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FAITH AND LIFE DEPARTMENT

Convener: The Revd Tony Coates

Secretary: The Revd Terry Oakley

Our Pattern of Working

1. The Department's work continues to be done mainly, but not exclusively, through its committees, and reports of their work follow. But issues arise demanding the Department's attention which do not fit into the agenda of any committee, and working groups are formed to deal with them. One such group is working on silent retreats and a network of those interested is being built up. Another group has been formed in response to the World Council of Churches Decade 1988 -1998 *Churches in Solidarity with Women*, to ensure that women's matters are taken up and appropriately dealt with. There is also a trainers' network for mutual support and encouragement.

The Provinces

2. The sharing of news from the Provinces has become an important part of the Departmental Central Committee's agenda, and we are much encouraged by the news of spiritual growth and vitality at many points in our church life. Lively initiatives are being taken by some Provinces: the North Western Province has produced a pack *A fresh look at worshipping and learning together*, the East Midlands Province a study course *Faith Alive*, and the Province of Wales is exploring the possibility of creating a community *Magnificat Now!*

Personalia

3. During the year we have welcomed John Taylor as Secretary of the Doctrine and Worship Committee and William Mahood as Convener of the Christian Education and Stewardship Committee. We are grateful to them for undertaking this work. We have welcomed Paul Franklin as Assistant Secretary, Faith and Life Department, a full-time five-year appointment. His work will be mainly in the area of Youth and Children's Work and his presence in the office is proving invaluable. Linda Oostenrijk left the Youth Office at the end of 1987 after 4 years' service, and we thank her for her work.

CHILDREN'S WORK COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee

Secretary: Mrs Hazel Snashall

4. This committee welcomes the increased interest being shown in all-age worship and learning, and is especially excited about the launch of the new *Partners in Learning* material, based on the syllabus *Being God's People*, an important new resource. We commend the new *Partners in Learning* to churches, and ask that District Councils help local churches look at the new material. This would be with a view to using this and other resources to encourage greater participation by members of the congregation, including adults and children, in worship and learning together and in separate age groups. The new *Partners in Learning* is for use from

October 1988, and should be available from April 1988.

5. We are very pleased with the response to our request that Districts and Provinces appoint Children's Work Secretaries, or the equivalent. We held a very stimulating consultation in March 1987 for those supporting children's work, and we urge those working with children to meet together for support at Province, District and local church level. A regular mailing has just been launched which we hope will keep those working with children in touch with new ideas and resources. There will be a consultation on Saturday 11th June 1988 for Provincial Children's Work Secretaries. At this consultation, we hope to share and explore resources for all-age worship. Please encourage your representatives to attend.

Children and Communion

6. We are greatly encouraged by the increasing world-wide trend to take the presence of children in church seriously. In particular, we are pleased that many churches are enabling children to take a full part in Communion Services. Over the past two years, a number of very helpful publications have been produced, including *Helping Children Participate in Holy Communion* by Leigh Pope, Uniting Church in Australia (to be published in Britain by the Methodist Church); *Children at Holy Communion - Guidelines* (Methodist Church) and *Children in the Way* (Church of England). We commend these to churches, together with a document published by this committee, expressing concerns which are particularly relevant to the URC. The Doctrine and Worship Committee gave valuable advice at an early planning stage.

7. There has been an increasing concern around the country about the decline of children in our churches. Recent statistical returns used by the URC may, on the surface, suggest that the number of children has increased, but these returns include Uniformed Organisations and mid-week groups which were not previously counted. The committee has been working on a leaflet designed to help churches discuss ways in which more children can become involved in church life.

8. The committee welcomes the *Mission Pursuit* pack produced by CWM and the World Church and Mission Department which is contributing to *Growth for their Sake*. We commend this pack for use by the whole Church family.

9. The committee recognises the value of workers with children on Sunday and in mid-week groups, meeting together to share and learn from each other. We encourage local churches and District Councils to set up "Learning Days" and/or to make use of any ecumenical resources for training in the area.

10. In the future the committee is to consider the needs of, in particular, the under fives, and would welcome any comments or suggestions for working with this age group. We also hope to look at mid-week activities and the gap between church and day schools.

11. The appointment of Paul Franklin as Assistant Secretary in the Faith and Life Department will be a great help to our work with the 11-14 age group. He would like to visit as many groups in this age band as possible, and is already liaising between the Children's Work and Youth Committees and helping provide links between the many Provincial and District Children's Work Secretaries.

12. It is good that Pilots is a joint venture with the Congregational Federation. In addition to local churches of our two denominations, this activity is also shared by a number of local churches of other denominations. We find it very encouraging that this mid-week, non-uniformed activity for children aged 7-14, linked with Sunday worship and learning, provides what so many churches have been looking for, ie, a means of helping the children to grow in faith and friendship together, with an emphasis on the world wide Church of Jesus Christ.

13. During the last year several of our publications have been revised and updated. We also have available two new colourful posters, reproduced from the winning entries in the national poster design competition. This attracted a large number of entries, and provided a difficult task for the selection panel! We are well pleased with the new posters and commend them for advocacy.

14. The Pilots Panel want there to be a growth in faith in those committed to our charge. We are grateful for all the nurture and Christian love shown in the local companies by so many dedicated leaders. We welcome the opportunity to encourage children and adults to work together on some of the activities in *Mission Pursuit* and Muriel Garrow is helping in the presentation of this material in our bulletin, *The Bridge*.

15. We welcome the appointment of Paul Franklin, and look forward to working with him in the future.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd William Mahood
Secretary: Mr Michael Harrison

16. The Committee has been encouraged by the level of co-operation with other bodies which has marked its work during the past year. Indeed co-operation must be the keynote of our report.

17. We welcome the initiative of the *Not Strangers But Pilgrims* Inter-Church Process and the enthusiasm for the second Lent Study course, *Who on Earth Are You?*. We hope that this experience will encourage many people to pursue a greater exploration and knowledge of their faith.

18. In our report last year we spoke of our belief that "beyond the structural training of elders lies the goal of a broad Christian education for all members of our congregations". We now see this as one of our main tasks for the future. We want to encourage individuals and congregations to be exploring their faith. We recognise that many congregations will need guidance and encouragement. It will be necessary for us to provide some material where necessary and to give guidance concerning material already available from other sources.

19. We are pleased to welcome the *Mission Pursuit* material from the Council for World Mission and to add our voice in commending it to our churches. We believe there is much here that is directly related to our own particular concern of Christian Education and Stewardship.

20. We commend to the churches the *Report on Christian Stewardship and Church Buildings* drawn up by the British Council of Churches. This is a document which deserves the attention of all levels of the Church as we plan for the future, seeking to grow together in ecumenical co-operation and using our resources wisely.
21. During the past year the Secretary of State for Education has proposed major changes in the education system. We have made our response to these in co-operation with the BCC and the Free Church Federal Council. We greatly value our involvement with the Education Committees of these bodies.
22. We welcome the video on Elders' Training produced by the Church of Scotland in co-operation with other Reformed Churches in the British Isles and commend it to churches, Districts and Synods. We believe that continued training of Elders is a vital element in the leadership of our churches.
23. We have produced a booklet which should be helpful to all prospective church treasurers, *They've Asked me to be Church Treasurer*. We are preparing a similar booklet for prospective church secretaries.
24. We look forward to our future work with excitement. We believe that the lead given at Swanwick concerning ecumenical relationships demands that we seek the widest possible co-operation in our work. We are already in touch with many bodies and denominations sharing ideas and material. We believe that this can only enrich our work and thus the churches we seek to serve.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Jean Holdsworth
Secretary: The Revd Paul Quilter

25. As with all central committees of the Church, one of the major responsibilities of the Youth Committee must be to encourage and support the ministry of the local church. The committee is very conscious of this responsibility, even more so in the light of the HMI report, which states "the weakest aspect of youth work is found at the local church level especially where a single leader is without other adult helpers". Much of the committee's energy and funds are used in trying to offer the widest range of training, resources and activities as possible. In presenting the report, it is our hope that we might be able to draw to the attention of the Assembly the varied contributions that the committee and its sub-committees offer to enhance the life and witness of the United Reformed Church at all its levels.

The Ginger Group Project

26. The committee continues to be greatly encouraged by the response to this project. The third group have settled down well and by the end of August will have completed over 30 projects ranging from a weekend upto a fortnight.

27. Since the decision taken by the Assembly last year, to encourage the continuation of the project for a further three year period, budgets have been prepared and a considerable sum of money has been promised. Full details will be presented at the Assembly. The total cost of a three year project commencing in September 1988 will be £61,000 but this does include £13,000 for the purchase of a brand new minibus, having suffered constantly from transport problems during the

three year life of the present project.

Training Resources

28. During the past year a small working party has been considering what contribution the committee might make to the *Growth For Their Sake* programme. We are enthusiastic about the *Mission Pursuit* material prepared by the World Church and Mission Department, and the committee is encouraging youth groups to use this material. We have produced some preparatory material which takes the form of three games. This has been put together in a pack which is to be sold as a *FURY Grow Bag* for £3.50.

29. We are encouraged by the number of small and rural churches who are using the self-help kit entitled *Stepping Forward*. This is designed specifically for churches in rural communities and small churches with few young people, who are anxious to develop an effective ministry amongst young people.

30. The committee's greatest contribution to the life of the local church is made through the team of Youth Leadership Training Officers. We are already benefitting from the appointment of Mr Roger Tolman as our first National Youth Training Officer. All team members are most anxious to respond to invitations given by local churches.

31. The URC is very involved in the preparation of a new ecumenical *Introductory Youth Workers' Training Course*, which will be ready for use by the end of this year.

Youth Activities and Events

32. During the course of the year a wide range of activities have been organised. Although well supported, in reality very few churches in the URC encourage active participation in the conferences, camps and educational activities. This is the cause of disappointment and frustration, because both local churches and young people benefit immensely from participation in the national youth programme.

33. Your attention is drawn particularly to just two of the many activities organised by the Activities Sub Committee. *Breakout*, a camp in August for the 15-18 year olds, was successfully launched in 1987 to replace Adventure Camp. The 1987 *Spectrum* camp with its amazing "time tunnel" was a tremendous success too. This camp has a dual purpose of providing a stimulating camp experience for the 11-14 year olds and an opportunity to develop leadership training skills for the 18-25 year olds. Have you seen the 1988 activities folder?

34. Part of the brief of the World Affairs Sub Committee is also to organise activities. In 1988 we embarked upon a two year project which will bring together young people from Britain and Jamaica in our Jamaican Partnership. Mindful of the fact that Britain is a multi-cultural, multi-faith society, we continue to encourage young people's involvement in the event called *Living Faith in Southall*.

Connect '87

35. The committee is well pleased with Connect '87. Over 1500 young people and adults shared in a very full weekend in October. Whilst the event was successful, we know that many young people who are part of the URC missed out and, consequently,

so did the churches to which the absentees belong. Connect '89 will take place in Bristol over the weekend of 27-29 October 1989.

What of the 1990's?

36. The committee is in the process of considering where youth work in the URC might move as we approach the last decade of the century. We are considering what may follow the Ginger Group Project, how our national programme of activities might change to meet the differing needs and demands of young people. We are applying considerable thought to the long-term use of Yardley Hastings URC and manse, and even the nature of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth. We shall present a full report to the Assembly in 1989.

37. Also on our agenda is our strategy to help local churches develop their work with and for young people and our need to explore closer links with the Children's Work Committee, as together we use the skills and talents of the recently appointed Faith and Life Department Assistant Secretary, Mr Paul Franklin.

38. We often use the word "partnership" within the URC youth scene. The committee trusts that it is seen as being in partnership with the Provinces, Districts and local churches. Our over-riding aim is to play a part in helping young people to grow in faith and feel able to exercise their own discipleship within the life of each URC. In time we look to see them giving leadership in its many forms. Rough diamonds have the potential to become great gems, but time, patience and sensitive care are needed so our role is to play a part in that all-important task of encouraging "growth for their sake" and His sake.

WINDERMERE POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Dr Robert O Latham

Director and Secretary: The Revd Graham Cook

39. It gives us great pleasure to report that the aims we set ourselves in terms of occupancy and financial management for 1987 (the first full calendar year) have been met.

40. We aimed at 30% occupancy and achieved 33.69% (a total of 4314 bed nights).

41. We aimed to make ends meet financially and as reported in the accounts presented to Assembly, we have done so, before taking into account the grant from the URC Central Funds (of £6,300) and depreciation of furniture and equipment (of £7,837), which, in line with URC accounting practice, has to be written down by 15% each year. The effect of these adjustments is to turn our surplus of £649 to a deficit of £888. We trust that the Assembly will share our satisfaction.

42. The real measure of the success and failure of the Centre is the effectiveness of its programme. 78 different courses were run in 1987 attracting people from all over Britain and from Poland, Germany, France, Czechoslovakia and Indonesia.

43. Ministers spent sabbaticals, the bereaved found peace, comfort and healing; the faith was explored, danced, enacted, sung and prayed; those exercising urban and rural ministry and chaplaincy to Higher Education had their ministry critically

examined and positively affirmed; men and women were painfully and joyfully confronted with the issues of human sexuality; departments of the Church examined their strategies and practised their tactics; spirituality has been explored by individual men and women, by churches and ecumenical groupings; Christians from different parts of Europe have met, worshipped and debated together; people, churches and groups of all sorts have been prepared to step outside the situation in which they see everything through their own windows and have taken the risk of seeing things in the context of God's world. Seeing things differently, they have become different people, churches and groups.

44. The programme for the Centre is planned well into this winter and is in the process of being planned into Spring 1989. The current programme of courses has been circulated to the churches and is available at Assembly. There is also an additional brochure available about holidays available at the Centre this summer.

45. Assembly last year expressed with applause its approval of the suggested appointment of Mrs Ruth Clarke as Honorary Assistant Director. We report that she has been working since last summer. We share the delight expressed by the Director at this appointment and the manner in which it is working out.

46. The Revd Stephen Thornton has, during this year, moved from Windermere to Newcastle upon Tyne. This is an appropriate time for Assembly to record the unique role he has played in the creation of the Centre. There are many people who have had a crucial role in its development, but none of them would have had any part to play if Stephen had not first seen the vision of what might be, moved to Windermere in pursuit of that vision and persuaded the Church and many others, to share it with him.

47. We hope that the relationship between Carver Church and the Centre will be further cemented and developed during the next ministry.

48. Both the Director and the Assistant Director would be happy to accept the occasional invitations to attend and speak to Provincial Synods and District Councils about the development and work of the Centre.

49. We hope that by the time of Assembly the final accounts for the creation of the Centre will be available along with an estimate of how much the appeal will finally raise once all covenanted monies have been received.

HEALTH AND HEALING COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd D Alasdair Pratt

Secretary: The Revd Michael Playdon

50. The love of God makes people whole, reconciles divisions and heals disease. Issues of Health and Healing are therefore fundamental to the work of the Church because they lie at the heart of the gospel. They are basic to our understanding of the whole of human life, and to the development of wholeness for people in all circumstances.

51. We believe that healing is concerned with harmony in body, mind, emotion and spirit and we support the holistic approach to medical care which treats the person and not just a sick part. Thus we see the commission to heal as being to the

Church corporate, and not simply to individuals.

52. As the ministry of prayer for and with the sick has become a much more widespread feature of church life, so thinking about it continues to develop. We sense a shift in mood. After the euphoria of the last decade and the rapid spread of interest there appears to be a reaction of caution and critical examination of the task laid upon the Church especially in the light of some of the more extravagant claims for signs and wonders. We welcome this concern which was particularly highlighted by the publication of a moving letter to *Reform* (October 1987) which warned against the dangers of insensitive and trivialising approaches. It is with these concerns in mind that the committee is exploring afresh the theological foundations of healing in the Church.

53. Within the committee we have acknowledged that it is not enough to speak of sickness as if it were a problem outside ourselves. To some degree everyone is affected by vulnerability, weakness and suffering, as well as being sustained by the assurances of our faith. The ministry of Martin Hazell to those affected by AIDS, has in fact also been directed towards helping people explore their own attitudes and feelings especially in sensitive areas of life.

Provincial Links

54. Sometimes the committee feels it is at one end of a horse-shoe. It is quite close to those in local situations who are interested in health and healing, but there is no direct contact. It feels like a long way to get through the communication process via Province, District and minister. We have therefore asked every Province to appoint a link person between the committee and other levels of the church. These people are not necessarily expert advisors, but can communicate information and advice for Synods, Councils or Church Meetings, and especially to those who are asking how does the local church start the ministry of healing?

Stress in the Ministry

55. This report, published at last Assembly, has been widely read. Has it been widely used? We know that several Provinces are acting on it, but we are not yet confident that it has been taken up at local level. Have Elders seen it? Are ministers blocking it? Ways to use the report are available in notes that come with copies bought.

Churches' Council on Health and Healing

56. The video, *The Healing Ministry*, prepared by the Council has been widely used. Recently abridged, it provides a very effective presentation of the range of the ministry of healing. Notes to introduce discussion, prepared by members of our committee, have been much appreciated.

57. In April 1988 CCHH organized a major conference at Swanwick under the title - *Towards Health in the 90s*. Addressed by a galaxy of distinguished speakers, with a variety of workshops it has sought to bring together doctors, church leaders and concerned lay people to face many aspects of health care.

58. This conference marks the end of the service of the Revd Denis Duncan as Director of CCHH. He has given distinguished service, for the Council was virtually moribund when he became Director, and under his leadership it has developed into an

influential body on behalf of the churches, both ecumenically and in relation to the medical profession. The Chairman of the Council is our own Advisor on Health and Healing, the Revd David Dale.

The National Health Service

59. Our concern for the crisis in the Health Service inevitably overlaps with that of the Church and Society Department. While consideration of the political and social issues properly lie with that department, the effect of current conditions not only on patients but also on all medical staff, must be on the hearts and in the prayers of all Christian people.

DOCTRINE AND WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Prof Colin E Gunton

Secretary: The Revd John H Taylor

The New Service Book

60. We are glad that the Oxford University Press is to publish the new book for the Church in time for the Assembly next year. It will be a companion volume to the hymnbooks which will appear some time later. At the back of the latter there will be some excerpts from the service book designed for congregational use.

61. The following list of contents should not be taken as final - to some extent space available will determine this - but it will reveal what we are aiming at.

Preface;

Introduction

* Order of Worship (Word and Sacrament); notes

Shorter Order

* Baptism

* Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

* Confirmation

* Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Reception of Members from Other Churches

* Marriage

Blessing of a Civil Marriage

* Funeral

Ordination/Induction of a Minister

Ordination/Induction of Elders

Commissioning of a Lay Preacher

Healing

Prayers of Intercession with Congregational Participation

Creeds and Canticles

Calendar and Lectionary

* It is proposed to have off-prints/booklets produced for congregational use.

62. It will be noticed that several services which were in the 1980 book are no longer to be included, eg Induction of a Provincial Moderator, Stonelaying. These services are of an occasional character and usually specially printed for the whole

congregation, and so our plan is to revise them and have master-copies available for photocopying and distribution when required. Beyond this, we are working on seasonal services (eg Holy Week) to appear in booklet form a little later on.

63. Whilst a number of the services listed above are at various stages of drafting, four are sufficiently advanced to be available for members of Assembly to have seen and commented upon in time for the Assembly. They are the Order of Worship (entitled Order for the Lord's Supper in the draft sent out), the Shorter Order, Baptism and Wedding. But we must record our thanks to some thirty churches or groups of churches which have willingly experimented with these services. Their experiences and reflections are particularly valuable. In the light of all the comments received by the Secretary of the Committee, final copy will be made up by the Committee for the printer.

64. It has been decided to omit schedules C and D from the new book, though copies of them will be readily available and supplied as leaflets when books are purchased. This decision had to be taken, in the first place because, although there is pressure to alter schedule C in particular, this should be done while the process of union with the Congregational Union of Scotland is being debated. And secondly, since changes in the schedules are almost inevitable during the life-time of the new service book, the suggestion that they should be separately produced and kept up to date, for which we thank the General Secretary, seems the one to adopt.

Baptism

65. The Committee has received plenty of feed-back, including some condemnation since the Assembly discussion last year on this subject. Some people have assumed that because there was a very frank discussion on that occasion and because some speakers did not hide that their practice was at variance with the Basis of Union, they had a carte-blanche to do whatever their conscience prompted them to do, without talking to their District Council first. We have also been asked when we would produce a study guide on Baptism. We have deferred bringing either a resolution or a study guide (or both) to Assembly this year in view of the Consultation of Baptism to be held at Windermere in early September. All views on the subject will be presented there. It is not to be a PR exercise but a full, open discussion. It will not fear to question the present doctrine of the Church. Its conclusions will be made known to the Church and may be placed before Assembly 1989.

Our Role as Consultants

66. An important part of the Committee's work, one which takes up much of its time and that of individual members, is in giving help and advice when invited and in the course of the year we have corresponded with individuals both at home and abroad, we have arranged for representatives of the Committee to meet other committees of the Church and individuals have visited Districts or District committees to discuss their problems.

67. The most important task was offering, through the department, the Wales Province advice on the scheme of union for the Principality. Our view was a positive one and the Wales Province was also positive. We are therefore saddened to learn that the hope, which seemed so bright a year ago, of making a break-through in ecumenical relationships, seems to be fading away.

Musicians' Guild (General Secretary: Mr Don Gray)

68. 1987 has been a busy year for the URC Musicians' Guild. We welcome continued growth, numerically and in activity. Membership is well in excess of 500. Reflecting the importance that is attached to co-operation and planning for worship between minister and musician, we are particularly pleased to report that this number includes 39 ministers. Long may this growth continue until all churches in the URC are represented. The Guild's General Secretary will be pleased to send details of the work of the Guild and membership application forms to enquirers interested in church music.

69. Training to improve skills has been a major ingredient of the varied and interesting meetings organised by the Guild Branches during 1987. All meetings are open to members and non-members alike, and Branch Secretaries will gladly send details of meetings as they are planned for 1988. A list of Branch Secretaries is given below:

Guild General Secretary

Mr Don Gray, 35 Carol Close, Upper Stoke Holy Cross, Norfolk, NR14 8NN.

North East

Mr Stan Burnicle, 17 Chatsworth Gardens, Billingham, Teeside, TS22 5JW.

Merseyside

Mr Christopher Whitfield, 29 Thorburn Road, New Ferry, Wirral, L62 1EN.

East Midlands

Mr Gerald Cockerill, 40 Lymington Road, Leicester, LE5 1LS.

West Midlands

Mr Cyril Willetts, 12 Arundel Avenue, Wensbury, West Midlands, WS10 9EU.

Eastern

Mr Malcolm Wallace, 7 The High Street, Great Wakering, Essex.

London

Mrs E Wolzac, 129 Lower Road, Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT23 4AW.

Southern and Wessex

Mr Derek Thorogood, 18 Cleve Close, Framfield, Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 5PQ

70. On Saturday June 11th 1988, an important meeting will be held at Hollinshead URC, Chorley, Lancashire, when John Cooke, Northern Commissioner for the Royal School of Church Music, will lead a Festival and Training Day entitled "Music in Worship". During the day a meeting will be held in which it is hoped a Branch of the Guild in the North Western Province will be inaugurated. Musicians and ministers in the North West are requested to give this occasion their support.

71. The AGM of the Guild was held at Kensington URC, London in October 1987. The programme included a visit to the Royal College of Organists at which a recital was given by one of the most brilliant organists of our time, David Titterington. Alison Howell, winner of the 1987 Coventry Cathedral Recital Award, demonstrated the Father Willis organ at Kensington URC, and after the business meeting a concert was given by the church choir directed by Martin Palmer, the Musical Director. The day

concluded with a service of worship conducted by the Guild Chaplain, Revd A J Beeson.

72. The response to the organ register scheme has been encouraging, though its effectiveness is difficult to monitor. The Guild's function is to register details of organs for disposal and send them to churches requiring the information. The scheme is in its infancy, but comments from churches using the scheme would be helpful.

HYMNBOOK EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Dr David Thompson

Joint Secretaries: The Revd David Gardner, Mr Alan Haywood

73. The committee's First List of Hymns for the new Hymnbook was published in *Reform* in December 1987. That list of some 450 hymns was a selection from more than 1000 initially suggested by members of the committee from seven basic source books as a core for the new book. The list did not include a number of hymns on which the committee so far remain undecided: the responses received to the list will provide significant guidance to the committee in making the final decisions. Work has also been done since that list was published on other hymns in the basic books and other current hymnbooks which were not included in the original exercise. In selecting hymns, the committee have used several criteria: does a hymn say what we believe in words which do justice to the thoughts expressed? If already well known, will it last another generation? If new, will it catch on? How does it compare with other hymns on the same theme? Hymns which satisfy all the criteria choose themselves, but usually the considerations are more finely balanced. Members of the committee are willing to discuss the work of the committee with Districts and churches if mutually convenient times can be arranged.

74. The first list did not include any of the new material considered by the committee, since we did not feel that a list of the first lines of such hymns would mean very much to the Church at large. Well over 2000 items have been submitted to the committee, and all have been carefully considered. We are grateful to all those who have submitted both words and tunes; but it will not be possible for us to consider any more material after this Assembly if the agreed publishing deadlines are to be met.

75. The Committee have appointed sub-committees to consider both words and tunes, and this work is well under way. It has been interesting to discover just how many detailed variations there are in the words of even well-known hymns in the books generally used among us, before addressing the question of any further amendments. The committee invited the URC Guild of Musicians to nominate a member of the Tunes sub-committee, which they gladly did. It may be possible to publish a full list of the tunes to be included in the course of next year.

76. Oxford University Press have welcomed the opportunity to publish the book, and a timetable has been prepared leading to publication at the General Assembly of 1991. It has now been decided that the book will contain some 750 items, including psalms and canticles etc; and there will be a little space for an order of service for Communion and other worship material. The committee hope to publish a Companion at the same time, or as soon as possible thereafter. It is not possible to quote exact prices at this stage, particularly because of the uncertainties surrounding

copyright costs, some of which can only be established when the selection process is complete. Nevertheless the Committee urge congregations to begin to budget for the purchase of the new book now, possibly using the current prices of other books of similar size as a guide. In this way they will be well placed to take advantage of the pre-publication offers which will be available.

PRAYER HANDBOOK

Secretary: The Revd Terry Oakley
Editor: The Revd Edmund Banyard

77. The second of the Prayer Handbooks written by the Revd David Jenkins and based on the Lectionary, confirmed the books' popularity. The combined set is still available on special offer at only 85p.

78. Building on this foundation, and with great sensitivity and poetry the Revd Kate Compston has helped to create the marvellous 1988 book, entitled *Encounters*. Sadly, due to difficulty with printers, less than the full order was delivered and the book has sold out. This has meant disappointment for some. However, it is a testament to its quality.

79. The other contributions gathered and edited by the Revd Edmund Banyard are equally inspiring, and have both variety and relevance.

80. The 1989 Prayer Handbook will be the fourth and final one to be edited by Edmund, after which the Revd Graham Cook will take over. The 1989 writer is the Revd Stephen Orchard and the title is *All the Glorious Names*. This will be available in the summer, together with selections on cassette for the partially sighted and blind, as is usual.

81. During the year Mrs Helen Lidgett has ceased to serve as Secretary to the Group, after working hard to help the Group successfully pilot through the changes over the last few years. The Group wishes to express its warm thanks for her valuable and creative contribution.

FORUM

Co-ordinator: The Revd Terry Oakley

82. The 1987 Forum, *Growing Together*, was, in the opinion of many, the best for many a year. This was due to the excellent team, which included the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard as theme presenter, Revd Stephen Thornton as Worship Leader, the Revd Brenda Stephenson as Music Co-ordinator, the excellent workshop leaders: the Revds Peter MacIntosh, Murdoch MacKenzie, Alan Trinder and Hugh Cross, and the Revd Michael Dunford as Chair.

83. Forum 1988, 20th-26th August, takes *Mission on the Move*, with the team from the World Church and Mission Department: Revd Donald Elliott and Mrs Muriel Garrow giving the theme presentation, and Miss Sheila Rudofsky as Hostess. The workshops will be exploring something of *Mission Pursuit*, through activities including

painting, drama, games and discussion. Worship will be co-ordinated by the Revd John Oldershaw and music by Mrs Janet and Revd Martin Nicholls.

84. The costs will be about £91 for adults, with reductions for children and unemployed, and a discount for early booking.

Womens' World Day of Prayer (Mrs Ruth Bowyer)

85. The Women's World Day of Prayer have celebrated their Centenary, 1887-1987.

86. The Day of Prayer was held on March 6th, the theme *Come and Rejoice* was prepared by the International Committee. Services were well attended throughout the country, a most moving experience. Many shared the meal of fellowship, either a simple Agape or a cup of tea after the service. Christian women world-wide had united in prayer, love and friendship.

87. An International Festival celebrating 100 years of this world-wide prayer movement was held at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on March 21st. Many travelled far to the afternoon and evening performances. It was a colourful and joyous occasion.

88. The *Together in Prayer* booklet continues to be useful and interesting, providing a report of the Centenary Celebrations with 30 beautiful pictures. Videos and slides can be hired or purchased from the new offices - 62 London Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8QL.

89. The National Committee welcomes Mrs Jean Whillis (URC) as President, and we wish her God's blessing in her years of office. We thank Mrs Joyce Smith for her period of service as the URC representative.

90. A 6% rise in income from offertories, enabled grants to the Christian Literature Societies to be increased to a total of £67,690.

91. We welcomed 49 new branches during the year, reflecting the spiritual growth of this prayer movement.

92. The women of Burma have prepared the 1989 service on the theme "Teach us to Pray".

Scotland (Mrs Jean Tinto)

93. The centenary service was very enthusiastically received by most people and great efforts were made to make it a truly joyful celebration. In some places there were reservations about the Agape in the service but most people attempted it and found it very meaningful.

94. Several thousand extra copies of the Children's Service had to be printed to meet the increased demand. Many schools using the service made the topics in the service the basis of their term's project and some schools took the opportunity to invite parents and friends to the service.

95. We were very grateful to the BBC Scotland for arranging to broadcast a service in the afternoon. Included in the service were radio link-ups with women overseas and in different parts of Scotland exchanging greetings and news of how the day was

being celebrated. In one of our cities the local committee staffed a caravan parked in the city centre throughout the day as a public witness and information center for World Day of Prayer. STV and Grampian TV used members of the committee to give the nightly religious spot.

96. The centenary celebration held in Dunblane Cathedral, on May 28th was the highlight of the year and was attended by people from all over Scotland. Local celebrations in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee were also well attended and much appreciated.

97. Special centenary donations of £400 each were made to Rape Crisis Scotland, Women's Aid Scotland and Women's Aid Centre in the Virgin Islands. £13,000 was donated to Feed the Minds and £6,000 to the National Bible Society of Scotland.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Faith and Life Department for debate.
2. Assembly welcomes the introduction of the new *Partners in Learning* material and encourages District Councils to explore with local churches ways in which this can be used as a resource for worship and learning together and in peer groups.

MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT

Convener: Revd Anthony G Burnham
Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

INTRODUCTION

1. An important aspect of every meeting within the Department is the contribution which comes from our Provincial representatives. Whilst we respond and initiate, the essence of our work for the URC is to be discovered around the country. The report that follows is a result of that process, and everything we do is with the co-operation and hard work of those on ministry committees, as well as in colleges and on training courses. We offer them our profound thanks. We now seek Assembly support for the various initiatives we have taken before beginning another year together (*Resolution 1*).

VOCATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Michael B Stolton
Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

ROLL OF MINISTERS

2. The following is a list of those added to or deleted from the Roll as set out in the minutes of our meetings in June and October 1987 and January 1988:-

Admissions to the Roll of Ministers

3. (a) By ordination - stipendiary

Wendy Baskett, Paul Breeze, John Bremner, Evelyn Cairns, Arthur Climpson, Christopher Elliott, Russell Gordon, Susan Henderson, Michael Hodgson, Edward Martens, Audrey Proffitt, Ian Ring, Raymond Singh, Cecil White, Ruth White, Yvonne Workman, Nicola Lowen, Eric Wollaston.

4. (b) By ordination - auxiliary

David Allonby, Kwadwo Amaning, Alan Batterbee, Joyce Benfield, Thomas Bush, Pamela Cox, Thomas Ellison, John Hall, David A L Jenkins, Andrew Lonsdale, Yvonne Oldfield, Michael Potter, Betty Roe, Eric Rogers, David Robertson, Katherine Stocks, John Walker.

5. (c) By Transfer from other Churches:

Revd Charles Reid (Presbyterian Church, USA)
Revd Andrew Milne (Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa)
Revd Ian Meredith (Elim Pentecostal Church)
Revd Ronald Townsend (Uniting Church in Australia)
Revd James Haggarty (United Church of Christ, USA)
Revd Marlene Schwoebel (Kirche von Kurhessen-Waldeck)
Revd Dr Elliott Massey (Disciples of Christ in the USA)

Revd Dale Rominger (United Church of Christ, USA)
 Revd Cecil Geyer (Uniting Church in Australia)
 Revd Geoffrey Dunstan (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa)
 Revd Jack Lawson (Presbyterian Church, USA)
 Revd Jean Hall (United Church of Zambia)

Deletions from the Roll of Ministers

6. (a) By resignation:

Nil

7. (b) By transfer to other Churches:

Revd Vernon Openshaw (United Church of Christ, Southern Africa)
 Revd James McLure (Uniting Church in Australia)
 Revd Lionel Walker (United Church of Christ, USA)
 Revd Leslie Drayer (Presbyterian Church, USA)
 Revd Malcolm Ford (Congregational Union of Scotland)
 Revd Tom Colvin (Church of Scotland)
 Revd Earlsley White (Church of Scotland)

8. (c) By committee decision:

Revd David Brett (D)
 Revd David Goodsell (D)
 Revd Philip Smith

Ministers of other Churches serving the URC

9. Revd Norman Amann (Baptist Union)
 Revd Rowland Joiner (Methodist Church)
 Revd Kevin Livingstone (United Presbyterian Church, USA)
 Revd Froukien Elly Smit (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands)

RECRUITMENT OF MINISTERS

10. We can report an encouraging response to our Programme of recruitment to our various forms of ministry. Information leaflets are made available to all enquirers as is advice from local ministers, Provincial Moderators and central staff. Enquirers' Conferences and Ministry Experience Weeks organised by Provinces with assistance from the Vocations Committee are held on a regular basis and are found to be extremely helpful. Articles and letters in Reform highlight the new patterns of ministry which we now encourage, and which promote the mission of the Church. As a result recruitment for stipendiary ministry has increased significantly:

Entry into college		
1983	1985	1987
28	29	40

11. Auxiliary enrolment has remained constant, and we welcome those preparing for Lay Preaching and Church-Related Community Work. We continue to operate the Overseas Recruitment Scheme which brings to us, on long or short term appointments, experienced ministers from the United States and Germany. There continues a steady

flow of ministers returning from service overseas, applicants from our sister churches in Southern Africa and Australia and of other denominations in the United Kingdom.

12. Certificates of Eligibility to serve in the URC have been granted to 9 ministers in the past year.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

13. We have reviewed the method by which we accept candidates for training and have paid particular attention to criteria by which we judge suitable applicants and the national assessment programme. We consider that we have made great improvements in the pattern of interviews at our conferences, but we continue to rely on the responsible actions of Provinces who make final decisions about candidature, and college authorities who monitor the progress of our students throughout training. There is no easy way of recognising ministerial potential but the task is undertaken with the utmost care and seriousness for the wellbeing and effectiveness of the whole Church.

CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

14. As the development of this new type of ministry is undertaken by the Department we take responsibility for their assessment, and we are following the guidelines provided by the Assembly last year. Our panel of Assessors has been broadened to take account of the particular expertise required.

THE YEAR BOOK

15. In association with the Editors we continue to give oversight to the entries in the Year Book and have paid attention this year to the list of URC personnel serving overseas to take account of the different styles and relationships represented.

THE ROLL OF MINISTERS

16. Responding to an expressed need for clarity and care in our procedures, and following extensive discussions and consultation encouraged by the Executive Committee, we wish to set out the following guidelines:

A Pastoral Measure: concerning the suspension and resignation of ministers
and their deletion from the Roll of Ministers.

Purpose

17. In all difficult matters of unfitness to minister or resignation or discipline, the over-riding purpose of the Church is to heal relationships and restore ministers to effective service. This is not always achieved, but is our hope in the Gospel. Our purpose is to ensure that, when emergencies or serious lapses occur, the responsible bodies have guidance on how to act, and the minister has the proper opportunity to share a personal statement.

Definitions

18.1 *URC Ministers.* Ministers are admitted to the roll of those eligible for a

call on ordination within the URC or by transfer from other churches through the Vocations Committee.

18.2 *Suspension.* This means a temporary bar on the activity of a minister who is in pastoral charge.

18.3 *Resignation.* This means either:

- a) resignation from one pastoral charge and readiness to seek another within the URC,
- or b) resignation from the ministerial service of the URC.

18.4 *Deletion from the Roll of Ministers.* This means either:

- a) action by the Church in response to the resignation of a minister from the service of the URC;
- or b) action by the Church on the initiative of a District and supported by Synod and detailed in this paper.

Such deletion means that the individual is no longer available for a call to a pastoral charge in the URC, is not considered to be a URC minister, and needs to re-apply if seeking later to serve as a URC minister.

