent the URC, not the Provincial Moderator.

67.2 Comments on the problem of requests for baptism by persons baptised as infants are helpful but since this is a matter of great pastoral concern, it calls for further sensitive thought to be given to it. Churches need to be able to respond with a visible symbol of declaration of faith which will engage the emotions as well as the intellect of the believer and the congregation.

68. **Local Ecumenism — Methodist/United Reformed Church** A paper received from the Staffordshire District Council outlined some of the hopes and difficulties experienced in United Reformed/Methodist churches and Local Ecumenical Projects. Areas of discussion included: oversight given by ecumenical Sponsoring Bodies, financial contribution to overseas mission work, duplication of annual statistical returns, Joint Area Meetings (as in the Mid-Wilts and West-Wilts Areas in the South Western Province), the implications for ministerial training arising from the need to work in teams. The sharing of experiences by Committee members, added to other correspondence on this matter, will keep the item on the Committee's agenda.

69. **New Enterprise in Mission Fund** During 1986 grants of £15,992 were made to six projects. New applications were received for a variety of local mission projects for which the total could not be found from other sources. The budgetted sum will probably be inadequate to meet demands. More requests for short-term funding are being received as a result of response to community needs by local churches, sometimes in partnership with neighbouring churches of different denominations.

69.1 The revised version of the leaflet *Can we get a grant for our project?* is available to all churches. Copies may be obtained from Tavistock Bookshop.

70. **Urban/Rural Mission** At the beginning of June 1986, there was held a weekend Consultation at Ilkley on **Mission with the poor in Urban/Rural Britain**. It was a follow-up to a previous gathering on city ministry, but was broadened both in scope and in participation. The following proposals were developed in response to presentations by groups from three different local situations: Salford (Urban Mission), Haringey and Hackney, and rural Lancashire.

- 1 to regard ministry as the work and calling of the whole Church in its setting;
- 2 to provide adequate support for a variety of ministries;
- 3 to develop training in community work skills, social analysis and neighbourhood intervention for ministers and others;
- 4 to initiate a deliberate programme to overcome racism in and through the church;
- 5 to keep up pressure for ecumenical decision-making in the use of all resources, especially in rural and inner city areas;
- 6 to re-examine the church's way of engaging in public issues so as to give a voice to the deprived;
- 7 to encourage the development of strategies for mission in Districts and groups of churches bearing in mind social settings;
- 8 to adopt a 'whole-church' approach to tackle the issues of 'divided Britain', including a General Assembly focus;
- 9 to provide wide Biblical understanding for 'liberation theology' in Britain;
- 10 to restore to evangelism the Biblical sense of social repentance, helped through overseas contacts.

70.1 These proposals are now working their way through the relevant Departments of the Assembly. They are similar to the points arising from the URC response to *Faith in the City* and some are being taken up through the **Growth for Their Sake** process.

71. **The Rural Consultant**, the Revd John Clarke, continually reminds the Committee of the context of our rural churches — and the URC has a large number of them. The future of the agricultural industry and the effect of changes in the Common Agricultural Policy are placing great stress on many members of the farming community. The rural churches are faced with great responsibilities and opportunities in exercising pastoral care in this situation.

71.1 The Rural Consultant is glad to accept invitations to churches, District Councils and Synods and ecumenical groups to lead worship and/or to help them prepare a strategy for rural mission.

72. **The appointments** of the Revd John Johansen-Berg as Moderator of the Free Church Federal

Council 1987-88 and Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow as a Vice-President of the British Council of Churches are a cause for joy and satisfaction.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the report of the World Church and Mission Department.
2. Assembly remits the work of the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism to an Evangelism and Mission Education Group to be set up within World Church and Mission Department as a sub-committee of the Missionary and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee, and agrees that
 - the Evangelism and Mission Education Group be serviced by and support the incoming Secretary for Mission Education, and comprise two to three members of the Missionary and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee, and five or six others with varied Departmental and other concerns;
 - the Group be set up forthwith and be subject to review before May 1989 in the light of experience;
 - in so far as Inter-Departmental coordination of priorities for growth in mission in the United Reformed Church is beyond the scope of this Group, this function be assigned by the Executive Committee to another appropriate group;
 - the Inter-Departmental Working Party on Evangelism be discharged as from 31 October 1987, with thanks for its pioneering and creative work.
3. Assembly amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, by the inclusion of the following additional paragraph:
 - 5.15 Such qualified laypeople from overseas or the United Kingdom as may be appointed in place of ordained ministers from overseas to five 'Special Ministries' by the World Church and Mission Department, acting under the authority of the General Assembly resolution of 8-11 May 1979 and of the Assembly Executive Committee resolution of 7-8 July 1983.
4. Assembly notes with appreciation the growth of relations with other churches in Europe and urges Provinces, Districts and congregations to take advantage of any opportunity of developing personal links with these churches.
5. Assembly records with pleasure and gratitude to God the Silver Jubilee of the Ghanaian Chaplaincy and looks forward with confidence to the continuation of this work.
6. Assembly receives with regret the news of the death of Mr Percy Grimble and wishes to record its appreciation of his contribution, through the URC Stamp Bureau, to the work of the Council for World Mission.
7. Assembly greets the Council for World Mission on its tenth anniversary in its new form, and invites local churches and councils to celebrate 19 July 1987, or another suitable day, as CWM Day, using the specially-prepared worship service.
8. Assembly invites ministers and local church leaders to present in a more positive and challenging way the opportunities there are for service overseas both within CWM partner churches and the wider Church.
9. Assembly notes the interim report, *A Proposal to Advance the Unity of the Church by the Joining Together of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom and the Congregational Union of Scotland*; encourages the Joint Negotiating Group to continue its work; and endorses the unifying process proposed by the Joint Negotiating Group.
10. Assembly notes the progress made by the Covenanted Churches in Wales in *Ministry in a Uniting Church*; encourages the Welsh Synod to continue the debate within Wales; asks the Welsh Synod to make its response at its meeting in October 1987 so that the matter may be brought to the General Assembly in 1988; and endorses the procedure for preparing a URC response to a Scheme of Union in Wales.

11. Assembly, realising the importance of Christian witness in rural areas, commends to the churches the ministry of the Rural Consultant and seeks to ensure a continuing URC contribution to rural life.

WORLD CHURCH & MISSION DEPARTMENT — APPENDIX

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF SCOTLAND

— RESUMÉ OF THE 1986 PROPOSAL

1.1. **The Congregational Union of Scotland** was formed in 1897 from the (Presbyterian) Evangelical Union and the former Congregational Union. It has approximately 16,000 members in 100 churches, divided into 10 Districts. It has under 90 ministers — or one for every 200 people.

1.2. Each member church takes full responsibility for all aspects of its day to day life and witness. The churches meet in Annual Assembly to decide jointly on those issues pertinent to over-all denominational life.

2.1. **Why unite?** The Joint Negotiating Group at its first meeting identified reasons and parameters for union between the CUS and URC. The major question is: why unite? Will a union be an advantage for the local church and an advance for the kingdom of God?

2.2. Positive answers come in the following terms:

- i) Both the URC and the CUS place the 'ecumenical imperative' high on their agenda; the URC through its bringing together of 3 traditions into one body, the CUS through its constant challenge to ecumenical adventure in Scotland. It is now time to translate words into action.
- ii) The unique character of the proposed union is its 'cross-border' dimension, releasing a new dynamic in inter-church relationships. The Proposal allows for other denominations to enter if they wish. It also helps to create an encouraging climate for all churches to work for the uniting of the whole Church in new and exciting ways, both north and south of the border. The ecumenical discussion will be taking place in a UK context. This will be a sign to and in an increasingly divided society.
- iii) The churches of the CUS will benefit locally by having enlarged resources opened up to them, e.g. in youth work, local mission, educational provision, range of ministry, etc.
- iv) The Church is being constantly reformed. Development and growth is essential in all our discipleship. Within an enlarged, new URC, we shall be facing fresh questions and seeing new perspectives. The union will require us to examine our life in Christ and the form of our church community. Together we shall help one another to discover anew the breath of Christian fellowship and discipleship, which will witness to the nation of the reconciling power of Christ in the whole of life.

3. **So this is the way forward?**

3.1. For these reasons, the Joint Negotiating Group believes that the formation of a new URC which has a significant proportion of membership in Scotland is the right way forward for both present denominations and for the whole Church in the United Kingdom.

3.2. While we do not see clearly the shape of ultimate Church unity, we can discern one objective which is attainable now. The church is at the same time to serve our natural communities and to transcend them. It will have a significant presence in and for a town, a city, a region or a nation, but will also point beyond these boundaries.

3.3. In the UK our ecumenical enterprise has rightly taken note of the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities since they are distinctive cultural, historical and social realities. But the united Church of the future will have also a UK dimension since that, too, is a human community in which we have a common life. We believe that future can begin now and that we should develop the URC as one church in the UK which yet gives a proper place to the distinctive church life and the different relationships of its members in England, Scotland and Wales. This holds together the readiness to envisage the Scottish and Welsh parts of the church moving into new united churches in those countries should they come into being, and the continued fellowship and witness across every border. One very real contribution of Scots and Welsh people in a united church is the insight born of experience which understands how to be a citizen of both nation and kingdom.

4. The new URC

4.1. The new body will be a united church, a Reformed church and a United Kingdom church. The basic structures will be those of the present URC but the family within the church will be different.

4.2. The major structural change will take the form of a Scottish Synod of the URC, including the Congregational Churches and the former Churches of Christ already in the URC membership. A United Kingdom church, one in faith and doctrine but at the same time genuinely part of the Scottish community at every level of its structures, introduces a new dimension, with implications for relationships with other churches in both Scotland and the United Kingdom.

5.1. **The local church pattern** Local congregations of the CUS becoming part of the new URC will be required to acknowledge a responsibility towards each other for that mutual care and guidance exercised through District Councils in the same way as happens in the present URC.

5.2. It is proposed that responsibility for pastoral oversight within the local church should be that already worked out in the URC (URC Basis Section 1. para.22). This means that:

- (a) Local churches in Scotland are offered this description of the functions of elders as the style of local leadership to be adopted from the date of union. But since local office bearers in Scotland, having different titles and following different constitutions, yet serve in ways very similar to those set down for elders in the URC;
- (b) at union, local churches in Scotland may adopt an ordained eldership as a mark of their commitment to union or, if they have a group which is called to pastoral leadership but which has a different name, will be assured that this body will be recognised accordingly.

5.3. It is recognised that an important debate is taking place about the nature and function of Christ's ministry in the contemporary churches, especially as this affects the responsibilities of church members for service to the world. Therefore, the united church will undertake at an early date a review of diaconal ministries, both local and general, considering eldership and other forms of service by church members and in consultation with other churches. The position regarding this element of church life will be reviewed by the General Assembly within 4 years from the date of union.

6. Ministry

6.1. To become one church means unity in ministry. All ordained ministers of the Word and Sacraments of the Congregational Union of Scotland and of the present United Reformed Church in good standing would, at the time of union, become ministers of the newly united church. All ministers of the new United Reformed Church would be eligible to be called to a vacant pastorate anywhere in the URC throughout the United Kingdom.

6.2. The existing system of Auxiliary Ministry in the present URC will become available for the CUS churches. At union, existing Lay Pastors in Scotland will be given the opportunity to become Auxiliary Ministers or remain as Lay Pastors for the rest of their service.