Suspension

19.1. There may occur situations of urgency when, in exceptional circumstances, because of very obvious unfitness to minister, action needs to be taken before the full procedures described in this paper can be completed. The circumstances making this necessary will be determined by what is in the best interests of the Church and of the pastoral care for the minister concerned. The primary responsibility for this action rests with the District Council in consultation with the Provincial Moderator.

19.2. A District Council may, as part of its "oversight of the ministry", suspend a minister from the exercise of ministry in the pastorate but only after the fullest consultation with the Provincial Moderator. Such suspension carries no implication for future ministry nor for any subsequent discussion of conduct.

19.3. Before taking such action, the minister and the elders of the local church concerned will be invited to make representation to the District Council.

19.4. The District Council will inform both the appropriate Synod Committee and the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee about every such action. No suspension may continue on the authority of the District Council alone for a period of more than three months. Any action beyond that date which affects the minister's pastoral service will be taken by the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee according to its terms of reference (Reports 1983. p.5), and in consultation with the Provincial Moderator.

19.5. In the case of stipendiary ministers, the Maintenance of the Ministry officers will accept the advice of the District Council regarding payment of stipend during the period of suspension. The MoM stipend will be continued normally for three months, by which time further decisions will have been taken.

Resignation

20.1. If any thought of resignation from a pastorate arises, a minister is well advised to consult with the Provincial Moderator prior to taking any formal action.

20.2. When ministers wish to resign from a pastorate, they inform the Church Secretary and the Secretary of the District Council in writing. The Provincial Moderator is consulted by the minister so that a movement to a new pastorate is facilitated. Should there be difficulty about such a movement, the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee may be consulted and will then exercise discretion about how the Church should care for the minister during a break in service.

20.3. Ministers who wish to resign from the URC Roll of Ministers will place their intention before the District Council. The Council in consultation with the Provincial Moderator will send its findings to the Clerk of the Synod. The Clerk will seek the judgement of the Synod (or its appropriate committee) and will forward this to the Secretary of the Vocations Committee. That committee will decide what action is to be taken and will report its decision to the minister and to the General Assembly.

Deletion from the Roll of Ministers

21.1. A recommendation that a ministers's name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers may arise in a District Council. The Provincial Moderator will be involved in consultation with the minister and the Council. The Council will seek the ministers agreement to a voluntary resignation. If agreement does not prove possible, the Council's recommendation will be sent to the Clerk of the Synod. The Clerk will place the matter before the appropriate committee of the Synod. Opportunity will be given to the minister to speak in person to that committee, accompanied by a friend if the minister so wishes. The Synod Committee may, in circumstances which make it difficult to deal with a particular case, refer the matter directly to the Vocations Committee or the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee.

21.2. If the Synod Committee recommends deletion from the Roll, it will inform the Vocations Committee and the Assembly Pastoral Reference Committee.

21.3. The APRC may undertake further work as described in its terms of reference and may then inform the Vocations Committee that deletion from Roll seems appropriate.

21.4. The Vocations Committee will make careful enquiries and will reach a decision on cases brought to it by a Synod Committee and by the APRC. It will inform the minister of the decision and forward the Assembly resolution. In its report to Assembly the Vocations Committee will list any deletions of this sort in a separate paragraph and a resolution will be appended to the Departmental Report, *Assembly affirms the action taken by the Vocations Committee as reported in paragraph X*. This procedure is designed so that the discussion leading to the decision is as confidential as possible, but so that if the minister wishes to appeal against the decision the opportunity is available at Assembly under the Standing Order *Access to Assembly by named parties*. A minister who decides to use that opportunity will inform the General Secretary at least six weeks before the Assembly meets so that proper preparation may be made.

21.5. The action to delete a name in this way from the Roll of Ministers will be taken as a last resort if there is such change in the character, or conduct or

belief of a minister as is clearly incompatible with continued pastoral responsibility.

22. With regard to ministers of the URC who are in appointments made by the General Assembly, the procedures outlined above will apply but with the General Secretary acting in the place of the Provincial Moderator, and the Assembly Moderator's Advisory Committee acting in place of the District Council and Synod Committee (*Resolution 2*).

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

23. We have been grateful for the hard work and attention to detail that have been a mark of another period of service to the church, particularly at an early stage in the life of a committee that has become responsible for both ministerial recruitment and applications. Because of the need to take care to understand the nature of the ministry required now by the Church we are spending some time in our meetings in general discussion, and are proposing to hold a residential meeting in the autumn to pursue our thinking further.

TRAINING COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs. Elisabeth Jupp
Secretary: Revd Michael G Dunford

INTRODUCTION

24. This year has seen the spread of our training concern widen, so that to a programme which caters for lay preachers, auxiliary and stipendiary ministers, we now add church-related community workers. We seek to respond to the needs of the church for informed, dedicated and well-equipped leadership, so that it can engage in its missionary enterprise, and take great care over the kind of training programmes we encourage and authorise. We are aware of a responsibility for pastoral care of students, the majority of whom are mature and have families, and for those who teach them. We are excited by ecumenical initiatives in colleges and on courses, and by all the new possibilities being opened up as a result of the Inter-Church Process and the special meeting in Swanwick last year.

INTERNSHIP TRAINING

25. Bearing in mind Assembly's request that Internship Training should be reviewed, we have appointed the Revd Dr Leslie Green to convene a group consisting of staff concerned from each college plus the Secretary to look at present progress.

26. The debate concerning the Presidency at the Sacrament of Holy Communion by Internship students as part of ministerial training has been adjourned pending conclusion of the negotiations with the Congregational Union of Scotland.

27. We have had discussions with Barbara Woolaston who is responsible for Pastoral Studies at Queen's College, Birmingham concerning the future use of that college for Internship students and the first group is to commence this autumn.

OVERSEAS VISITORS

28. In Manchester and Oxford as well as within the British Council of Churches Standing Committee on Theological Education meeting in London, much benefit has been derived from sharing in the programme of visits arranged for theological educators from the third world - the Phillipines, Jamaica, India and Africa. Their trenchant comments and shared insights have already been of value, and we await with eagerness a full report of their impressions of our training institutions and courses.

WINDERMERE COURSES

29. The Director of the Windermere Centre is a member of the Training Committee. It is hoped to strengthen links between the committee and the Centre to cover areas of common concern, and shared training programmes.

STUDENT GRANTS

30.1 Mindful of the well-being of students within its care and the distress expressed by some students as to their financial position whilst training, we invited Mr Douglas Thacker, formerly Vice-Principal of Sheffield Polytechnic, to prepare a report for us. We are very grateful for the work he carried out, which included visits to the four recognised colleges and St. Andrew's Hall, to talk with the students, at a time of great personal difficulty.

30.2 We accept that all students being trained for our stipendiary and CRCW ministries should be on an equal footing with students in the same personal circumstances in receipt of an LEA grant, to the fullest extent, (given the exercise of discretion in certain areas) and all students are receiving the equivalent of the appropriate grant with effect from October 1987.

30.3 In addition, we also recognise that whereas for most students their relative hardship during training is followed by a period of comparative affluence, when, for example, loans taken out during the training period can be repaid comfortably, this is not a possibility for the ministerial or CRCW student whose income in service will never match secular levels. To support our students therefore, we have approved this year a special extra payment fixed at 10% of the maintenance grant whatever that might be for the individual and any dependents and from whatever source, subject to the usual ceiling figure of allowable extra income.

30.4 The secretary has visited the students and reported that this additional support is appreciated.

THE MINISTERIAL TRAINING FUND

31. Grants are made available to help students in training for the auxiliary and stipendiary ministry according to their needs, and to ministers for in-service training. Relying as we do largely on the income from trust funds it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a growing number of students training for the stipendiary ministry, the majority of whom are unable to obtain LEA grants. The situation has suddenly become more serious because of the welcomed increase in the number of candidates. We have been grateful to the whole department for initiatives now being taken to monitor the situation, to seek further funds, to examine different training options and to ensure adequate support for those we do accept into college.

VISITATIONS TO COLLEGES AND COURSES

The Federation and Westminster College, Cambridge

32.1 We have received encouraging reports of the way our report and recommendations are being acted on (*See Appendix 3*).

The Northern Federation and Northern College, Manchester

32.2 We received the report of the Visitation to the Northern Federation of Ministry led by Mr Graham Adams of the Congregational Federation and including the Revd Donald Hilton. The visitors considered it prudent in view of the relatively young life of the Federation, not to make formal recommendations, though they hoped that their comments would be acted upon, and their findings, together with our commentary are attached to our report. We are pleased to note that already the Governing Bodies of both institutions, separately and together, have made progress on some of the practical matters raised by the visitors, and the Governors of Northern College are to hold soon a residential conference to consider the wider implications of the important broader issues which we have identified. (*See Appendix I and Resolution 3*)

Programme for future Visitations

32.3 We see a need to examine the future programme of visitations. This should include the non-residential and ecumenical courses as well as our own colleges. A draft programme is to be drawn up, and we shall be sharing in an ecumenical visitation to Queen's in 1988 and Westminster in 1991, and mounting our own visit to Mansfield in 1989.

MANSFIELD COLLEGE

33 After many years of careful negotiation, a new Trust Scheme has been published by the Charity Commission and this was reported to the February Executive Committee. The revised Constitution reflects the present nature of the college where other disciplines have expanded and theological education provision has been fully maintained. It provides for a more appropriate governing body on which we shall be properly represented, and it upholds the original object of the college and safeguards the present Ordination Programme. Finally it will help Mansfield in its relationship with the University of Oxford with all its attendant wide benefits.

CRCW TRAINING

34. As requested by Assembly in 1987, the committee has set up a working party on CRCW training, including a CRCW student, to review training patterns, now that there is sufficient experience on which to draw. The goal of an integrated pattern of professional and theological preparation is being sought, and a variety of options for those who come to us already professionally qualified. We hope to report to the Assembly next year.

BOARD OF STUDIES FOR THE AUXILIARY MINISTRY

35. The introduction of a new unit on Christian Spirituality as part of the revision of the present course, the setting up of a Tutor's Training Day and the continued success of the Summer School programme, indicate the valuable work being

done in this area.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Post Ordination Support Scheme

36.1 We welcome the arrangements which are being made by each Province for the support of ministers during the first three years after ordination, particularly the holding of a training day for pastoral advisors convened by several northern provinces.

Refresher Courses

36.2 Westminster College once again hosted the Ministers' Refresher Course in June 1987 which was organised by the Revd Janet Sowerbutts and had been appreciated by the participants. The 1988 conference will feature mission as its particular theme.

Review of the Sabbatical Programme

36.3 The programme whereby we encourage all ministers to take some form of sabbatical leave after each ten years of service was introduced by the Assembly in 1982. It is now time to review progress and we are encouraged by what is happening but wish to see more ministers participating. A system of evaluation which will benefit all concerned is now to be developed with the help of the Provincial In-Service Training Officers (*See Appendix 2*).

LAY PREACHERS

37. For some time we have been pressed to review our course of training for lay preachers and others - *Exploring the Faith* - and this is now under consideration. A new factor has been the review of training patterns going on in one of the partner churches, the Methodists, and there is a possibility and an invitation to share in the new course they are preparing. Discussions are taking place and a decision will be made shortly.

38. Currently we have 424 students studying the course. We congratulate the 26 who completed it successfully during the past year.

39. The winner of the Shergold Memorial Prize, for the highest overall mark, was Mrs Susan Cox of Shaftesbury (now at Westminster College).

40. The annual Anglican/Methodist/Congregational/Baptist and URC conference, held 8-10 April, has once again been well supported. The theme for 1988 is *Spirituality Today*. The URC Lay Preachers' conference at Swanwick on the 3-5 June will this year be led by a group working in Industrial Mission and is entitled *Thank God it's Monday*.

APPENDICES

1. VISITATION TO NORTHERN FEDERATION AND NORTHERN COLLEGE

2. REVIEW OF THE SABBATICAL PROGRAMME

3. COLLEGES REPORTS

4. STUDENTS IN TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY AND FOR CHURCH-RELATED

APPENDIX 1

VISITATION NORTHERN FEDERATION FOR TRAINING IN MINISTRY AND TO NORTHERN COLLEGE

February 2-6 1987

Introduction

1. Northern College is one of five institutions within the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry. It was recognised from the outset that it was impossible to visit or understand Northern College except in the context of the Federation. Thus, the Visitation to Northern College was a part of a wider Visitation to all the colleges making up the Federation and included Baptist, Congregational Federation, Methodist, and Unitarian Visitors. The hopes and concerns of the colleges interlock in a way which makes it impossible to view any college in isolation. This may lead to occasional ambiguities in the report.

2. The Revd Donald Hilton BA, then minister of Princes Street URC Norwich, represented the United Reformed Church and Mr Graham Adams BA, MBA, Cert Educ. represented the Congregational Federation. The other Visitors were Revd R.A. Cowley MA, BD (Northern Baptist College), Revd A L Finbow BA (Unitarians), Revd B. N. J. Galliers MA, MTh. (Methodist Church) and Revd R Matthew BA (Co-opted). Because of his wide experience in organising Inspections to Institutions of Higher Education, Mr Adams was appointed Chairman of the Visitors. The team of Visitors express their profound gratitude to him.

3. The Visitors met for two full-day meetings in advance of the Visitation to clarify procedure and objectives. The Visit itself was held over a period of three and a half days. The college Principals submitted reports, and 21 former students, 18 of whom replied, were invited to answer a questionnaire about their experience of training in the Federation.

4. During the inspection discussions were held with all the College Principals, members of staff, many students, representatives of College Governors, representatives of the Federation, lay students, leaders in churches who have received students on their practical training, and members of the domestic staff. The Visitors attended classes, acts of worship, meals, and informal groups. Gratitude is expressed for the warm and open welcome. The atmosphere that characterised the Visit was a tribute to life within the Federation.

5. These are times of considerable change in theological education. The Visitors recognise that their report can be no more a *snap-shot* of a young and dynamic organisation seeking to seize its opportunities and cope with its problems. For these reasons the Visitors make no formal recommendations but invite the Assembly to draw the attention of the College, and thus where appropriate the Federation, to those suggestions in the Report which are italicised with the request that they become part of the continuing agenda of College and/or Federation.

The Federation

6. The Federation, founded in 1984, includes Hartley Victoria Methodist College, the Northern Baptist College, the Unitarian College, and the Church of England Northern Ordination Course in addition to Northern College which trains ministers principally for the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation. Following British Council of Churches guidelines the membership of the Federation is open to those institutions which "confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Unitarian College is, therefore, an Associate Member of the Federation". The suggestion that Northern College should be involved in ecumenical grouping on one site of the theological colleges and training institutions of Manchester in such a Federation dates back to at least 1980 and a Review undertaken by Northern College (then The Congregational College, Manchester).

7. An appropriately representative governing Council meets at least twice a year. Its related committees have responsibility for education, worship, the library, staff policy etc. The Principals (except the Unitarian Principal) serve as President in rotation. The President supervises the day-to-day administration of the Federation.

8. Each college retains its autonomy within the Federation. Staff appointments are in consultation with the other Principals. The Federation employs a part-time Education Officer. One set of buildings, Luther King House, is used which is also available to the Manchester Christian Institute. The property is vested in the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches.

9. Luther King House is a fairly modern building about two and a half miles from the centre of Manchester and close to the University of Manchester. It has 65 study rooms, 7 of which are used by tutors as offices, and 3 flats. Additional flats and houses, variously owned, are available for student accommodation. The House also includes seminar/lecture rooms, the chapel, library, dining room, and administrative offices. Recreational facilities are severely limited.

10. The Federation has serious problems of space which become critical at certain points in the week not least because of recent increases in the number of students at three of the colleges. On Tuesdays, when the majority of students, staff and their spouses are present, both the dining room and chapel are uncomfortably crowded. The kitchen staff work under extreme pressure and tribute is due to them for their ability to provide good meals with inadequate facilities. Teaching space is at a premium and any use of study/bedrooms for seminars simply exacerbates the problem of student accommodation. Students past and present regard the common room facilities as inadequate.

Recognising the constraints under which the Federation works the Visitors believe that improvements to the kitchen facilities are urgently needed and that consideration should be given to alternative ways of coping with the Tuesday evening meal and chapel service.

The departure of the present bursar provides an opportunity to re-assess the administrative structure of the Federation.

This could include consideration of the appointment of Federation Administrator covering work done by the present

Bursar and some of the work done by the Warden.

The College

Staff

11. In February 1987 the staff comprised:
The Revd R J McKelvey BA MTh DPhil
The Revd S H Russell MA BD DPhil
The Revd F R Tomes MA BD
The Revd J E Francis BD (half-time)

with part-time and occasional lecturers including Mrs R M Miller, and the Revd Dr John Ponter who is Education Officer (part-time) to the Federation. Comparable staffing arrangements exist at the other colleges in the Federation.

Courses

12. There is a wide range of courses on offer. They provide the opportunity for ministerial training under the three programmes approved by the 1987 Assembly i.e. the Basic Programme, the Alternative Programme, and the Community-based Programme. Northern College is the only one of the URC-related colleges that provides the total range. The courses comprise:

(i) University courses:

13. Certificate in Biblical Knowledge
Certificate in Theology
BA Degree
BD Degree
MA Degree
Diploma in Social and Pastoral Theology

(ii) The Federation "core" curriculum.

14. This covers such areas as Ministry, Worship and Preaching, Pastoral care, Mission, Contemporary Society, Education, Free Church History. The Visitors were glad to note that a Review Group is re-assessing the core curriculum.

(iii) College Courses

15. Each college has additional courses of a denominational nature. These do not normally add more than one hour of classes each week for each student.

Methodology

16. Across the Federation these three elements of University, Federation Core, and College Courses are set within the framework of a diverse approach to ministerial training which is formed of

- (a) College-based training.
- (b) Congregation-based training which includes a period of Internship in a local church.

- (c) Community-based training in which by means of placements students are exposed to contemporary issues and their challenges to Christian life and service.

With such diversity of course and method there is inevitable debate within the colleges and Federation about the value of each course and method.

17. Under the leadership of the Principal, Northern College is committed to a pattern of contextual training. A clear vision is evident of ministerial training which has academic integrity and is also rooted in an experience of local church life, and life in the wider human community. Community placements, local church involvement, and the Internship year exist in close juxtaposition with academic studies thus offering a sharp and intimate interaction across the different modes of training. Reflection on experience can thus be instant and intimate. Past and present students express strong support for the Internship Year.

Evaluation

18. Both student progress and the courses themselves need constant evaluation. University assessment is largely by examination but the Visitors found it difficult to discover a clear basis on which students were assessed within the Federation and college courses, though there was widespread if not unanimous appreciation of the staff assessment of the conduct of worship when students visit churches. The importance of peer group assessment should not be minimised

The Visitors welcomed the rich diversity of course and method in this pioneer situation and regarded it as a positive opportunity for students and staff to listen to and learn from the different approaches. Staff seminars should provide regular opportunity for such dialogue and to ensure that the vision and its implementation is fully shared by all.

The Visitors hope that the Federation core programme will be given an increasing profile, attract the involvement of all students, and that greater emphasis will be given to 'Church management' in the core - an area singled out by many students for increased priority - and further that the Federation will examine courses such as speech-training with a view to incorporating them into the core.

The Visitors ask the appropriate College/Federation committee to determine how internal courses can be more effectively assessed.

Diversity and a willingness to pioneer new methods of training bring their dangers. There is a danger to the staff not only in the amount of work involved but also of role-overload and a possible neglect of research. As with all ministers involved with the changing patterns of church life, college staff inevitably need help and in-service training to meet changing demands and opportunities. The role of the Education Officer, especially in assessing teaching skills, and assisting in the development of contemporary educational theory and practice needs clarification.

Inevitably, students in a pioneering situation become guinea pigs. Whilst the students mainly welcomed their role and opportunity in the process, care needs to be taken lest their work becomes too intense and varied.

The Visitors were glad to note the universal approval of the concept of Internship. The co-operating churches, students, and college staff deserve congratulations for creative work. Any questions from students centred on the effectiveness of college assessment of the Internship.

The debate between the priority to be given to passing examinations and developing basic ministerial skills was in evidence in the colleges. The debate should continue, proper regard being given to student opinion.

Students

19. At the time of the Visitation Northern College had 45 students. Of these 15 were in their Internship Year and thus living out of college; 90 were following the CBK/Certificate in Theology Course, 6 were BA students, 7 BD students, 1 an MA student, and 7 were following various other courses which included the Christian Leadership Course. Two of the students were preparing for the Moravian ministry; the rest for ministry in the URC.

Advocacy and explanation

20. In this innovative period of theological education in which the college is involved the importance of sharing and interpreting the vision widely should not be ignored.

Students and potential students need to be prepared for the pattern of contextual training and be helped to see the educational principles that lie behind it.

College staff, present and future, probably more familiar with and trained by other methods, may need help to meet the changed demands and opportunities. In-service training will be necessary.

The churches to which students go as part of their training must be helped to see themselves as partners in theological education. The wider constituency of the United Reformed Church needs to be helped to understand the nature of contextual training and the principles on which it is based.

The College/Federation needs systematically to monitor the relevant courses so that both Northern College and other colleges related to the URC can benefit.

Worship

21. Morning and evening worship is held in the College Chapel on a daily basis. The weekly Communion Service is clearly valued by the majority of students and is for

many a pivot of the college week. Though limited by only a few day's experience the Visitors were a little disappointed at the level of skill used, and the lack of variety of worship. They felt that the worship contained little of a world dimension. They wondered why innovation and experiment were less evident in the Federation worship than would be the case in many local churches.

The worship life of the College/Federation should be kept under constant review regard being given to changing patterns of worship in local churches and elsewhere.

Relationships in the College/Federation

22. There was clear evidence of warm and creative relationships between students from the different colleges. As one might have expected and hoped, it was difficult in casual conversation to decide which students belonged to which college. Similarly, the sense of team-spirit amongst the staff members of the constituent colleges was self-evident.

Hidden models of ministry formation

23. Alongside the overt models of ministry e.g. preacher, pastor, Bible interpreter which formal theological training offers to students there are inevitably other hidden models. These may complement the intended models or they may be counter-productive. The Visitors discerned the following:

Pastoral models

24. Pastoral care provided in college becomes a model for the students later ministry. If college care is organised on the basis of "Come and ask if you need help" this experience will be formative in later ministry. If college pastoral care is systematic and the staff disciplined in pursuing it this offers a different model for the students future work.

Female and male

25. Apart from occasional lecturers, the teaching staff within the Federation is predominantly male; the clerical and catering staff female. Thus women are cast mainly in the mode of servers and supporters, men as teachers. Does this well serve students as creators of church life and contributors to wider society? The question is not simply about the low incidence of female teaching staff. If for example the style of teaching suggests that the staff are principally "givers" to "receivers" then inherent masculine models prevail regardless of the sex of the teacher.

Worship

26. The worship life of the Federation inevitably offers models which students will, consciously or subconsciously, use as resources in their future ministry.

Resolution of differences

27. As ministers in local churches the students are likely to be confronted by instances of disagreement or even serious division between individual members or groups of members. The way in which disagreement over theological differences or ecumenical relationships within the Federation are resolved will become an important

resource if students later encounter such disagreement in their own churches.

Teamwork

28. Many of the students will go to group pastorates or team ministries. A major but not always acknowledged resource for them in such situations will be their experience and observation of how staff have worked together and how they have monitored and evaluated their co-operation.

Teaching Style

29. Teaching methods in the college and Federation will become a powerful model for the students own teaching ministries. Staff can be seen as *those who know* giving information to *those who do not know*. Alternatively, students can perceive the staff as learners. In either case a model for future ministry is learned. Similarly, if students' previous commercial, industrial, or domestic experience (many of the students are mature students) is treated seriously in the college as a resource for students and staff alike, this may encourage students to regard the lay experience in their future churches with greater seriousness.

Audio-visual aids

30. The extent to which the teaching staff use audio-visual aids will become a model for the students later teaching ministry. The fact that there is no Resource Centre in the Federation from which students can draw cassettes, pictures, film-strips etc. for their visits to churches offers a silent message about the style of teaching the students are expected to employ on their visits to churches and in their Internship year.

The Visitors draw attention to the hidden models which exist in all teaching institutions and encourage the College/Federation to be sensitive to them.

An audio-visual resource centre, associated with advice on its use, would be of considerable value to staff and students alike.

The Library

31. The Federation Library is an amalgamation of the libraries of the constituent colleges. This means that it is well-stocked but that an enormous amount of work is needed to complete the task of forming one library. Lack of space in the Federation means that the Library is also used for serving coffee and for social gatherings.

The urgent need to complete the creation of a single library may be a task greater than the current part-time help can achieve in the required time.

Pastoral care of students

32. The college pastoral programme is to be commended with the staff acting as tutors and a part-time (6 hours a week) college chaplain who shows high dedication. There is also strong evidence of peer group pastoral care between students.

33. The inevitable busyness and hectic nature of a college composed of several traditions, with some students living in and others living out, some away for the

majority of the time on Internship, some with the help and stress of family life, others without it, and all in a student body with a wide age-range can, in the best ordered situation, leave some relationship issues obscured and thus not addressed. Programmes of pastoral care are rarely perfect and there needs to be constant review, maintaining within the college staff an effective balance of academic ability and pastoral skill.

The college should satisfy itself that the pastoral care of students is adequate.

Future staffing needs

34. The Staff and Governors of Northern College are aware that the existing full and half-time members of staff are of similar age and, if they continue to retirement, will all leave within a short period of time with obvious difficulties for continuity. The Visitors regard it as a matter of urgency that the appropriate committee should face up to this problem. The Visitors considered, and so record for further thought, many possibilities, however remote, including appointing an additional younger member of staff even if this produced staff numbers higher than could be justified under other circumstances, an additional member of staff with responsibility as director of practical training and perhaps with additional pastoral responsibilities, the possibility of a current member of staff welcoming an appointment as the urgently needed Federation Librarian thus releasing a post for a new appointment, early retirement with proper provision of salary and pension rights.

The need for continuity in the college staff needs to be well considered both now, and in future appointments. The changed nature of theological training and the introduction of contextual training must be a major factor in appointments.

Mona Powell Fellowship

35. The creation of the Fellowship is a welcome step offering as it does the opportunity for younger ministers to undertake research.

Over the years of the Fellowship regard should be paid to the need for a balance between pure and applied research.

Regional Centres

36. One recommendation of the 1980 Review Group in the Congregational College included consideration of Regional Centres in various towns other than Manchester. They were conceived as centres for the training of stipendiary and auxiliary ministers, lay training, and in-service training. The Visitors shared in conversations between the Principals and Governors about Regional Centres. There was a lack of clarity about their operation and further discussion is needed across the Federation.

The Visitors believe that the time is now appropriate for a careful consideration of Regional Centres.

Development of the Federation

37. The Visitors saw evidence of a group of independent colleges developing a

community spirit in work, worship, and personal relationships. Although each college, rightly in the Visitors view, maintains its distinctive ethos, each is contributing something to the good of all. Within the diversity of outlook and approach there is tolerance, frankness, honesty, and goodwill. This is in itself a model for students many of whom will work in ecumenical situations.

38. Inevitably, there are problems still to be faced. The role of the Northern Ordination Course in the Federation is unclear. Although a founder member of the Federation it is almost entirely removed from the community, its students attending evening classes on a part-time basis. The weekly Communion Service has become a symbol of the corporate life of the Federation yet members of NOC have no opportunity to share it. NOC Retreats are open to other students. Many students perception of NOC was that of an irritant because their contact was virtually confined to the distress they felt at having occasionally to vacate their rooms within Luther King House to provide accommodation for NOC students.

39. Some staff members of the Northern Baptist College feel they are operating in two colleges - that of the congregational based students on the one hand, and college based students on the other, the former being severely restricted in the part they can play within Luther King House.

40. The number of places for lay students in the House has been reduced to 20 providing an imbalance between lay and ministerial students. The introduction of lay students was to avoid a "theological ghetto"; conversations suggest that it is the lay students who now feel isolated.

41. The development of the core curriculum is an important element in the development of the Federation.

42. The Visitors listened to a conversation between the Principals about their different approaches to ministerial training. Current procedures of the various denominations present barriers to a fully integrated programme of courses. For example, Methodist students are accredited lay preachers before coming to college, and spend a maximum of 3 years in college. The probationary year between the end of the college course and ordination is seen as the practical training. This is different from the patterns the denominations expect of the Baptist and Northern Colleges.

43. It was not clear to the Visitors who was responsible for monitoring the development of the Federation and initiating further change. It would seem important to establish proper procedures for experiments which could be agreed across the Federation before initiation, and with effective evaluation on completion. The role of the Federation Council seems crucial lest the task of development fall on the Principals alone thus making them innovators, practitioners and assessors. To be effective the Council would need to meet more frequently. The Education Officer also has a part to play in development.

44. Despite these issues the Visitors, noting that the Federation is in its early days judge that it has made an excellent start towards fulfilling its object of "ecumenical training.....by facilitating the sharing of resources among members and associate members".

The Federation should feel encouraged by its present progress, ask how its next steps are to be determined and

future work monitored, and promote discussion at every level. The place of the Northern Ordination Course in the Federation should be examined and kept under review.

The core curriculum should be high on the agenda of the Federation's development plans.

The Federation should persist in its attempt to integrate courses and not be deterred by the varying needs of the denominations, seeing diversity as a positive element in the Federation's life.

The role of the Council in the development of the Federation should be crystallised and the need for more frequent meetings considered. The job specification of the Education Officer in respect of Federation development needs clarification.

One reason for introducing lay students into a theological college was to prevent the training of ministers in a theological ghetto. Some argue that, in a college committed to contextual training, this argument is even more pressing; others that given the increased contact with "the world" that contextual training offers, the presence of lay students is less important. Recognising that there are financial considerations involved the Visitors urge that the issue be teased out further.

Conclusion

45. The Visitors are deeply grateful to the whole of the Federation community for the warmth with which they were received and for the privilege of sharing for five days in the life of the colleges and the Federation. This obviously gave the staff much extra work and the Visitors are grateful. It is clear that from its present position further creative developments in training women and men for the ministry in the churches will take place.

46. The report, with its italicised comments and suggestions, is offered as a positive contribution to the ongoing life of the Federation and constituent colleges, and in particular to Northern College as it continues its task of training ministers for the United Reformed Church. (*Resolution 3*).

APPENDIX 2

REVIEW OF THE SABBATICAL PROGRAMME

STATISTICS

1. Following the introduction of the programme for ministers' sabbaticals by the Assembly of 1982, the numbers of applications for some kind of financial assistance from central funds (with a limit of £500 per minister) have been as follows:-

1983 - 3
1984 - 5
1985 - 22

1986 - 15
1987 - 12
1988 - 5 so far

We note that a total of 20 ministers have undertaken sabbatical terms at Westminster College during the period 1983-1987 funded by the Cheshunt Foundation. There are also many ministers who have arranged and funded their own sabbaticals, and we have no means of establishing any figures. To this we must add URC ministers who are members of staff at our theological colleges who have their programme of sabbatical study leave funded by the colleges.

GRANTS FROM CENTRAL FUNDS

2. A total of £22,454 has been paid out since 1985 on the sabbatical programme, against a budget allocation of £54,000. We might deduce from this that many ministers are finding support elsewhere, or are engaging in home-based and no cost study and reflection, or we got our estimations wrong, or there are many ministers yet to be persuaded of the value of a sabbatical. Our knowledge of local situations leads us to the last view, though we do not think that recourse to central financial aid is determinative.

TYPES OF SABBATICAL

3. It is not easy to categorise programmes, but the following figures indicate something of the present pattern:

Pure research - 4

Private study (which includes courses and conferences) - 50

College attendance (excluding Westminster) - 8

We note that 22 ministers in the private study category have included some time overseas.

GENERAL COMMENTS

4.1. The choice of sabbatical subjects is varied and covers a very wide range of subjects. Freedom is given to the individual minister to choose what he or she considers appropriate and helpful. Consultation often takes place with the Provincial In-Service Training Officer concerned in the putting together of a programme and sometimes with the Ministries Department.

4.2. Occasionally a minister splits up the three month period, and we see good reason for this when a study programme warrants it, or when family circumstances determine it. However, the full benefit of a long spell away from pastoral duties is not gained, and the local church equally derives less benefit.

4.3. Normally we expect the programme of a sabbatical to relate to a minister's present or future service, and do not consider it appropriate immediately prior to retirement. Arrangements for a pre-retirement course are in hand in the Ministries Department.

4.4. We note the difficulties mentioned above, related to family responsibilities, either where there are young children or dependent aged relatives. Generally we would consider it beneficial for a leave to be taken away from home so that the pressures of pastoral responsibilities really are lifted. It is not always easy for this to be achieved but it must be the goal.

4.5. District Councils should be much more involved in the programme. They should ensure that ministers are properly advised and supported, and that leadership is not depleted locally because several are away at the same time. Details of pulpit supply payments should be made more widely known.

4.6. Normally sabbaticals provide the opportunity for a minister to continue theological education and to up-date, but there should also be an element which allows time and space for reflection - a recharging of the batteries.

4.7. Local churches are not made generally aware of the advantages to local congregations of their minister taking a sabbatical. They should be briefed by the District Council and should also be encouraged to help their minister in the planning of the programme.

4.8. We are convinced of the value of the sabbatical programme. Reports on file show that all have been immensely grateful for the opportunity and have found their ministries enhanced as a result.

4.9. Reports of sabbaticals are requested and these vary from relatively brief outlines to lengthy papers.

APPENDIX 3

COLLEGE REPORTS

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Following through

1. This report takes up the recommendations in the Visitors' report of January 1986, presented to the Assembly of 1987. The Liaison Committee of the Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges is already planning ahead for the next visitation to avoid such a delay between visit and report.

2. Mrs. Mary Bradford has become College Secretary in succession to Mrs. Rita Richardson, to whom gratitude has been rightly expressed for her long and valuable service. Mrs. Anderson's duties have been extended as cook/housekeeper and Mr. Pinfold has added to his part-time duties with accounts; the acquisition of new office equipment will provide for more rapid work in some areas. The Management and Library Committees are still considering how to provide additional and professional help in library administration. This would enable fuller use of the library resources, not only by the resident community. The improvement of the annexes, the provision of more married accommodation, the furtherance of regular maintenance work on the main building, all provide urgent matters for the Management Committee. The students are very grateful to the church as a whole for increased grants but finding houses or flats in Cambridge for married students is often both difficult and expensive and economical ways of meeting the problem are being sought.

3. The Federation has set up a committee on Curriculum and Courses which has the remit both of developing a core programme and of increasingly integrating the different aspects of training.

4. The Revd Kate McIlhagga has agreed to continue as Chaplain for a further year. Her work in counselling is much appreciated. Chapel worship has been enlivened by the coming of a large and varied group of first year students. The rise of numbers from 24 to 36 (plus 5 from other churches) has boosted every aspect of community life.

The Nestle Library and the Lewis and Gibson Manuscripts

5. The college is privileged to have in its care the library of the German scholar Eberhard Nestle and manuscripts collected by Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson. These are held for the use of scholars but their maintenance has perforce been low among budget priorities. The college has been much heartened to receive two very generous gifts from the congregation of Rudow in West Berlin, whose pastor, Dr. Billy Butzke, is a Westminster alumnus. Repairs, binding and manuscript protective work have been able to go ahead at last.

A Presence and an Image

6. The Visitors said that Westminster College has "a presence and an image in the whole life of the denomination". That phrase needs to be spelled out. Many of the ways in which staff, students and buildings serve the wider church are not publicised. The Westminster Lay Conference in Lent, the Ministers' Refresher Course in June, use of the college for summer schools are all regular events; the Cheshunt Foundation offers sabbatical terms for ministers. A recent review of staff diaries showed how many conference speaking engagements, special services (e.g. on Vocations Sunday) and study programmes of local churches have used their various expertise. Students, as at other colleges, are regularly leading worship in the area and also taking part in summer Youth Committee programmes. Several local churches have used the buildings as their base for a day visit to Cambridge. Westminster College wants to be an *open house* for the URC in these and other ways.

MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

7. Although there has never been any doubt that religion and life must be integrated in order to amount to anything, this has not been an easy matter for ministerial training from the beginnings of the Church. There have, however, been important moves in this area in the past generation, and during the past years Mansfield, along with other URC related colleges have been making this a priority. Great Britain has been helped by visits from five overseas theological educators sponsored by the BCC. Their report after a term's residence is in many ways very critical of British ministerial training. They stressed the need to integrate world, national and personal issues with the traditional theological subjects. They believe that a university context is the best place for this if the church as well as the university sets the agenda for the course. Classes should be multi-disciplined and placements should feed back into the course. Minority experiences should be taken seriously. They found too many gaps between academic concerns and the formation of the Christian life in our colleges and training programmes in all denominations.

8. We have tried to respond to these concerns for many years, and in the past year have made some changes in our methods. We are stressing to all of our tutors (5 on site, 8 part time from other colleges, and local ministers) that there is always a

need for continuous reflection and explanation why their courses are taught and how they relate to life itself. We also organised a new cross-discipline course to examine topics that are of concern to all people, and a term was given to "love" and "failure" as a start. With the new ordinands we began informal discussions related to their academic biblical work asking how the essay subjects made a difference to their lives. We are keen to develop new ways of theology especially to look at and do *theology by the people* that emphasises grass-roots experience in communities. This is fed into our placements and intern year programmes and the course leaders are also in their own pastoral charges. We want to reflect on the joys and pains in society and what churches can do about it, and to relate the story of salvation to it all.

9. Another project we are working on is a better way of teaching church management, noting that many ministers have trouble in this area. Those ordinands with academic and/or practical backgrounds in management (including the Director of Training) organise case studies and role plays.

10. The twelve theological colleges in Oxford organised events during the year. Sessions on *Body Language in Worship* were held in Mansfield and attended by over 100 ordinands, led by Roman, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and URC liturgists. Traditional and new ways of doing and conducting worship were explored and the theology, psychology and sociology underlying these were discussed.

11. The ordinands have initiated a course evaluation scheme which was welcomed by the Board of Education and results will be given annually to the tutors and the Board. This has resulted in some changes in approach and is a very useful exercise.

12. Our main worries this year have been the cost of married accommodation in Oxford and the slowness of getting our new constitution into place, but we are actively working on both items. Otherwise it has been a good and stimulating year with a group of talented and lively students that we are proud to be training.

NORTHERN COLLEGE

13. The college will shortly be completing its third year in its new ecumenical setting. The great advantage of being on a single site is the opportunity this provides for staff and students to live, work and worship together. Sharing is a way of life for both staff and students, whether they are at coffee or in committee. In a place like the Federation where different theological viewpoints are represented no particular viewpoint is likely to remain unchallenged for long, and this is of course to be welcomed since we believe that the Lord has more light yet to break forth out of his holy word.

14. One thing which was not foreseen when the Federation was planned was the marked increase in the number of students offering for training. Northern College has its largest enrolment for some years. This has put strains on the space available on certain days of the week. Projecting the number of students in a theological college has always been a notoriously difficult exercise, and the situation can change from year to year, but obviously we shall want to keep this matter under review. The increasing numbers also mean additional demands on the staff. This coincided with the developments in theological education by means of reflection on experience gained by students on placements. We have had temporary help from the Revd Jean Forster and are appointing a full time staff member as Tutor of Community

-Based Training. This is a new post and it reflects the college's commitment to the decision taken by General Assembly that training for ministry should involve theological awareness that results from reflection upon experiences gained by students in placements in local churches and communities.

15. During the year under review the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation conducted an inspection of the college. This was undertaken jointly with representatives of the other churches in the other colleges of the Federation. Some of the recommendations were already on the agenda of the college committees but others are new and will keep us busy for the foreseeable future. Our thanks are due to the Revd Donald Hilton (URC) and Mr Graham Adams (Congregational Federation) and the other inspectors who gave so generously of their time to carry out the task assigned to them.

16. The College Mission this year was in Salford. The Revd Roger Tomes and the student team worked to make the claims of Jesus Christ known, not only in the church but in the community, visiting homes and schools. Also during the session planning was started in regard to the mission for spring of 1989. The committee responsible for the revision of the Core-Curriculum presented its findings during the year and we will be introducing a number of improvements in the light of our experience. One aspect of the Core which is receiving particular attention is assessment. Students and staff are encouraged to build forms of evaluation and assessment into courses which will provide information on the value and effectiveness of the courses so that they can assess performance from a quite early stage in the session. We also aim to help students do their own self-assessment. Evaluation of courses involving training and skills and reflection on experience in placement is also receiving attention and here we have received valuable help from colleagues in departments of social studies of other academic institutions.

17. The Federation was pleased to have a visit from a number of theological educators from overseas. The Revd Professor Kwesi Dixon of Ghana and the Revd Ashley Smith of Kingston, Jamaica, spent some time with us. It was a valuable experience to have comments on aspects of our training like mission and world church from representatives of the younger churches.

18. When the college's former premises at Whalley Range were sold and the proceeds of the sale were invested, the governors pledged themselves to use some of the investment income for the purpose of undertaking projects on an ecumenical basis which would not otherwise be possible. Negotiations have been going on for some time with churches in areas outside Manchester with a view to exploring the possibility of entering into a partnership with these churches in order to assist schemes for training for ministry in situ. This is of particular interest to the Federation since quite a number of its students live outside Manchester and train within local churches and communities, travelling to Manchester every week for two days of training. Moreover our college has always been anxious to do what it could to work with lay people in understanding ministry in their local churches and secular occupations. We have long been challenged to explore ways in which ordinands can be trained alongside lay people. These are quite early days yet and a lot of thought and planning will obviously need to be given to the matter, but the enthusiasm for the idea which has been communicated to us by interested parties in two areas outside Manchester has led to the setting up of a joint committee for the purpose of making detailed proposals. It is hoped that this will become a further way in which the college will assist the churches in their ministry and mission.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE

19. The new Principal, the Revd Dr J B Walker, writes in his first report to Queen's Council:

I feel very much like a new boy who has entered into a whole new situation, and is trying to find his bearings. Perhaps a better analogy would be that I feel very much like an engine driver who gets in to drive the train, but discovers that the train runs of its own accord very well!

20. It is hard to make a report when I have been Principal for just under two months, and yet I would say at the onset how much I am enjoying being here. I am finding the students very stimulating, the staff very encouraging, the administration at times overwhelming, and I am aware of tremendous goodwill from a very wide group of people, not least those here on the Council.

Welcome

21. Since we arrived at the end of August the welcome has been so marked, not only from staff at Queen's but also from several others in the Church and community. I want to note quite clearly how grateful we are to the teaching staff, to the bursar, to the secretary, to the caretaker and others on the staff, and to the students, for helping us to settle in well and smoothly. All have gone out of their way to encourage, to help and to guide, and have been remarkable in putting up with my inexperience. I would wish to thank them all most warmly.

22. Before leaving the subject of welcomes I have been grateful to have been present at the installation of Donald Eadie the new Methodist Chairman of Synod, and also at the enthronement of Bishop Mark Santer in the Anglican Cathedral. The United Reformed Church too, though not installing a new Provincial Moderator this year, has been kind enough to visit in the person of the chairman of district.

23. One further word of welcome should be extended to our new member of the teaching staff, David Kennedy, who will be teaching liturgy as well as co-ordinating in time both the doctrine and ministry course, and also the worship and preaching course. David will take up his duties from the 1st January, and we are delighted that our search for a liturgy tutor has been successfully completed.

Installation and Ordination

24. A word must be said on these two events which occurred so near the beginning of term. I was profoundly moved to be installed as Principal by Bishop Keith Sutton, having heard a challenging and stimulating address by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. There is an old expression in the Church of Scotland, one which comes from the Bible, referring to the *filling of the hands*. When a minister is ordained by a Presbytery his ordination is, as the old tradition has it, not complete until his hands are filled with the Lord's Supper, the Lord's final seal of ordination. During the eucharist in the chapel I had a tremendous awareness of my hands being filled for the task ahead, and I will long recall that moment and promise.

25. The other highlight in chapel life, occurring, I understand, for the very first time in Queen's was the ordination as deacon of Barbara Woollaston by Bishop Colin Buchanan, with Marlene Parsons preaching the sermon. The whole college shared with Barbara in her joy, and it was delightful to welcome members of her family too, and

indeed her brother, who has taken early retirement, had only a few weeks before been ordained a minister of the United Reformed Church. When we saw Barbara the next day she looked about two inches taller and the glow on her face was undiminished.

Training of Students

26. I have mentioned already my delight and enjoyment at being involved with students, finding comments and questions quite stimulating. There are some first class people here, not only among students but also among spouses, and it is lovely too to have living on campus some 36 children, including the children of staff, and also several children living out but also part of college life. I am greatly warming to the task of helping to prepare students for ministry in Christ's Church, and am reflecting on how this is being done at Queen's. It is good too to be in a worshipping ecumenical community, centred in the eucharist. We are at Queen's totally committed to training ministers and priests for the individual Churches represented.

27. Finally - I would wish to express my thanks to the Council for appointing me as Principal. I regard this as a very great honour and feel humbled to be called to this task. I am greatly looking forward to what lies ahead, and hope that, with our staff, we can help to train the people through whom, under God, the Churches will advance, grow in number and in spirit, and reach out in mission, taking forth the good news of Christ's kingdom.

APPENDIX 4

STUDENTS IN TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY 1987/88 *(as at February 1988)*

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Ruth Crofton (Northern), Tim Hopley (Northern), John Kingsley (Northern). Jean Gordon (Northern).

Auxiliary

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

NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Stephen Brown (Northern), Elizabeth Byrne (Westminster), Alison Chart (Northern), Joseph Clemson (Westminster), Robert Jones (Westminster), David Legge (Northern), Sandy Mailer (Northern), Peter Meek (Northern), Christopher Searle (Northern).

Auxiliary

Audrey Boon (MCI), Anthony Cottam (URC), Brenda Ford (MCI), David Lee (MCI), John Mackereth (MCI), Denise Megson (MCI), Barbara Plenderleith (MCI), Jack Thompson (MCI).

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Andrew Dawson (Northern), Sandra Dears (Northern) , Paul Holmes (Northern), Philip Tiplady (Northern), James Whateley (Westminster).

Auxiliary

Peter Brown (MCI), Susan Flynn (MCI), Trevor Legge (MCI), Robert Thomson (URC), Kathleen Watts (URC).

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Peter Clarkson (Northern), Paul Ellis (Northern), Margaret Herbert (Westminster), Michael Moss (Northern), William Nicol (Mansfield), Richard Pearson (Westminster), Derek Redfern (MCI), Peter Blake (MCI).

Auxiliary

Iain Bentley (MCI), Tresna Fletcher (NEOC), Stephen Knapton (MCI), Julia Martin (MCI), Mirella Moxon (MCI), George Perrott (MCI), Marjory Swift (MCI).

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Paul Barratt (Westminster), Colin Biggs (Westminster), Revd Stanley Crane (Westminster), Christopher Strong (Westminster), William Spurling (EMMTC & Westminster), Christopher Ball (Mansfield), Betsy King (Mansfield), Cecil Macaulay (Mansfield), Martyn Coe (Northern), Graham Maskery (Northern), Andrew Willett (Northern), Angela Wood (Northern), Enid Slater (EMMTC and Northern), Maxwell Shepherd (Queens).

Auxiliary

Leslie Watson (URC), Malcolm Deacon (URC), Lesley McNeil (EMMTC). Revd Reginald Moore (EMMTC), Dr. Rodger Charlton (URC)

WEST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Thomas Bayliss (Westminster), Janet Loveitt (Mansfield), Jane Stranz (Mansfield), Rikki Twigg (Queens), Josephine Williams (Queens & WMMTC), Gethyn Rees (Queens).

Auxiliary

John Dews (MCI), Christine Key (URC), Margaret Renton (URC), Lewis Reynolds (URC), Doreen Vick (URC), Roger Woodall (MCI).

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Revd David Bunney (Westminster), Roy Cole (Westminster), Simon Ellis (Westminster), Margaret McKay (Westminster), Bill Thomas (Mansfield), Allan Smith (Mansfield), Craig Bowman (Northern), Geoffrey Clarke (Northern), Nick Stanyon (Northern).

Auxiliary

Colin Knight (URC), Jacqueline Knight (URC), Julia Stone (URC).

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Peter Southcombe (Westminster), Ray Sowersby (Westminster), David Pickering (Mansfield), Sandra Pickard (Mansfield), Ian Knowles (Northern), Erica Beglin (Queens), Samantha Caton (MCI).

Auxiliary

Jill Brown (SWMTC), Dora Frost (URC), Isa Napier (URC), Andrew Pugh (URC), Mary Wheatley (URC), Pat Ford (SWMTC), Heather Pencavel (URC), Evelyn Ridout (URC).

WESSEX PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Douglas Burnett (Westminster), Susan Cox (Westminster), John Wilkinson (Westminster), Daphne Williams (Mansfield), Eddie Boon (Northern), Brian Clarke (Northern), Kenneth Ellis (Northern), Brenda Russell (Northern), Daren Wimbleton (Northern).

Auxiliary

Emily Browne (SWMTS), Frank Cochrane (SWMTS), Bill Connell (SWMTS), Nina Mead (SWMTS), Kate Pryde (SWMTS), Pamela Richardson (SWMTS).

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Charles Croll (Westminster), Gordon Hearne (Westminster), Derek Jones (Westminster), James Pettitt (Westminster), David Witts (Westminster), David Yule (Westminster), Mia Kyte (Mansfield), Stephen Newell (Mansfield), Marlene Brown (Northern), Keith Hagon (Northern), Simon Thomas (Northern).

Auxiliary

David Aplin (Oak Hill), Stewart Bullen (St. Albans), Malcolm Childs (Southwark), Norman Croft (URC), Brenda Denvir (Southwark), Laurence Dixon (Oak Hill), Robert Green (Oak Hill), Martin Legg (Oak Hill), John Maitland (Southwark), Margaret Williams (URC), Christine Willis (URC).

SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Paul Bedford (Westminster), Jean Black (Westminster), Rudolph Dixon (Westminster), Jeanne Ennals (Westminster), David Harkison (Westminster), Alan Wharton (Westminster), Brian Stops (Mansfield), David Hilborn (Mansfield), Simon Copley (Northern), Robert Day (Northern), Russell Furley-Smith (Northern), Sally Willett (Northern).

Auxiliary

Reginald Charles (URC), William Gray (URC), Mary Read (SOC), Karen Street (URC), Marie Thistle (URC).

PROVINCE OF WALES

Stipendiary Wyn Evans (Westminster), Andrew Mills (Westminster), Shirley Mountcastle

(Northern), Philip Webb (Northern).

Auxiliary

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

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Gwen Collins (Westminster).

CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS

Simon Loveitt (West Midlands), Kate Breeze (Eastern), Theresa Mansbridge (West Midlands), Alison Jiggins (Thames North), Marie Trubic (Thames North).

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
WMMTC	West Midlands Training Course
URC	URC Auxiliary Ministry Training Programme

APPENDIX 5

TRAINING STATISTICS

	Total in training at Feb '87	Total in training at Feb '88	Entry into URC service				Entered service in 1987
			1988	1989	1990	1991	
Westminster	24	36	11	7	4	14	5
Mansfield	14	15	3	6	3	3	2
Northern	41	44	9	12	6	17	13
Queen's	3	5	1	1	1	2	-
Totals	82	100	24	26	14	36	20
Auxiliary	72	70	23	21	16	10	20
CRCWs	4	5	3	-	2	-	1
Grand totals	158	175	50	47	32	46	41

SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Peter Brain
Secretary: The Revd Michael Diffey

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

41 The report of this working party forms the major part of our report this year. We hope to ensure that there is in place in the church a sure framework for the engagement in the ministry, a combination of the practical and intangible support of ministers which implies responsibilities as well as better *working conditions* (see Appendix 6 and Resolution 4). In anticipation of this report, and at the request of the Moderators' meeting, a pre-retirement course for ministers (with spouses as appropriate) will be held at Windermere in November 1988. We hope this will become an annual event.

MINISTRIES IN THE COMMUNITY

42. This sub-committee has been following up Assembly's decision to pay some Church Related Community Workers from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund. We confirm that the equivalent of five such posts will be designated by January 1989 when these stipends will start to be payable.

43. It is encouraging to receive applications from potential projects, although these are still uneven nationwide. The Department is producing literature to help local groups; but personal contact, plus a visit from a member of the sub-committee, is the best means of ensuring that a project starts well, CRCWs are themselves also keen to be consulted. In addition, debates in Synods or District Councils on ministry issues would be enriched and enlivened by a contribution from an invited CRCW.

44. Assembly charged the sub-committee with the task of maintaining a balance between CRCWs and available posts. Currently there are more projects in the pipeline than CRCW candidates. We are sure that there are many who should consider this calling. A personal contact is always welcomed, either directly or through Ministerial Enquirers' Conferences.

45. The Ministries and Church & Society Departments are co-sponsoring a residential consultation for those engaged in *community ministry* of various kinds; this will be in Halifax, 23-24 June.

46 The sub-committee has met with the British Council of Churches Community Work Resource Unit and contributed to the discussion on ecumenical prospects in this field, part of the general looking ahead beyond the present BCC. Community work is hardly denominational; we look forward to exploring some exciting possibilities.

"SPECIAL CATEGORY" MINISTRIES

47 Following the introduction of a new procedure for those applying for a new post to be recognised, we have now similarly updated the procedures for reviewing existing posts, especially when an extension is being sought.

48 During the year 22 situations were considered and several visits were made. As

a result, in November 1987, 27 ministers were serving in "special category" posts, 8 in institutional chaplaincies (industry and education), 13 in new developments or urban priority areas, and 6 in one-off special special situations (inter-faith work, AIDS adviser, etc.)

49. We have welcomed the opportunity to share responsibility with the MOM officers for evaluation of those ecumenical posts which are funded from MOM under para. 13.3 of *The Plan*, known as Ministry in Other Situations (MOS) grants. We look forward to agreeing with the MOM officers a procedure for dealing with these applications.

50. We would be keen to encourage fresh applications for innovative, outreach ministries, from across the country and from a range of situations. We do appreciate that the need to provide housing and adequate expenses from local resources can be a constraint. Though the Committee cannot offer direct funding, we should wish to be consulted by anyone for whom this is the principal barrier to a possible application. It is vital that mission, not money, is the basis for the deployment of ministers.

SPECIALIST MINISTRIES

51. The Committee recognises at least five areas of specialist ministry and during the year has been involved with each. We are seeking ways of sharing the lessons learned in each field :-

In Higher and Further Education

52. This work is overseen by a separate sub-committee, whose composition and terms of reference are currently under review (at its own request).

53. The majority of Free Church education chaplains are local ministers devoting what time can be spared within a pastorate. Thus it becomes, largely, a matter of caring for one's own students. There is, however, increasing recognition of the need for chaplaincy to the whole institution and not *private chaplains* for the (denominationally) faithful few. So we encourage a broader commitment by this large number of part-time chaplains.

54. As to full-time posts, a number of questions and proposals have been put, in the first instance, to the Free Church Federal Council by the Methodist, Baptist and URC secretaries involved. We look forward to progress in establishing a co-ordinated policy for more joint chaplaincy provision.

55. Currently the MOM Fund supports (wholly or in part) 10 full-time education chaplaincies (including 3 URC ministers). A number of other URC ministers are in such posts, not funded by the MOM.

In Industry

56. Concern has often been shown about filling Industrial Mission vacancies promptly as openings and contacts established over a period of time are easily lost. Currently the MOM Fund supports (wholly or in part) 10 industrial mission posts (including 5 URC ministers). Again, there are other URC ministers engaged in this work with other funding.

57. Industrial Mission should be a regular element in the pre-ordination and in-

and in-service training of ministers.

58. All known contacts are invited to the annual consultation sponsored jointly between the Ministries and Church & Society Departments. When these posts are coupled with pastoral charges, problems can arise so we look forward to the production by the Churches Consortium on Industrial Mission of some guidelines on half and part-time appointments.

In the Armed Services

59. Through the United Board (a Baptist/URC partnership), the church exercises its right to nominate ministers who may be considered for service as chaplains in the Army, Navy or Air Force, and approves appointments to T A chaplaincies. The Board invites enquiries from ministers interested in this work.

60. Some 26 URC ministers serve as local Officiating Chaplains. In 1987 these were contacted by the Support Committee; the 13 who replied spoke of their satisfaction in the work and, in some cases, of their wish to share their experiences with District Council or Provincial Synod. It is important that local churches send commendations of young people entering the Services; 10 such names were received in 1987.

In Hospitals

61. We report that the Hospital Chaplaincy Board of the Free Church Federal Council, which acts on behalf of the URC in these matters, has reviewed the criteria for such appointments; they have accepted that URC Auxiliary Ministers shall be eligible for appointment, provided the usual conditions as regards training, experience, status, availability and local commendation are met.

In Prisons

62. The officers of the Committee met with the Methodist superintendent Prison Chaplain to explore whether there might be a change in the Methodist *monopoly* of this ministry. Those URC ministers who act as prison chaplains (recognised by the Home Office) do so by virtue of being quasi-Methodist ministers in united pastorates. However it seems unlikely that Home Office approval would be given to any change. Reluctantly we shall not pursue the matter at present.

APPENDIX 6

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The matters addressed in this report have been raised in several quarters within the United Reformed Church in addition to the Ministries Department, under whose auspices it has been produced.

1.2 The annual report of the Provincial Moderators has more than once drawn attention to the difficulties experienced by ministers at the various stages of their working lives. The report on *Stress in the Ministry*, accepted by Assembly in

1987, specifically highlighted matters which may adversely affect the minister. The Maintenance of the Ministry Committee and officers are aware of some problems in the implementation of the *Plan for Partnership*, parts of our report are intended to reinforce what is contained in the *Plan*.

1.3 The Support Committee of the Ministries Department resolved in April 1986 "to set up a small working party to clarify where the responsibilities of a model employer lie within the structures of the United Reformed Church and to suggest how they might be better exercised for the well-being of ministers and of the whole church".

1.4 We are only addressing the circumstances of stipendiary ministers; in this report, therefore, *minister* refers to a full-time stipendiary minister of word and sacraments. Others must examine the situations of part-time ministers, auxiliary ministers or laypeople variously employed within the URC.

1.5 The responsibilities of a model employer are spread through out the church. In part ministers are a self-regulating profession, protective of their freedom to organise their lives as they feel led; in part they are a group of *employed staff* with terms and conditions laid down nationally; in part they are members of co-operatives, sharing in Councils and Synods and Assembly with other church members in decisions affecting their prospects and livelihood. The precise legal status of ministers is a matter for the Churches Main Committee and has (thankfully) not been on the working party's agenda.

1.6 Our report seeks to clarify the best of current practice, offers some suggested improvements, and attempts to locate within the church's structure the responsibility for ensuring that the best practice is adopted.

1.7 Certain features of secular employment - but not all - offer helpful models for considering the position of ministers. We shall refer, for example, to in-service training, preparation for retirement and the production of a curriculum vitae (cv), where secular precedents seem helpful. Similarly certain employment legislation which is not strictly applicable to ministers may be nevertheless recommended. For example, in one matter of principle the working party believes that the United Reformed Church should clearly accept the role of an *equal opportunity employer* (see 4.4 and Appendix E). If in the recruitment, training or placing of ministers there is prejudice against women, or black or disabled candidates, this must be confronted and resolved.

1.8 This is a unanimous report from the working party:

Mr Jim Coull (convenor), a management consultant and formerly Managing Director in the engineering industry;

Revd John Waller, Provincial Moderator and convenor of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee;

Revd Elizabeth Nash, industrial chaplain, former member of the Support Committee;

Revd Peter Brain (secretary), minister, convenor of the Support Committee.

1.9 We have consulted in person with Revd Bill Mahood, Mrs Judy Stockings, Mr Clem Frank, Revd Michael Dunford and Revd Bernard Thorogood. We are indebted to Revds Brian and Susan Nuttall for the substance of section 2.3.9. We have received several letters from individuals. Some Provinces have shared their own papers on matters which are addressed here. We have consulted documents, including: the booklet *Guidelines for churches seeking a Minister* published by the Baptist Union;

the forms and procedures used by the Uniting Church in Australia; a church planning inventory from the Hartford (USA) Center for Social and Religious Research; reports from Government and other statutory bodies, eg Commission for Racial Equality. None of these individuals or bodies is responsible for our report though we have been glad to incorporate good ideas and clear statements.

THE JOB

2.1 The starting point of a similar working party in a secular situation would be to clarify the *job description*, a document setting out the tasks expected of the employee with the skills and qualifications required, plus a statement of the authority to be exercised and the accountability to others. The Christian ministry is only in part susceptible to this approach. The minister is a person set apart both to do and to be; the doing can to an extent be planned and measured, the being cannot. Our report is self-evidently more about doing than being. We offer procedures and proposals which will enable the work to proceed more efficiently which in this case means to the greater glory of God.

Declaring a Vacancy

2.2.1 The sequence of events surrounding a vacancy offer a good opportunity to review the post concerned, the life and work of the pastorate (or "special category" ministry) and the prospects for a new minister. We return below (2.4.1-3) to the need for such reviews other than at a vacancy.

2.2.2 We RECOMMEND(1) that every pastorate should prepare a full self-description. This is not always done at present. Too many ministers arrive with misunderstandings, and there are often misconceptions on the part of the local pastorate. This can lead to unnecessary tension as the report *Stress in the Ministry* points out (3.2). It is, after all, better to break an engagement than a marriage. We offer a pro forma for such a self-description (Appendix A); some Provinces already use something similar.

We RECOMMEND(2) that such a form (with the proposed terms of settlement) be completed before a District Council formally declares a vacancy. We deal below (4.2.1) with the parallel need for a full self-introduction of a prospective minister.

2.2.3 Where the post is a joint pastorate between two or more local churches (or between a local church and another recognised ministry), the pastorate profile should be prepared by a joint group who should ensure that those involved in both parts of the job are aware of the needs, demands and expectations of the other; thus only one full-time post is prepared, not two!

2.2.4 The responsibilities of employer throughout a ministerial move belong jointly to the District Council and the local pastorate, with the Provincial Moderator. The District's role, especially in the period up to the declaration of a vacancy, is crucial and too easily undervalued. Implementation of the equal opportunity policy on behalf of the District Council or local church (4.4.1-5 and Appendix E) is particularly relevant when a pastorate profile is being prepared and possible ministerial candidates for a vacancy being considered.

2.2.5 We RECOMMEND(3) the best current practice, up to the point of declaring a vacancy to be as follows, (with emphasis on the implied *normally throughout*): (NB:

District Council in recommendations 3 & 4 implies "or the appropriately authorised committee or officers of Districts"; District procedure needs to be clearly agreed and understood on such matters, including who can give concurrence to calls. Similarly, *Elders* stands for the equivalent group in an ecumenical or "special category" ministry.)

- i) The minister informs the Elders of receipt of a call to another post; normally three months' notice of a move is given. At the same time, the move is referred to District Council and confirmation of the position is given to the Provincial Moderator.
- ii) District Council initiates discussion with the pastorate and Provincial Moderator with a view to appointing an Interim Moderator (or sometimes more than one to churches in a joint pastorate). The role and duties of Interim Moderators should be clearly defined. (2.2.6)
- iii) District Council arranges one or more meetings with the Elders (or equivalent group) and the Provincial Moderator to discuss the question of the vacancy. The information concerning the church(es) and the proposed terms of settlement may be prepared before or after such a meeting.
- iv) After receiving the information about the pastorate and agreeing the proposed terms of settlement, District Council then determines the *scoping* of the pastorate (ie is it to be full-time, part-time or somehow shared) and declares a vacancy.

2.2.6 The duties of an Interim Moderator will vary considerably depending on local circumstances. They should always include taking the chair of any meeting (of Elders, members or special group) where there is discussion of the ministerial vacancy, and taking the chair when a candidate is being introduced and interviewed. The Interim Moderator is the link of *mutual* representation between the local church and the District Council. It will be found helpful if the expected duties are set down in writing, however informally.

Filling a Vacancy

2.3.1 The procedure for filling ministerial vacancies contains distinctive features which have aroused argument. See recommendation 4 (below).

2.3.2 Candidates are considered consecutively, not concurrently. However, a short-list of more than one is interviewed for other church posts.

2.3.3 There is reliance on the relatively closed system of the Moderators' meeting to discover candidates. Open advertisement is discouraged, though a list of vacancies is circulated to stipendiary ministers quarterly. Such a system makes it difficult to avoid structural discrimination on grounds of sex or race, however hard those who are operating the system try. The Commission for Racial Equality in its Code of Practice stresses the close link between good employment practice and equal opportunity; "the more unstructured and subjective procedures are, the more likely unlawful discrimination is to occur". We offer Recommendation 22 below (4.4.5) as an attempt to review our own practice in this context.

2.3.4 There can also be strong resistance by ministers (on grounds of personal conviction/convenience) against any element of constraint or direction - even by the

Holy Spirit! We know that ministers are sometimes reluctant to consider certain pastorates, e.g. in demanding urban or rural situations. We are not bringing a recommendation on strengthening the authority of the church in the matter of the movement of ministers. However we wonder whether there may be examples of where asserting the right to personal conviction in this context may damage the mission of the church.

2.3.5 We RECOMMEND(4) the current best practice for filling a vacancy to be as follows (again assuming a liberal scattering of *normally*) but that this procedure be kept under scrutiny:

- i) When the vacancy is declared, the Provincial Moderator gives information about the vacancy to the Moderators' meeting.
- ii) If a candidate can be identified, that minister is shown the papers prepared about the pastorate and asked about letting their name go forward.
- iii) If the minister agrees, the name with their c.v. (see 4.2.1) is given to the pastorate. An invitation may follow to meet the Interim Moderator and Elders. These meetings/interviews should be carefully handled; we offer some guidance on their conduct in Appendix D.
- iv) If the minister and Elders both agree, Church Meeting (or equivalent) will invite the candidate for a weekend, to include leading of worship, social gathering, etc.
- v) Elders Meeting and Church Meeting (with the Interim Moderator chairing) will take place as soon after the weekend visit as possible; the Elders are free but not obliged to make a recommendation to the Church Meeting.
- vi) Any decision is communicated, by telephone and confirmed in writing, to the candidate immediately after the meeting; it should include a report on the attendance and the voting figures. A decision to send a call should be communicated to the District Council as soon as possible, with a request for concurrence.

Clearly, this basic procedure will be adapted for group pastorates, ecumenical or other *special* situations.

2.3.6 We would point out that the primary *employer responsibility* of District Council covers the period before the vacancy is declared, though the requirement to concur with a particular call and to be responsible for the induction is an important safeguard. The earlier oversight of the production of a description of the pastorate, the agreement to the *terms of settlement* to be offered and the actual declaration of the vacancy are much more significant.

Married Couples

2.3.8 There are over 30 couples within the URC where both partners are ordained. Though in most cases at least one partner is an auxiliary minister, it is necessary to reckon with this distinctive group in establishing best employment practices, not least when changing posts is involved. We draw attention to a ruling by the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee on the entitlement of married couple ministers to certain payments (manse expenses, removal expenses, ordinations loans, etc.)

2.3.9 We RECOMMEND(5) the following procedure for introducing husband and wife ministers to two separate pastorates; (the procedure described above will apply when two ministers are job-sharing).

- (i) Preliminary visit by both ministers to see both areas, church buildings, the intended manse, etc. and to meet Interim Moderators and Church Secretaries, and to clarify which minister is to candidate for which pastorate.

Then if ministers and pastorates wish to proceed:

- (ii) Consultation between pastorates to clarify lines of communication.
- (iii) Both ministers meet both Elders Meetings (or equivalent).
- (iv) Elders Meetings may confer together or separately after visit.

Then if ministers and pastorates wish to proceed:

- (v) Ministers visit over a weekend, include leading of worship etc.
- (vi) Both Elders Meetings consider their separate responses to the weekend.
- (vii) Interim Moderators (or Church Secretaries) report the responses to each other and to the ministers.

Then if both Elders Meetings are willing to recommend a call:

- (viii) Church Meetings meet separately but at the same time, all parties accepting that if one pastorate decides against a call, neither minister would accept a call.
- (ix) Interim Moderators report jointly to ministers.

Finally, if both ministers and both pastorates are willing:

- (x) Calls are confirmed in writing.
- (xi) Pastorates set up joint committee to deal with matters concerning manse, terms of settlement, etc.
- (xii) Inductions are planned, preferably for the same or consecutive days.

Variation

2.4.1 We believe that District Council should be free to attempt rescoping of a pastorate, regrouping churches or otherwise reorganising its ministerial resources, other than when a minister leaves, retires or dies.

2.4.2 We RECOMMEND(6) that District Council resolutions declaring a vacancy should reserve the right to consult with minister(s) and pastorate(s) with a view to redetermining the scoping etc agreed prior to an induction. No-one can foresee what the situation will be after 4 or 5 years of a ministry. An initiative can come from any of the parties. It seems right for District Council to be in a position to exercise oversight with maximum flexibility.

2.4.3 We believe that the District Council clearly has this responsibility, and presumably the authority, under the *Basis of Union* implicitly. This needs to be spelt out with the understanding that the concurrence of the pastorate(s) is required, and that the minister(s) should agree but cannot veto. (See also 3.7.1)

Evaluation

2.5.1 We are persuaded that not only ministers in fixed-term posts benefit from some form of deliberate evaluation of their ministry. Yet only they are subject to it. The issue of evaluation or assessment is one where the analysis of ministry as a combination of doing and being mentioned above (2.1) is of vital importance. To attempt to examine the quantity and quality of what has been done is too often perceived as an examination of the minister's being, of personality, identity or spirituality. Hence the distinct questions of the evaluation of ministry and the personal support of the minister are usually, perhaps inevitably, confused.

2.5.2 The highly structured, promotion-orientated, management-by-objective approach has no place in the assessment of ministry. But we are conscious that over £5m is spent by the church every year on stipends for ministers with almost no attempt to discover what might constitute value for money.

2.5.3 Accountability is a theological theme, with its ultimate dimension in the divine judgement. We RECOMMEND(7) that consultations on evaluating ministry are convened in each Province (or between two neighbouring Provinces) at which some of the resources in the field can be examined. What is required is a means of enabling ministers to engage, preferably with a trusted colleague, in self-assessment which should be stretching and encouraging, reassuring and renewing. This may sound ideal, especially in Districts where ministers are few; but we are sure that such practice would benefit minister and church alike.

2.5.4 In this context the documentation drawn up by a pastorate at the time of a vacancy can be helpful; it is one reason for our recommendation that it be produced with care and thoroughness. It should have outlined the broad aims of the pastorate, the existing work, the hopes or dreams, the resources; it might well have included specific tasks expected of the minister or areas in which fresh leadership was required. Such initial documents are soon overtaken by events, but they still provide a framework for some appraisal of one's own ministry in terms of *doing*. It is for the minister's personal support group or chosen colleague to keep an eye on the *being*.

2.5.5 In parallel with this recommendation concerning ministerial evaluation would be one advocating a regular *mission audit* to be undertaken by the local church(es); indeed one without the other is unbalanced. However, this is outside our terms of reference so we can only allude to the possibility.

THE TERMS

3.1.1 Though the terms and conditions of a minister are normally spelt out before any call is sent, not all Districts insist on a written statement. This is not good enough.

3.1.2 We RECOMMEND(8) that District Council should only declare a vacancy after confirming, in the confidence of the appropriate committee, that the proposed terms of settlement meet the terms of the *Plan*. We offer a pro forma (Appendix B),

similar to those in use in some Provinces, for completion by the pastorate. The information, would then go to any minister who was considering the vacancy, along with other details about the post, as suggested above (2.2.2).

3.1.3 Use of standardised procedure seems to us an important step towards ensuring that all ministers enjoy at least the basic conditions set out by the General Assembly when it adopted the *Plan*. We have discovered considerable variation in policy and practice around the country, quite apart from the serious breaches of the *Plan* revealed by our direct enquiries.

3.1.4 We are aware that the complex and uncertain tax position of ministers is liable to be changed at any time though the thrust of our comments and recommendations is unlikely to be fundamentally affected by any ruling. The Maintenance of the Ministry Committee will keep ministers informed.

3.1.5 It will clearly benefit ministers if regular expenses can be paid on the imprest principle (of an agreed float which is then topped up) rather than having to spend their own money and being reimbursed later.

Questionnaire

3.2.1 In December 1986 we circulated a questionnaire about terms and conditions. Percentages given here are of 83 replies (from 96 enquiries); this represents 10.8% of the 765 full-time stipendiary ministers in pastorates on "special category" ministries, a large enough percentage for general conclusions to be drawn.

Manse expenses:

3.2.2 In answer to the question "are manse heating and lighting bills paid in full?", 86% ticked *yes* but 14% *no*. This may mean that over 100 ministers are not receiving this element of their entitlement; if so, it is a clear breach of the *Plan*. There is some anxiety over the open-endedness of the provision of heat and light for manse, not least because many pastorates need to budget such expenditure quite tightly. Ministers and treasurers need an arbiter to deal with any tension; we suggest a procedure below (3.5.4 and Recommendation 14).

3.2.3 13% record manse redecoration *not done*, i.e. not provided by the pastorate. The reference in para. 6.3.1 of the *Plan* implies proper internal and external decoration of a church-owned manse. Even where interpretation is varied, promises made to a minister must be kept; where an arrangement is spelt out before an induction, the District Council must ensure that it is done.

3.2.4 In anticipation of guidance from the Churches Main Committee and our own Maintenance of the Ministry Committee in the matter of the Committee Charge (Poll Tax), to replace domestic rates, we offer no comment in this report.

General expenses:

3.3.1 19% answered *no* to the question "are general sundry working expenses met (in cash or in kind)?" Again, this appears to mean that around 145 ministers subsidise these expenses out of their own pocket.

3.3.2 On the payment of telephone accounts, it appears that 38% of ministers have the total bill paid; 46% contribute to the cost of private calls; 16% are worse off in one way or another. We RECOMMEND(9) that, contrary to the implication of para. 6.3.4 of the *Plan*, telephone accounts should be paid by the pastorate; it is

important, for tax purposes, that the telephone account is in the name of the church, not the minister. We recommend that ministers should reimburse the cost of personal telephone calls to their treasurer on a quarterly basis.

3.3.3 From the start, every minister needs a desk and some other office equipment (filing cabinet/s, typewriter or equivalent, etc.). We RECOMMEND(10) that the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee consider making a grant at ordination to enable ministers to obtain office furniture and equipment.

Travelling:

3.4.1 Probably the sorest point affecting the reimbursement of ministers is that of motoring costs. Across the country there is a wide range of conditions, from the 20% who are provided with a car and only pay for private petrol to the 11% who receive under £1,500 pa to run their own vehicle.

3.4.2 We note that the *Plan* assigns responsibility for actual provision of a vehicle to the pastorate; we discovered that 59% of ministers run their own. In either case, purchase of the vehicle can be difficult. Perhaps more ministers would buy their own car if finance were easier. Several Provinces have loan funds for this purpose, though resources vary considerably around the country, as do the terms of car loans. We RECOMMEND(11) that these be consolidated in a national car-loan scheme. A policy of fleet provision for all ministers would probably be neither acceptable nor workable.