7. The Scottish Synod

7.1. The Scottish Synod of the URC will be the identifiable Scottish section of the church, relating to other churches in Scotland. In one of its meetings each year, it will have the opportunity to maintain all that is best in the present Annual Assembly of the CUS.

7.2. As within the present URC it is District Councils which appoint the members of the General Assembly. So that the needs of the national church life in Scotland may be met, it is recommended that additional Synod representation be increased from 3 to 9 persons.

7.3. The Synod will have the major responsibility for mission strategy and for ecumenical relations in Scotland.

7.4. It might be thought fitting at the point of union to designate Scottish and Welsh local churches as gathered within National Synods of the URC, sensitive to the needs of those who live in Scotland and Wales, and indicating that these Synods do have a different function from others.

8. Youth work

8.1. A Scottish Synod of the URC will have as a priority integration with the youth policy of the

whole church. A new Scottish Youth Committee will develop youth leadership training, encourage the participation of young people in the 'Councils' of the church, build up ecumenical youth links in Scotland, promote the youth dimension in mission through CWM, encourage the concept of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth.

9. Women's work

Closely associated with the CUS is a Women's Union which is very well organised throughout the churches. It has two main features — one the fostering of fellowship within the local church and the other a joint diaconal interest — at present funds are being raised to help with establishing hospices. While carrying out its activities independently, the Women's Union makes an Annual Report to General Assembly. Throughout Scotland, at community level, this organisation is often more ecumenical, in its fellowship with women from all denominations, than the denominations themselves are allowed to be. Accordingly, it is likely that, with the lack of an English equivalent the Women's Union will continue in essentially the same form after union.

10. World mission

Both denominations are firmly connected to and through the Council for World Mission: in fact, this is possibly their strongest common bond.

COMMUNICATIONS AND SUPPLIES COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Netherwood

Secretary: Miss Alma Wade

PUBLICATIONS

Reform

1. The Review Group's recommendation that Norman Hart should be re-appointed as Editor for a further five years was welcomed by Communication and Supplies. Arising out of the Review Group's recommendations the Editorial Board will be newly constituted as the Editorial and Management Board and will include the Secretary for Communication and Supplies.
2. The Board's function will be to support the Editor in their declared aim:
Reform is a periodical produced by the URC to provide a common forum for its members and to encourage them to consider and discuss the issues of the day and to know and understand the nature of the Church to which they belong. It is not an official mouthpiece of the Church and the Editor's first concern is to produce an attractive periodical which will sell on its own merits because URC readers find it attractive to read and which will give pleasure as well as stimulation to its readers.
3. They will regularly review the issues of *Reform* and, in consultation with Communication and Supplies Committee, consider promotion, pricing, production and distribution, and will maintain a policy for advertising in *Reform* which does not damage the life of the URC or hurt the faith of its members but which helps to sustain the periodical and keep it in the market-place.
4. Additional copies of the June 1987 issue will be printed and will contain very full coverage of Assembly issues. Churches are urged to use this issue for promotional purposes and extra copies (or singles) may be ordered from the Assembly Bookstall. Delegates will find it very helpful when reporting back.

Annual URC Books

5. In 1986 we published Richard Hall's *For Everything a Season* and issued a colour poster advertising all three Annual Books to date.
6. For 1987 we shall be publishing jointly with the Baptist Union *Come Wind Come Weather – Bunyan's Pilgrim in Today's World* by John H Taylor. The book will be available for URC October Synods and the BU's autumn meetings. Promotion will continue into 1988 which is the tercentenary of Bunyan's death. We understand a number of national and local events are planned to mark the tercentenary.

Year Book

7. Part 2, the list of churches, is now on computer. This has produced some problems but we expect these to have been overcome by the time of publication at the beginning of October. The Editors are always glad to receive any corrections.

Assembly Publications

8. There is no change this year to the method of producing either *Reports to Assembly* or *Record of Assembly* as the Office Management Group is carrying out a study of all the word processing/computer and printing operations at Church House.

Communications Leaflets

9. In June last year the former 'Publicity Group' was disbanded and, instead, we have appointed small Working Parties to undertake specific tasks such as Assembly communication arrangements and the production of Communications Leaflets. During the year we produced *Does Your Church Need Video?* (June Information Service) and *Get it in the Paper* (November Information Service – churches' relationship with their local papers). The subject of the next Communications Leaflet will be the Information Service.

URC Hymnbook

10. The Secretary is assisting the Hymnbook Editorial Committee in negotiations with potential publishers.

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLIES

Assembly Bookstall

11. The Assembly Bookstall will again carry a large selection of URC and other material.
12. Churches are reminded that Bookstalls can be supplied for 2-3 day events, but we do appreciate as much notice as possible. The Bookshop staff who will be present at the Assembly Bookstall, will be glad to give advice and take advance orders.
13. Bernard Thorogood and Colin Evans have agreed to sign copies of their latest books. See Assembly information material for dates and times.

Bookshop

14. Bookshop turnover has remained fairly steady (at about £63,000). The range of book titles has been broadened and sales have increased; as expected, sales of logo goods — first launched in 1985 — have now declined.
15. In September *Tavistock Bookshop (Windermere)* opened and we see this as an extension of the London Bookshop. One of our main concerns during 1987 will be to seek *additional* outlets for URC titles.

Mail Order

16. A number of staff problems during 1986 slowed down the turn-round of orders, especially during the last quarter of the year which is always the busiest. However, over 1,000 packets were mailed during December and we hope to give a speedier response to all orders during 1987.

PRESS/PR

17. We are happy that Brian Cooper continues to look after Press/PR matters on our behalf and that he is able to be at Assembly this year.

LOCAL RADIO

18. Churches are again urged to listen to and contribute to their own local radio stations. Following the *Lent '86* programmes on local radio, piles of post and jammed switchboards were reported at a number of stations, proving that people *do* listen to religious radio programmes.

ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

CACLB (Churches' Advisory Committee for Local Broadcasting)

19. This group has now adopted a formal constitution and by the time of Assembly will probably have appointed a General Secretary. They are now involved with Video and Cable Television as well as Local Radio. The Revd David Netherwood has been the URC representative to CACLB for over 10 years.

AFCC (Association for Christian Communication)

20. URC continues to support AFCC and our representative since its inauguration in 1983 has been the Revd Edmund Banyard. They now publish a quarterly Newsletter, *Church and Media*, and occasional papers on Communications subjects, eg the Green Paper on Radio. A starter course in *Television Awareness* has been produced for churches and others interested in promoting informed debate about television and its role in communicating values.

Representation

21. Communication and Supplies Committee agreed to the suggestions of the Revd Edmund Banyard and Revd David Netherwood that in future the URC representatives to AFCC and CACLB should be the Secretary for Communication and Supplies. We are grateful to both gentlemen for their work on these organisations.
22. As a matter of policy the Secretary will be asked to represent the URC on national inter-denominational matters.

Electronic Viewdata

23. *Teletext* and *Prestel* have been discussed by Communication and Supplies Committee and by World Church and Mission Department's Mission and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee.

A Working Party, including representatives of both Committees, has been set up to decide whether URC should advertise on either or both.

Religious Audio-Visual Reviewing Panel

24. We continue to support the Reviewing Panel by providing secretarial assistance and attending the meetings as often as possible. AVA Magazine, in which the reviews are published, is commended to churches as a good source of information about film and video programmes, and suppliers.

VIDEO

25. The January Committee reviewed the titles available on loan, together with the number of bookings each had had during 1986. Whilst more churches are using video programmes in house-groups, etc, it is thought that many find it more convenient to borrow locally or direct from the producers as take-up of URC loan copies is fairly slow. We plan to continue to purchase programmes which are helpful or interesting and remind churches that a list of current titles, together with a brief description, duration, etc, can be sent on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

TELEVISION

26. Four of the Provincial Moderators will be attending a Television Course at CTVC (the Churches' TV Centre at Bushey) later in the year.

EXHIBITIONS

Christian Resources Exhibition

27. We are encouraging local participation in the CREs and are happy to give as much help as possible by lending display material and providing URC publications for sale if the local organisers wish to have them. There was a small URC Stand at the CRE in Manchester last September, organised by North Western, Mersey and Yorkshire Provinces; Southern and Wessex Provinces are joining to take a Stand at Sandown Park immediately after Assembly.

28. There will be a CRE in Glasgow in September and it is hoped to arrange for some form of URC representation there.

Other Exhibitions

29. We are happy to lend display material for local events on a strictly 'first come, first served' basis. The *URC at Work* set of photographs is being updated and material produced for Assembly is sometimes available.

STAFF

30. The present Secretary retires at the end of May and it is expected that her successor's name will be known before Assembly. We welcome the fact that the new Secretary will be a member of the *Reform* Editorial and Management Board and will have greater involvement with the Information Service, as well as representing the URC at AFCC and CACLB meetings.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives this report for debate.
2. Assembly endorses the setting up of the Editorial and Management Board of *Reform*, noting their aims and parameters.
3. Assembly encourages Communication and Supplies to continue to represent the URC in the existing and new fields of media involvement.

FORWARD POLICY GROUP

1. The Forward Policy Group was established by the Assembly in 1984 with the following terms of reference:
 - i. The Forward Policy Group is instituted by the General Assembly to stimulate, support and comment on the planning of the URC for its future life and witness.
 - ii. The Group is not responsible for making decisions about the policy of the Church.
 - iii. The Group may initiate consideration of any particular area of the Church's forward planning, and will respond, as time permits, to questions put to it by Assembly Departments or Committees, by the Executive Committee or by Synods.
 - iv. The Group will examine, through *Reports to Assembly* and other publications, the trends of Church policy, will note inconsistencies and significant omissions, and will relate forward planning at all levels to realistic and hopeful assessment of the work God calls us to do in the future.
2. To date, thirteen meetings, including two that were residential, have been held. To help our thinking, we have received the Minutes of many of the meetings of national committees as well as a number of papers on a range of topics, including the development of General Assembly, the significance of numbers and the importance of communication. In addition, we have requested from Departments information about the manner of their working. Two specific requests for help have been received from the Executive Committee. These are referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 below.
3. The Group sees the United Reformed Church in good heart and there are many healthy and encouraging signs. We have been aware of many people working with great dedication and skill to improve our life and witness. However, there are also problems and the one which in our view deserves primary attention relates to the determination of priorities. This has been impressed upon us as we have examined a number of aspects of denominational life.
4. First is the request which came to us through the Executive Committee from the Budget Committee who asked for guidance as to the manner in which proposals should be considered where there was competition for limited financial resources. In response we have recommended to the Executive Committee the establishment of a *Priorities Advisory Group*, available to the Budget Committee when there is a need to adjudicate on the merits of projects competing for limited budgetary resources. The Group should consist of the immediate Past Moderator of General Assembly, and two other members, one lay, one ministerial, with the General Secretary and the Convener of the Budget Committee as non-voting members. This Group could also serve to assess any new programme or project, whether or not it is competing for resources, and bearing in mind the overall priorities and balance of ongoing work in the URC.
5. The second request, to 'consider the role and effectiveness of the office', has led to an examination (which is continuing) of Church House and of the central organisation of the URC. We have visited departments, conducted interviews, and used questionnaires in order to review the size, attendance and costs of committees, the setting of priorities, and inter-departmental communication. We have already formed certain impressions even though there is more work to do which we intend to carry out during the coming year.
6. It appears that conveners and departmental secretaries seem generally satisfied with the present committee structure. Nevertheless, we shall be giving further consideration to the number and size of committees to encourage a more cohesive and effective working pattern.
7. Our survey indicated some concern about inter-departmental co-operation and revealed divided opinion as to whether there is adequate co-operation between departments. There is a feeling that co-operation is generally good, and has in fact increased, but there is room for further improvement. Some replies included strong statements about lack of co-ordination, and stated the need for a 'policy-shaping body', a sharing of 'visions' between conveners, and 'the rooting of departmental purposes and priorities in the central purposes and priorities of the Church'.
8. The survey showed that there is an awareness that, in looking to the future, the URC needs to focus its energies on growth, education and mission at local church level. From such forward movement locally there should emerge a realistic engagement with other Christian churches, and