3.4.3 We RECOMMEND(12) that the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee publish a set of recommended mileage rates every year, to cover the use of church-owned and personal vehicles, and that these become the basis for agreements reached with ministers. For tax purposes, it is important that these do not include a lump sum element.

3.4.4 We are aware of several ministers who do not drive; we RECOMMEND (13) that full reimbursement of all travel expenses be promptly paid by the pastorate in such cases, to allow for some taxis as well as public transport or bicycle costs.

Supplements:

3.5.1 In our survey, some 27% of ministers indicated that they receive a supplement to the basic stipend. In some cases (which our questionnaire was not designed to reveal) this may be instead of paying actual expenses as incurred; this practice is to be discouraged, if only on grounds of tax liability problems. But our finding does suggest that a large number of pastorates and ministers are persuaded that the national agreed stipendiary needs to be augmented in their situation.

Strain

3.6.1 It is obvious that financial matters can put considerable strain on the minister (and the minister's family) and the pastorate. In particular we note three problems which have been raised with us.

3.6.2 If the local expenses are to be met in full, it may become evident that the pastorate cannot pay them - or will default on Maintenance of the Ministry or Unified Appeal contributions to do so. In over 100 cases, the pastorate apparently cannot afford to offer the minister in post the full provision set out in the *Plan*; we suspect that these include several pastorates where there are already heavy pressures on the minister. We must question the apparently collusive nature of

District Council's concurrence in situations where this is known. We are moved to ask whether the United Reformed Church as a whole can afford the present number of stipendiary ministers, several of whom are in effect subsidising the church. Such failures to honour the *Plan* must be acceptable.

3.6.3 This is a complex matter and extends beyond our terms of reference. We note that the Executive Committee is already addressing the relationship between a call to recruit more ministers and the difficulty of raising more money to pay them. We therefore RECOMMEND(14) that the specific question of the difficulty of raising adequate local costs of ministry be urgently addressed by a separate inter-departmental inquiry, to which this working party would be ready to give evidence; alternatively the matter might be included in the remit of the Central Funding and Advocacy Group which will report directly to the national Executive Committee.

3.6.4 The second problem is also essentially one of relationships. It should not fall to the minister to initiate an enquiry in to the level of expenses being paid; it is easy to say *let the minister complain* but that is wrong, whether the pastorate is well-to-do or poor. We RECOMMEND(15) that with the annual returns submitted from pastorates is included a statement of the current level of expenses being paid, under agreed headings, and that each District (or Province) appoint an individual (*personnel secretary*) with responsibility to check with each minister annually precisely the level of expenses being paid. Where a problem arises, discussions should involve the District or the Provincial Treasurer (to help the local church), the personnel secretary (to support the minister) as well as the minister concerned and the local pastorate. Our recommendation implies that these officers of the wider church should act annually as arbiters of each local situation; they must be trusted to do so in fairness with confidentiality.

3.6.5 The third issue derives from the view that certain ministers might be more open to accept a call to urban priority area work if they could make provision for the private, residential education of their children; this clearly could not be a financial call on the local pastorate. We invite the Trustees of the Milton Mount Foundation to clarify and publicise their policy in grant-aiding such children. To quote *Faith in the City*: "Many UPA clergy and their wives find it a privilege to bring up their children in a multi-cultural area....For some it is an opportunity, for some it is stressful and hard to cope with, for many it is a combination of the two."(para 6.8.9). We would suppose that a survey of URC ministers would reveal a similar situation.

3.6.6 Another factor affects the ministers directly. Most insurance companies, including the two with direct links to the United Reformed Church, find it necessary to charge high premiums for insurance cover for building contents and personal belongings in *problem* postal districts. We echo the call made in *Faith in the City* (para 6.94) for help with premiums in such cases.

3.6.7 We RECOMMEND(16) that the inquiry proposed above (Recommendation 14) address the question of introducing differential payments for ministers serving in certain areas where, in addition to above-average stress, there are above-average costs. Already the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee expects to have to respond to varied community charge levels with differential payments.

Variation

3.7.1 We have recommend above (2.4.2) that the minister(s), pastorate and District

Council be able to negotiate alterations to the scoping or description of a post at any time, rather than only having this possibility at a vacancy. It follows that this renegotiation will include the terms of settlement as agreed prior to an induction. Our Recommendation 6 makes clear that this renegotiation can be initiated by any of the three parties involved.

3.7.2 Occasionally a change may become necessary because of a decision of General Assembly to vary the terms of the *Plan*. For example the ruling to exclude payment of stipend to part-time ministers who are in full-time remunerated employment was, in the view of one Province, an imposed change of agreed terms of settlement to the detriment of at least one minister already in such a position. We have been asked by the General Secretary "to consider the authority placed in the General Assembly to make decisions for the whole church and its ministry in relation to agreements reached between a minister, the local church and the District Council". We offer the following opinion to help the determination of this matter.

3.7.3 The terms of settlement agreed prior to any induction will include reference to national stipend and local payments. There are differences between the two elements in the settlement, though neither is legally defined in terms of the Contracts of Employment Acts.

3.7.4 The payment of local expenses etc. is a matter for the three parties to any induction to agree; if, as we have recommended, there is some flexibility built in from the outset, any change is a matter for local agreement. On the other hand, the payment of a stipend is governed by the rules laid down by Assembly and embodied in the *Plan*. We would affirm that Assembly has the right to make changes to the *Plan*, after full consultation and debate, though no Department, Committee or officer has power to impose a change without approval of Assembly.

3.7.5 Any minister at induction will accept the authority of General Assembly as set out in the *Basis of Union*; any local church or District Council will also acknowledge this. Consideration of particular cases is outside our remit but we have no sense of arbitrary unfairness on the part of Assembly in the particular instance which led to the reference by the General Secretary.

3.7.6 We are reassured by the statement issued jointly by the conveners of the Ministries and Finance and Administration Departments: "Realising that occasions may occur when new procedures or rules need to be made because of new circumstances or needs, the Departments give the assurance that particular pastoral considerations will be given to the way in which such new procedures or rules are applied to ministers who may be adversely affected." This affirms the authority of Assembly while defining that power in terms of the care which must characterise the church.

Maternity

3.8.1. The United Reformed Church should have suitable arrangements for the possible pregnancy of its women ministers. We have been made aware of some problems for ministers in this situation.

3.8.2. We RECOMMEND(17a) that District Councils appoint an Interim Moderator to assist in a pastorate where the minister is pregnant, from the 29th week of pregnancy till 29 weeks after the birth. The duties of such an Interim Moderator will vary from the minimal to the substantial; District Council will take account of the particular circumstances.

3.8.3 We assume that a serving minister remains on stipend throughout pregnancy. We RECOMMEND(17b) that representatives of the District Council and the minister discuss the future of the pastorate at a time normally about 4-5 weeks after the birth. If the minister is to continue as before, there is no break in payment of stipend, expenses, etc.; if she is to resign from the pastorate, stipend should continue until 13 weeks after the birth; if some other arrangement is sought (e.g. rescoping of the pastorate), the minister and District representatives in consultation with the Provincial Moderator, should seek to resolve the matter within 13 weeks after the birth. In cases of illness or incapacity, the existing provisions of the *Plan* (para 6.1.3.1-4) apply. We also ask the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee to clarify procedures for reclaiming Statutory Maternity Pay.

3.8.5. One correspondent told us: "Women ministers with families have experienced lack of imagination or even prejudice when they have attempted to resume their active ministry"; it is at such moments that the claim to be an equal opportunity employer is tested.

Earning more

3.9.1 The difference between a stipend and a salary seems semantic today. The level of basic stipend is supposed to be enough for a minister not to have to earn a living elsewhere. We consider that there would certainly be much more pressure to raise this stipend if it was realistically expected fully to satisfy that criterion, though it is outside our brief to comment on the stipend level. In 1986 the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee reported to Assembly its work on the adequacy of stipends: "Given the circumstances of ministers and their families...differ so widely, any concept of "adequacy" is hard to define." They continued (Reports p32): "*The basic stipend should be sufficient to enable ministers and their families to live without undue financial worry... The stipend should not be tied directly to the remuneration of any other employment because no direct comparison can be made. However there does need to be regular reference to general income levels, the index of retail prices...and the stipends paid by other denominations.*" (Our italics)

3.9.2 However, the fact is that most, if not all ministers have opportunities to perform their ministry and earn extra money at the same time. Our concern is not with the need of such ministry nor the value of it, both which are evident, but with the payment involved.

3.9.3 There is provision in the *Plan* (para 7) for District Council to approve additional paid work provided that "where more than one day per week is involved, the central MOM Committee may reduce the stipend by an appropriate amount after consultation with the minister's District Council and Provincial Moderator". We are told that this provision has never been invoked; perhaps it would seem penal to apply.

3.9.4 Alongside the teachers or hospital chaplains, some ministers are gifted writers or broadcasters. God has given to be used; it is one thing to exercise that gift, another to expect to be paid extra for it while still drawing a stipend from the church. Other ministers, with attractive church buildings or in a particular community setting, may expect to spend significant amounts of their time on the preparation and conduct of weddings; this is their ministry, for which they already receive a stipend. Similarly, some ministers have a large number of funerals.

3.9.5 The argument over preaching fees paid to stipendiary ministers is similar, though distinctive. The Ministries Department is bringing a revised statement about the policy to Assembly in 1988, following the debate in recent years. As to the practice, we would comment that widespread confusion of the terms *fees* and *expenses* is a barrier to the resolution of the matter; if proper travelling and other expenses are calculated and paid, the residual issue about hardship or expectations will be much easier to solve.

3.9.6 The whole area of additional earnings from ministry is most sensitive. We can bring no recommendations. If General Assembly were wholly the employer, a ruling concerning the possible repayment of such additional earnings (Anglican-style) into the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund could be proposed, debated and determined. As it is, this is a matter of personal conscience; any constraints are moral, not legal.

THE MINISTER

4.1. The United Reformed Church has produced several reports on the ministry over the years, most recently *Stress in the Ministry* in 1987. This section of our report concentrates on certain issues where best practice in employment might help.

Candidating

4.2.1 In order to assist the introduction of minister and pastorate we have already recommended a fuller self-description of the pastorate. We RECOMMEND(18) that every minister, especially in the context of a possible move, completes a curriculum vitae (cv). We offer a pro forma (Appendix C). Such a document is common in business and the professions. A prospective church has the right to expect reasonable disclosures of information about the minister, even if certain personal matters are properly excluded. The contents of a cv are controlled by the minister.

In-Service Training

4.3.1. No responsible employer would leave in-service training of staff (IST) to chance or to demand as we do in the church. Despite Assembly resolution, references in the *Plan* and other exhortation, only 67% in our questionnaire recorded IST as *done*. 22% actually recorded it as *not done*, (whether in pride or sorrow we do not know!).

4.3.2 We note that the Ministries Department is planning to produce a report on sabbaticals; we have addressed our comments to the other IST provision.

4.3.3 In every Province there is an In-Service Training Officer; this responsibility may be held a full-time Training Officer or by a minister as an extra duty. We RECOMMEND(19) a thorough review of the system of Provincial In-Service Training Officers, such as a review to include consideration of IST financing, which varies between Provinces. The ISTOs need much clearer brief, more training themselves and better exchange of information around their network.

4.3.4 Changes in the social context of ministry, e.g. between rural, suburban and urban pastorates, require a form of *induction training* if the minister is to be better prepared for a new post. We RECOMMEND(20) that every minister should complete one week's in-service training, within 6 months of moving to a new post.

4.3.5 We RECOMMEND(21) that District Council ensure that the terms of settlement include a commitment to support the minister's annual period of IST, with time off granted by the pastorate.

4.3.6 We could wish to see an element of obligation over IST. At least we hope that our Recommendations will result in a more attractive *package*, comprising a better set of options, a clearer statement of the pastorate's willingness for the time away, better guidance available from ISTOs and the provision of adequate finding. This should raise the 67% to a more acceptable proportion. There being no stick, the carrot must be effective.

Equal Opportunities

4.4.1 We are glad that according to the *Basis of Union* "all ministries shall be open to both men and women" and that Assembly in 1987 adopted its delectation on racism (Record pp 11-12).

4.4.2 We restate our belief that the United Reformed Church should observe the best practice of an *equal opportunity employer* in respect of ministers, even though the legislation may not strictly apply.

4.4.3 Discrimination is more than statements like "we do not want a women or a black minister", although such statements are being made in the church. It is related to the structure of an organisation and the expectations we have of the work people will do. Women may have different career patterns; we do not always value the particular skills and experience they bring. A statistical examination of the place of women in the church shows that we do not use them as widely in the more influential places as we do males ministers. This is known as structural discrimination. It does not mean that people set out deliberately to excluded women or black people but that underlying expectations and assumptions mean that they are excluded.

4.4.4 We have not enquired into the specific experiences or options of black ministers or URC members. We RECOMMEND(22) that the working party on racism which prepared the declaration for Assembly will go on to pursue its own question: "why is it that black people do not play much part in District Councils, Provincial Synods or General Assembly?" (Reports p 22) and examine whether there are barriers to black people offering for the ministry.

4.4.5 We RECOMMEND(23) that the United Reformed Church adopts a policy of equal opportunities, in a declaration such as Appendix E, and that the Ministries Department regularly monitors the advocacy, recruitment, training and deployment of ministers in the context of such a policy.

Support

4.5.1 We echo the comment of *Stress in the Ministry* (para 6.5): "there are few professions that leave their practitioners so independent and sometimes so isolated as the church". We too have asked their question: "why do ministers regard it as an intrusion into their privacy to receive ministry?" We would address two specific matters only, personal support and marriage breakdown.

4.5.2 However self-regulating a profession the ministry may be, we must insist on better practice in the area of support. We need more than crisis management. If

there is to be more and better support of ministers as persons we RECOMMEND(24) that a District or Provincial committee (as determined in a Province) with the Moderator check regularly that every serving minister has access to one of the support structures mentioned in *Stress in the Ministry* at (para 6.5, items 1-5).

4.5.3 We again draw attention to *Stress in the Ministry*. In section 5 the particular circumstances of the minister's family life, especially if things go wrong, are sensitively set out.

4.5.4 That report calls for a *code of practice* in cases where a minister's marriage breaks down. We are not convinced that such a document, seeking to meet every practical contingency, would be practicable or appropriate.

4.5.5 Alongside their purely pastoral role, Provincial Moderators must be in a position to offer practical help, according to each set of circumstances. For example, in such cases there is usually delay, and it may be that the church will accept some responsibility towards both partners, if only to ensure adequate legal and welfare advice to enable provisional arrangements to be agreed until such time as the court rules on the matter.

4.5.6 We believe that, insofar as provision of housing is part of overall entitlement of a serving minister (the stipend package), there is a degree of responsibility on the part of the church towards a separated spouse. Some Provinces have been able to act generously in particular cases. Assembly in 1982 agreed that welfare funds might be used for not more than 12 months towards housing costs of a separated spouse if a Provincial Moderator presents a case. We RECOMMEND(25) that this 12-month rule be reviewed by the Assembly's Pastoral Reference Committee and, if it is found to cause hardship, Assembly must be told and invited to reconsider whether its policy over discretionary payments needs revision, what the possible costs would be and where the finance might be found.

Discipline Procedure

4.6.1 A statement on suspension, resignation and deletion from the roll of ministers is being brought to the 1988 Assembly by the Vocations Committee at the request of the Executive Committee. We have therefore refrained from comment on what would otherwise have been an important item within the remit of this working party.

Grievance

4.7.1 Where the complaint is in the other direction, i.e. where a minister is aggrieved about attitudes or actions on the part of a pastorate, District Council or Provincial Synod (or individuals representing any of these bodies), the first priority is to resolve it informally, with the involvement of District and Provincial representatives as appropriate. Such serious issues rarely arise without warning signs. They do seem as likely to arise as matters which might lead to discipline, however, and it is doubly important for the minister to know where he/she stands.

4.7.2 In the light of the preceding comments, we RECOMMEND(26a) the following outline of a relatively informal grievance procedure which seeks to highlight where the responsibility lies:

(i) The purpose of a grievance procedure for ministers is to give a legitimate place of complaint and to solve the problems as quickly and as simply as possible.

(ii) It is important that grievances are treated seriously, because they are genuine to the person concerned.

(iii) It is important to discover whether the grievance is legitimate.

(iv) In the first instance the minister with the grievance should approach the Provincial Moderator; however if the grievance is against the Moderator, they should approach the District Secretary or Synod Clerk.

(v) The Moderator should approach both parties, respond to the grievance and where possible make effective a reconciliation.

(vi) Where immediate reconciliation is not possible, a small independent group should be established by the appropriate council of the church, consisting of laypeople and ministers, men and women.

(vii) Either party should be able to challenge the composition of the group which should reflect the nature of the grievance (eg if it concerns equal opportunities, members of the group should be seen to have some knowledge of the field).

(viii) The group should then meet with both parties who may be accompanied by a friend. The group should again attempt a reconciliation but, if this is not possible, should arbitrate between them.

4.7.3 Because the responsibilities of *employer* are spread throughout the church's structure, we further RECOMMEND(26b) that Assembly makes clear the responsibility of District Council in this regard and that of Provincial Synod vis-a-vis the District.

Retirement

4.8.1 A good employer will retain a genuine concern for and link with employees into retirement; this will be in part financial (because of pensions), partly pastoral (though welfare officers etc.). No less can be expected in the church.

4.8.2 Pastorally the minister and widow(er) have a special claim on the attention of the church, not least because of the adjustment required from a leadership role to a new one. The procedure for this varies; it includes regular Moderatorial visits and/or District care. It is relatively easy to keep track of retired ministers but we believe that some widow(er)s slip out of touch. And inevitably the level of local pastoral care varies in different churches. We RECOMMEND(27) that every Province (or District) regularly review its procedures for a) maintaining lists of ministers and widow(er)s resident in their area, b) determining how often on average they should receive an official call, and from whom, and c) agreeing on any annual gifts.

4.8.3 It is inevitable that some ministers will continue to serve, full-or part-time, after retirement age. A shortage of ministers may increase this tendency, and the church should take care lest this becomes undue pressure.

4.8.4 Where a minister has retired and is living in a house provided by the URC Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) there can be a problem if it is suggested the minister accept another pastorate. We received this assurance from the chairman of the Society: the Society is "required to charge churches calling a retired minister already occupying one of our properties a more realistic rent than that paid by our tenants"; but "neither the officers of the Society nor the Moderators are aware of any case in which the minister has determined not to take a part-time pastorate for this reason."

4.8.5 Financially the retired are not all receiving the same, since they were in different Pension Funds. Some of those who are now in their late 70's and 80's may suffer considerable hardship if insufficient contributions were paid by them or on their behalf, as happened with some Congregational ministers and churches, of if no provision was made officially, as was the case with Churches of Christ ministers' widows. One correspondent pleaded for a special addition for the over 80's; another was worried least regular Christmas gifts should become taxable. Both these last concerns have been recently addressed within the Finance and Administration Department. In the circular *PEN/ARI* (April 1987) the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee states that "widows and widowers of pensioners are usually paid 50% of their spouse's pension" and claim that "Pensions paid to members of the URC MPF who were never members of the funds of the former churches are paid at the same rate" as those who were. The actuarial arguments are outside our terms of reference but we invite the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee to reassure the church over the matter of the oldest pensioners and non-pensioner widow(er)s in their next report to Assembly.

4.8.6 Serving ministers are expected to belong to the URC Ministers' Pension Fund (MPF) although there is no legal obligation to do so. The 1987 Finance Act allows for *portability* of pensions; the church would discourage ministers from transferring out. We cannot reproduce here the arguments on the matter set out in the leaflet *PEN/ARI* referred to above.

4.8.7 We can, however, draw attention yet again to the anomaly that provision of housing is an integral element in the stipend package of the serving minister, though it is not reckoned into the calculation of superannuation. The logic of that entitlement is that provision of basic housing should be part of the pension provided by the URC through the MPF, or otherwise by the church, e.g. by a housing association or by a sheltered housing provision of some kind. We cannot find a flaw in that logic. The chairman of the RMHS expects "to be able to meet the needs of those retiring in the foreseeable future". We RECOMMEND(28) that, within the conditions already applied by the RMHS relating to length of service, personal circumstances, etc., the church should guarantee assistance to every minister at retirement to obtain adequate housing. Incidentally, there can be no question of provision of heat and light or other manse costs which are paid to the serving minister by way of working expenses; but they are or course payable to any serving minister over retirement age.

4.8.8 Two correspondents echoed a concern expressed to us by the Moderators over preparation for retirement. We understand that an average of 25 ministers retire each year; some will have considerable to how they will cope. We are pleased that the Support Committee is arranging a pre-retirement course for ministers and their spouses in 1988, and we RECOMMEND(29) that this becomes a standard provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

directed particularly to "A" (Assembly or central Department/s), "P" (Provinces), "D" (Districts), or "L" (local churches/pastorates)

The working party recommends:

1. that every pastorate prepare a full self-description, using a pastorate profile similar to Appendix A. (2.2.1-2) *A D L*
2. that such a profile (with the proposed terms of settlement) be completed before a District Council formally declares a vacancy. (2.2.1-2) *D*
3. that the church affirm the procedure set out in 2.2.5. for the period up to the point of declaring a vacancy. *A P D L*
4. that the church accept the procedure set out in 2.3.5 as normal practice for filling a vacancy but that the Ministries Department keep it under scrutiny. (2.3.2-6) *A P D L*
5. that the procedure set out in 2.3.9. be generally adopted for introducing husband and wife ministers to two separate pastorates. *P D L*
6. that District Council resolutions declaring a vacancy reserve the right to consult with the future minister(s) and pastorate with a view to redetermining the scoping, local terms, etc. agreed prior to an induction. (2.4.1-3) *D L*
7. that consultations on assessing ministry be convened in each Province (or between two neighbouring Provinces). (2.5.1-3) *P*
8. that District Council declare a vacancy only after confirming, in confidence of the appropriate committee, that the proposed terms of settlement (spelt out on a form such as Appendix B) meet the terms of the *Plan*. (3.1.2) *D L*
9. the manse telephone accounts be in the name of the pastorate, and that ministers reimburse the cost of personal telephone calls. (3.3.2) *L*
10. that the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee consider making a grant at ordination to enable ministers to obtain office furniture and equipment. (3.3.3) *A*
11. that the various car-loan schemes for ministers and pastorates be consolidated in a national scheme. (3.4.2) *A P*
12. that the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee publish a set of recommended mileage rates every year, to cover the use of church-owned and personal vehicles, and that these become the basis for agreements reached with ministers. (3.4.3) *A D L*
13. that full reimbursement of travel costs be paid by the pastorate to ministers who do not drive. (3.4.4) *D L*
14. that the question of the difficulty of raising adequate local costs of ministry be urgently addressed by a separate inter-departmental inquiry or be included in the remit of the Central Funding and Advocacy Group responsible directly to the national Executive Committee. (3.5.2-3) *A*

15. that with the annual returns submitted from pastorates is included a statement of the current level of expenses being paid, under agreed headings, and that each District (or Province) appoint someone (personnel secretary) with responsibility to check with each minister annually the level of expenses being paid. (3.5.4) *P/D L*
16. that the inquiry proposed above (Recommendation 14) address the question of introducing differential payments for ministers serving in certain areas where, in addition to above-average stress, there are above-average costs. (3.5.5-7) *A*
17. a) that District Councils appoint an Interim Moderator to assist in a pastorate where the minister is pregnant, and
b) that representatives of the District Council and the minister discuss the future of the pastorate at a time normally about 4/5 weeks after the birth on the basis of 3.7.3. (3.7.2-3) *D L*
18. that every minister, especially in the context of a possible move, completes a curriculum vitae form (cv), similar to Appendix C. (4.2.1)
19. that the Ministries Department hold a thorough review of the system of Provincial In-Service Training Officers, such a review to include consideration of IST financing. (4.3.3) *A P*
20. that every minister complete one week's in-service induction training within 6 months of moving to a new post. (4.3.4) *P*
21. that District Councils ensure that the terms of settlement include a commitment to support the minister's annual period of IST. (4.3.5) *D L*
22. that the working party on racism which prepared the declaration for Assembly pursue its own questions: "why is it that black people do not play much part in District Councils, Provincial Synods or General Assembly?" and examine whether there are barriers to black people offering for the ministry. (4.4.6) *A*
23. that the United Reformed Church adopt a policy of equal opportunities such as set out in Appendix E, and that the Ministries Department regularly monitor the advocacy, recruitment, training and deployment of ministers in the context of such a policy. (4.4.2-3) *A P D L*
24. that a District or Provincial committee (as determined in each Province), with the Moderator, check regularly that every serving minister has access to one of the support structures mentioned in *Stress in the Ministry*. (4.5.2) *P/D L*
25. that the 12-month rule on housing assistance for separated spouses be reviewed by the Assembly's Pastoral Reference Committee. (4.5.6) *A P*
26. a) that Assembly adopt a grievance procedure such as set out in 4.7.2, and
b) make clear the responsibilities of District Council and of Provincial Synod in disciplinary and grievance procedures. (4.6 & 4.7) *A*
27. that every Province (or District) regularly review its procedures for a) maintaining lists of ministers and widow(er)s resident in their area b) determining how often on average they should receive an official call, and from whom, and c) agreeing on any annual gifts. (4.8.2) *P/D*

28. that the United Reformed Church guarantee assistance to obtain adequate retirement housing for ministers. (4.8.7) *A*

29. that a place on a pre-retirement course becomes a standard provision of in-service training. (4.8.8) *A*

APPENDICES

Appendices A, B & C of this Report are set out in the full Report as forms (with blank spaces) and therefore cannot be usefully reproduced here; they are available as forms from the Ministries Department. Appendices D & E are reproduced in full below.

Appendix A offers a pro forma for a Pastorate Profile, to be completed during a vacancy. Completion of this form will help local churches to examine their life and work, and indicate some of their expectations for a new ministry. A completed form will help a minister to understand some of the characteristics of the vacant pastorate. The form contains questions about the context of the pastorate (the local community, the ecumenical scene, etc.), about the priorities of the pastorate, about the current pattern of worship and church life, and the local expectations for mission and ministry.

Appendix B offers a pro forma for ministerial Terms of Settlement, inviting the pastorate to put into writing its understanding and acceptance of the Maintenance of the Ministry's *Plan for Partnership*, spelling out the housing arrangements and various expenses payable.

Appendix C allows a minister to detail his/her own training, previous work and general experience in the form of a *Curriculum Vitae* (cv). It contains only what the minister writes and is not for general publication, being designed primarily for introductions to vacancies.

APPENDIX D

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Meeting with a prospective Minister

In the context of discovering God's will regarding the filling of a vacant pastorate, the care taken over a more deliberate meeting with a candidate is vital. The Report of which this is an Appendix sets out a recommended overall procedure.

When a candidate visits a pastorate, there should be more than one opportunity for informal contact with a wide range of members (including children and young people) and, if possible, adherents. Several Provinces issue their own notes for guidance which this sheet cannot replace. This brief Appendix concentrates on the actual meeting.

1. The preparation:

Ensure that all relevant papers are available. This will comprise: correspondence; minister's cv (not for general publication); pastorate profile; draft terms of settlement.

Normally the interviewing group will comprise only Elders. Others may be invited to take part since it is vital to ensure that there are women and men present, and if possibly a mix of ages. The meeting will be less fruitful if more than, say, twelve are present (in addition to Interim Moderator and candidate).

It is essential that a comfortable venue, with freedom from distraction and a friendly atmosphere is provided. Those who will be present should meet in the week before, to decide what form the meeting will take. Will it be mainly:

- a) *a directed interview* which involves direct questions and definite answers;
- or b) *a non-directed conversation* with more open questions?

The group should agree on the factors which will form the basis of any recommendation resulting from the meeting. The group should determine clearly who will lead off which part of the meeting, given that it is important to cover all that is set out in the pastorate profile (and see note overleaf). Make a list of topics to be covered in order; give this list to the candidate, together with a note of the names of those present. In addition to the points made in the pastorate profile and draft terms of settlement, which the candidate will have seen, additional topics may be usefully raised, such as attitudes to various forms of worship, approaches to Christian education for all ages, work in the wider church, URC and ecumenical, community involvement by minister and people, personal hobbies and interests, etc.

2. The meeting

The Interim Moderator should chair the meeting. Every interview, however formal or informal, has a recognisable sequence which should be followed:

- a) Opening. It is important to set the scene, to spend time in prayer together, to confirm introductions. Make clear the agenda to be followed; agree on what notes will be taken, by whom and for whom.
- b) Exchange of information. The questions and discussion should cover all topics and at each stage the candidate should be able to ask as well as answer. Only by frank exchange of views can God's will for pastorate and minister be discovered.
- c) Closing. Even when the time is pre-arranged, the conclusion of such a meeting must be handled with care. No major matter should be overlooked.

It is important to make clear what the next stages will be, and the probable timing.

3. The assessment.

It is vital to stop, think and pray for at least 15 minutes when the candidate has withdrawn, before any conversation, discussion or assessment is begun.

Those present should gauge their impressions against the list of factors previously agreed, such as training, qualifications, experience, presentation, motivation, etc. Additional factors will now be apparent following the meeting, and will properly affect the assessment. It may be useful to score a candidate under each heading as *good, acceptable or problematic* but not everyone will follow this method. A consensus should be sought in order that a clear recommendation can be made.

APPENDIX E

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

A Declaration of Equal Opportunities Policy

1. The Church will behave as an equal opportunity employer organisation and not discriminate between ministers on grounds of race or sex.
2. The Church has affirmed in its Scheme of Union that "all ministries shall be open to both men and women" and at Assembly in 1987 has adopted a *Declaration on Racism*.
3. The Church works to combat racism and sexism and is committed to positive action rather than containing the issues.
4. The Church is aware of possible barriers to women and to black people within the structures of the Church in ministry and other posts; this has to do with expectations, position, role and status.
5. The Church will therefore establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, calling and position of women and black people in the ministry.
See section 4.4.1-5 and Recommendation 23 of the Report.

The working party recommends:

In the first instance a working group answerable to the Assembly should determine what would be the best means of implementing the policy, monitoring the situation and of offering training in equal opportunities. This group should recommend what might be appropriate action where discrimination is being practised. Any monitoring should be ongoing and should be encouraged at every level of the Church's life.

URBAN AND RURAL MINISTRY

63. We have shared in many discussions as part of the *Growth for their Sake* process, and spent time wrestling with the problems of ministerial leadership highlighted in the Anglican report *Faith in the City*. We see our way forward through the new group *Urban and Rural Mission* which has one of our number, Charles Brock, as its convener. We are anxious to find ways of recruiting, training and supporting those who must move away from the strengths of our denomination into areas of even greater need.

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY IN THE URC

64. Our Department has already initiated a series of investigations into the ministry, both as we experience it now and as it might develop with even greater diversity in the future. We believe it is now time for the whole church to consider what it has discovered about its auxiliary ministry, church-related community work, and new patterns that have regional emphases or are increasingly

ecumenical and thus complex and multi-form. This can only take place through education and discussion, and to achieve this end a paper entitled *Changing Patterns - Ministry for Today in the URC* will be offered to all church meetings through the next Information Service. We are also seeking from every Province a report on the actual ministry they would hope for - a new way of looking at deployment strategy. As a result of all that, and at a time when significant changes take place in the URC itself, we will be in a position to analyse where we are and arrive at an understanding of what we must plan for the future.

PREACHING FEES

65. Traditionally it was the custom in the CCEW and PCE to pay a fee to a visiting minister for taking a service. This was often seen as a contribution to expenses and the stipend. The practice regarding payment to a lay preacher varied according to the custom of an area, locality or local church and by the response of the individual involved. Usually, where a fee was offered to and accepted by a lay preacher, it was understood to be a contribution towards expenses and the cost of buying books. Within the Churches of Christ no preaching fees were paid. Travelling expenses were offered and sometimes special occasions would be marked by the gift of a book token.

66. Within the URC the practice of paying a preaching fee continued as before. However, the principle was accepted that every church was responsible for paying something towards the ministry of the whole church. This was coupled with the central payment of stipends. Consequently the former PCE practice of allowing a claim against the Maintenance of Ministry (MoM) Fund for the payment of fees in vacancy and illness was followed in the Plan for Partnership and its predecessor.

67. However in the early stages of the development of auxiliary ministry an anomaly appeared. Two principles had been agreed as a basis for payments to auxiliary ministers. The first was that the auxiliaries ought not to benefit financially from exercising their ministry. The second was that the auxiliaries ought to receive full out of pocket expenses. The payment of a preaching fee seemed to contrast sharply with the first principle.

68. It was also noted that "the URC accepts the responsibility for paying a reasonable stipend to all ministers in pastoral charge" (Reports to Assembly 1984). Or, some ministers believed it was inappropriate for a fee to be paid for preaching the Gospel. In any case, preaching fees had certainly not increased in the same proportion as stipends. Therefore it was agreed that, with two exceptions, preaching fees for stipendiary ministers ought no longer to be paid.

69. Reference was also made to ecumenical developments and differing traditions relating to the preaching fee which now have to be taken into account. (Reports to Assembly 1983).

70. the Church Life Department raised this matter at the General Assembly in 1983 and, after some consultation, made proposals to the Assembly of 1984. The Report makes it clear that the decision regarding the payment of a fee is a matter for the local church (see Reports to Assembly 1984, p.76).

We consider that the chief element in the offer of a preaching

fee these days is an expression of thanks for help given and it is the prerogative of a local church to decide when and how a gift is to be made.

71. But somewhat confusingly the Report continued:

It is our opinion that it is not now appropriate to offer a preaching fee as such.

72. We should also recognise certain needs:

principally among bona fide students training for the ministry, and those who are retired, and (we) should ensure that appropriate travelling expenses are always paid.

73. The resolutions then dealt with payments from the MoM Fund and the Record 1984 p 24 shows:

The Assembly agrees that:-

(a) Payments by the MoM Fund to a local church shall not normally include the reimbursement of preaching fees, but in those cases where the *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* (reviewed 1984) provides for Preaching Fees to be reimbursed, appropriate travelling expenses shall continue to be reimbursed by the MoM Fund.

(b) Reimbursement for Preaching Fees (together with appropriate travelling expenses) will be paid in the case of:

- i) bona fide students for the ministry of the URC
- ii) retired ministers of the URC;
- iii) exceptional situations established by the local church and the District Council in consultation with the MoM committee;

(c) The *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* be amended accordingly, taking effect from 1st July 1985.
Tellers were called. The resolution was carried by 191 votes to 188.

74. As a consequence of this decision the MoM committee only allows claims in vacancy and sickness in respect of expenses and fees and expenses in the two exceptional cases. (Two further exceptional categories were added in 1987, see para 80 below).

75. The system has caused bad feeling between the MoM office and churches because many of the latter do not accept the view that "it is not now appropriate to offer a preaching fee".

76. The effect on some churches and preachers was to cause a number of misunderstandings. Some churches acted on the Assembly ruling, others did not. Since the majority of such transactions do not involve claims on the MoM Fund, fees were often offered and accepted. A church loyal to the Assembly ran the risk of being regarded as mean. Some having always seen the fee as *expenses* failed to offer

anything to a visitor. The resolution regarding *bona fide students* did not clarify the position of those who would serve in an auxiliary role. There were problems over the knock on effect of a minister who preached away. The church visited had to pay the cost of the substitute preacher but was unable to claim this from the Fund as only travelling expenses were allowable.

77. There was embarrassment over our failure to offer fees to preachers from other denominations who, in certain cases, were used to receiving them. There were many indignities for our loyal lay preachers.

78. Discussions of these problems have irritated us by the time they have taken in some District Councils, Synods and even at Assembly.

79. In 1986, a resolution from Thames North calling on the Assembly to return to our previous practice failed procedurally. The Convener of the Ministries Department gave an assurance that the matter would be reviewed.

80. In 1987 there was a resolution from the Northumberland District Council. The Department reported that further delay was necessary in order to allow the working party on Employment Practice to complete its task. To help the immediate difficulty, the MoM committee gained the agreement of the Assembly to deal with the anomalies relating to the knock on effect and payments to preachers of other denominations. However, these additional exceptions also complicate the procedures.

Conclusion

81. When an attempt to deal with one anomaly creates half a dozen more; when the resulting web of rules confuses preachers and church treasurers; when our lay preachers believe that their embarrassments over this are ignored; and when administration is increased without universal assent; then it is time to say that, though acting in good faith, mistakes have been made and we should wipe the slate clean and begin again.

82. We therefore bring a resolution which confirms the obligation of churches to pay full expenses both travelling and, where necessary, the cost of providing a substitute and which also recognises that churches often wish to make an additional gift. It should be noted that this is liable to tax. We recognise that at present some Provinces have ways of dealing with these matters which do not involve central administration. It was our intention to bring another resolution asking the Finance and Administration Department to consider reducing the work of the central administration in this, but the MoM committee have this on their agenda.

(Resolution 5)

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Ministries Department for debate.
2. The Assembly receives the guidelines *A Pastoral Measure concerning the suspension and resignation of Ministers and their deletion from the Roll of Ministers*, and adopts the procedures outlined forthwith.
3. The Assembly welcomes the report of the first visitation to the Northern

Federation in Ministry and the Northern College, Manchester, encourages them as they respond to the various suggestions it contains, and asks for a report on progress in 1989.

4. The Assembly welcomes the report *Employment Practice in the United Reformed Church* and sends it to District Councils for comment by 30th June 1989, in order that firm proposals may be brought to the 1990 Assembly. Provinces, local churches and other bodies should submit any comments by the same date.
5. In the matter of Preaching Fees, the Assembly agrees that:
 - a) the amount paid should always cover the actual expenses incurred by the visitor, whether minister or lay person, in undertaking the leadership of worship;
 - b) and may, at the discretion of the local church, also include a gift,
 - c) during a vacancy or sickness both a) and b) will be reimbursed, with a maximum figure being set by the MoM committee from time to time, both for a single service and for a whole Sunday.

CENTRAL FUNDING AND ADVOCACY GROUP

Convener: The Revd W Wright

Secretary: Miss A Wade

1. The General Assembly in 1986 passed a resolution asking the Finance and Administration Department, in consultation with the other departments, to consider the form of presentation of the appeals for funds for the central activities of the church, including Maintenance of the Ministry, and to seek more informative and attractive ways in which the claims of mission at home and overseas can be communicated to members.
2. After discussion in the Department and consultation with Thames North Province, it was decided that the Communication and Supplies Section should take the lead in continuing discussion but with inter-departmental consultation.
- 3.1 The Revd Bernard Thorogood then prepared a paper which was discussed by the General Assembly Executive in February 1987 - and which agreed to form a Central Funding and Advocacy Group.
- 3.2 The terms of reference agreed were:
 - a) To examine the present system of central funding in the URC, and to note its strengths and weaknesses.
 - b) To propose how the system could develop in ways which engage the enthusiasm of church members, represent the Christian concept of giving, and enable the church to develop enterprise as well as maintaining the core work of the denomination.
 - c) To propose educational or advocacy methods.
4. The Group was formed with representatives from each of the departments, plus the Convener of the Budget Committee, the General Secretary and three people with experience of local church finances. The Departmental Secretaries were appointed as consultants.

CONSIDERATIONS

Central Funding

5. At the time of preparing this report the Group had met 3 times in September, November and January. Initially it considered a paper describing the MoM Fund and the Unified Appeal and noted the strengths and weaknesses of each Fund.

Maintenance of the Ministry - Strengths

6.1 The central payment of stipends has provided a security which many ministers, who were previously paid by their local church, had not felt.

6.2 The Plan for Partnership has removed the feeling in local churches that their contribution was a *tax*, and has given Synods, District Councils and local churches a direct say in how the money is raised.

Maintenance of the Ministry - Weaknesses

6.3 Many local churches, which in the past raised *all* of the money required to support a minister, have now lost sight of the true cost, despite the fact that the true cost of ministry is made available.

6.4 There is evidence that some Provincial MoM Committees are now only offering what *they* think their churches can afford rather than challenging them to raise what is required. The consequences of this were seen at 1987's Assembly when it was announced that the increase in stipends in 1988 would be less than the MoM Committee would have wished.

Unified Appeal - Strength

7.1 It does provide staffing and maintenance of Church House, money for CWM, and new enterprise in mission thus avoiding the need for regular appeals.

Unified Appeal - Weaknesses

7.2 The title does not describe the purpose of the Fund.

7.3 The inclusion of funding for mission with the central support of the church has removed from the sight of the local church their financial responsibility for mission at home and abroad.

7.4 In many churches the Unified Appeal occupies a low place in terms of priority. The MoM contribution is the first charge on funds, then comes the running of the local church and finally the Unified Appeal.

7.5 In the more conscientious churches the Unified Appeal is paid regularly. Often it is paid at the end of the year and, in a number of churches, it is either not paid in full or not paid at all.

8. The following general problems were identified:

- a) The lack of challenge from a spiritual base.
- b) Widespread ignorance among church members about the way the URC is financed.
- c) Lack of understanding by some church treasurers and ministers.
- d) The large number of churches who do not prepare a budget or engage in financial appeals or stewardship campaigns.

There was a unanimous feeling that the title Unified Appeal was unhelpful and that a new title should be sought. It was also clear that a major programme of education was required but it was agreed that literature alone would not be sufficient.

CONCLUSIONS

Central Funding

9. Our discussion led us to believe that the existence of two central funds is counter-productive. The fact that it is stated in the *Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration* that the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund shall be a first charge on local church funds has affected the attitude of local churches to the

Unified Appeal and the work it supports. In a church with a structure such as we have in the URC we are of the opinion that it is wrong to say that one fund is more important than another. We have a central organisation with Assembly Departments staffed by full-time appointments and we are committed to mission both at home and abroad. These areas of the church's work deserve our unswerving support. For this reason we believe one central fund would best serve the church. We have also been made aware that many local church treasurers would welcome the opportunity to make one contribution to one central fund.

10. Such a move cannot be made overnight and we recognise that local churches and the central Finance and Administration Department need to prepare for the creation of one central fund. We are also acutely aware of the difficulties faced by the central Maintenance of the Ministry Committee in incorporating the Community Charge into the Fund. We, therefore, feel it right that the central Finance and Administration Committee should be given the opportunity to examine the implications of one central fund before a final decision is made.

Unified Appeal

11. The Group was conscious that there has been widespread dissatisfaction with the title *Unified Appeal* because it neither describes the purpose of the Fund nor commend it and is a possible hindrance in evoking enthusiasm to support it. We looked at the work which the Fund supports and concluded that the title *Mission and Service Fund* goes some way to describing its purpose and to advocating it.

Advocacy

12. In the light of the general problems we identified (see para 8), with the knowledge that the central Maintenance of the Ministry Committee is finding it difficult to make significant increases in stipends; and with the fact that the Unified Appeal is no longer able to sustain the central work and mission of the church as budgeted, we are convinced that a major programme of advocacy is necessary.

13. Faced with a growing financial restraint in the church it might seem illogical to embark on a course of action which involves even greater expenditure. However, we cannot see the situation being arrested or the affairs of the church placed on a basis which will enable the central MoM Committee to increase stipends to a higher level, so that the church as a whole is able to engage in new work and initiative in mission unless we act boldly. It is this conviction which encourages us to recommend an investment of personnel and money in the appointment of a full-time Advocacy Secretary. We envisage this person working closely with an Advocacy Group on which each Province is represented.

14. The Task would be to make a spiritual appeal with a Biblical base and a practical outcome by relating this to the vision and purpose of the church at all levels.

15. We envisage the Advocacy Secretary and the Group achieving the task by:

- a) collaborating with the central departments to produce a programme of advocacy explaining the need for, and use of, the MoM Fund and Unified Appeal (Mission and Service Fund);
- b) produce a programme to help local churches plan their life and work

- and the means to finance it;
- c) promoting the programmes in Church Meetings, District Councils and Provincial Synods;
 - d) the Secretary/Convener sharing in the decision making process with the central Finance and Administration Committee, MoM Committee and Budget Committee;
 - e) Provincial Advocates liaising closely with the Provincial Treasurers and Provincial MoM Committees in deciding the contribution to central funds.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the report for debate.
 2. Assembly requests the central Finance and Administration Committee to consider the establishment of one central fund to replace the present MoM Fund and the Unified Appeal and to report their findings together with a recommendation within 3 years.
 3. Assembly agrees to the Unified Appeal being renamed Mission and Service Fund as from January 1989.
 4. Assembly supports the central Finance and Administration Committee's efforts to encourage all churches to contribute to the Unified Appeal (Mission and Service Fund) by monthly direct debit.
 5. Assembly approves the appointment of a full-time Advocacy Secretary for a period of 5 years and instructs the Budget Committee to make provision for such an appointment.
 6. Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to appoint an Advocacy Group consisting of one representative from each Province, plus a Convenor.
-

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Brian Nuttall

Secretary: Mr David Butler

Appointments made since last Assembly

1.1 In 1986 the Assembly re-appointed Mr Fred Brooman as Honorary Treasurer and Convener of the Finance and Administration Department for a further two years, while a successor was sought. By November, 1987, our Committee had found a successor in Mr Angus Grimmond, of Welwyn Garden City Free Church; his appointment took effect from the November meeting of the Executive Committee and will last until Assembly 1994.

1.2 In July, the Executive Committee accepted a proposal from the Faith and Life Department to appoint an Assistant Secretary in that Department, with responsibilities for developing work with 11's to 14's and for assisting the Youth Secretary. Again by November, our Committee had gone through the process of advertising, shortlisting and interviewing, and had recommended the appointment of Mr Paul Franklin, of Stoke URC, Coventry. His appointment was approved by the Executive Committee to take effect from 1st December, 1987, for a term of five years.

1.3 Also during 1987 Mrs Sandra Ackroyd was re-appointed as Youth Leadership Training Officer for the Thames North Province, for a further term of five years, commencing 1st September, 1987.

1.4 Our Committee is grateful to the members of the appointment groups who brought these three nominations to us. In the light of past experience, we have prepared and agreed a set of Guidelines for Appointment Groups.

1.5 Our Committee has nominated a Convener and nine other members (drawn from other Provinces) for each of the Provincial Moderator Review Groups needed for the South-Western and Wales Provinces this year. The other ten members of each Group will be appointed by the Provinces concerned. Both Groups will bring nominations to next year's Assembly.

1.6 In response to a proposal from our Committee, the Executive Committee has nominated the Revd Cyril Franks as a candidate for election as Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council in 1990/91.

1.7 In addition to the above, our Committee has nominated a new sub-section of the Panel for Assessment Conferences for candidates for Church-Related Community Work; we have suggested names for the new Budget Priorities Panel; we have filled some forty vacancies on various committees and representative bodies, which arose in mid-year; and we have recommended delegates to represent the URC at other Churches' Assemblies during 1988. The names of these delegates to other Assemblies appear for the first time in the Appendix to this report. In the same Appendix, some of the Representatives to Other Church Bodies and National Organisations are omitted as they have been deemed to be more appropriately handled by the Departments.

Committee Officers

2. Our Committee now nominates the following to serve for three or six years, as indicated:

2.1 *Convener*, Vocations Committee: The Revd Michael Stolton (re-appointment to 1991)

2.2 *Convener*, Welfare and Emergencies Committee: The Revd Cyril Franks (to 1994)

Community of Women and Men in the Church

3. Our Committee has continued to keep this matter under review. We have attempted an analysis of the progress made in Provinces and Districts, but have had difficulty in obtaining comparable information. We feel very strongly that every effort should be made at all levels of the URC to ensure that opportunities are provided for women to offer service to the Church and are grateful for assurances that the Faith and Life Department will continue to treat this matter with high priority. As the Assembly's nominating Committee, we re-affirm our own commitment to ensure a balance in the committee appointments for which Assembly is directly responsible. We can report that of the (approximately) 220 members of standing committees of Assembly nominated by our Committee, 80 are women and 140 men, 100 are lay and 120 ordained. (The fraction recommended in the Manual is that, at least, one quarter of the total membership of each committee shall be male, one quarter female, one quarter lay, and one quarter ministerial). We urge all Provinces and Districts to commit themselves to similar progress and to monitor results.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the Report.
2. The Assembly appoints Committee Officers, as set out in paragraph 2 of the report.
3. The Assembly appoints Committees and Representatives of the Church for the year 1988-89, as set out in the Appendix to the report.

APPENDIX

COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

1. The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members *ex officio* of every Standing Committee.
2. The Departmental Conveners and Secretaries are members *ex officio* of each Committee within their respective Departments. The Secretary of the Finance and Administration Department is a member *ex officio* of every committee which has funds.

3. Officers and Members appointed since Assembly 1987 are denoted by an asterisk. Those denoted by two asterisks are to be appointed by Assembly for the first time.

MINISTRIES DEPARTMENT

Convener: The Revd A G Burnham - 1990

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Provincial representatives

I	Revd D A Welbrock	VII	Revd G R Muttram
II	Revd F A Noden	VIII	Revd Dr D G Cornick*
III	Revd P H Welsh*	IX	Mr R J Smith
IV	Revd S O Jones	X	Revd P C Jupp
V	Mrs V Stonehouse	XI	Mr Cecil Davis
VI	Revd W W Mahood	XII	Revd Kevin Watson*

together with the Conveners of the committees within the Department, Revd Dr C B Baxter, Mr E C Chilton, Miss M Roberts*, Mr D Thacker, Revd Elizabeth A Welch and a representative of the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee.

VOCATIONS

Convener: Revd M B Stolton - 1991

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

Revd E S Allen*	Mrs Gwen Hall	Mrs M Hindley*
Revd M J Davies	Revd P C Jupp	Mrs Connie Holmes
Revd S O Jones	Revd V G Ridgewell	

TRAINING

Convener: Mrs Elizabeth Jupp - 1993

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

Dr J C G Binfield*	Revd K Chippindale	Revd Principal M H Cressey
Revd J C Brock	Revd D H Hilton	Revd D Jenkins
Revd D Grainger	Mrs S Owen	Dr Ann Stevenson
Revd Dr R J McKelvy	Mrs S Thompson	

together with one stipendiary ministry student (Mr Tim Hopley*).

Panel for Assessment Conferences

Miss R Archer, Revds B Baker, C J Baker, Mr J S Benbow, Revds Elizabeth Caswell, T C Cheesbrough, Mrs R Clarke, Mr R T Clarke, Revds G J Cook, F G Wilson Dennett, A S Dunstone, Revd Mary Evans, Mrs B Fisher*, Revds J Francis, A Frost, Dr Anne Galer, Mrs R Goodfellow, Revds A G Green, Dr L C Green, Jessie Halfpenny, Mrs Gwen Hall, Revd R J Hall, Mr M Hammond, Revd M G Hanson, Mr M Harrison, Mr A Hart, Revd H G Hayes, Mrs M Herbert, Revds D H Hilton, R W H Jones, Mrs E Jupp, Miss M Kennish, Revds R O Latham, W N Leak, R H Lewis, W W Mahood, Mrs J W Macdonald, Revd W R

Marchbank, Mr R Norris, Revd F R Nunn, Mrs B Onions, Revds Dr S C Orchard, D A Pitkealhy, Professor R Schwarzenberger, Mr A Senior, Mrs E M Steel, Dr Ann Stevenson, Mr B Stonehouse, Mrs G Swain, Revd I L Thomas, Mr A W Thompson, Revd B D Treharne, Miss L Tucker, Revds A J G Walker, R J Way, Elizabeth Welch, Miss J Welford, Revd C Wilton, together with the General Secretary, the Provincial Moderators and the staffs of the recognised Colleges, members of the Auxiliary Ministry Board of Studies and the Convener and Secretary of the Training Committee.

Panel for Assessment Conferences - CRCW Sub-Section

Mrs S Ackroyd, Mrs D Beale, Revds P Loveitt, Kate McIlhagga, A T Newman, Mrs A Sutcliffe, Miss J L Turner, Revds C F Warner, M W Williams, R V Jones.

Nominations to Teaching Staff (Westminster College)

Convener: Mrs Elizabeth Jupp - 1993

Secretary: The Secretary of the Training Committee

Principal, Westminster College
Miss Ann Phillips
Revd J E Young

Professor John Ferguson
Professor G N Stanton

SUPPORT

Convener: The Revd P J Brain - 1991

Secretary: Executive Secretary, Ministries Department

Mrs Sally Abbott
Revd R Pagan
Mrs M Stacy

Miss Alison Maclean
Revd Christine Pinnell
(1 vacancy)

Mr R Norris
Revd E P Schofield

FAITH AND LIFE DEPARTMENT

Convener: The Revd A J Coates - 1992

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Provincial Representatives

I Revd Peter Poulter
II Mr Monty Helmn*
III Miss Fiona Gow*
IV Revd L H B Neems
V Mr John Culley*
VI Revd K A Wilkinson

VII
VIII Revd Stella Beare
IX Revd Mark Westerman
X Revd David Turner
XI Revd Ceri Lewis
XII Mrs Eileen McIlveen

together with the conveners of the Committees within the Department, The Revd G E F Bowerman, Mrs Barbara Brettell, Mrs Ruth Clarke, Mr B Worrall.

Members under 25: Mr C Satchwell, Mr J Slow.

DOCTRINE AND WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Professor C E Gunton - 1991

Secretary: Revd J H Taylor - 1993

Revd Principal M H Cressey
Revd Dr A H B Logan
Revd Margaret G P Nuttall**
Revd Dr D P Morgan
Revd Susan Durber**

Revd K C Fabricius
Revd Kate McIlhagga
Professor G N Stanton
Dr C Schwoebel

Revd Mary Frost
Dr W N Gray*
Dr R Trigg
Revd Justine Wyatt

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Convener: Revd W W Mahood - 1993

Secretary: Mr M Harrison - 1992

Dr D George
Mrs A Morgan
Revd R Scopes
Revd J T Yates

Mrs E Jurd
Revd Greta M Morgan
Mrs J Tomlin

Revd P McIntosh
Revd G H Sharp
Mrs L Wilson

YOUTH WORK

Convener: The Revd Jean Holdsworth - 1992

Secretary: The Youth Secretary

Miss Rachel Burnham*
Revd B Acty
Mrs M Nineham
Revd J W Steele

Mrs A Coates**
Revd M J Fisher*
Miss J Pearce
Revd D M Taylor

Mr K Coote*
Miss B Prettie
Mr G G Maskery*

Members under 25:

Miss D Allen
Mr D Leon*
Mr P Ashworth*
Mr G Walker*

Mr S Anderson
Miss S Houlton*
Mr R Nicholson*
Mrs F Kissack*

Miss C Davey
Mr A Hughes*
Mr D Rainford
Mr J Slow

CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee - 1992

Secretary: Mrs Hazel Snashall - 1990

Mrs Pat Evans
Mrs S H Flett*
Revd A W Satchwell

Dr J M Hull
Revd J Robinson
Mrs P Shapland

Revd J H Oldershaw*
Mr B W Russell

HEALTH AND HEALING

Convener: Revd D A Pratt - 1990

Secretary: Revd M C Playdon - 1992

Revd Jeanne Christie
Dr I D O Frew

Miss Sarah Clark
Dr Anne Galer

Dr Anthea Cooke
Dr Joan L Holliday

Revd A R Lee
(1 vacancy)

Revd J C Neary

Revd J M Ward

WINDERMERE POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Dr R O Latham - 1989

Secretary: The Director ex officio

Representatives of the Ministries, World Church and Mission, Church and Society and Finance and Administration Departments, Revd Ruth Mealand, Mr Roger Tolman, (1 vacancy), with the Assistant Director*, the Convener and the Treasurer of the Management Committee, the Convener, Faith and Life Department and a representative of Carver URC, Windermere (ex officio).

HYMN BOOK EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Dr D M Thompson

Secretaries: Revd D C M Gardner, Mr W A Haywood

Mrs C Brock

Dr Alun Jones

Revd D McIlhagga

Mr A Satchell

Revd Dr C P Thompson

Revd Barbara Gates

Revd David Jenkins

Revd C Micklem

Revd Brenda Stephenson

Revd A Gaunt

Revd Dr F H Kaan

Mrs M Raggett

Revd Margaret T Taylor

WORLD CHURCH AND MISSION DEPARTMENT

Convener: Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow - 1989

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Provincial representatives

I Revd Dr G A Hood*

II Miss Jose Robins

III Mrs Mary Hambly

IV Revd D Miller

V Revd Nellie Smith

VI Dr Barbara Boal

VII Revd R J Mortimer

VIII Revd P Killick

IX Miss M Cumber

X Revd G Bending

XI Revd W R P Adams

XII Revd K Graham*

together with the Convener of Committees within the Department and the Revd G J Cook, Mrs Anthea Coates, Mrs Norah Morgans, Mr D W Parry.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK AT HOME

Convener: The Revd J F Slow - 1990

Secretary: The General Secretary

Revd R J Bade

Revd F Hall

Mr R J Coole

Mrs M Hambly**

Mrs Betty Fisher

Revd M Mackenzie

Revd Dr D R Peel
Mr P A Wade

Miss C E Robertson*

Revd W E C Sewell

URC/Methodist Liaison Committee

Revds G E Beck, Mr P W Hamblin, Revds J Hollyman, P I Poulter**, N L Shepherd, B G Thorogood, (1 vacancy).

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK ABROAD

Convener: The Revd D M Wales - 1991
Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

Revd C J Allen
Revd K Chong
Miss H P Jones**
Mrs D Rogers

Revd Susan K Armitage
Mrs E Cottle
Revd R V Jones

Miss J M Barclay
Revd D R Floe**
Mr H Morgans

MISSION AND OTHER FAITHS

Convener: Revd F R Tomes - 1989
Secretary: Revd J M Parry - 1990

Mr M Childs
Mrs Shirley Firth
Miss J M Robins**

Revd Gillian Boorne**
Mrs C Harries
Revd M W Williams

Miss Gill Cressey
Revd R J Mortimer

Consultant:- Revd R H Lewis

PERSONNEL

Convener:
Secretary: The Personnel Secretary

Revd N W Bainbridge
Mrs H Horsfield**
Revd J D Lovett-Hargis
Mr C P W Wright

Revd J Dean
Revd Joan Johansen-Berg
Revd H B Singh Rahi
Principal of St Andrew's Hall

Mrs J Floe
Revd Moira H Kerr
Mrs Marian Strachan

CHURCH AND SOCIETY DEPARTMENT

Convener: Dr Mary Ede - 1991
Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Provincial representatives

I Revd A W Summers
II Revd G Eatock
III Revd M MacKenzie
IV Mrs W Higginbottom
V Revd P Fuller

VI Mr D Barton
VII Mrs J Armour
VIII Revd B W Kirk
IX Revd Susan Nuttall
X Revd D Batchelor

XI Revd D V Clarke

XII Revd P Taylor

together with Revds Molly J Kenyon, Elizabeth J Nash, Elisabeth Neale, Mr D Jones.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

Convener: Mr A Grimmond* - 1994

Secretary: The Departmental Secretary

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Provincial Representatives

I	Mr J C G Forrest	VII	Mr P A Wade*
II	Mr G R Stelfox	VIII	Mr P Hamblin
III	Mr I Cumberbatch	IX	Mr D I Main
IV	Mr J E M Gilbey	X	Mr R S Martin
V	Revd D J Williams	XI	Mr E J Ford
VI	Mr H Kempton	XII	Mr A Gilmour

together with the Conveners of the Committees within the Department, Miss R M Cook, Mrs C S Marshall, Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, Revd W Wright.

TREASURERSHIP

Convener: Mr D Davies - 1993

Secretary: The Chief Accountant

Mr D Lethem	Mr J Gilbert	Mr R M Hardie*
Revd R J Wiggins	Mr W M McVey	Mrs Gwen Hall
Mr E Morgan**	Mr N H Oldham	Mr R T Masser
	Mrs I Steele*	Mr R Thompson

MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY

Convener: The Revd J D Waller - 1990

Secretary:

Provincial Representatives

I	Dr P Clarke	VI	Mr P A Wade
II	Mr G R Stelfox	VIII	Mr A M Johnston
III	Mr A J Bryan	IX	Mr L G Whiteman
IV	Mr J E M Gilbey	X	Mr V F Lane
V	Revd G Smith	XI	Mr D Buckland
VI	Mr R Webb	XII	Mr S Harvey*

together with the Convener of the Pensions Sub-Committee (Mr H F Fisher), the Revds Hazel M Day, W J Taylor, Mrs Elizabeth Wilkinson and a representative of the Ministries Department. The Revd J D Waller also represents the Provincial Moderators.

BUDGET

Convener: The Revd A J G Walker - 1993

Secretary: The Chief Accountant

Provincial Representatives

I	Mr G Trenholm	VII	Mr P A Wade
II	Mr G R Stelfox	VIII	Mr A M Johnston
III	Revd Barbara Gates	IX	Revd J J Macro
IV	Mr D Lethem	X	Mr P M Fickling
V	Revd D J Williams	XI	Mr E J Ford
VI	Mr A Redhead	XII	Mr B Smith

together with the Convener or Secretary of the Ministries, Faith and Life, World Church and Mission and Church and Society Department, the Convener or Secretary of the Maintenance of the Ministry, Communication and Supplies Committees, the Convener of the Treasurership Committee, the Honorary Treasurer, the General Secretary, the Office and Personnel Manager and one Provincial Moderator.

Budget Priorities Panel

The immediate past Moderator (Convener - ex officio), Mrs J Boulind* and the Revd R A H Bocking*

BUSINESS

Convener: The Revd A J Wells - 1991

Secretary: The Office and Personnel Manager

Provincial Representatives

I	Revd Dr A R Ritchie	VII	Revd J B Simpson
II	Revd B A Baker	VIII	Revd Jessie Halfpenny
III	Revd W Wright	IX	Revd G H Thomas
IV	Mr D Thacker	X	Revd G W Satchell
V	Mrs M Weedon	XI	Mr H Grief
VI	Mr R Webb	XII	Revd P D Scotland

together with the Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator, the Clerk and General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Assistant Clerk and the Conveners of the five Departments.

NOMINATIONS

Convener: The Revd C B Nuttall - 1991

Secretary: Mr D Butler - 1993

Provincial Representatives

I	Mrs S M MacLeod	V	Mr B Stonehouse
II	Revd B A Baker	VI	Mr R Webb
III	Revd W Wright	VII	Revd J B Simpson
IV	Mr D Thacker*	VIII	Revd Jessie Halfpenny

WELFARE AND EMERGENCIES

Convener: The Revd C C Franks** - 1994

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings - 1992

Revd W R Marchbank
Revd May Segain

Revd Nanette Head
Mrs Joyce Sutcliffe

Revd R J Hall

CHURCH BUILDINGS

Convener: The Revd J J Macro - 1992

Secretary: Mr T T W Peregrine - 1991

Mr M J Ballard
Revd R Good
Mr G E Knowles
(1 vacancy)

Miss B F Davis
Mr R Honey
Mr C A Raggett

Revd A W Duncan
Revd M F Hubbard
Revd Dr A R Ritchie

Property Consultant: Mr M Foster Taylor

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING

Convener: The Revd D L Skidmore

Secretary: Mr R S Carruthers

Mr M Foster Taylor
Revd D R Hannen
Mrs J Parkinson
Mr G E Winter

Mr J E M Gilbey
Revd M F Hubbard
Mrs E Pitkealthy
Mr G Yuille

Revd F L Hill
Mr G H Parkinson
Mr J Reason

Note: This Committee shall consist of all the members of the Committee of Management of the URC Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited with the ex officio officers of the Department.

OTHER COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE

Convener: The Moderator of the General Assembly

Secretary: The General Secretary

Four representatives of each Synod, including the Moderators, together with ex officio members as follows:

The Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator, the Deputy General Secretary, the Assistant Clerk, the Legal Adviser, the Conveners and Secretaries of the five Departments, the Conveners of the Business, Applications, Nominations, Budget and Communication and Supplies Committees, the Secretaries of the Nominations and Business Committees.

IX Revd G H Thomas
X Mrs J Jenkins*

XI Mr H Grief*
XII Miss D Newns

together with the Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator, the General Secretary, the Convener of the five Departments and the Provincial Moderators.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPLIES

Convener: The Revd D J Netherwood - 1990
Secretary: Secretary of Communication and Supplies

Revd C G Evans
Mr R J Grant
Mr C P W Wright

Mrs J Silvan Evans
Miss B E How
Revd C E C Richards
Mr A Rogers*

Revd P L Flint
Revd R A Irving
Mr A J Webster
(1 vacancy)

EDITORIAL AND MANAGEMENT BOARD OF REFORM

Convener: The Revd E A Banyard - 1990

Revds G J Cook, R J Ellis, J Filsak, Miss Kristian Ofstad, Mrs J Silvan Evans, (1 vacancy), Youth representative: Miss Sarah Houlton**

ASSEMBLY PASTORAL REFERENCE

Convener: The Revd A L Macarthur - 1989
Secretary: The General Secretary

Mrs Benita Kyle
Revd Jessie Halfpenny

Revd Dr J I Morgans
Dr Paul Rogers

The Honorary Treasurer

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Mr J A Cumming
Joint Secretaries: Mr I G Neilson, (vacancy)

Mr F H Brooman
Mr D Davies
Mrs Gwen Hall
Mr R M Hardie*
Mr H Kempton
Mr W McVey
Revd B G Thorogood

Mr R S Carruthers
Mr C M Frank
Mr G Hearne
Revd V N J Lewis
Mr R S Martin
Mr H Oldham
Revd R J Wiggins

Revd D J Clague
Mr J Gilbert
Mr A Grimmond*
Mr K M Kirby
Mr T W Macdonald
Mr R Masser
Mr R Thomson

FORWARD POLICY GROUP

Convener: Professor Robert W Steel - 1990

Revd Elizabeth Caswell
Mr Graeme D Smith

Revd Arnold Harrison
Revd K Chippindale**

Mrs M Carrick Smith
Mrs S Tull**

CENTRAL FUNDING AND ADVOCACY GROUP

Convener: The Revd W Wright

Secretary: Miss A Wade

Mrs E Chilton	Ministries Department
Mr M Harrison	Faith & Life Department
Mrs M Marsden	World Church & Mission Department
Revd D Batchelor*	Church & Society Department
Mr A Grimmond*	Finance & Administration Department
Revd D J Netherwood	Communication & Supplies Committee
Mr C Lowden	Communication & Supplies Committee
Revd A J G Walker*	Budget Committee
Revd B G Thorogood	General Secretary

together with Messrs C Dickie and S Griffith and the Revd R Maitland

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ON OTHER BODIES

1. OTHER ASSEMBLIES

Church of Scotland	The Moderator (Rt Revd Edmund Banyard)* Revd Clifford Wilton* Mrs Mary Marsden*
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	The Moderator* Revd Dr Buick Knox*
Congregational Union of Scotland	The Moderator*
Congregational Federation	Revd Michael Hubbard*
Union of Welsh Independents	Mr G E Walters*
Presbyterian Church of Wales	Revd Cyril Franks*
Palatinate Church	Revd Derek Wales*
Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Portugal	The Moderator*

2. CHURCH BODIES

British Council of Churches

Revds R Andrews, Molly Kenyon, Dr J I Morgans, J P Reardon, Mrs D M Beale, Dr D M Thompson, and Mrs Mary Marsden and Mrs Yvonne Parry (through WCM Dept)

Consultative Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects in England: Revds M F Hubbard, B G Thorogood

Consultative Group on Ministry among Children: Revds A Greenslade, T Oakley

Women's Inter-Church Consultative Committee: Revd J E Sowerbutts*

Youth Unit Reference Group: Revd P Quilter

Standing Committee of Theological Education: Revd M Dunford, (1 vacancy) Team

Ministry Conference: Revd G K Tolley

Working Party on Collaborative Styles of Ministry: Mrs B Brettell, Revds M C Diffey, T Oakley (1 vacancy)

Scottish Churches' Council: Revds R J Bade (to end of 1988)*, P D Arthur* and Mrs C F Hunter

Free Church Federal Council: Mrs J Armour, the Revd P W Beaman, Mrs B Brettell, the Revds N Healey, B G Thorogood, J M Ward
Chaplaincy Board: Revds P W Beaman, A B Holroyd, R Royston-Bishop
Education Committee: Revds A D Lewis, T Oakley, Miss R Davis, (Dr Mary Ede, Revd J P Reardon also serve)
Joint Education Policy Committee: Dr Mary Ede
Women's Council: Revd May Segain

Congregational Union of Scotland/URC Negotiations: Revds J F Slow, D W Elliot, D R Hannen, L E Kirkman, Dr S C Orchard, B G Thorogood, Mr F H Brooman, Mrs E Jupp, Mr I Neilson, Miss J Turner

3. OTHER COMMITTEES AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund: Revds K French, R L Richards, Mr L Macro (Honorary Treasurer), Revd G Satchell
Christian Education Movement Council: Revd T Oakley
Churches' Main Committee: Mr N A Pooler, Mr M Foster Taylor, Mr C M Frank
Congregational Fund Board: Revds C H Grant, Havergal-Shaw, D A Smith, J H Taylor, Mrs R E Taylor
Cambridge Federation Examination in Theology Committee of Management: Revd M G Dunford
Joint Liturgical Group: Revds Justine Wyatt and Dr C Thompson
Methodist Faith and Order Committee: Revd K Fabricius
National Christian Education Council: Revds C K Forecast, T Oakley
National Council of Voluntary Organisations: Revd J P Reardon
National Ecumenical Agency for Further Education: Revd M C Diffey, Mr D Thacker
Scottish World Day of Prayer: Revd Jean Tinto
Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church: Revd Patrice Sessions*
United Navy, Army and Air Force Board: Revds M Diffey, D Friend, J Paull, E P Schofield, B G Thorogood
United Reformed Church History Society: Mrs K Davies, Revds P C Jupp, Dr D M Thompson, Mr E P M Wollaston*
Wharton Trust: Mrs B Taylor
Widows' Fund of the Three Denominations: Revds K French, L A Stringer, Mr L Macro, Revd G W Satchell
Women's World Day of Prayer: Mrs Ruth Bowyer

4. COLLEGE AND SCHOOL GOVERNORS AND COUNCILS

Aberystwyth (Memorial College): Revds Dr G Harris, T Leslie Jones
Bala-Bangor: Mr J Rhys
Bishops Stortford College: Revd C G Evans
Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges: Convener and Secretary, Training Committee
Caterham School, Board of Governors: Revds D L Helyar*, T Perry
Cheshunt Foundation: Mr D Davies, Revd M G Dunford
Northern College: Revds Dr D Cornick, M G Dunford, D Jenkins, W N Leak
Eltham College/Walthamstow Hall: Miss M Moyce
Homerton College Trustees: Mrs J Boulind, Revds Principal M H Cressey, W K Gathercole, Mrs G Hall, Mr J Hall, Miss A Phillips, Dr D M Thompson, Dr R Watson
Mansfield College, Oxford: Revds M G Dunford, J P Lee-Woolf, P C Jupp, Dr F H Kaan, Mr P Spicer, Revd A D Tucker
Milton Mount Foundation, Governors: Miss Margaret Canning, Revd D G Evans, Mrs Gwen

Hall, Revd R E Taylor, Revd A Lewis
Queen's College, Birmingham: Revd M G Dunford
St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak: Mrs Mary Marsden, Miss S Rudofsky, Miss B Vickerton,
the Revd M Diffey Silcoates School, Governor: Dr C Binfield
Springhill College Endowment (Mansfield College): Revd W W Biggs, Sir Kenneth
Corley, Mr R A Heritage, Revds M F Hubbard, R W H Jones, (1 vacancy)
Taunton School: Revd M F Hubbard
Tettenhall College, Governors: Dr W Blakeley, Mr K S Geekie, Mr R McKenzie, Mr R J
Whild
Wentworth Milton Mount, Governor: Revd E Lord
Westhill College of Education Council: Mr J Payne (Governor and Trustee), Dr R D
Jurd

5. COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Miss Marlene Brown	Revd D W Elliot
Mrs Mary Marsden	Revd Dr F H Kaan

6. CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Mr F H Brooman	Revd M J Davies	Mrs Gwen Hall
Revd M J Husselbee**	Mr F A W Lodde	Mr R H Hardie*
Revd G W Satchell	Revd D L Skidmore	Mr Arthur Smith
Revd J H Taylor	Revd P Grimshaw*	

7. NEW COLLEGE LONDON FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

Mr J C Smethers	Revd Dr R O Latham	Revd J A Pugh
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FORWARD POLICY GROUP

Convener: Professor Robert W Steel

Secretary: Mrs Sheila Tull

1. The Forward Policy Group has met six times during the past year, and the meeting held shortly before the Southport Assembly will be its nineteenth since it was established by the Assembly in 1984. Six of the seven members have served throughout that period and this has been helpful in providing continuity through its initial discussions; but from now on there will be regular changes of personnel to ensure the revitalisation of its deliberations.
2. Last year we stated that, "in looking to the future, the URC needs to focus its energies on growth, education and mission at local church level", and we stressed need for "visionary leadership". These thoughts have been uppermost in our minds and the comments we make about organization, planning and communication are directed towards the promotion of these objectives. We hoped that there might emerge out of discussion "guidelines of greater clarity and practicality" and we now offer four headings with supporting paragraphs to indicate lines of enquiry and action that we trust will contribute to the future life and witness of the URC. Three of these arise from our consideration of the role and effectiveness of Church House.
 - (a) to serve the local churches and ministers by undertaking basic maintenance functions and by initiating new programmes and developments;
 - (b) to act as a focus for decision by the whole URC. This includes the work-intensive preparations for the annual General Assembly and arrangements for consultation with provinces, districts and local churches; and
 - (c) to act as a channel for the URC's external relations, both with the wider church and the world at large.
3. The role of Church House, as we see it, is three-fold.
 - (a) to serve the local churches and ministers by undertaking basic maintenance functions and by initiating new programmes and developments;
 - (b) to act as a focus for decision by the whole URC. This includes the work-intensive preparations for the annual General Assembly and arrangements for consultation with provinces, districts and local churches; and
 - (c) to act as a channel for the URC's external relations, both with the wider church and the world at large.
4. Since our remit is to "stimulate and comment" rather than to determine policy, we suggest from our review of these functions that the following aspects of the role and effectiveness of the central organization need early attention.
 - (a) the size and composition of committees (see (I) below)
 - (b) communication to and from the local church (see (II) below)
 - (c) planning in the life of the Church (see (III) below)
5. In looking at the administrative structure in Church House, our considerations have not included anything like an "O and M" examination and, in any case, we are not competent to conduct one. Moreover, we doubt whether it would be appropriate at this juncture when discussions are proceeding about the future pattern of General Assemblies and the possibility of sharing more responsibilities ecumenically. Any change resulting from an enquiry into committee structure, planning and communication, might also have significant effects on staffing requirements. We are aware that an independent job description and grading exercise was undertaken in 1986.
6. We want to place on record our appreciation of the leadership and effort at Church House, but emphasise the desirability of maintaining in a relatively small office as much flexibility as possible, with the elimination of any superfluous activity as it is identified.