with people of other faiths, and active contention with social evils. It is clear to us that in order to achieve this goal there needs to be an overall aim which will give direction to each Department's efforts. There is a hole at the heart of our denominational life, which can be filled only by visionary leadership. This might be provided by a small policy-shaping body whose prayerful consideration and shared vision will focus and co-ordinate the work of the Church and its departments. This would require of us as a Church a high degree of trust in those who have been called to be our leaders.

9. We believe that it is important that we should also trust our leaders to speak for us. As the report of the Long Range Policy Group stated: "In our desire to take all points of view into account at all times our corporate public statements are so broad as to lose any cutting edge." In particular the General Secretary should be encouraged to speak for the church and to use his considerable communication skills to make the URC voice heard by the media and thereby the public.

10. Previous paragraphs have dealt with current issues essentially within the current framework. For the remainder of the Report the Group wishes to change gear and share its thinking about more fundamental issues. Our terms of reference require us to stimulate forward planning. With this in mind some of our deliberations have made us stand back from the Church as it is and to speculate about starting afresh.

11. Taking up discussions at last year's Assembly, we have discerned a proper concern within the Church with the forms and methods we adopt to organise our affairs. Most attempts at 're-structuring' take as the starting point those guidelines which have emerged out of past experience and the arrangements which they have shaped. For example our standing as a denomination has determined that the URC is active and represented in all areas of church and secular life and at all levels. Similarly in ensuring that this work is shared by local churches nationally, a complex pattern of committee systems and consultative procedures has been developed. But those historically created ways of doing things together may not be the best ones. So a case can be made for taking a more analytical approach which looks at the **purposes** of our activities rather than relying exclusively upon the rules and practices which have accumulated to fashion the way action is taken.

12. In common with any other large national federal body we need to have business-like arrangements for (a) determining general policy; (b) generating arrangements to translate this policy into action; (c) ensuring the accountability of those who are authorised to act on our behalf. Underpinning all these 'business' activities is the strengthening of discipleship, faith formation and the development of Christian insight and vision.

13. A Church is a *company* of Christ's people. In the URC we stress the corporate aspect of our life a great deal and see it as an essential component of all activities, however mundane.

14. The Free Church tradition is historically and theologically committed to 'congregational' forms of church government. It includes a deep attachment to simple representative models of decision-making. From local church meeting through to General Assembly, our practice is to ensure that the greatest possible range of individuals, churches, Districts and Provinces is involved. But for different tasks, different forms will be required, which may or may not embody this convention.

15. To be assured that the necessary activities of the denomination are to take place in ways which are economical of effort, yet effective, there must be a re-examination of existing ways of doing things. For example: Is it essential for each Department to report formally to every annual Assembly every year? Must each national committee be composed of representatives from every interest and Province? When does a committee become too large to be an effective decision-making body?

16. The structure of the Church must be determined by its purposes and not by its history. If each purpose is examined according to a set of guidelines, the appropriate structure should emerge, and our planning for the future might become fresher and more creative. We offer the following guidelines not as a blueprint, but merely as one possible framework for consideration.

VISION & DISCIPLESHIP

How will this activity further the work of Christ on earth?

PURPOSE

What are the objectives of this activity?

PLANNING	In what ways does this activity form part of a cumulative effort directed to future objectives?
FORM	What is the most effective vehicle for enabling this activity to be carried out?
RESOURCES	What are the minimum resources needed, in terms of money and people?
REPRESENTATION	Does it entail a set of tasks which can be assigned to people on the basis of prior knowledge and skill, or must the group also be representative geographically or in some other way?
COMMUNICATION	How will the work be linked to related activity in the denomination and in other bodies? What means of dissemination of the outcome will be most effective?

17. Inevitably these first thoughts about the shape and form of the denomination are unrefined and somewhat abstract. Nonetheless we submit them for comment in the hope that discussion will help to produce guidelines of greater clarity and practicality.

RESOLUTION

1. The Assembly receives the report for debate.

ASSEMBLY PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd A L Macarthur

Secretary: Revd B G Thorogood

1. As directed by the Assembly of 1986, the Committee has continued its work. A number of new cases where problems have arisen in the exercise of the pastoral ministry have been referred to the Committee by Provincial Moderators or by the Councils of the Church. These have been carefully considered and such steps taken as seemed most helpful. In nearly all these cases personal relationships within families or local churches have become strained so that the problems themselves have become embedded in tensions which can only be resolved by understanding and patience. The Committee has sought to help with advice; by arranging for professional counselling, in which the Westminster Pastoral Foundation has been especially helpful; and where appropriate has used the authority given to it to sanction payments from Assembly Funds beyond the normal provisions of those funds. In some cases the help of the Welfare Committee has been sought and grants made to help with special needs.

2. Even in its short experience of handling these matters, the Committee has been made aware that a society with different expectations and mores from those of a generation ago has had and will have a costly effect on the work of the church and of the ministry. Alternative society the Church may be, but it lives and works under the same pressures that operate in society at large. The problems are not in themselves new, but Christian witness, ministerial discipline and human relationships within the Church are exposed to them in a new way. The work of the Committee is thus likely to be needed by the Church for some time to come, but its value depends upon the prayer and wisdom of the whole Church as it is exercised in local churches and throughout the structures of Council, Synod and Assembly. Spiritual victories are only won by live working through forgiveness and repentance. They are seldom achieved 'at a stroke'.