I. THE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

7. The central organization of the Church, excluding the large Panel for Assessment Conferences, includes 34 committees (with a total of nearly 600 posts). There is, of course, overlap, some individuals serving on several committees. But undoubtedly these figures represent a very great investment of human and financial resources for the Church as a whole.

8. It is, therefore, prudent to consider whether the present arrangements constitute the most effective use of the URC's resources. We acknowledge a natural inclination on the part of Departments to maintain the *status quo*; we recognise the desire to ensure a wide representation of views and expertise; and we accept that the mode of operation in some cases necessarily influences the size. But, on the basis of our investigations so far, we believe that a serious review of the number and size of committees, and not least of the Executive itself, is called for. The Assembly is very good at setting up committees - the 600 people now serving in this way did not appoint themselves. We urge the Assembly to have the courage to take a realistic look at the situation so that the Church may have what it needs for the present and future, which will not necessarily be that inherited from the past. We believe that action in this direction could well encourage a more cohesive and effective working pattern and we think that the Executive has a role in this to monitor progress. At the heart of this re-consideration will be the discovery of the most effective balance between geographical and other forms of representation and the achievement of denominationally acceptable policies, by smaller committees and groups.

9. In our report in 1987 we stated the view that "the structure of the Church must be determined by its purposes and not by its history." We believe that this comment was well received by Assembly, and we urge the Church now to act on it.

II. COMMUNICATION TO AND FROM THE LOCAL CHURCH

10. We are conscious that there is a great diversity of background, need and opportunity among the local churches and we believe that there is a sense of remoteness among individual members from the central policies of the URC. We therefore urge that consideration be given to a more selective, perhaps more popular, pattern of outward communication and a more systematic "listening" to the views of local churches, together with some arrangement to monitor progress.

11. While all local churches are bound together by a common gospel, their immediate day-to-day needs are varied. Moreover the local church depends upon a structure which has a significant lay leadership: a leadership that is voluntary, not always trained in the tasks it is expected to perform, and with a limited tenure of office. Many of these leaders have, of necessity, to concentrate on local affairs and needs, to the exclusion of many wider church affairs. In the same way, many interest groups in the local church are very selective in the information they require, and are limited in their contact beyond their own fellowship or their involvement in other activities.

12. Our independent Protestant tradition makes "belonging" a local experience for most people, resulting in little necessity or desire to want or to "own" centralised decisions. The churches' day-to-day needs are as numerous as the churches themselves, each with their own view of what is immediate and important. Even interpreting a common gospel does little to unite us in our immediate needs.

13. Ecumenical experience has led us, in recent years, to encourage and foster local initiatives. Such an approach to local needs must not be lost when we think purely as a denomination. Local needs and experiences must be a governing factor in determining how we communicate with one another. Yet some awareness of, and involvement in, the national Church is a prerequisite of membership. Local introversion is never desirable for any Christian community.

14. It is not easy to determine the needs of a local church, in order that information can be better targetted; and it is difficult to monitor its progress or reception. This is well illustrated in the case of General Assembly Business. The formal *Record of Assembly*, while being a necessary and important record of the event, is not ideal for the use of the local church and its members. Consideration should be given to a "popular report", along the style of that in *Reform*. Such a move would go some way to bridging the gap between the individual members of the URC and the central policies of the Church. It may also go some way to answering the call for greater representation.

15. During the coming year the Group intends to undertake a small sample survey of churches to establish their use of the Information Service, and to find out why they disregard some items and what they do with the items used. We shall also ask what other kinds of information, and in what form, they would like.

III. PLANNING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

16. During recent years several important new ventures have been undertaken in the URC. It is a sign of the health of the Church that these ideas have come from individuals as well as groups, and in spite of facing some obstacles, schemes as varied as Church Related Community Workers and the Windermere Centre have come to fruition. The Group, which is in the process of gathering material on a range of case studies, intends to reflect further on how initiatives arise in the URC. The results of this exercise should lead to a better understanding of the way in which ultimately fruitful enterprises have been facilitated or hindered by denominational procedures and committees.

17. All initiatives should be tested "whether they be of God". Currently such testing is haphazard, and tensions are experienced when different views and schemes seem to be vying for support - especially financial support. We believe that there must be co-ordinated planning of the work of the Church as a whole. Each Department, for example, needs to work to a three-year or five-year plan, (together with longer-term strategic objectives) with its activities very closely related to those of other Departments. Monitoring such activities should be undertaken by a central representative group that is much smaller than the Executive Committee (with its present 72 members and with proposals for the number increasing to 112). The Group believes that a much smaller Executive would work with greater efficiency and would be able to devote time to the effective implementation of new projects. It also welcomes the consideration being given to the possibility of Departments reporting to Assembly in alternate years. At present each Department has to report annually, and so many resolutions are brought to Assembly that it is almost inevitable that many of them will not receive due attention by the Church as a whole. Could it be that we are the victims of a system which gives us an annual Assembly with little continuity of membership? Ought we to be concentrating our energies more and to take adequate time for consultation and reflection?

IV. VISION FOR THE FUTURE

18. Behind all the considerations discussed in this report lie the overwhelming importance of personal commitment and discipleship and of the place of the local church in the life of the URC. Our individual vision, as well as the vision of our leaders, is vital. Without vision, streamlining of Church House, restructuring of Committees, improving communications within the URC and with other Churches, or the implementation of new enterprises based on initiatives, however well intentioned, will be of no avail. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" is as true in 1988 as it was many centuries ago.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Forward Policy Group for debate.
2. The Assembly agrees that there should be a review of the number and size of Committees and invites the Executive Committee to take the appropriate action and report to the Assembly as soon as possible.
3. The Assembly agrees that a popular report of its deliberations for the use of local churches should be produced for wide circulation, and invites the Business Committee, in consultation with the Editorial Board of *Reform*, to consider how this may be done.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Convener: The Rt Revd C Cyril Franks
Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

1. The Executive Committee met at Church House on 2 July 1987, 5 November 1987 and 4 February 1988 with an attendance of 56, 60 and 59.

Applications to enter URC

2.1 At the request of the Wales Synod, the Executive considered the application of the fellowship at Caebach, mid-Wales, to become a local church of the URC; hitherto it has been attached to the Llandrindod Wells fellowship. The Executive recommends this action.

2.2 At the request of the Wessex Synod the Executive gave support to an application of the Rokeby URC, Reading, to be a local church of the URC subject to any further discussion of the matter in the Wessex Synod in March.

2.3 At the request of the Wales Synod, the Executive gave support to an application of the St David's ecumenical pastorate, Pentwyn, Cardiff, to be a local church of the URC, subject to any further discussion of the matter in the Wales Synod in March.

2.4 The Thames North Synod was reported to be in discussion with the American Church in London, meeting in Whitefields, about joining the URC. The Executive encouraged the exploration of the matter and requested a further report in July.

Secessions

3.1 Ruscombe, West Midlands. In 1985 the District Council and Synod received a request from Ruscombe that it be permitted to secede, and, because there was a breakdown in relationships, both bodies recommended that the Church agree. The Executive Committee appointed a delegation to meet the officers of the District Council and the church, and a report was received. The Committee decided that no action be taken for at least 12 months, during which the Moderator and the District Council would make further efforts to provide appropriate pastoral care. The church has repeated its request to secede. The Executive, after full consideration, did not regard the reasons given as sufficient grounds and reached a negative conclusion, and this forms the resolution. Documents are attached as Appendix A.

3.2 Trinity, Slough. This church has requested the Synod and the General Secretary to consider the possibilities of becoming a *union church* with dual membership in the URC and the Church of Scotland. Discussions with the Presbytery of England of the Church of Scotland have taken place. It is too early to forecast the outcome.

3.3 St Andrew's, Bournemouth. A petition for secession was forwarded from St Andrew's, Bournemouth, through the Wessex Provincial Synod, which made no recommendation. The Executive Committee asked a commission consisting of Mr Ray Heritage, Dr Mary Ede and the Revd Michael Davies to visit the church. Their report was considered by the Executive in February. The Executive had in mind the discussions referred to above under 3.2 and passed resolutions

urging that no further action be taken on secession until that discussion is completed (Resolution 4). The Executive further recommends that if nevertheless the Assembly should decide to debate the petition, then the decision should be not to permit the secession. Documents are attached. Appendix B.

3.4 The Executive further agreed to ask the officers of the Church of Scotland to talk with URC officers about the relationships between the two churches in England, since we need an open discussion about the possibilities before any decisive movement of a congregation can be considered.

Informal Churches

4. The Mersey Synod brought forward the situation of the Anfield Road Fellowship which had applied to be received as a local church but this had been rejected by the Synod, largely on doctrinal grounds. The Executive agreed as follows:

- a) In confirming the paper already issued on Informal Churches, the Executive Committee recognises that the Liverpool District Council will continue to exercise its pastoral discretion in retaining its friendship with the Anfield Road Fellowship and offering supporting care.
- b) The Executive will be ready to review the situation in three years' time.

Support of Lay Ministries.

5. The Assembly in May 1987 instructed the Executive to consider the financial support of lay ministries. This followed the Assembly decision that Church Related Community Workers should be paid from the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund from 1989 and a request from the World Church and Mission Department that lay and ordained people from overseas could be recruited for service in the URC. After consultation, the General Secretary reported to the Executive. The main elements in the report were as follows:

5.1 Church Related Community Workers

- a) Assembly has agreed that those in recognised posts be paid from Maintenance of the Ministry from 1 January 1989. This payment will be of the basic stipend then current, plus pension contribution and national insurance. All other costs of service will be the responsibility of the local church, District Council and Synod, which may seek help from other sources.
- b) The number of CRCWs so supported will not be greater than eight at 1.1.89 and is not expected to be more than twelve in 1992. The Ministries Department will consult the MoM Committee about any variation to these figures.
- c) The contract of employment should be prepared locally in consultation with District and Synod.

5.2 World Church and Mission Department. At present this Department has the right to appoint up to five ministers from overseas to *special posts* and seeks the freedom to use these places for lay people if that is more appropriate. The argument in favour is a strong one. Our mutual relationship with overseas churches in CWM is involved. We are ready to respond to their requests for lay missionaries; we should also be able to receive lay missionaries. The Finance and Administration Department, while anxious not to see the terms of the Maintenance of the Ministry becoming wider and indefinite, acknowledged that since the number of posts is not

increased, the raising of funds is not the issue. The evangelical calling is primary; mutuality with overseas churches is important; the Assembly is therefore advised to allow this development:

- a) The World Church and Mission Department be permitted to appoint lay persons from overseas partner churches to posts within its allocation of five.
- b) The Maintenance of the Ministry will pay the basic ministerial stipend plus pension contribution and national insurance.
- c) The term of service will normally be three years.
- d) The Synod, or those acting locally with the approval of Synod, will act as employer for legal purposes.
- e) The Synod will ensure that the costs of housing and all other pastoral expenses are being properly covered.
- f) The World Church and Mission Department will be responsible for recruitment, the process of obtaining a work permit, and any assistance needed towards travel to the place of settlement and return.
- g) The appropriate District Council and Synod will be asked to receive such a lay worker as an associate member.
- h) Initiative for such an appointment is with the local church and District Council, with Synod approval, and their proposal is placed before the World Church and Mission Department.

No further claims on the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund for lay ministries are envisaged in the near future.

Definition of 'Retired Ministers'

6. Assembly 1987 gave first approval to constitutional amendments which would replace the current *minister emeritus* with *retired minister*, and asked for a definition of the latter phrase. The Executive, on the advice of the Thames North Province which initiated the proposal, offers the following definition:

For the purposes of associate membership in District Councils, retired ministers are those who:

- a) At the date of retirement are in stipendiary ministerial service in the URC or are in ministerial service recognised as Category C in the Year Book.
- or b) At the date of retirement are in the service of the URC as auxiliary ministers and have been appointed by Synod to membership of a District Council.

Responses from Synods and District Councils were received and did not include sufficient motions of opposition to halt the ratification of the proposals.

Moratorium on Constitutional Change

7. In view of the progress made in negotiations with the Congregational Union of Scotland and the publication of a scheme of unification, the Executive accepted that the constitution of the URC could not be amended in the period up to the completion of voting on the scheme. This was advised to Synods and District Councils by letter dated 3 July.

Faith and Life Department Staffing

8. The Executive considered and approved a proposal from the Department to recruit an Assistant Secretary for work among children (particularly the 11 to 14 age group) and young people (particularly national activities). The funding was made possible by a Department of Education and Science grant together with savings on clerical staff. The post was approved for five years only, subject to the Budget Committee's agreement that the available funds be used in this way. That agreement having been given, the post was advertised and an appointment was made of Mr Paul Franklin.

Growth for Their Sake

9. The Executive requested the Moderator, with help from the Revd David Marsden, Revd John Reardon, Dr Robert Steel and the General Secretary, to take forward the planning of priorities under this heading. Meetings were convened and the Departments described their work in fulfilment of the main theme. A brief working paper was offered to the Executive as a progress report, and is included here for information. The Executive noted that in 1989 Synods will be reporting to Assembly on the work they have done on this theme.

Our Central Purposes

The life of the church always looks towards the reign of God in the world he has created.

The church points towards God's reign, proclaiming the cross of Christ and the empty tomb.

The church already lives under God's reign as the community where his loving will is honoured.

The church is a tool in God's hand to defeat evil and bring to birth new life in Christ.

We believe this is true always and everywhere. It is within that understanding of what God has called the church to be that we have looked for the immediate purposes for which the URC lives. We have related our purposes to the theme of *Growth for Their Sake*. We have tried to *look* and *listen* to the experience of our churches and our Assembly Departments, and now seek to *decide* what our priorities should be. We believe this will enable us more effectively to *gather* our resources and *act* together.

In the central life of the URC we can describe our priorities. They are

- a) Building up the local churches as growing communities of faith, worship and prayer.
- b) Enabling the ecumenical fellowship to grow in unity.
- c) Participating in the world church for growing witness to Christ.
- d) Acting together with those who are disadvantaged for growth in freedom.

As the central departments of the church seek to give reality to these purposes, we believe that local churches also will find that they summarise most of the essential work we are called to do for Christ.

Missionary and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee - Secretary.

10. The Executive, as a result of the review of the General Secretary's re-appointment, advised that other arrangements be made for a Secretary of the MEW Home Committee which he now services. The Department responded that no other practical way could be seen at present, but that aspects of the committee work were being handled by others. The Executive agreed to continue the present pattern for one year.

CWM Solidarity and Action Fund

11. The World Church and Mission Department reported some difficulty in responding to a new proposal of CWM to raise additional funds to help member churches in times of crisis, since our central budget system does not allow room for additional appeals. The Department had provided £500 from its own reserves. The Executive hoped that there would be further discussion within CWM and that those now considering URC Central Funding and Advocacy would discuss how best the URC might raise extra-budgetary money.

Moderator Review Group

12. The Review Group on the Moderator of the North Western Provincial Synod was chaired by Mr Ray Heritage and unanimously recommends that the Revd A G Burnham be re-appointed for a term of five years from 1 September 1988. (Resolution 6)

Honorary Treasurer

13. On the recommendation of the Nominations Committee, the Executive appointed Mr Angus Grimmond as Honorary Treasurer of the Church from 5 November 1987 to the Assembly of 1994. Mr Grimmond is a chartered accountant with wide commercial experience and comes from the Welwyn Garden City URC.

14. The Executive paid tribute to Mr Fred Brooman CB who served as Treasurer for 8 years and gave much time to the Finance Department and to all the central life of the URC, guiding our financial stewardship with skill and sensitivity.

Budget Priorities Panel

15. The Budget Committee had sought a method by which detailed consideration could be given to competing claims for restricted resources from the Unified Appeal. The Executive accepted a proposal from the Forward Policy Group that a Budget Priorities Panel be available to the Budget Committee to give advice, particularly when new expenditure is requested. The Panel will act when requested by the Budget Committee. The membership approved is as follows:

The Immediate Past Moderator in the Chair,
with the Revd Ronald Bocking and Mrs Joan Boulind.

Central Funding and Advocacy

16. The Group which was formed at the last Assembly, with the Revd Bill Wright as Convener, has brought forward an initial report which is printed separately in the Book of Reports.

Diverging Trends

17. The General Secretary brought forward a discussion of the possibility that the number of ministers and ordinands is not being matched by the financial resources available. The Ministries Department and the Finance Department assisted in research and discussion. As a result the Executive received a paper which showed that there is no immediate crisis as regards the MoM support for ministers, since the number of new ordinands is more likely to stabilise the total ministerial roll than to increase it. Greater concern surrounds the capacity of the Ministerial Training Fund to support the larger number of students now coming forward. The Executive heard of the various actions proposed by the Ministries Department to balance numbers and available finance; this is further reported under that Department. The Executive noted that there will be further consideration in the autumn in the light of updated statistics.

Council for World Mission

18. The URC, as a constituent church of CWM, was asked to endorse amendments to its constitution to provide for the additional membership of young people and women in the Council and Executive. This approval was given..

Executive dates

19. In view of the likelihood of a July Assembly in 1989, the Executive agreed that it would meet only twice in that year, on March 2 and October 5. Should the Assembly revert to May, the usual February, July and November dates would be kept.

Seeking Comprehensive Policy Directions

20. The General Secretary introduced a paper which outlined some of the major issues before the church which ought not to be considered piecemeal by Departments or Synods. Among these issues were the number of very small local churches and our care for them, the grouping of local churches and the problems this is causing, the development of ecumenical agencies in the counties, the breadth of theological outlook and the difficulty of a cohesive URC view, the vast challenge of mission and yet our shyness in witnessing to Christ, and the balance of conciliar churchmanship with the longing for dynamic leadership. The Committee encouraged the Secretary to continue thinking of these and other issues, to collect materials for a discussion and to plan a residential Executive meeting in November.

The Leadership Report

21. The Executive received a resume of all the responses received from councils of the Church. It was agreed that this matter be taken forward within the discussion under paragraph 20 above and not in any special group.

Mansfield College, Oxford

22. The Ministries Department kept the Executive informed of progress on the new constitution of the College. A draft scheme had been published by the Charity Commissioners. The Executive agreed that this was acceptable to the URC and no comments should be submitted, since the future of theological training had been fully secured.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Executive Committee.
2. The Assembly receives the fellowships at
Caebach, Mid-Wales
St David's, Pentwyn, Cardiff
Rokeby, Reading
as local churches of the URC.
3. The Assembly does not agree to the secession of the local church at Ruscombe, West Midlands, and requests the congregation, District Council and Synod patiently to seek ways of developing fellowship and pastoral care.
4. a) The Assembly agrees to leave the petition from St Andrew's, Bournemouth on the table until the discussion at present taking place between the URC and the Church of Scotland regarding joint membership in a local church is completed and the views of the Church of Scotland are known.
b) If the Church of Scotland should agree to joint membership in a local church as a possibility, the Assembly will urge St Andrew's to give this further consideration.
5. The Assembly approves the statement in Section 5 of the *Report on Support for Lay Ministries*.
6. The Assembly re-appoints the Reverend Anthony Gerald Burnham BA as Moderator of the North Western Provincial Synod from 1 September 1988 for a period of five years.
7. The Assembly ratifies the amendments to the *Basis and Structure of the URC* referred by the 1987 Assembly to District Councils and Synods and notes the definition of *Retired Minister* provided by Executive Committee.

9.3.g. A Minister Emeritus - amend to read A retired minister...
9.3.h. All Ministers Emeriti - amend to read All -retired ministers not covered by clause 9.3.g. residing in the District...
9.3.viii To be deleted
9.3.ix to 9.3.xix to be re-numbered viii to xviii
9.4.g A Minister Emeritus - amend to read A retired minister...
9.4.h. All Ministers Emeriti - amend to read All retired ministers not covered by clause 9.4.g. residing in the Province...
9.4.xv To be deleted
9.4.xvi and xvii to be re-numbered xv and xvi.

APPENDIX A Ruscombe URC - Appeal for Secession

Statement by the Local Church

1. The URC has failed to fulfil the unity sought for in the implementation of the union.

2. Ruscombe without the services of an ordained minister, and as a church looking for spiritual guidance is without the circle of the District.
3. Ministerial help and guidance has been sought, all to no avail, and it is felt at Ruscombe that the URC are not just interested, so much so that we have had to find our own pulpit supply, and have done so quite adequately.
4. That our Budget is such that we cannot meet the requirement and quotas imposed by the URC.
5. It is now the desire of Ruscombe to revert to its old Congregational ways, and enjoy the freedom of worship which we feel is denied us by being a member of the URC.

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE 1985

1. The Executive Committee received from the West Midlands Province the request of the Ruscombe church to secede from the URC, and appointed a Commission to enquire into the circumstances and to make recommendations. The Commission members were the Reverends Peter Beaman, Peter Scotland and Nellié Smith. They reported to the Executive Committee on 7 November 1985.

2. *Report to Executive* The following description was included:

2.1 The Ruscombe church is the only church in the village: a community which nestles in a fold of the Cotswolds. The road through the village does not appear to lead anywhere, except back to the main road from which it started -the village is "off the beaten track" and it appeared that the feeling of isolation by the church, which was very deep, was compounded by this geographical separation.

At the same time the church is only about 2.5 miles from the centre of Stroud, and thus not far from Rodborough. There are a number of Congregational Federation churches in the area.

2.2 The Ruscombe church does not appear to have had regular ministry for over 50 years. It has been served by Lay Pastors, and has appreciated their ministry. One of the main areas of discussion centred on ministry. The church has experienced a deep sense of hurt over a long period: part of that hurt may be as a result of the action and attitude of the church itself; part of the hurt clearly results from the attitudes and lack of response from outside, most recently the District Council. For a period of two years prior to October 1984 the church felt a quickening interest from the District, but since October 1984 the church feels that nothing has happened. There was a feeling that the start of a new ministry at Rodborough in 1985 might have provided an opportunity which had been missed. A visit by the Rodborough minister for morning worship might be helpful and appreciated - especially if offered to the church.

2.3 The story of secession began formally in November 1982 when the Church Secretary reported the outcome of a Church Meeting at which members voted to secede. It appears that even before that date there had been misunderstanding, and certainly from November 1982 the situation has not been handled in the most helpful way. There are failures and shortcomings on both sides. The request to secede appears

to the church to have been *dragging on* - they cannot understand why the URC will not let them go.

2.4 The story of the past few years is about the crisis of a "little church". The members of the church may not be aware of this - the Commission members came to see this clearly. In this crisis, the church had nowhere to turn, having no real sense of belonging or identity in the URC.

The crisis revolved around two main issues:

2.5 *Ministry* The church is well served by Lay Preachers, mainly from Methodist and Baptist churches. The fact that few Lay Preachers from the URC led worship seemed to the church to emphasize the fact that they did not really need the URC. In this sense the local fellowship was quite self-sufficient. Yet there was a desire for the help and support which the church felt ministry could bring: communion to the housebound was a particular area of need expressed. The church does exercise a pastoral care to its members, especially the housebound. Provision of ministry might help the church towards a sense of belonging.

2.6 *Money* The crunch came with a sudden increase in the Maintenance of Ministry contribution from £191 in 1978 to £342 in 1979 and £496 in 1980. Prior to 1977 no contribution had been requested at all.

The figure in 1983 has been reduced to £100. At this time the church was receiving nominal oversight from Rodborough, but virtually no visits on Sundays because the minister could not or would not be released in the mornings to lead worship. There is thus a very evident need both for the local church to understand more fully the actual cost of ministry, and for the wider church to facilitate the service of ministers to this, and similar, village churches.

3. The Executive Committee received the report and agreed with the following recommendations:

3.1 It is evident that the provision of ministry in small and rather isolated local churches has become a point of crisis. There are several ways in which this concern may be approached - through a larger church making its minister available for some Sunday services, through a District Council appointing a *Link* minister, through the encouragement of local leadership. We hope that District Councils will give this matter urgent consideration, and deal with it generously.

3.2 It was noted that in this case the District Council may not have been able to cope adequately. Perhaps it would have been wiser to have called on Provincial or national resources at an earlier point, not that weightier pressure should have been applied to a small group of members but so that a variety of experience could have been shared. It is hoped that the wider church might learn this lesson.

3.3 The Executive Committee agrees with the recommendation of the Commission that a decision about secession should be delayed so that the URC can determine whether some degree of ministerial service can be provided for Ruscombe, thus helping the fellowship to fulfil its calling in the locality. We recommend that the Synod and District Council should attempt to offer part time ministry, asking the church to contribute whatever it is able to afford.

3.4 The Executive Committee asks the West Midlands Synod to report on this matter to the first meeting of the Executive in 1987.

DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE

The Pastoral and Ministries Committee

RE: Request for Secession from Ruscombe URC

4. In view of the *one year period* recommended by the Executive Commission (November 1985) we at District level have delayed any written response to the paper *Notes regarding Ruscombe URC*. As the West Midlands Province is expected to report to the meeting of the Executive in February, we wish to make some comments about that report. Our main concern is with paragraph 2.2.

4.1 We are unhappy about the underlying suggestion that *part of the hurt* is the result of *the attitudes and lack of response* of the District Council. The attitude of the Council was always to seek the good of the church and to try to keep the channels of communication open. The paragraph in question says that the church saw a quickening of interest from the District Council during 1982-4. This coincided with attempts made by the Pastoral and Ministries Committee to reconcile issues and build bridges. In September 1984 Ruscombe wrote to the District Council and confirmed their wish to secede. It was after the failure of these talks where we emphasized ministry, offering to start negotiations concerning ministerial oversight, that no further progress was able to be made. The church would accept no more delays, and so it was with great regret that Gloucester District Council recommended secession to the West Midlands Province.

4.2 The District Council, through its Pastoral and Ministries Committee has worked hard to help churches become part of the wider church. Within the resources of the church, efforts have been made to give pastoral oversight to all churches. We have many churches *on a limb* and many have inherited a rural independency. Many, like Ruscombe, were faced with great financial strains particularly when the MoM scheme came into being in the mid-seventies. We still believe that "finance" is a key issue, and part of the "hurt" was caused by misunderstanding about this scheme.

4.3 Paragraph 3.2 suggests that the Province should have been brought into the discussions at an earlier time. The Moderator was always present at Pastoral and Ministry Committee meetings. There was no suggestion on his part that the Province should be involved more actively or that the District was not handling the situation prayerfully and caringly.

4.4 Mr Alder summarises the situation in his most recent letter (8 October 1986) under the issues *Ministry* and *Finance*. Over more recent times it has been almost impossible to talk of providing "ministerial oversight", because the church always comes round to the request for secession. There is a tension between the two ideas: "Ruscombe is happy and contented with arrangements as they exist" and the desire of the Church to offer more oversight.

4.5 The District is immensely sad at the situation that has resulted, particularly as all avenues of reconciliation seem now to be closed.
Glyn Jenkins (Chairman) Thelma Hardie (Secretary)

District Council comments on Executive Report included above:

5. With regard to the observations of the Commission appointed to examine the request to secede from the above church, there are certain errors of fact which we feel should be brought to the attention of the executive when they are considering the matter.

5.1 Firstly in paragraph 2.2 they state that there has been no regular ministry for over fifty years. In fact the church was served in the following way:-

5.2 1972 - March 1977 Brian Oostheysen as lay pastor for four and a half years.

March 1977 - March 1978 Retired Minister Revd J Cottle for one year until his death.

March 1978 - December 1981 Revd J W McMinn minister of Rodborough Tabernacle. Three and half years.

December 1981 Revd D Brown unofficially had oversight. This later lapsed.

5.3 Please also refer to the notes on Pastoral Oversight in the request for secession.

5.4 In paragraph 3.2 regarding the involvement of province at an early date, it should be noted that at all meetings of the pastoral committee at which Ruscombe was discussed, the Provincial Moderator was present.

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE 1987

13 February 1987

Mr J W Alder

Dear Mr Alder

5.5 At its recent meeting, the Executive Committee of the URC had a further discussion about the request of Ruscombe to secede from the church. There was wide recognition of the difficulties which surround this request and a deep desire to establish good relationships. The Committee came to the following conclusions, which I was asked to send to you.

- (a) The Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, has heard further reports of the Ruscombe situation from the Moderator of the Synod, and now informs the church that the Executive cannot give any support to the appeal to secede, not seeing any adequate grounds for such action.
- (b) The Executive Committee welcomes the re-affirmation by the Synod and District Council of their willingness to seek ministerial service, bearing in mind the very limited resources of the local church for this purpose.
- (c) The Executive Committee asks the Moderator of the Provincial Synod to attempt to meet the church in person, to explain these resolutions, and to assure the Ruscombe fellowship of our concern for them and for future

Christian witness.

5.6 I can well imagine that it will be hard for you to accept these Resolutions, but I ask you, as sharers in the one faith, to think about them patiently and to receive the Revd John Waller as a trusted colleague.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Thorogood

Monday 7 September 1987

Dear Revd Thorogood

1. I write on behalf of Ruscombe United Reformed Church to place on record our actions and intentions since receipt of your letter of the 13 February 1987, in which we assume, the rejection by the Executive Committee of the URC, to our request for secession is the final word.
2. Firstly, I would like to make the following observations:
3. Before joining the URC, having no minister of our own, we had visits from at least three ministers, encouraging us to join, and were told the main benefit would be pastoral care, a point which appealed to us at Ruscombe and which encouraged us to join.
4. Having joined, we are still waiting for this care, and which we understand would make little difference to our congregational way of worship, and at little expense.
5. As stressed many times before, we are but a small congregation, to date some twenty members, mostly senior citizens.
6. To date, we have received the Ministry of Word and Sacrament which we believed was part of the basis of union, by Lay Preachers, and Retired Ministers of denominations, other than the URC, and materially nothing from the URC.
7. Considering that our request for secession was first placed before the Gloucester District of the URC on the 11 November 1982, and realising that Ruscombe do need some spiritual guidance and Ministerial Service, both of which have not been forthcoming from the URC, we have taken the following action.
- 7.1 At a recent convened church meeting a resolution was unanimously passed, that we apply for Associate Membership of the Congregational Federation, with a view, if we are accepted, to full membership as and when we are free to do so.
8. Our application for Associate Membership of the Congregational Federation has been accepted.
9. We feel you should be informed of this development as Ruscombe, in no way wishes to be devious or underhanded.

10. With every good wish.

Jack W Alder
Honorary Secretary & Treasurer
Ruscombe United Reformed Church

APPENDIX B
ST ANDREW'S, BOURNEMOUTH - APPEAL FOR SECESSION

PETITION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
BY ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, BOURNEMOUTH
FEBRUARY 1987

1. We, the congregation of St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Bournemouth, humbly petition the Venerable, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, to allow us to secede from the said Denomination. Our main grounds for this request are unaltered from those submitted in September 1984, but in view of comments made (a) by the District representatives who believe that arguments put before members in the referendum were *inaccurate and also misleading* and (b) by the Synod representatives who indicated that in their view the main point of the petition was based on *false premises or on misunderstandings* we stress the following:-

1.1 *Historic Episcopacy* We have been told on more than one occasion that, for us, the principle of Historic Episcopacy is *dead*. We still, however, adhere to the view that this may well be revived at some future time, particularly in view of the General Secretary's statement in the Church Times in December 1980, that "I don't think there's any way forward to Unity in England except through Episcopacy".

1.2 *Closure of St Andrew's* We are assured by the higher Councils of the United Reformed Church that there are no propositions or plans to merge the central town churches. We know, however, that since these assurances meetings have taken place in Bournemouth which have discussed the possibility of such an arrangement.

1.3 *Membership of St Andrew's* All meetings of the Congregation held since the previous petition was refused have repeatedly emphasised the continuing strong feeling of St Andrew's to achieve secession. Attention is drawn to the fact that in the 21 months since the petition was last presented 43 members have been admitted into the fellowship of St Andrew's, and each has been made fully aware of the course we are pursuing and has readily accepted the situation.

1.4 *Church of Scotland* Following advice from the Moderator and Secretary of the Wessex Province that we should contact the Church of Scotland, we did so. As a result we have no reason to believe that a request for admission would be received unfavourably. This is contrary to suggestions made at the 1985 General Assembly and subsequently repeated by Visitation Committees to St Andrew's.

2. (a) Once within the United Reformed Church, St Andrew's accepted the fact that for some years there were bound to be teething troubles. However, after the first five to seven years had passed and we had settled down to the new structures and pattern of Church life, we found it to be top heavy. In

particular, the Provincial Organisation seemed unnecessary. In 1972 it may have had some validity as the new Denomination was catering for a larger membership both immediately and looking to the future when other denominations might be absorbed but in our opinion the larger reduction in membership now down to 131,213 as at January 1986, does not warrant such a large administrative superstructure.

(b) Encouraged by the advice given at the time of Union, St Andrew's has from time to time attempted to initiate *change from within* culminating in our letter of 17th September 1982 - see Appendix A. As a consequence, the Dorset District put to the Wessex Province resolution 1 in Appendix A which, if passed to and by the General Assembly, would have abolished the Provincial Structure, but unfortunately this resolution was lost at Province on a casting vote.

(c) St Andrew's does not accept the need for the office of Provincial Moderator. (We would make it clear that this is no personal criticism of those holding office). Especially, we disagree with the seven years span of office which can be extended. Indeed, a Minister can continue to be reappointed and be, in effect, "Moderator for life". This borders upon the traditional view of Episcopacy to which we are opposed because of the very strong Presbyterian background of so many of our members - see Appendix B.

(d) It follows that we were greatly disturbed when a recent General Assembly voted to accept the principle of the Historic Episcopate if the Covenant then envisaged between the Church of England and other Churches came into being. At the same time, our Provincial Moderators made it known that they were willing to be set apart as Bishops in order to facilitate such a move. It was at this point that the strength of feeling in St Andrew's began to surface. Had the Church of England accepted the Covenant, there would have been moves at that time for St Andrew's to secede from the United Reformed Church. However, the Church of England's action gave us further time to think on these matters. Upon reflection, we feel that the principle of the Historic Episcopate, having been accepted by our Denomination, may well be revived at some future time. We find, therefore, that we are at variance with the United Reformed Church on this major issue.

3. (a) At a meeting with the Dorset District Officers on February 8th 1984, St Andrew's was given a clear indication that District thinking envisaged not three, as at present, but one URC. Congregations in the centre of Bournemouth in the future. Such a congregation, we were led to believe, would centre upon Richmond Hill, which has a larger church building, more hall space and car parking facilities.

(b) We therefore had to consider realistically the whole future of St Andrew's. There seemed two possibilities:-

(i) To carry on within the U.R.C. for as long as possible under considerable financial pressure and knowing that any default or difficulty could lead to closure. Such closure would not automatically increase the congregation of Richmond Hill by 300 members. St Andrew's is a very scattered congregation. Some 20 or so, living fairly centrally, might link up with Richmond Hill; some would join local congregations where they live; others, if they experienced the closure of a Church that meant much to them, might go nowhere in particular. So the fellowship of St Andrew's would scatter and

cease to exist. It is possible to argue that this would be a good thing - *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and dies ...etc!* One congregation would cease that others might be enriched. We faced this thought clearly and realised its force. But in the light of very strong Presbyterian presence in this congregation we looked at an alternative possibility, namely -

(ii) That there is a case for St Andrew's continuing and indeed thriving in the future if it presents, as we believe it does to a degree already, a different Christian emphasis. The URC is well represented in the centre of Bournemouth; the Church of England has good representation so have the Methodists and Baptists. As a Church of Scotland, we believe that St Andrew's would have a new impetus and new life; already the prospect of such a possibility has greatly invigorated the congregation.

4. All of the above considerations were put to the test in a series of meetings and a Referendum.

(a) At an Elders' Meeting on 7 March 1984, 24 were present and voted unanimously to invite the Church meeting to consider holding a Referendum of the whole membership to ascertain their wishes with regard to seceding from the United Reformed Church.

(b) The Church Meeting on March 17th 1984, at which 160 members were present, voted unanimously to hold such a Referendum.

(c) The Referendum was held between April 25th and May 31st 1984. Out of a total membership of 307, 303 votes were cast, of which 299 were in favour of secession and 4 against.

(d) At a Church Meeting on June 27th 1984, a resolution was passed instructing the Elders to proceed with a Petition for Secession. On this occasion, 146 members were present. 144 voted for secession and 2 voted against. Therefore, in both the Referendum and the Church Meeting, 98% were in favour of secession.

5. When we entered the United Reformed Church, we did so with 119 out of a membership of 521 voting positively to do so. On such a percentage of the whole membership, (23%), we were accepted. Now the membership had voted by 98% for secession. With such an overwhelming vote, it is quite plainly their wish that we should do so. It is significant that those still in the membership who were leading advocates for going into the Union have now, in the light of experience, been strongest in supporting secession.

6. In the light of the present theological and administrative thinking of the United Reformed Church, we firmly believe that the Church of Scotland will be a more appropriate spiritual home for St Andrew's and that a new beginning within that Church would give us fresh impetus. Therefore it is our prayerful hope that our problem be recognised and our position understood and that we be allowed to secede from the United Reformed Church with dignity and in a spirit of mutual Christian love.

7. In conclusion, we draw particular attention to comments given at, or reported on following, visits by various representatives -

(a) District Council resolves that "the council recognises the difficulty, and

questions the value of retaining the congregation within the U.R.C. against the expressed wishes of an overwhelming majority of its members." (Dorset District Council meeting 14th November 1984).

(b) Wessex Province representatives reported (i) "The inescapable background to the conversation was that both in a Church Meeting attended by 160 people and by means of a referendum, a majority of 98% had expressed the wish to secede. Nothing that was said made any apparent dent in the determination and unanimity of the Elders. (ii) St Andrew's is one of those isolated examples of Presbyterian tradition which came into the URC with hesitation, and found itself, as it feared, alone, in a wide area of Congregational understandings, language and ethos." (Wessex Province report 9th March 1985)

(c) The Reverend Alasdair Walker, a member of the Assembly Commission, stated at the Commission's visit, "I have been impressed by the unity of your desire to secede". (Assembly Commission 17th July 1985).

(Signed) Keith R Brymer
Minister

Roy Alletson
Secretary

REPORT OF A MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 1987 AT ST ANDREW'S URC, BOURNEMOUTH

1. The Revd Keith Brymer with 26 Elders and representatives of the local church were present. Those representing the Dorset District Council were Mr R J Potts, the Revds R O Balmer, B Rawling and K F Southern, those representing the Wessex Synod Executive Committee were the Revds Nelson W Bainbridge, J J Macro, G H Thomas and Mr D Butler.

2. The Moderator presided and led opening devotions. He said how sad the District and Synod were that St Andrew's URC Bournemouth felt the need to present again a petition to secede from the URC. The Church Meeting held on 25th June 1986 had unanimously approved the petition - there were 60 present at that meeting. Considerable consultation took place over the next 2.5 hours over many points within the petition from which it appeared that there were no new grounds for secession. The original petition said, we were told, what the church intended to say, they still intend to say it and have not changed their minds. The reaction from the St Andrew's members was that they were sad that Assembly had not listened to the strength of feeling, and the Synod and District representatives were asked to make sure that the Assembly were fully aware of that feeling. Whilst the depth of feeling is strong enough to encourage people to leave the church, it is the group's opinion that this is not a reason for secession.

3. We would wish to comment on one or two factual points, and these are set out under the headings of the petition from the local church.

4. *Historic Episcopacy* To claim secession on the grounds of what might have been seems to be a *non-starter*. Whilst the General Secretary wrote what he did in a letter to the Press, expressing his conviction that church unity would only come about with some measure of episcopacy, this does not mean that it is going to be the kind of episcopacy exercised by the Anglican Communion. The Revd J J Macro said that he was one of those who had opposed the Covenant and St Andrew's were not alone

in this. It was of interest to see that the Revd Donald Hilton who had led the opposition to the Covenant ideas was, in fact, likely to be appointed a Provincial Moderator. It was pointed out that Provincial Moderators certainly do not serve for life, and the group's conviction is that this matter is now a dead issue.

5. *Closure of St Andrew's* The St Andrew's church people seemed very certain that although assurances had been given that there was no intention to close the church, meetings were still taking place about this. The District representatives explained that the only meetings that had taken place had been in connection with support for ministers and witness in Bournemouth, and these had been more of discussion type meetings - not called by the District Council. Assurances were given that as long as St Andrew's is viable no good reason could be put forward to close the church. The URC Acts were referred to by the group, who reminded the Elders that a congregation could not be closed against its wishes. Although assurances were given categorically that the distinctive witness of the St Andrew's congregation was valuable in the town centre at Bournemouth, this did not appear to be received.

6. *Membership* The St Andrew's congregation confirmed that the 43 new members that they had recently received did come from many areas outside of Bournemouth as well as from the town centre. These 43 had all joined in the knowledge of St Andrew's petition to secede from the URC. The group responded by stressing that unanimity does not necessarily mean that a thing is right.

7. *Church of Scotland* The local congregation seemed convinced that the Church of Scotland would be willing to receive St Andrew's, and again the group spoke of indications to the contrary. This is a matter which would only be determined in the end by an Assembly vote at the Church of Scotland.

8. *URC Structures* Whilst the petition says that the loss of membership is 80,000, in point of fact this is 60,000. The congregation said that they had objected to the Provincial Structure before 1972 and had made a mistake then by entering into the URC. A representative of the Church Meeting spoke at some length and said that although the assurances had been given by the District Council and the Synod, such assurances do not really affect the malaise; "St Andrew's is a misfit, and the depth of feeling is such that it is now too late for reason to take over." This representative expressed fear that litigation might be resorted to by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church. It was thought that Assembly would be unwise to assume that St Andrew's will abide by a decision made not to allow the church to secede and said that they themselves might resort to litigation. Much discussion took place over the question of property.

9. *Other Matters* In general discussion it was stated that the URC are denying St Andrew's their rights, that freedom of choice is theirs, that the URC hides behind the rule book, makes veiled threats about its property, and despite all the visits that have taken place the URC response is still a negative one. It was pointed out that the URC has no right to deny St Andrew's the right to worship as they wish. The minister stated that there had been far too much emphasis on law and not on the Spirit, and suggested that the minds of the Council and Synod were already made up. In response the Moderator pointed out that it was possible that St Andrew's URC had also made up their minds; he also made it clear the St Andrew's would not and could not be prevented by the URC from following its own tradition of worship. Mr David Butler felt that the local church has much to contribute to the United Reformed Church and should not be surprised that the URC wants that local

congregation still to be within the fold.

10. *Conclusion* It would appear that there are no new points being made concerning the petition, and in the circumstances the Executive Committee of the Wessex Synod would be asking to suggest to the Synod that a resolution should be passed under the following terms:

The Wessex Province, having received the petition from St Andrew's URC, Bournemouth to secede from the United Reformed Church, and having read the report of the meeting held by representatives of the Dorset District Council and the Wessex Synod, with representatives of the local church, pass the petition to the Assembly Executive Committee with regret.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - 4 February 1988

1. Report of a Church Meeting of St Andrew's Bournemouth with representatives of the Executive Committee of the URC, held in Bournemouth on Friday 8th January 1988. The Commission from the Executive Committee comprised Dr Mary Ede, the Revd Michael Davies and Mr Ray Heritage.
2. The Minister the Revd Keith Brymer and about 110 members were present. The Minister extended a welcome to the visitors, and expressed a special welcome to the Revd Michael Davies, who had stepped in at the last minute because of the illness of the Revd David Hannen.
3. The immediate past Moderator, Mr Ray Heritage, presided and opened the meeting with a reading from Scriptures and a prayer. He then thanked the Church for their welcome, and proceeded to outline something of the purpose of the visit, by saying that the thinking which prompted this visit, was a genuine pastoral concern for, and understanding of the concerns expressed by the Church in the recent petition submitted to the General Assembly, and presented to the last meeting of the Executive Committee, and that our visit was an expression of that concern and understanding. Mr Heritage stated that it was not the intention of the visitors to spend time commenting on the factual misunderstandings in the submission, since the District Council and Province had done this during their visit in May. He then reiterated a view expressed on previous occasions, which is that St Andrew's do have a distinctive part to play in the life of the URC in Bournemouth and beyond as a congregation with a Presbyterian heritage.
4. At this point the Chairman suggested that it would be helpful to the Commission if the members of the Church would care to state any matters that were new to those contained in the petition, which in the main was a repetition of the one submitted in 1985.
5. Many members spoke, not adding new facts, but repeating and underlining points in the petition. The tone in which many of these comments were made revealed a frustration and disappointment at the way that St Andrew's sees the URC functioning. The view was put that St Andrew's represented a home in a strange land, and a religious tradition that maintained their link with Scotland. The important *fact* since 1985 was that there had been no change whatever in the desire of the congregation to become a part of the Church of Scotland. The speeches, in the main, were made with considerable feelings of emotion and were almost always received

with applause.

6. The Chairman then invited the Revd Michael Davies to present to the meeting an alternative way of moving forward from the present impasse. Mr Davies began by stressing his concern at the whole idea of secession being regarded as the best way of resolving differences. He then proceeded to speak of the way in which Trinity Church Slough were approaching the matter of Secession. They were prepared to give consideration to the possibility of becoming a union church with the Church of Scotland and the URC. Discussions about the possibility of this were proceeding with the Church of Scotland. If this were possible it would seem to offer St Andrew's the opportunity of being part of the Church of Scotland whilst still remaining a part of the URC. The matter of Financing in union situations between ourselves and other Denominations could be explained if the Church thought that this was a way forward. At this point the Session Clerk spoke quoting a minute of a Church Meeting of the 4th November 1987, when a proposal was made from the floor of the meeting which was similar to that being suggested by Mr Davies, which proposal also suggested that this course be pursued. This proposal was overwhelmingly opposed and the proposer withdrew it. We were assured that the matter had had full discussion. The Revd Michael Davies urged the Church to give time and thought to this possibility, but it was made clear that the decision of the 4th November last was definitive and they were not willing to re-open the matter.

7. The meeting went on to make further comments with feeling. It was suggested that there is not room in Bournemouth for two UR Churches. St Andrew's they said would make a more useful contribution as a Church of Scotland Church, and would then work more closely with UR churches.

8. The plea which clearly came through was *Please let us go* otherwise the struggle will go on, and St Andrew's may be forced to take other action, one speaker mentioned the European Court of Human Rights. A further complaint suggested that the URC procrastinated, it took 6-7 years from raising their complaint, they said, until the petition was presented to Assembly in 1985. They also claim that what they thought would be two years delay after the 1985 Assembly turned out to be three years, again they saw this as procrastination.

9. The Unity of the Church said another contributor, was seen to be important but not when that unity was in opposition to the conscience of a whole congregation.

10. Finally reference was made to the Dorset District Resolution quoted in St Andrew's Submission. "The Council recognises the difficulty, and questions the value of retaining the congregation within the URC, against the wishes of an overwhelming majority of its members." (Dorset District 14th November 1984). The speaker went on to say that in 1972 the feeling of the Church was not wholly in favour of union. A church meeting at that time voted 66% in favour and 33% against, "We know that we made a mistake in 1972" the speaker concluded.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

Convener: Mr Angus Grimmond

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Contributions to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and the Unified Appeal 1987

1. The Budgets for 1987 approved by Assembly 1986 (Record pages 16 and 27) provided for expenditure which was to be financed by contributions of £6,275,000 to the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund and £1,428,000 to the Unified Appeal. Both of these amounts were a little more than the Provinces considered they would be able to bring. In the event the amount received for the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund exceeded the target but the Unified Appeal was less than the Provinces had offered. (*Appendix 1*).

2. Once again the loyal support of the Churches and the hard work of Provincial and District Officers provided the money 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 Churches who are the source of almost all our funds.

Stipends of Ministers Holding Assembly Appointments

3. Information about the stipends and the conditions of service of ministers holding Assembly appointments is given in Appendix 2.

4. At the Executive Committee in November 1987, the church appointed Angus Grimmond to be Convener of the department, and to the office of Treasurer of the Church. The Executive Committee paid tribute to the service of Fred Brooman who has served the Church for 8 years in these offices and has led the department through periods of difficulty and opportunity. The department join in the thanks expressed to Fred Brooman and wish him happiness in his retirement job as Secretary of the Guildford District.

MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Waller

Secretary: Revd George Hooper

Our Finances in 1987

5. The Committee has received draft accounts which show that all Provinces except one met the target which they set themselves at budget-making time. The Committee were grateful that two Provinces were able to pay in excess of their original target, which more than off-set the shortfall.

6. So far as expenditure was concerned the Fund paid an average of eight full-time ministers more each month than had originally been budgeted. However, there were eleven fewer part-time ministers paid, and this meant that the overall cost for the support of the ministry was only marginally different from budget. The final result was a deficit of £20,625, against a budgeted deficit of £25,000.

7. The Officers felt it appropriate to recommend that a transfer to the stipend payment reserve of £35,000 should be made, in order to bring this reserve up to approximately one month's expenditure of the Fund. A legacy more than off-set the cost of this transfer and the deficit in the year.

Level of Stipends

8. The Committee is pleased that the response to its last report to General Assembly has been such that it has been able to decide on a 5% increase in basic stipend from 1st July 1988 (to £6,420 p a) rather than the 4% projected. Six Provinces increased the level of their contributions above their original offers and a number of local churches made voluntary increases in their promises for 1988. As a result of this the improved stipend will not create a deficit in the Fund. This outcome has encouraged the Committee which believes it will be welcomed by the General Assembly, and by local churches and ministers alike.

9. The Committee has taken this experience into account in preparing the budget for 1989 which allows for a 6% increase in stipend. At the moment Provincial offers suggest that this may lead to a small deficit for the year. Further discussions are continuing in the Provinces and the Committee anticipates that this deficit will be covered by increased contributions through local churches continuing the generous spirit shown in regard to their contributions for 1987. The Committee has also been aware that recent inflation and State pensions have been rising at a significantly slower rate than average earnings. Recent stipend increases have compared well with the increase in inflation but have fallen behind average wage increases. Since the budget is produced eighteen months ahead of events, the Committee has to judge trends as well as gather facts. (*Resolution 3*).

10. The Committee has just begun a radical review of the whole of its operation. This is due to recent Government legislation in the areas of the Community Charge and pensions, in addition to changes within the Church. If it proves possible the Committee wishes to keep all these issues in mind in any proposals that are brought to the General Assembly. At the moment only the issues are outlined in this report.

Community Charge

11. At the time of writing, this matter is still being debated before Parliament. Present indications are that this will be introduced in Scotland in 1989 and in England and Wales in 1990. It will be a charge on ministers and their adult families but local churches will be relieved of domestic rates on manses. Whilst most churches pay a 50% concessionary rate there may be no such concession on Community Charge. In church life it therefore seems fair that ministers should receive an increase to help them meet this new demand on their resources, and that local churches should pay more to the MoM Fund since they will no longer be paying manse rates.

12. The Committee has looked at a number of ways of doing this, bearing in mind that the rate of the Community Charge will vary from area to area and also that the family circumstances of ministers vary considerably. A recent survey shows present manse domestic rates costs vary from nil to over £720 p a. Any proposal has to be measured against its effects on a minister's Income Tax and National Insurance contributions, and also its effect on the URC Ministers' Pension Fund.

13. At the moment the Committee only wishes to establish the principle that payment to ministers will be increased in 1990 by some extra sum that takes into account the introduction of the Community Charge, and that local churches will be asked to meet the cost of this. More detailed proposals will be discussed with the Provinces during 1988. Special interim arrangements will be made for 1989 in respect of URC ministers serving in Scotland.

Pensions

14. As foreshadowed in the 1987 Assembly Report the Government's plans to alter the basic opportunities to provide pensions, coupled with a reduction of 20% in State Earnings-Related Pensions (SERPS), have now been completed, albeit with revised dates from which they operate. A further detailed statement will shortly be sent to members of the URCMPF and opportunities for consultation will be provided if requested.

15. The MoM Committee is considering the total effective level of pensions available to ministers, generally and allowing for the alteration of state pensions and other fiscal change. Any increase in basic stipend in excess of 6% per annum, automatically creates uncovered costs for pensions due in respect of service in earlier years.

16. An actuarial valuation of URCMPF is being completed as at 31st December 1987, and it is hoped that preliminary results will be available in time for the Assembly. The present special contribution of £500,000 p a. from the MoM Fund is to be paid until the year 2000 to meet the costs of past deficiencies and improvements. However it may be that the result of the valuation will allow some of this special contribution to finance or offset the costs of changes arising from the review outlined in the previous paragraph.

17. As promised at the 1987 Assembly a new system of dealing with additional voluntary contributions made by members to URCMPF has been introduced. This ensures that a final pensionable return in keeping with the general financial experience of the fund, does not rely solely on market values at the time of retirement, and continues to guarantee minimum pensions in accordance with a table certified by the actuary. Resolution (4) deals with the necessary change in the Pension Fund rules.

GENERAL

18. For some years the Inland Revenue has had rules relating to the taxing of benefits paid to those who are "higher paid". These rules come into operation at an emolument level of £8,500 p a. For ministers this will normally be stipend, plus all expenses, other allowances and benefits in kind, and it seems likely that many of our stipendiary ministers will soon fall into this category.

19. If outside factors have added new dimensions to the Committee's thinking, it also needs to respond to the changing life of the church. It seems that the church's prayers for vocations to the ministry are being answered and that, for the first time in many years, the total number of ministers to be paid may increase slightly. The Committee will watch the financial consequences of this trend very closely. It does not want to present as a problem what others see as an opportunity. Local churches may need to be as generous with their money as candidates are with their time and talents.

20. In a year not lacking in challenge the Committee has been aware of the importance of advocacy. This is not simply a money raising exercise, but an explanation of a complex operation central to the life of our Church which is facing considerable changes and pressures. The Committee looks forward with interest and hope to the proposals of the Central Funding and Advocacy Group.

Personalia

21. Once again the Committee recognizes the valuable contribution made to its work by the Provincial Representatives. There have been several changes in personnel during the year. More particularly it wishes to place on record its profound sense of gratitude to the Revd George Hooper who has served as Secretary for 10 years. He has piloted the Committee through a time of great change with faithfulness and good humour. He well deserves the thanks of the Assembly.

CHURCH BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Julian Macro
Secretary: Mr Tegid Peregrine

Guidelines

22. The guidelines for giving financial assistance from the Church Buildings Fund are as follows:-

- i) Assistance will be given to those projects recommended by Provinces which the Committee deems appropriate in all the circumstances.
- ii) To encourage Churches to employ professional consultants to advise on property matters, loans will be made of 50% of professional fees, subject to a maximum loan of £15,000,(an increase of £5,000 over previous years). 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%.
- iii) 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.
- iv) Current resources will not permit the making of further grants.

Loans

23. Eight applications from churches were approved in 1987 amounting to £235,000 for building works and £31,000 for professional fees. Although the number of applications has remained constant from 1986 the amount of money advanced has been doubled. The sum available for loans in 1988 is likely to be of the order of £200,000.

Church Building Surveys

24. During the year the Committee gave consideration to the question of having professional surveys of church premises undertaken at periodic intervals. It became apparent that this was already the practice in some Provinces, the most common interval being 5 years. The Committee urged all Provinces to adopt a system of periodic surveys of all their premises in the conviction that failure to do so would inevitably lead to sudden and catastrophic repair bills in many cases. Guidelines were issued to Provinces to assist in the process.

Disposal of Redundant Church Sites

25. When it is expedient to dispose of a redundant church site, a decision has to be made whether or not to retain the freehold. While no rule can be laid down which is applicable in all cases, the Committee feels that, particularly in urban areas, it is likely to be financially advantageous in the long term to enter into a leasehold arrangement. There should therefore be a presumption against disposing of the freehold unless professional advice is firmly of the view that this is the best course.

Professional Advisers

26. An issue which is currently concerning a number of churches of all denominations is the employment of retired professionals to advise on property matters. There are dangers inherent in doing so as such people may not be insured against claims for negligence or bad advice. The Committee's view is that churches should use uninsured professionals only to identify areas where further investigation is needed. This should then be carried out by a fully insured person in current practice.

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Skidmore

Secretary: Mr Bob Carruthers

27. At 31 December 1987 Retirement Housing was an enterprise of 214 properties providing for the needs of 139 retired ministers and 65 widows. The Society owns 10 properties which for a variety of reasons are occupied by persons who are not retired ministers or widows of ministers.

28. The Committee has endeavoured to provide housing in localities where the applicants wish to reside, but in some localities in the South of England suitable properties have not been available at prices within the purchase limits.

29. Hitherto national purchase ceilings have been set each year.

In view of the wide variation in the increases in property prices during the year 1986/87 the Committee has set differential purchase ceilings on a Province by Province basis, the location of the property to be the determining factor.

For the year 1987-88 the ceilings are

Province	Society/Trust Ceilings	Joint Purchase Ceilings
Northern, North Western, Mersey, Yorkshire & Wales	£ 36,000	£ 54,000
E Midlands, W Midlands South Western	£ 39,000	£ 58,500
Eastern, Wessex, Thames North Southern	£ 43,000	£ 64,500

30. In 1987 capital was provided for the housing of 21 retired ministers and 3 ministers' widows and for the rehousing of one retired minister. Of the 25 properties purchased 12 were purchased jointly with a Province and 9 jointly with the tenant with one property purchased exceptionally with capital provided by the Committee, a Province and the tenant. In addition two properties were purchased on behalf of two Provinces for the use of retired ministers who did not satisfy the "Guide Lines" which apply in the National Scheme.

31. No qualifying applicant was refused assistance and the only delays in the provision of housing were due to either the legal process of purchase or selection of properties which proved on survey to be unsuitable.

32. During the year 4 properties were sold including one property received as a legacy. In addition one property was purchased by the retired minister who tenanted it.

33. At the year end a further two properties were in process of purchase and 7 retiring ministers and 2 ministers' widows were seeking suitable properties for purchase in the early months of 1988. It is likely that an additional 7 to 9 retiring ministers will need to be provided with assistance during 1988.

34. The Committee has given full consideration to possible alternative methods of meeting the cost of maintenance and repair of properties as requested by Assembly 1987. The Committee's Report is set out in Appendix 3.

35. There was no increase in rent during 1987 and none is projected for 1988. The level of rent for the period commencing 1 January 1989 will be decided on the basis of expenditure on maintenance repairs, insurance and administration in 1988.

36. During the 12 months to 31 December 1987, £36,000 was received in donations for retirement housing and £275,000 in legacies.

37. The Committee is grateful to all those who donate sums of money for retirement housing and to those who leave money or property in their wills for this purpose. While it is hoped that loan facilities will continue to be available as required in the years to come, there can be no guarantee of this; it is desirable therefore that there should be an appreciable increase in donations from Churches and individuals to reduce the dependence on loans. The Committee looks to Provincial Synods and District Councils to take positive steps to encourage regular giving commensurate with the increases in property prices over the past two years.

38. The arrangement for the oversight of properties has continued throughout the year and the Committee is grateful to those who freely give their time and expertise to this work. There is, however, a need for more members of local Churches to assist the Society and its tenants in this way to ensure the adequate maintenance of retirement properties. During the year the Principal Officers of the Society made visits to 10 applicants, 51 tenants and 13 properties.

WELFARE & EMERGENCIES COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Michael Whitehorn

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

39. The Committee is again pleased to report that it has been able to help with most of the requests received, chiefly through Provincial Moderators but occasionally from individuals, during the past year. It is a privilege to give some financial help largely to ministers and ministers' widows in their times of need through the resources entrusted to the Church by wise provision in the past and continuing investment. While these grants are normally made to individuals, we have been glad to assist in providing a Benevolent Fund in connection with the Revd Martin Hazell's special ministry to those suffering from AIDS. We have also been made aware of a special fund to help ministers and their spouses who wish to visit Israel. Application, as for other funds can best be made through Provincial Moderators.

40. At the end of the Convener's spell of service he would like to thank all those who have shared in the Committee's work, and especially to the Officers for their careful attention to individual correspondence and to the administration of the funds available; and the Provincial Moderators for their co-operation in seeing that as far as possible the Church provides for its ministers and their families in special need.

APPENDIX 1

Contributions to Maintenance of the Ministry and Unified Appeal 1987

Membership 1.1.87	Province	Maintenance of the Ministry		Unified Appeal	
		£	£ per Member	£	£ per Member
11,125	Northern	495,000	44	100,423	9
14,080	North Western	600,000	43	140,279	10
9,041	Mersey	437,000	48	77,847	9
8,734	Yorkshire	438,000	50	100,525	12
7,959	East Midlands	366,000	46	86,001	11
10,614	West Midlands	500,000	47	111,685	11
9,671	Eastern	485,000	50	111,855	12
8,117	South Western	407,000	50	96,088	12
12,396	Wessex	593,000	48	136,552	11

12,191	Thames North	739,000	61	172,002	14
18,171	Southern	935,000	51	220,535	12
7,044	Wales	290,785	41	43,052	6
Total from Provinces		6,285,785	48	1,396,844	11
Other receipts		-		2,286	
				1,399,130	
Amount required by Budget		6,278,000		1,428,000	
Surplus/(Shortfall)		£7,785		(£28,870)	

APPENDIX 2

Ministers holding Assembly Appointments Stipends and Conditions of Service from July 1987

Provincial Moderators

1. The stipend of Provincial Moderators is £8,148 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)

2. Stipends range from £8,124 per annum for Assistant Secretaries to £11,988 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

3. 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

4. Stipends range from £8,148 to £8,916 per annum (plus any children's allowances). The housing provisions are the same as those for Provincial Moderators.

APPENDIX 3

Report on the Financing of the Maintenance and Repair of Retirement Housing

1. The 1987 Assembly passed the following Resolution:-

"The Assembly asks the Retired Ministers Housing Committee to look into other means of financing the maintenance and repair of houses than by the imposition of rents."

Present Position

2. The present arrangement is that the costs of maintenance and repair both major and minor are met from the Property Management Account, which has the benefit of an assured income in the form of rents paid by the tenants. This account provides also for the expenditure on house insurance and those administrative costs charged directly to the Housing Society, at present about £5,000 a year. In the case of properties jointly owned with a tenant or a Province, the cost of maintenance and repair is shared in the proportion by which the property is held. Joint purchasers have a particular interest in the adequate maintenance and repair of their property to ensure that on its sale the full market value of a well maintained property is realised.

3. More than routine maintenance and repair is involved: during the past five years extensive repairs have been carried out including re-roofing, replacing windows, relaying driveways, damp proofing and dealing with problems in timbers with wood boring insects and rot.

4. The present arrangement ensures that as the number of properties to be maintained increases so does the income.

5. The Committee is assured from the ongoing contacts with the tenants that the great majority are well satisfied with both the level of rent and with the efforts made to ensure that their properties are adequately maintained and repaired.

Assumption

6. The Committee has assumed:

- a) that the intention of the resolution is to relieve tenants of the payment of rent and thus to seek alternative means of financing all expenditure at present charged to the Property Management Account on insurance and administration as well as maintenance and repair; and
- b) that Assembly accepts the continuation of the present policy of ensuring the proper and adequate maintenance of retirement properties at all times.

Consideration

7. In considering this matter the Committee has been conscious that only a proportion of retired ministers and widows are housed under Assembly's scheme and that, in equity, any additional money which could be made available should be used

in a way which would benefit also those who own their own homes or are in other rented accommodation. One example, which the Committee had in mind, was an improvement in the Pension Scheme benefiting all pensioners.

8. The Committee has, nevertheless, examined possible means of meeting the costs at present met out of rental income:-

- a) The provision by a generous benefactor of a capital sum which would provide an adequate income to meet the annual costs.

No such benefactor is in sight and even if one were such an arrangement would ensure an adequate income only in the short term, bearing in mind variations in interest rates, the possible increase in the number of properties and normal escalation of maintenance, repair, insurance and administrative costs. It was concluded that such a solution was both unrealistic and impractical.

- b) An additional charge on Churches based on membership. Since the URC has agreed to fund central expenditure from the Unified Appeal, and since it has proved not possible to increase the Unified Appeal sufficiently to meet the current demands of the work of the Church, the Committee does not consider that it is practical to depend on that source for the assured income needed for adequate maintenance and repair.

9. The Committee concluded that the present method is the most equitable and practical that is available and can be foreseen, and so advises the Assembly.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the report of the Finance and Administration Department for debate.
2. Assembly adopts the Accounts for 1987.
3. Assembly approves the Budget of the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund for 1989 noting that it allows for an increase of 6% in basic stipend from 1 July 1989.
4. Assembly approves the amendment of rule 17 of the rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund by the deletion of all wording after "shall be" in line 20 and the substitution of "calculated and fixed at the time of retirement in the light of the financial experience of the fund during the time when contributions were made but shall not be less than those provided under a table certified by the actuary which may be revised from time to time".

Note - the wording to be deleted is "in accordance with a table prepared by the Actuary and revised from time to time".

If this resolution is passed, rule 17 will read:

17. *Additional Contributions*

A contributing member of the Congregational Fund who, at the amalgamation

date, was paying under the option provided under that Fund an additional voluntary contribution may continue to do so until the normal pension age. With effect from 1 June 1982 any other contributing member may similarly pay an additional voluntary contribution until the normal pension age. Provided always that the total contribution of the member to the Fund in any year shall not, with any contributions made by him in that year to any other retirement benefit scheme, exceed fifteen per cent of his total annual remuneration in that year; and provided further, that the member's additional contribution must not be such that the total amount of pension secured under the Fund (together with the pension under any other retirement benefit scheme) shall exceed two-thirds of such member's final remuneration. The benefits secured by such additional voluntary contributions shall be calculated and fixed at the time of retirement in the light of the financial experience of the fund during the time when contributions were made but shall not be less than those provided under a table certified by the actuary which may be revised from time to time.

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Alasdair J G Walker

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

1. The Committee has met a number of times during the year. At the first meeting in July, the Committee welcomed the Revd Alasdair Walker as Convener, and at that meeting, gave consideration to proposals that the office should be equipped with word-processing computers. A long careful debate ensued and approval was given to a programme that would, over the years, involve capital expenditure in the order of £60,000, and an annual depreciation charge of one quarter of that figure, against which may be set certain savings.

2. At the meeting in October the Committee gave provisional approval to the inclusion of a number of items in the budget for 1989. These included the additional cost to the central funds of a residential Assembly, proposed for 1989, and training Church Related Community Workers and provision for Ecumenical Assemblies expected to take place within the next few years. The total costs were placed before the Central Committee of the Finance Department, who were asked to provide £1,615,000 to meet this programme.

3. In the event, bearing in mind the falling numbers of members and the level of inflation of retail prices, the Central Committee of the Finance and Administration Department were able only to give a commitment to £1,555,000. The Provincial Treasurers, to whom the ultimate question is put with regard to the finance of the Unified Appeal, agreed to provide £1,565,000, and after further examination of the estimates, the Budget Committee are able to present a budget showing total costs of £1,574,000.

4. In view of the size of the provision offered on behalf of the Church, investigation involving much detailed work within the Departments, who examined the Departmental Budgets line by line, was undertaken with a view to reducing costs to equate with income promised. The Committee are now convinced that any further reduction in expenditure will inevitably lead to substantial cuts in the amount of work done. Already Committee costs have been cut to a level where it is improbable that the same pattern of Committee representation as the Church has enjoyed in the past will be possible in the future.

5. During the year, the Central Funding and Advocacy Group was set up. The Committee is represented on this Group and has watched the development of the Report which will be made by the Group to the Assembly. The Budget Committee trust that the advocacy suggested by the Group will lead to the improvement of the support given to the central budget of the Church.

6. The projected Budget deficit is within budgeting tolerances and the Committee, therefore, recommend the budget to the Assembly for adoption.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives the Report of the Budget Committee.
2. Assembly approves the Budget for 1989 which provides for an expenditure of £1,772,000.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPLIES COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Netherwood
Secretary: Mrs Carol Rogers

PUBLICATIONS

Reform

1. Worshippers in some 1,400 churches read *Reform* - a unique link between the individuals who make up the URC. They use its columns to debate the crucial issues for our generation, from AIDS to the Education Bill, housing to hymns. Churches use it as a resource for discussion and prayer and a guide to new books and video tapes. It aims to show the human face of the URC, to air discussion about the way it works and to give a readable view of other churches and other lands.
2. Two 36 page issues in 1987 enlarged its range of topics - suggestions from readers are taken very seriously.
3. There has been no increase in the cover price of *Reform*, despite small increases in paper and postage costs. The number of subscribers remains steady.
4. During 1987 the advertising agreement with MHG Media was ended and a new agreement was entered into with Everest Media.
5. Cyril Lowden has undertaken the promotion of *Reform* and this will receive a higher profile in 1988.
6. Additional copies of the June 1988 edition will be printed and will contain full coverage of Assembly issues. Churches are urged to use this issue for promotional purposes. Extra copies may be ordered from the *Reform* stand.

URC Annual Book

7. *Come Wind Come Weather - Bunyan's Pilgrim in Today's World* by John H Taylor was published in October 1987. The book has been favourably received and is selling steadily. This title is the first to be published jointly with the Baptist Union and the venture has proved successful.
8. Plans for the next URC Annual Book are in hand, while the previous titles *Our Father's House* has now sold out and *Communicate or Die* and *For Everthing a Season* continue to sell.

Year Book

9. The whole of the *Year Book* is now on computer. A laser printer has been purchased and will hopefully make the checking of proofs much easier in future. Early notice of additions and amendments would be welcomed by the Editors. It is intended that the price of the 1988/89 *Year Book* will not be increased.

Assembly Publications

10. For the first time the *Reports to Assembly* have been partially produced in-

house. New word processing equipment and a laser jet printer has made it possible to produce work ready for paste-up by the printer. This reduces the necessity for constant proof reading and each department has been fully responsible for producing its own report. It is hoped that this technology will eventually be fully used in the production of most URC materials.

Information Service

11. The Information Service continues to be sent out to all church secretaries and to individual subscribers. A willing army of volunteers pack and despatch the material three times each year. The introduction of the *Info Sheet* has provided a popular innovation. This regular mailing ensures that URC members and ministers are among the best informed of any denomination.

Communications Leaflets

12. A new communications leaflet *How to use the Information Service* was published in 1987. The other leaflets in the series are to be revised and updated.

URC Hymnbook and Book of Services

13. The Secretary is assisting the Hymnbook Editorial Committee and the Doctrine and Worship Committee in negotiating with the publishers of these books.

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLIES

14. David Gossington has succeeded Cyril Lowden as Manager of Distribution and Supplies.

Assembly Bookstall

15. The Assembly bookstall will again carry a large selection of URC and other material.

16. It is hoped that John H Taylor, Bernard Thorogood and Colin Evans will sign copies of their books during the Assembly. Please see *Assembly Information* for details of dates and times.

17. Churches are reminded that bookstalls can be provided for special events, providing sufficient notice is given.

18. Links have been strengthened with Synod bookstalls and a wide range of material is supplied.

Bookshop and Mail Order

19. Computerisation of invoicing and stock control will lead to greater efficiency and accurate advice to all departments on stock levels.

20. The book stock has been expanded to carry items from college booklists, and a special purchasing scheme is available to all ministerial students on request.

21. The mail order operation has been speeded up and is continuing to keep pace with orders. However, at the peak time in the autumn, with the despatch of *Diaries*,

Year Books, Prayer Handbooks, as well as the usual seasonal increase in demand for materials suitable for winter programmes, some delays are inevitable, and for items needed for specific dates, early ordering is appreciated. During the period of September to December, over 10,000 orders were despatched.

PRESS/PR

22. Brian Cooper continues to act on behalf of the URC. The press list has been expanded. Coverage in the religious press has been considerable during the past twelve months. A *basic information pack* about the URC was sent to the media at the beginning of the year giving details of issues on the agenda of each department.

ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

AFCC (Association for Christian Communication)

23. The Secretary has represented the URC at meetings of the AFCC. There has been a change of direction in the work of AFCC with the cutting back of the UK Communications Programme while continuing to promote their work overseas through Feed the Minds and Eurolit.

CACLB (Churches' Advisory Committee for Local Broadcasting)

24. The Secretary is a member of CACLB and represents the URC. CACLB is seeking extra funding in order to appoint a full time officer in order to extend its work beyond local radio broadcasting into cable, satellite and video. With the deregularisation of broadcasting there is need for the churches to have a credible voice in this area.

Electronic Viewdata

25. For an experimental period, the Communication and Supplies Committee has asked John Rawnsley to act on behalf of the URC in regard to Prestel and the Churches' Teletext Project with regard to Ceefax and Oracle. Items submitted by the URC have appeared during the past twelve months including details of the publication of *Come Wind Come Weather*.

VIDEO

26. The video library has been expanded and the number of loans has increased dramatically. Reviews of videos available in *Reform* and the inclusion of the video list in the catalogue have drawn attention to the materials available. A list of titles with a brief description of each will be sent on request.

EXHIBITIONS

Christian Resources Exhibition

27. The URC was represented at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park, Esher, by Southern and Wessex Provinces in 1987. For 1988 these Provinces, together with Thames North and the Community of Reconciliation, are again planning a stand. Although the URC was not represented at the Christian Resources Exhibition in Glasgow, a wide range of materials was shown at the Congregational Union of Scotland Assembly at St Andrews, and was enthusiastically received.

Local Exhibitions and Events

28. Churches are reminded that the URC display material is available for loan to churches on a strictly *first come, first served* basis.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly receives this report for debate.
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CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Convener: Dr Mary Ede

Secretary: The Revd John Reardon

Caring Communities

1. All people are called into a special relationship with God. It is God's intention that all people should reflect the spirit of that relationship, described in the Old and New Testaments as a Covenant, by living in caring communities in which the rights of all are secured and protected and in which all have duties and responsibilities towards others.

2. It is against such an understanding of human society that Christians in Britain have worked over centuries to improve community life and, in particular, have supported the development in this century of welfare services to which all might contribute and from which all might benefit.

Welfare Alert

3. At last year's General Assembly the Department drew attention to the main spheres of public life usually described together as the Welfare State. In the spheres of social security, health, housing, social services and education far-reaching changes are taking place. Churches were invited to study the changes and the Department produced a study leaflet outlining the origins of the welfare services.

4. In a time of change Christians ask of existing welfare services, and of proposals for change, whether they strengthen the sense of belonging within society or whether they reinforce division and inequality. The Department offers the following questions to help Christians to assess welfare services and proposals for change.