RESOLUTION

1. The Assembly receives the Report for debate.
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UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY

REPORT 1986/87

1. A very enjoyable study weekend was held at Dunford House from 5 to 7 September 1986. The House, now in the ownership of the YMCA, is the former home of Cobden and contains many reminders of his Liberal and Free Trade associations. As always, we were very warmly received at neighbouring churches which we visited and especially at Romsey, where we met for Sunday morning worship, and the united church in Winchester who gave us lunch. Our guest lecturer was Dr Richard Carwardine who spoke about the issues in church and political affairs in the United States before the Civil War. There was the usual variety of members' papers, the excellence of which we have come to take for granted. The whole event was enjoyable and encouraging, extending our appreciation of URC church life today as well as historically.
2. At our Study Weekend we met under the presidency of Revd Arthur Macarthur, who reaches the end of his term of office at the next Annual Meeting. Although protesting his ignorance of church history it will surprise no-one who knows him to learn that he has promoted the good of the Society with his knowledge as well as his unfailing good humour and practical wisdom. We have invited him to speak about that history in which he took a leading part, the formation of the URC in 1972, as a valediction. This will be at the Annual Meeting in the Ebenezer Church, Charles Street, Cardiff on Tuesday 12 May 1987 at 5.45 p.m.
3. Our Annual Meeting in 1986 took the form of a tea meeting during the URC General Assembly in Blackpool, when the Secretary, Dr Stephen Orchard, spoke about the work of the Society. We have enjoyed the unflagging energies of our team of voluntary helpers in the Library this year as usual and there remain very few sections of our holdings now that are not properly listed. We are also continuing to acquire local church histories and photographs, for which we are most grateful and we urge local churches to make sure that some brief record of their history is available in their local library and ours.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Convener: The Revd A J Knight
Vice Chairman: Mr P J Hoskins
General Manager: Mr D Jones
Secretary: Mr B R Mullinger

The Association has its origins in Presbyterian Housing Ltd., founded in 1929. The May 1979 General Assembly of the URC authorised a change of name to the United Reformed Church Housing Association Ltd., thus it may serve the United Reformed Church in its mission by providing homes for those in need, as part of caring Christian commitment within the community.

Since 1980 it has managed 5 blocks with 60 flats in East London and has supported in South London the formation of a URC-based Local Management Committee responsible for the day-to-day running of Sheltered Housing Accommodation inherited from Presbyterian Housing.

The Association's involvement relates to sites and premises within the United Reformed Church, or Churches of Congregational and Presbyterian traditions, seeking advice on future development or part development of their property with a view to meeting specific local housing needs.

By the end of 1987 it will have in occupation 5 sites for the elderly which it has developed at Woodford, Chertsey, Romford, Catford and Dunstable, resulting in an additional 47 units in occupation. It is also now responsible for accommodation for the elderly at Leicester and Liverpool through a Transfer of Engagements in 1986 from the Churches of Christ Housing Society Ltd. The Association nationally is engaged on developments at 4 other sites, and these when completed will bring the total number of units in management to 220.

The Association has experienced the same funding difficulties as all other Housing Associations. It is unfortunate that the period of development by URCHA i.e. since 1980, has been one of severe restrictions on Government funding to the public housing sector. The Association urges Churches to put pressure on Government to make resources available for housing, especially in this International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

In requesting the General Assembly to take note of this Report, we ask that it will continue to commend the work of the Association to Churches, recognising that it is identifying closely with the aims of the Church and Society Department of the URC.

SCHOOLS LINKED WITH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

1. The Heads and Governors representative of the Five Schools as usual met twice during the year. In the context of the continuing and perhaps increasing debate, much of it principled but some of it uninformed, about independent education in contemporary society, the Committee wish to stress the value of the education provided by the five independent schools for which they are responsible, its Christian dimension and the consequent stewardship which falls to them and many others in our churches.
2. In May the Committee met at Walthamstow Hall when the theme for consideration was *Religious Education and Worship in Schools: What Can be Done and What We Should Do*. Invited speakers included the Revd Eric Lord, Dr Grahame Miles and Mr John Goulding.
3. Once again the Schools warmly acknowledge the grants made by the United Reformed Church from its share of the Memorial Hall Trust, and by the Milton Mount Foundation. The URC grants are used solely to educate children of URC ministers and missionaries. In addition to the children of serving ministers and missionaries the Schools welcome those of women and men preparing for ordination.

CATERHAM SCHOOL

4. There are 19 ministers' children from several denominations at the school, of whom 12 are the sons of URC ministers.
5. As usual the academic year ended in July with Speech Day when the chief guest was Mr R. A. Finch, Educational Adviser to ICI, who spoke of the real meaning behind "Education". A good year's work was confirmed when the GCE examination results were known in August when the 'O' level results produced the highest average pass rate recorded with 86 candidates gaining an average of 8 passes (grades A-C) per pupil. Three boys achieved 11 grade As. At 'A' level, the pass rate was 80%, with 25% being at the highest grade A. Two boys gained four grade As and seven gained three grade As.
6. Still on the academic side, the school has its largest Oxbridge class for some time as 15 boys and girls try for places at Oxford and Cambridge.
7. The religious life of the school has been enhanced by visits from the Salvation Army and the Church Army and a particularly good address was given by the Revd Rex Mason, Senior Tutor of Regent's Park College, at the Founder's Day Service in Caterham URC. The new Bishop of Croydon preached at the Carol Service to a packed church of pupils, parents, governors and friends.
8. Sport, expeditions, debates, concerts, plays and regular meetings of over 20 societies made this a busy year.
9. Sadly, the Headmaster, Mr S. R. Smith, suffered a mild heart attack in November and missed the last few weeks of the Autumn Term but has made an excellent recovery.

ELTHAM COLLEGE

10. There are 9 missionaries' children and 7 ministers' children (including 2 Methodists and 4 Anglicans) at the school.
11. The school has experienced another encouraging year with 24 pupils gaining places at Oxford and Cambridge.
12. The Rugby 1st XV had a successful season, during which it won the National Westminster Bank Sevens. Cricket and tennis teams were similarly successful. In swimming the school came fifth in the National Championships.
13. The school community orchestra at its concert at St. John's Smith Square raised over £2,000

for the NSPCC. The Choir visited St. Alban's Cathedral to sing choral evensong and Bromley Parish Church to sing in the St. Matthew Passion. There were special musical contributions at the Parents' Service, the Carol Services, and the Easter Service.

SILCOATES SCHOOL

14. The number of pupils in the School, 538 in total, once again constitutes a record, as does the number in the Sixth Form, now 88. The first Sixth Form girl to be successful in obtaining a place at Oxford entered Merton College in October.

15. There are 20 ministers' children at Silcoates: 6 Anglicans, 1 Baptist, 1 Congregational Federation and 12 United Reformed Church.

16. The school was delighted to welcome Dr and Mrs Kenneth Slack as their Guests of Honour at the Senior Prize-Giving, and Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow as Guest of Honour at the Junior Prize-Giving in July.

17. The Yorkshire Province of the URC held its October Synod at Silcoates when the Wakefield and Dewsbury District chose the school for its meeting. It was however with regret that we learned at the Synod of the intention of the Reverend Alasdair Walker to resign from his position as Moderator of the Yorkshire Province in August 1987. He has been a very active member of the Board of Governors for the past nine years and has acted as Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Five Schools since its inception.

18. Further additions to the School's facilities were added during the Summer holidays. A new Art Room was constructed and several Study Bedrooms for Sixth Formers added. The Physics Laboratory has been completely modernised and the Junior Block considerably improved.

19. Mr Geoffrey Fowler has retired from his position as Head of the Geography Department and Editor of *The Silcoatian* after 29 years at the school.

WALTHAMSTOW HALL

20. There are 8 daughters of missionaries and 8 ministers' daughters (3 of them URC) at the school.

21. One of the highlights of the last year for us was of course hosting the annual Five Schools Conference in May. We hope we provided some stimulating, if controversial, material for discussion. What we most valued, however, was the opportunity to welcome to Walthamstow Hall delegates from Caterham, Silcoates, Wentworth Milton Mount and Eltham College.

22. We were also happy to welcome the Synod of the Southern Province of the URC in the Autumn and were impressed by the large scale and efficiency of the organisation. It was a privilege to be allowed to share in worship with such a gathering.

23. Our Guest of Honour at Speech Day was Miss Katherine Whitehorn of *The Observer*. She addressed the girls with wit and verve, and returned later to collect further material for an article which proved very favourable to girls' schools and was illustrated by a photograph taken at school.

24. Our careers education programme, during Industry Year, was especially lively, with an Understanding Industry course for the Lower Sixth as well as the post-examination Challenge of Industry Conference. Our now well-established work-experience scheme continued, as did careers talks and interviews, but the major excitement was perhaps the launch of our special link with Liberty of Regent Street. They have adopted us as "their" school and are offering talks, visits and work-shadowing to our girls. Results in public examinations were the best for at least ten years, with a pass rate of Advanced Level of 97%, and at Ordinary Level of 94%.

WENTWORTH MILTON MOUNT

25. There are 349 girls in the school (171 boarders) of whom 19 are daughters of Ministers — 17 URC, 1 Congregational and 1 Church of England.

26. In July we said farewell to Mr A. Canning, Deputy Headmaster, who had given generously to the school of his time and care for 11 years. Also the academic year 1985/6 brought retirement for 5 of the teaching staff and for the Headmistress's Secretary. They had each served the school with exceptional dedication and their combined years of service totalled 142.

27. The visitor of the Day at Speech Day was Guy Stringer, former Director of Oxfam. Underpinning the daily life of the school have been, as always, our worship and our work. We are grateful that the entire school is able to meet every morning for Prayers and for a special service with parents at the end of each term. We have been privileged during the past year to lead worship at 4 local URC churches and also at our Anglican parish church.

28. Following careful preparation by staff, there has been a smooth start to work for the GCSE examinations.

29. The new House system introduced on the boarding side in 1985 has been extended to the whole school. The Houses, named Davie, Farrell and Hadland after three past Headmistresses of note, have established themselves quickly, generating lively House spirit.

30. Thanks to generous financial support from parents and Old Girls, the 25-metre indoor swimming pool is under construction and will be in use by the time the Assembly meets.

31. Extra-curricular activities have been a source of enjoyment and success. The school play was *Hassan* by J. E. Flecker and the Fourth Year presented a musical: *The Sweeney Todd Shock 'N' Roll Show*. Pupils have been successful at County or Area level in athletics, life-saving, music and public speaking. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has been introduced this year.



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.



*'The Assembly welcomes
the Church and Society
Department's concern for
the future of the Welfare
State and invites all
churches to take part in a
year's programme,
Welfare Alert.'*

—resolution passed at the United
Reformed Church General Assembly
in Cardiff, May 1987.



Origins of the Welfare State

Concern about social conditions in 19th and 20th Century Britain led to the creation of the Welfare State in the 1940s.

Sir William Beveridge in the war years prepared a series of reports that paved the way for the Welfare State. He called his proposals 'practical religion'.

CHRISTIAN VALUES

Christian thinkers and leaders gave their blessing to the Welfare State and helped to bring it into being. . . .

- R H Tawney believed that a Christian society was one in which all are equal and all care for one another. Freedom and equality belong together.
- 'Christianity and Social Order', written by William Temple, has been described as '*one of the foundation piers of the Welfare State*'. In it he argued for decent housing, full education, adequate income, a rhythm of work and leisure and basic freedom for all citizens.
- John Baillie led a group of Scottish church leaders calling for a more equal ordering of society and practical policies to secure equality of opportunity in education, full employment, social security and a National Health Service.

What is the Welfare State?

**'five giant evils to be destroyed—
Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor
and Idleness.'** Sir William Beveridge 1943.

HOUSING

At the end of the War a major programme of building council houses was encouraged by increasing government subsidies to local authorities. Later the government gave help to owner-occupiers through mortgage tax relief, introduced a Rent Act (1965) to provide a fair rent scheme and encouraged and funded housing associations. Improvement grants and other measures to improve housing standards have been introduced. However, unlike the other major services in the Welfare State there has never been a systematically planned strategy for housing.

EDUCATION

The 1944 Education Act provided for primary schooling for all children up to the age of 11 followed by secondary education up to at least the age of 15. Three kinds of secondary schools, grammar, technical and secondary modern, were provided. Later the system was reorganised to provide comprehensive schools for the majority of secondary pupils and the school leaving age was raised to 16. Local education authorities were made responsible for seeing that all children with special needs would have adequate schooling.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The personal social services in their present form developed after the Seebohm Report in 1968, considerably later than the other parts of the Welfare State. It was felt that some service should be specially planned to meet the needs of individuals, families and community groups. Local authorities set up social services departments with responsibility for child care, residential homes and welfare services for elderly and disabled people. These authorities organise home visiting, day care and residential care and employ home helps, occupational therapists, social workers, community workers and residential staff.

The Future

PARTNERSHIP

The Welfare State was always a partnership of state, private and voluntary services. Private health care, education, social services and house ownership were available for those who chose, and could afford to pay for them. Similarly voluntary agencies, among them the churches, offered a range of welfare services, including advice, residential care, hostels, pre-school groups, and counselling. Voluntary and state agencies have often worked closely together, as in the case of the Meals on Wheels service.

AGREEMENT

In the community at large and in all political parties the Welfare State was considered a good thing. The churches supported it, believing that society should be ordered to express the value of each individual within community. The Welfare State reflected the Christian view that human beings were made to be interdependent, serving one another and being supported in times of need.

BREAKDOWN

Richard Crossman in 1970 said 'There is a cracking sound in the political atmosphere, the sound of the consensus breaking up'.

Today the old agreement is breaking down and the Government is changing the nature and the balance of the Welfare State. Private provision is being promoted and voluntary services are expected to cope with a bigger share of welfare provision.

Welfare State was Britain's response to the challenge posed by these evils by social reform. British society was fundamentally changed by legislation during and just after the Second World War. The core welfare services of modern times were developed then to combat the five evils identified by Beveridge:

HEALTH

The National Health Service was established in 1948. It provided a comprehensive health service for everyone in England and Wales including the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, free of charge at the point of use. Mass X-rays in the 1950s and free dental examinations and eye-testing were early features of the Health Service. The introduction of prescription charges and payment for dental treatment and ophthalmic services, albeit with exceptions for children, expectant mothers and some chronic illnesses, modified the original intention that the service would be free at point of use.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Unemployment and poverty between the World Wars provided the stimulus for a national insurance scheme enacted in 1946. It meant that everyone in employment paid flat-rate contributions. In return the fund thus created provided a minimum income for those in need, retirement pensions, sickness, unemployment and maternity benefits. Family allowances for all children after the first were provided. Later graduated payments directly related to earnings were introduced with the promise of graduated pensions and benefits. To supplement the benefits provided by national insurance a national assistance scheme was also necessary to help those who could not otherwise survive.

These five are the pillars of Britain's Welfare State. They are complemented by a whole range of other public services like transport, police, employment and environmental services. Welfare policy does not exist in isolation but is closely connected to taxation, economic and employment policies.

Change Ahead

All aspects of the Welfare State are under review and undergoing change. Widespread changes in education are proposed, including schools opting out of local authority control. A new social security system will be introduced in 1988. Council houses are being sold and the housing stock is rapidly deteriorating. The National Health Service is under severe pressure.

For further reading:

- NOT JUST FOR THE POOR—CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE WELFARE STATE
—a report for the Board of Social Responsibility of the Church of England, (*Church House Publishing*).
- CHRISTIANITY AND THE FUTURE OF WELFARE by Duncan B Forrester, (*Epworth Press*).

Both have useful lists of other books.

'A welfare state cannot be imposed or kept in being unless it is sustained and supported by a society which is genuinely concerned for the welfare and wellbeing of all its members. Christians as members of society have a responsibility to play their part in determining what values society holds dear. If the Church were to encourage the building of links and bridges across the barriers which divide our society, Christians would be in a better position to play that role effectively and ensure that ours was a society in which justice and compassion were valued, and the interdependence of one on another was acknowledged and accepted.'

From 'Not Just for the Poor', a Report of the Social Policy Committee of the Board for Social Responsibility (Church House Publishing 1986), by permission of the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England.

Questions

Questions that Christians must always ask in a time of change are:

- Are the costs of social policies fairly shared?
- Who benefits from welfare services?
- Are the poor being sufficiently safeguarded?

The churches should carefully examine the proposed and actual changes in the light of the answers to these questions. Churches are well placed as community groups to see the impact of changes in welfare services. The Welfare State did not benefit the poor as it was intended. Will the proposed changes lead to a fairer or more divided Britain?

The Church and Society Department hopes to prepare a set of principles by which changes in the Welfare State might be judged. Your views would be welcomed to help in that process.



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