Questions about any welfare provision or change

- 5.1 Does it help people to develop their full potential and allow them to live with dignity?
- 5.2 Does it improve the quality of people's lives and offer a range of fair choices within their means?
- 5.3 Does it enable the poorest and disadvantaged to benefit?
- 5.4 Is it merely a short-term remedy or does it address problems in the context of longer term improvements?
- 5.5 When a proposal is made:
 - a) has there been adequate consultation with those most affected?
 - b) is there general support for it?
 - c) are there adequate plans for informing those who could benefit?
 - d) is there a proper complaints and appeals procedure?

- 5.6 Are welfare services administered in such a way that those who use them feel that they are *their* services?
- 5.7 Are the service providers given the feeling that they are valued through the training, support and resources available to them?
- 5.8 Does the service recognise and attempt a proper critical balance between competing needs and provisions when resources are limited?
- 5.9 How do the choices and decisions made by one group of people affect the choices to be made by others?
- 5.10 How is the service integrated with other related services and how does it fit into the wider pattern of national and local provision?

Education

6. Education has been an issue of major concern for all the Churches in Britain during the past year. In July the Secretary of State for Education issued a series of consultation documents asking for responses during September, thus giving at most two months over the school holiday period for consideration of huge changes in public education. Most of those who responded from the Churches deplored the inadequacy of the timing and duration of the consultation period, many contrasting it with the three years of consultation leading up to the 1944 Education Act.

7. The most disturbing features of the Education Reform Bill are those concerning the curriculum and the proposals for grant-maintained schools relating directly to the Secretary of State and no longer integrally controlled by Local Education Authorities. The proposed National Curriculum over-emphasises foundation subjects and seems to take little account of the importance for pupil development of cross-curricular themes. The Bill speaks of a balanced and broadly based curriculum to promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. It is astonishing then to find that religious education is completely omitted from the core and foundation subjects proposed in the Bill. This omission will reinforce the poor position of RE in the schools and the serious under-resourcing of the subject. Exploration of the spiritual and moral aspects of human experience is vitally important if the curriculum is to express adequately the inherited values and the multicultural nature of contemporary society.

8. In the consultation documents many of the proposed changes were based on the assertion that parents are demanding more power over their children's education. The clauses in the Bill relating to choice of school and the opportunity to opt out of Local Authority control are based on this assertion. The proposals on admissions to schools have within them the potential for social and even racial divisiveness with privileged and articulate parents securing their choices, leaving under-subscribed schools in deprived areas to decline even further without the present benefit of rational control and management of admissions by Local Authorities. The proposal to establish grant-maintained schools by parents voting to opt out of Local Authority control will be a serious blow to the present dual system which has served the country well since it was established in 1944. The parents of one generation of pupils will be able to take their schools out of the control of Local Authorities and will thus bind future generations by their decision.

9. The Bill proposes to alter the present balance of partnership between local and national government in the direction of more centralised power with the Secretary of State controlling the school curriculum, undermining local management of school rolls and providing for a new class of schools directly controlled by his office. These measures strike at the heart of community decision making. It was for all these reasons that the Free Church Federal Council, the Church of England Board of Education, the Roman Catholic Education Committee and the British Council of Churches Assembly urged the Government to rethink its proposals.

Housing

10. Local Authorities have provided homes to rent since Exchequer subsidy began in 1919. The 1988 Housing Bill aims to transform the rented housing market by diminishing the stock of Local Authority housing and stimulating private investment. Local Authorities nevertheless will be expected to act as enablers to ensure that everyone in their area is adequately housed. Housing Associations and many Local Authorities of all political persuasions feel handicapped and deeply concerned about their future ability to provide what is becoming termed as the social housing sector. The Bill is not aimed at those in greatest housing need and the question as to who will house the homeless remains unanswered.

Social Security

11. The 1986 Social Security Act came into force in April this year. The most controversial section is the Social Fund which even the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee has described as unfair, unworkable and likely to cause hardship to claimants. The degree and urgency of need are irrelevant once the local monthly budget has been allocated. Most claims will be met by loans which by their very nature will compound problems by pushing people below the poverty line. The discretionary nature of the Fund is causing disquiet within the caring professions and voluntary organisations, not only for the effect it will have on claimants but also for the impact it will have on their own work of assessing and responding to need.

The Community Charge

12. The Government has embarked on a process of change which will replace the local domestic rating system with a community charge levied equally on all persons from the age of eighteen. The process is much further advanced in Scotland than in England and Wales. Churches have naturally begun to concern themselves about the effects on their own budgets and on their ministers and other employees. There are, however, broader issues to consider. While there are few voices raised in defence of the present rating system, which has been in need of reform for a long time, the community charge will not be based on the ability to pay and will thus introduce an injustice into the taxation system. It seems likely that those living in inner city areas will have to pay a much higher community charge than the rest of the population thus adding a serious extra burden to those already living in places of deprivation and stress.

Racism

13. One of the most serious threats to community cohesion is the persistence of racism. Last year's General Assembly adopted a Declaration on Racism and commended it for study and action throughout the Church. The Department welcomes the survey

conducted in the churches in the Greater London area by the Urban Churches Support Group of the Thames North and Southern Provinces. It reveals how many black members there are and what proportion of them are serving as elders but it also reveals how few black people are representing their churches in the wider Councils of the Church. There is still an urgency about the need for all churches to study and act upon the Declaration not only in multi-racial areas but throughout the country. The attitudes and assumptions which reinforce the racism of our society are often more evident in all-white areas.

14. The British Council of Churches, in cooperation with the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches, organised a consultation on Challenging Racism at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, Herts in the autumn. The All Saints Declaration which was agreed at the end of the consultation begins with a series of statements about racism very similar to the URC's own Declaration. It then outlines some ways in which churches might challenge racism in various sectors of public life and might support those who are oppressed by racism. In particular it urges churches to increase financial support for the Programme to Combat Racism of the WCC and the Projects Fund of the Community and Race Relations Unit of the BCC. This matter of financial support is a special challenge to the URC and the Department is considering how such support could be encouraged.

South Africa

15. The situation in South Africa and Namibia has not improved in the past year. Not only does the South African Government continue to oppress its own black citizens and to occupy illegally the territory of Namibia, it also continues its sorties into neighbouring countries in military raids. In the climate of fear and suspicion which it creates the rivalries and differences of opinion within the black community are encouraged and exacerbated. Frustrated by their lack of progress in the struggle against injustice they have sometimes turned against each other. The state censorship of all news from South Africa means that the world outside is allowed to hear about violence among the black community while the injustices against black people by the apartheid system continue largely unreported.

16. In May last year an important conference of church leaders, including several from Britain, gathered in Lusaka to meet with exiled representatives of the liberation movements. As a result of that meeting the WCC plan to send a delegation of Eminent Church Persons on a mission to the United States, the United Kingdom, West Germany, Japan, the European Community Secretariat in Brussels, the permanent member states of the UN Security Council and the Contact Group nations on Namibia in the autumn this year to underline the urgency of the plight of the Namibian people, to call for comprehensive sanctions against South Africa and to encourage solidarity with the struggling peoples of Namibia and South Africa. At the meeting those church leaders present from Western Europe called, among other things, for acceptance of the liberation movements as representatives of the people of Southern Africa who yearn for a just peace which would end the violence they abhor.

Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

17. The WCC at its Assembly in Vancouver in 1983 agreed to engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of all creation. Since then the Roman Catholic Church has agreed to participate in the process and, in particular, to co-sponsor with the Conference of European Churches a Convocation on Peace with Justice in Basle in May 1989. All

Churches are urged to contribute to the process by working on the theme and by re-examining their life and witness in the light of a vision of society and the world in which human dignity and rights will be affirmed, in which wars and the threats of war will no longer exist and in which there will be an attitude of caring for God's creation. To strive for such a vision and to pray and work for this realisation would be to say together, *Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

18. The Department supported a training course at the Windermere Centre last September to which most of the Provinces sent representatives, and it has now appointed an advisory group, partly drawn from these representatives, to encourage churches to involve themselves in the process.

World Poverty

19. The continuing poverty of so many in the human family is arguably the most urgent aspect of the WCC's focus on the theme of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. The reappearance of famine in Ethiopia captured the interest of the media during the winter months thus stimulating another spate of imaginative fund-raising efforts. The high profile hunger portrayed on television is only the visible tip of a terrible hunger that afflicts millions throughout the world. One example is the chronic condition of the children of the island of Negros in the Philippines. Because of the collapse of the world sugar prices, partly due to heavily subsidised sugar surpluses from Europe being dumped on the world market, and because of the unjust system of land tenure in the Philippines, malnutrition now afflicts 80% of the children in Negros. Only the establishment of justice within and among the nations will restore hope to communities like that of Negros now struggling for survival.

20. Emphasis on charitable giving is well-meaning enough but Christians are called to a more comprehensive and urgent response to the vision of justice. The URC's World Development 1% Appeal continues to offer a combination of planned and consistent support for poor communities overseas, of political action in Britain and Europe to change priorities and of public education to help people to understand the causes and the solutions of world poverty. Last year £284,465 was raised to support the work of Christian Aid, the World Development Movement, One World Week and other programmes of education.

To Strengthen the Poor

21. The Department works very closely with Christian Aid in its concern for the world's poor communities and, therefore, welcomes and commends the Statement of Commitment adopted by the Christian Aid Board in July 1987, *To Strengthen the Poor*. The full Statement is available from the Department and contains the following Summary of Commitment:

In penitence and hope we commit ourselves
to strengthen the poor against injustice.

The majority of the world's people have scarcely enough
to keep them alive. They have little or no say
in what happens to them. Unlike the strong they cannot protect
or further their own interests.

We cannot be content to alleviate their suffering.
It must be brought to an end.
The world, we believe, is likely to be a fairer place where
strength is not left to take advantage of weakness
but is balanced by strength.

We must act strategically to strengthen the arm of the poor
until they can stand up to those who so often
act against them, and have the power to determine
their own development under God.

This strategy for justice is not ours.
We can only pursue it in partnership with the poor
and all who stand by them. We commit ourselves to partnerships
of mutual sharing and accountability which try to achieve
in themselves the justice they seek everywhere.

As partners we will welcome diversity and make room
for disagreement. Differences of opinion will provide
opportunities for listening and plain speaking,
not occasions for parting company. Where however there is no
commitment to strengthen the poor
the future of any partnership must be called into question.

We believe this commitment, above all to a strategy for justice,
is required of us by our Christian faith,
which also requires us to look beyond a world that is fair
to a Kingdom that is more than fair;
beyond the power of the strong to strength made perfect
in weakness; beyond justice to forgiveness and reconciliation.

Central America

22. In the search for peace in the world the region of Central America poses urgent problems. The five states of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica agreed a peace plan in August 1987 to work towards stability, justice and freedom for the whole region. Since 1983 all previous initiatives had foundered as a result of the United States administration's determination to remove the Sandinista government from power in Nicaragua. To give the peace plan a chance to succeed the Department, with other churches and individuals in Britain and throughout the world, wrote to members of the US Congress in January urging them to vote against President Reagan's plan for a package of further aid to the Contras in Nicaragua.

23. In October the Department circulated to all churches a leaflet on Central America urging them to pray for the people of the region, and to find ways of stimulating informed concern about the issues of the region. A study pack, *Central America: Cause for Christian Concern*, has now been published by the BCC, price £2.00.

Environment

24. In April 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway, published its report *Our*

Common Future. The link between environmental degradation and world poverty outlined in that report and the new emphasis in the WCC on the Integrity of Creation combined to show up the neglect of these issues in the British churches. One World Week this year, from 23rd - 30th October, has as its theme *Making Peace with the Planet.* It will enable Christians to share with others in the community the Biblical roots of concern for God's creation and to identify ways in which the destruction of the environment can be challenged and reversed. The Department hopes that every local church will take part in One World Week to give focus to the urgency of the environmental issues confronting the world today.

Aids

25. The agreement of the General Assembly last year to the appointment of a National Adviser on AIDS meant that the Revd Martin Hazell was able to begin that ministry in July 1987, with a commissioning service arranged during the autumn. The Department has appointed a Support Group to work with Martin Hazell and has raised some money from Trusts to support the educational and training programme which is being developed within the URC and other denominations. Further funds are being sought to sustain that programme and to support the important contribution that Martin Hazell is able to make to the churches in Britain as they face up to the challenge of AIDS. To learn from the way other countries are working on the AIDS problem he has already visited the United States at the invitation of the Episcopal Church and plans are now being made for a visit to Africa. The Department is beginning to realise how AIDS is going to be a factor in many social and international problems in the years to come and it is, therefore, crucial that Christians understand more about it before taking up fixed positions. One particularly worrying development is the way people with AIDS are being physically attacked and discriminated against.

Conclusion

26. As always the Department has worked with a range of other Churches and agencies on matters of social and international concern. It has supported the campaign Keep Alcohol Safeguards, opposed the proposals in the Immigration Bill and protested about various human rights violations. It has made small grants to a range of organisations with which it has contact and, in particular, it welcomed the establishment of Church Action on Disability. As in previous years the Department has worked closely with Church Action on Poverty, the Churches Council on Alcohol and Drugs, and the corresponding Departments in other denominations, particularly through the BCC. Department staff time has been given generously to this ecumenical cooperation.

RESOLUTIONS

1. The Assembly receives the report of the Church and Society Department for debate.
2. The Assembly encourages churches to study proposals for change in the main spheres of the Welfare State (social security, health, housing, social services and education) using the questions contained in the report; and to engage in public debate and appropriate action to safeguard and improve community services wherever they are threatened.

3. The Assembly urges Her Majesty's Government to re-affirm its commitment to religious education in schools by including it among the foundation subjects in the National Curriculum.
 4. The Assembly welcomes the summary of the Statement of Commitment adopted by the Christian Aid Board and encourages churches to study the full Statement, *To Strengthen the Poor*.
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PROVINCIAL MODERATORS' REPORT

What hope for the URC?

1. *Are you disillusioned or optimistic about the future?* This was one of several questions put to the Provincial Moderators individually and confidentially as part of a review of ministry in the URC just over a year ago. At one of our monthly meetings we had the opportunity to meet the person who compiled the report; he told us that our unanimous response had been a clear one of optimism and hopefulness!

2. This does not mean for a moment that the Moderators are a group of starry-eyed optimists. While the sound of laughter rings regularly from the room where we hold our monthly meetings at Church House, and our proceedings are regularly enlightened by the comedians amongst us, we are only too well aware of some of the problems which face many of our ministers and congregations. We know only too well that some ministers are meeting with frustration and discouragement as they attempt to provide adequate leadership for groups of small congregations, and that some congregations find that buildings which have outlived their usefulness drain their enthusiasm and energy and prevent them carrying out the service they long to give to their community. We know also that there are congregations who refuse to move with the times, who put the traditions of the past before the challenges of the present, and who are more anxious to preserve their buildings than they are to proclaim the Gospel. We are only too well aware of the divisions which sometimes appear in congregations, of the bitterness which destroys relationships and renders mission impossible, of the fraught situations into which we are sometimes called, which make us wonder if we are expected to be the URC's conciliation service, a sanctified form of ACAS. We are aware of all this but we are not disillusioned, we do not despair of the future of the URC.

3. Why is this so? It is perhaps because from the vantage points we are privileged to enjoy in moving around the Provinces, we see not only difficulties and problems and frustrations, but also signs of the Kingdom which fill us with hope, encouragement and thanksgiving to God. We find hope in the calibre of the people we are privileged to meet at Enquirers' Conferences and Assessment Conferences and in the vision and dynamism of many of our young people. We see congregations, both large and small, which have been brought back to life by a readiness to experiment with new forms of worship, by the re-discovery of the ministry of healing, by housegroups which have transformed the fellowship of the congregation and deepened beyond measure its spiritual life, not least by the willingness to take seriously the primary Christian responsibility of mission and service and outreach. We see in the vision and commitment of ministers and elders, and in the loyal support of members, real signs of the Spirit at work in the church.

4. What then are the key factors to the hope and encouragement we all experience? How can these be developed so that the URC may become the instrument of the Kingdom of God which it has in it to be?

Elders and their potential

5. The first is the Eldership which has been described as *the most neglected ministry in the URC*. Here there is a resource of spiritual leadership, unique to the URC, provided its potential is not dissipated through over-occupation with matters relating to finance and property. Sadly, we are aware that this is what

happens in some congregations where elders are obliged to spend so much of their time deciding what colour the kitchen should be painted, or organising the Christmas Fayre, that they are unable to give their attention to the care of the children of the church, or plans for outreach, or major social and moral problems. Stewardship of finance and property is important in the mission of the church, but where elders are so busy keeping the church going that they have no time to see where it is going, there is little that a congregation is likely to achieve in the purposes of God. On the other hand, where elders refuse to allow themselves to become bogged down by finance and property, and give due priority to major concerns such as mission, Christian education and church unity, there is no saying what God may make of a congregation, and achieve through it.

6. The leadership potential of elders is enormous. The life of a congregation is transformed when the elders see that their responsibility is not just to ensure that the age-old wheels of the machinery of the church are kept running smoothly. Their task also is to give direction and leadership to the life and mission of the congregation, to re-assess its patterns and its priorities, to suggest new initiatives and to engage in constructive planning for the future. This is something which cannot be left to the minister and church secretary. It is a responsibility which the elders share together as a leadership team. For this to happen elders must be people of vision and enthusiasm, their eyes open to the vast purposes of God and the great things which God can do through them, their hearts alert to the prompting of the Spirit leading them in ever new ways.

7. There are also tremendous resources in the pastoral role of the elder, and where these resources are being tapped we see the life and fellowship of congregations enriched beyond measure. Elders have a unique part to play in partnership with the minister in the pastoral care of the congregation. They more than anyone make real to people the fellowship and care of the church, as they share with them their joys and sorrows, and encourage their growth and nurture as Christians. This role is becoming increasingly important as more ministers are involved in joint pastorates, and find increasing demands being made on them, and it is essential that ministers should be able to look to their elders to share this key responsibility.

8. If elders are to share in these ways in the spiritual leadership of the church, two considerations are of crucial importance. Congregations need to give the most careful and prayerful thought to the whole question of the election of elders. Consideration must be given to the nature of the work for which people are to be appointed, and the qualities which are necessary for such responsibilities. Election to the eldership is not to be regarded as a long service award, or a mark of someone's popularity. It is the acknowledgement of a congregation's confidence in a person's ability to give spiritual leadership. We rejoice in the fact that many congregations are realizing that such leadership can be given by younger people. Whatever their age, it is essential to find the right people to serve as elders. There are times when it might be better to carry one or two vacancies rather than appoint people who are not ready for such an office simply to make up the numbers.

9. Equally important is the training which should be given to elders. No-one should ever be asked to serve as an elder without being made fully aware of what is expected of him or her, and without being given some basic preparation for the duties and responsibilities to be undertaken. Likewise, there ought to be repeated opportunities for in-service training, as elders are enabled to acquire new skills,

and receive new insights and vision for their work. We very much welcome the lead which has been given by the Faith and Life Department in the field of eldership training. Where that lead has been followed in the Districts we can already discern that the quality of the leadership of elders has been considerably enhanced.

Ministers and their support

10. We also see very real signs of hope in the quality of the leadership given by so many ministers. To be a minister in pastoral charge these days is one of the toughest and most demanding jobs there is. The changing patterns of church life in local ecumenical projects and joint pastorates, the widely differing expectations of congregations, even the radically different position of ministers' spouses and families, these are all factors which exert new and complex pressures, and demand a great degree of flexibility in patterns of ministry. We are heartened by the way so many ministers are rising to meet these challenges. We are encouraged by their vision and commitment, by their persistence in discouraging situations, by their readiness to adapt to meet new situations, by the enthusiasm with which they are leading their congregations in projects such as *Growth For Their Sake*. We gladly pay tribute to the dedication of ministers who give themselves unstintingly in pastoral care, and in preparation not just for preaching but equally for the content of services, in ways their congregations are not always aware of. We are also encouraged by the quality of so many of the more recently ordained ministers, and all that they are bringing to the church in terms of vision and eagerness and inspiration. If these gifts and energies can be harnessed by the church, there is hope indeed for the future.

11. But sometimes we ask ourselves, is the church worthy of its ministers and the commitment and dedication which so many bring to their work? We hear too often of ministers who apply themselves so diligently to preparation for worship, to enterprising schemes of renewing the life of the church, or extending its mission, and the only response they receive is criticism when things go wrong. Seldom do they hear that word of appreciation or encouragement which would give them new heart, and bring out the best in them. We see the vision of younger ministers dampened by the refusal of congregations to change their long established ways, greeting every new venture with the cry *but we have always done it this way*. We see single ministers too often left unsupported, with no-one to share their hopes or their frustrations, or even to understand their loneliness.

12. The awareness of major problems of this nature makes us welcome only the more the report on *Stress in the Ministry*, and the insights which it gives to the church in understanding and caring for ministers. We find immense encouragement in the way this report has been taken up by some congregations and ministers, and not least in the support structures which have been established by some Districts and congregations. If ministers on the one hand can be helped to acknowledge their need for support, and congregations can be encouraged to provide it, there is very real hope that the resources of the ministry possessed by the URC will not be wasted by stress.

The Church of the Living God

13. The other way in which we see hope for the URC is our awareness of a new realization in many congregations of what it means to be the church of the living God, and a new eagerness of people to make more fully their own the resources of the Gospel. This is something which we encounter repeatedly on our travels round the

church, and it is a major source of hope for the future.

14. There is a very real spirit of renewal abroad in the URC to be found in congregations of different theological outlook and churchmanship. There are signs of a new eagerness to discover what the Bible has to say concerning the experiences and demands and conflicting values of the 20th century. There is a new determination to plumb the deeper depths of prayer, and fathom all that spirituality means.

15. At the same time we see congregations illumined by a new vision of what it means to be part of Christ's church and the boundless possibilities of what Christ might achieve through them. This has come about only as they have asked themselves searching questions as to what is the purpose of their existence, what their priorities ought to be, and where Christ is leading them as they prepare to move forward into the 21st century. For some this has meant assessing the needs of the community and rethinking their patterns of church life and adapting their buildings. For some it has involved the pain that change can involve in becoming a neighbourhood church instead of a gathered congregation. For some it has come about through union with neighbouring churches in schemes which, despite the tensions which may have been involved, provide the most striking examples of what can be achieved by a sharing of resources of buildings and personnel. When congregations have been prepared to take risks in responding to a new vision, in so many cases they have found new relevance in worship, new effectiveness in mission and outreach, and new experiences of Christian fellowship.

A foretaste of things to come

16. There may be problems and difficulties and frustrations, and we are as much aware of them as anyone can be, but there are also signs that these are exciting days in which to belong to Christ's church. There are very real signs of hope of what the URC can become and achieve, in new obedience to Christ, and an ever deepening experience of the Holy Spirit. As we move around the Provinces and see the Spirit at work, we find new meaning in Paul's assertion that *God has given us the Holy Spirit as the guarantee, the foretaste, of all that he has in store for us.*

17. Finally, on a more domestic note, we record the changes which have taken place in our number during the last year. We said farewell to four of our colleagues who have served the church faithfully in this office for so many years. Howard Williams and John Williamson were appointed when the URC came into being, and Alasdair Walker and Cyril Franks have each given two terms of faithful service. While we have missed their collective wisdom and experience, we have been glad to welcome in their place four new colleagues: Eric Allen, David Helyar, Donald Hilton and David Jenkins. Now they have become adjusted to the *culture shock* of their change of role, we are all being enriched by the widely varying gifts they bring to the task we share in the service of Christ and his church. Through all these changes we acknowledge the unchanging support and counsel of our other friend and colleague, General Secretary Bernard Thorogood. Bernard is always with us for part of our monthly meetings. We never fail to benefit from his wisdom and we appreciate particularly the way, through all his own personal troubles in the last year, he has always been so ready to share our problems, and those of so many throughout the church.

WORLD CHURCH AND MISSION DEPARTMENT

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow

Secretary: The Revd Donald Elliott

1. "We now declare together our readiness to commit ourselves to each other under God. Our earnest desire is to become more fully, in His own time, the one Church of God, united in faith, communion, pastoral care and mission. It is our conviction that, as a matter of policy at all levels and in all places, our churches must now move from co-operation to clear commitment to each other, in search for the unity for which Christ prayed and in common evangelism and service of the world."

2. This paragraph comes from the declaration that all those who were present at the Swanwick Conference of Church leaders in September 1987 signed as part of the Inter-Church process. It expresses the twin themes of the World Church and Mission Department's reports to Assembly this year - unity and mission.

3. The continuing striving for Church unity is expressed in the Scheme of Union between the Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church and in the covenanting proposals for the Churches in Wales and in the steps taken towards the creation of new ecumenical instruments to fulfil the work of the British Council of Churches.

4. The Department commends to Assembly the Resolutions giving first approval for unification with the Congregational Union of Scotland and the other Resolutions under this heading and also commends the Resolution endorsing the Welsh Synod's response to the document *Ministry in a Uniting Church, (Resolutions 6-10)*.

5. The Reports of Working Parties on new ecumenical instruments for England, Scotland, Wales and Britain and Ireland were published in February but not in time for the Executive of the Church or the Central Committee of the World Church and Mission Department to consider them before the 1988 Assembly. As replies to the proposals must be returned before Assembly meets again it is proposed that the URC response shall be prepared in the manner suggested in *Resolution 4*.

6. The mission of the Church is reflected through all the Reports to Assembly and by its decisions Assembly becomes part of that mission. How can the witness of the church be maintained and strengthened in rural or inner city churches? How can the church proclaim salvation to a country that thinks it has outgrown a spiritual dimension to life? We have 520 churches with fewer than 30 members. One approach has been the Department's encouragement of new enterprises in mission. During 1987 assistance has been given in special service to the Leicester Asian inner city community, to help the churches of Merseyside to change racist attitudes both within the community and within the church and a small grant is helping ministers to communicate in Welsh. Support has been provided for a temporary youth officer and a community worker whilst the costs of a minister are being met in a mission situation where local resources are exhausted. Exciting new work is being encouraged with community service for those recovering their mental health and for the caring relatives of those not expected to recover. A revised edition of the leaflet *Grants for Mission Projects in Britain* gives greater detail and seeks sharers in this pioneering work.

7. Another way has been the production of *Mission Pursuit* which helps churches look again at their local mission in a global context. The URC together with 28 other Churches forms the Council for World Mission in which all the churches are bound together to share personnel and other resources. These are exciting days for mission. *NewShare* published by CWM every other month (price £3 p a) provides up to date information which can be reproduced in church magazines.

8. When you have read this Report have in mind your local church and congregation and think about two matters. First, how can I share the information in this report with my local church and District, and secondly how can my church share in the mission and unity of the Church,?

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK ABROAD COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Derek Wales
Secretary: The Revd Donald Elliott

9. The Committee paused for a while at one of its meetings this year to review its task of "assisting local churches, Districts and Provinces to participate in local mission world-wide within the ecumenical fellowship". We saw that this meant enabling the experiences of the Church across the world to be felt within our own councils and congregations so that members of the URC might feel part of the world Church. We aim to help people become sensitive to the Holy Spirit's movement in many different situations and to develop attitudes that are capable of receiving the gifts that others have to share with us. This broad task is approached through detailed consideration of particular relations with particular churches: this is the bread and butter of our discussion and in this report we offer a few slices for the Assembly to taste.

Europe

10. We continued the task of broadening links with European churches, receiving the report of the group that visited the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Netherlands Reformed Church in March 1987, and encouraging development of relations with those churches, with the Eastern and East Midlands Provinces as a base.

11. We heard more about the Conference of European Churches, meeting with its Vice-President, the Dean of Rochester. He spoke of its two-fold work, under the headings *Peace with Justice* and *Unity in Witness*. Dean Arnold noted the importance of this Conference to the Orthodox community: it is one of the very few ecumenical bodies in which they are not in a minority. A CEC consultation in November 1987 was attended on our behalf by the Revd Brian O'Neill: the theme was *The Mission of the Churches in Secularized Europe*. This was also the discussion topic at the meeting of the European Region of the Council for World Mission, held a fortnight earlier.

12. Revd Geoffrey Roper had gone for us to the Plenary Meeting in Strasbourg in March 1987 of the Leuenberg Process, a conference which enables Lutheran and Reformed Churches to respond in partnership to the wider ecumenical fellowship. The current programme was *Towards a common expression of the apostolic faith today* and paralleled the CEC emphasis on witness in a secularized Europe. Mr Roper had been elected to the Executive Committee on behalf of British member churches.

South Africa

13. Matters of principle concerning our support for churches overseas were raised by CWM's request for churches to be asked to contribute to the needs of South African detainees through its newly established *Solidarity and Action Fund*. How can we in the URC respond to emergencies for which no provision has been made in the Unified Appeal or the overseas budget? We passed the question to the Assembly Executive Committee but we were able to commend the petition drawn up by the British Council of Churches and other bodies for the release of those detained without trial in South Africa and Namibia and to encourage FURY in its request for participation by some South Africans in *Connect '87*.

Chinese Work

14. We emphasised our commitment to developing relations with the church in China by increasing the URC's grant to the China Study Project Journal in order to help pay for translation work.

15. Through a sub-committee we supported and monitored the development of community work among Chinese people, prompted by the Chaplain to the Chinese community, the Revd Chong Kah Geh, centred on the URC in Hounslow and maintained by the District Council.

India

16. We agreed to the request of the CWM Council that the URC should now take the place of CWM in representation to the Related Missions Committees of the Churches of North India and South India and send a representative to the Partners in Mission Committee of the Church of North India.

Israel and the West Bank

17. The Committee heard a report by the Revd John Parry on a group visit to Israel and the West Bank. We believe that Israel has the right to a secure existence in the Holy Land, but also that the Palestinians have the right to territory and autonomy within it. These conflicting claims need to be reconciled, but this will only be possible through moderation and concessions on both sides. The Committee is sharing with other Churches its concerns for the Palestinian Christian community, itself a minority within the Palestinian minority in Israel. (*Resolution 1*).

18. We received a presentation by Ms Barbara Butler of *Christians Aware* a group arising out of the education work of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which organizes a wide programme including international work camps for "people who want to be in mission but desire to be engaged ecumenically and internationally". The group is now seeking a wider ecumenical base and we agreed to make the organisation known within the URC.

19. In order to assist the flow of information about links between URC Councils and churches and Churches overseas it was decided to conduct a survey to establish the nature and extent of existing links.

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

General Secretary: The Revd Dr Christopher Duraisingh

20. The year under review (1987/88) began with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of CWM's journey as a community of Churches covenanted together to share resources in mission. In addition to the acts of thanksgiving and rededication of the Council and each of its member Churches at its Council Meeting in Hong Kong, CWM committed itself to explore new directions in two specific areas:

- a) a greater sharing of "non-material" resources.
- b) new forms of sharing of people in mission.

A consultative process of re-thinking the concept and practice of long-term missionary service has been set in motion.

20.1 The meeting of the 1987 Council was yet another sign of the maturity of the fellowship that ensures freedom and context for fuller participation for all its members in the decision making processes. Action has been taken to ensure fuller participation by women and young people in the near future.

20.2 Member Churches rejoiced with the Nauru Congregational Church in its centenary celebrations. The Executive Committee, meeting in Madagascar in December, shared in FJKM's rededication of itself for renewal and advance in mission in the context of the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of Rasalama.

Leadership Development

21. Leadership development and Christian formation for effective mission continue to be the major programme thrusts of many of our member Churches. Therefore a major portion of the common financial resource was allocated for programmes related to such a concern during the year.

21.1 Related to this is the question of the role of mission education in the theological institutions of our member Churches. Colleges and Churches have been encouraged to consider the perspectival change and curricular implications for theological education if it is to intentionally prepare 'enablers' of the whole people of God at grass-roots for the mission of the Church rather than to perpetuate a traditional "clerical paradigm".

Mission Education

22. Most of the member Churches have initiated some form of mission education programme at the level of local congregations. It has also helped CWM acquire a presence at the local level. The European Region has published the highly commendable *Mission Pursuit* and the Church of South India has initiated an ambitious programme called *VELCOM (Vision for Equipping Local Congregations in Mission)*.

Funds

23. CWM recognises that greater self-reliance and financial stability are important for any member Church to authentically participate in partnership in mission from strength rather than weakness. Therefore, CWM has voted to make available necessary

capital resources to Churches which work out viable plans for strengthening the infra-structure towards greater self-reliance. To this end, a *Self-Support Development Fund* has been set aside.

24. Encouraging member Churches in ecumenical involvement in their local and national contexts is a continuing concern of CWM. Therefore a special Ecumenical Involvement Fund has been established to inspire and facilitate ecumenical commitments of member Churches in their own contexts in a small scale.

25. In order to ensure that the enormous potential of cross-cultural and inter-Church heritage that is available within the CWM family could be brought together into greater inter-action, a Joint Mission Venture is being explored. Such joint action in mission will be one in which a team of four people - a local person plus three from three other regions - will work together in mission for a given period of time. The context of their work will be an ongoing programme of a member Church. The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar has indicated its willingness to explore the possibility of locating such a venture.

Training in Mission

26.1 After a year of review and modifications, the Training in Mission programme has been set in motion again. There are ten young people from nine countries and ten Churches during this year.

26.2 The Council has authorised the organising of short mission workcamps for four to six weeks in different regions for young people. The first one may be held in Taiwan in October 1988.

27. The Council has appointed a Six Yearly Review Group to study the working of the Council since 1983, and to submit its report to the Council at its meeting in 1989 for consideration and action. It is hoped that every member Church will actively co-operate with the Review Group in the process.

28. During 1988 there will be Regional Consultations in every one of the six regions of the Council. The Regional Consultations have an important role to play in the life of CWM. The Executive Committee has given careful thought to the role and agenda of the forthcoming consultations in order to ensure significant sharing of life, experiences and resources in mission horizontally within the family of Churches through these consultations. It is hoped that the participants in these consultations will form "living links" between member Churches.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Convener: Mrs Mary Marsden
Secretary: Miss Sheila Rudofsky

29. The Personnel Committee has been sharing in a study, inaugurated by the Council for World Mission at its Council meeting in July 1987, of what the sharing of personnel in mission throughout the world really means today. CWM reiterated its vision that the task of carrying out God's mission in any place was primarily the responsibility of the local church, and that any missionary came to share in that task. So that the exchange of people was not just to fill jobs that needed doing

but to allow people to share themselves, their background, their insights in a common task. The emphasis was shifted from jobs to people. The Personnel Committee continues to explore what this means for it in its appointment and training of missionaries to go overseas and in the bringing of missionaries to share with the URC in its task of mission.

30. In October the unusually large number of URC missionaries at home provided an opportunity for the Personnel Committee to arrange a special day to meet together with them. This was a valuable occasion of sharing news, ideas and fellowship.

31. The value of short term sharing of personnel is becoming widely acknowledged. The Personnel Committee has been glad to assist in a variety of sabbaticals and voluntary schemes. This year for the first time there has been money set aside in our budget for Exchange Visits. The Committee has decided that part of this should be available for local church exchanges which have the approval of the District Council, and were glad to support a visit to Zimbabwe made by members of Maidstone URC. A contribution was also made to the bringing of four young people from South Africa to *Connect*.

Exchange Visits

32. The larger portion of our resources for exchange visits has been invested in a visit to the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan by a team of ten people, ministerial and lay, from the URC. The purpose of the visit has been to study the witness and mission of that Church and to feed that experience into the life and work of the URC.

33. The Committee is also happy to make a contribution to a youth exchange visit being arranged with the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. In 1988 fifteen young people from Britain will spend four weeks in Jamaica and in 1989 young people from Jamaica will come here.

Scholarships

34. The Personnel Committee has at its disposal eight residential places at St Andrew's Hall Missionary College because of the URC's sponsorship of that College. For many years four of those places have been granted to overseas partner Churches for the training of leaders. The Committee believes that this is a valuable contribution to world mission and has been exploring the possibility of widening our partnership to include other Churches by increasing the number of scholarships given to five per year. The Committee is in consultation with the Missionary and Ecumenical Work Abroad Committee about this possibility.

35. The URC continues to be invited by the British Council of Churches to join in ecumenical mission ventures along with other denominations in the United Kingdom. This year the Personnel Committee, with the help of grants from CWM, has been involved in the sending of Katie Trinder and Gayle Calverley, from URC, along with five others to teach in China with the Amity Foundation.

36. The Committee welcomes the Revd Froukina Smit from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to the Special Ministry at Southall from 1 January 1988.

37. The Committee has at its disposal a number of small "earmarked funds". These moneys originate in legacies from individuals. The Committee has been looking again

at responsible ways of using these to carry out in today's circumstances the original intention of the donors.

People appointed to serve overseas:

38.1 Through CWM: Mr Martin Vickerman of Morley, Leeds, Yorkshire Province, to Beru Island, Kiribati.

Through the Amity Foundation, as part of a team sponsored by member Churches of the BCC - Miss Gayle Calverley of Hull, North Humberside, to the East China Institute of Technology, Nanjing, and Miss Katie Trinder of Newport, Gwent, to the Jiangsu Institute of Technology, Zhenjiang, in the People's Republic of China.

38.2 Short term experiences overseas:

Miss Judith Wilkins - 1 year at Debrecen with the Reformed Church in Hungary.

38.3 Missionaries who have completed their service with Churches through CWM:

The Revd John and Mrs Elizabeth Crocker: Zambia

The Revd Jean Hall: Zambia

The Revd Donald and Mrs Harokuku Horsfield: Papua New Guinea

Mr Keith and Mrs Gillian Peace-Brown: Zambia

38.4 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 John and Mrs Judith Haggarty: United Church of Christ USA
Pastoral ministry at Shelley Road, Worthing

The Revd Dr Elliot Massey: Disciples of Christ USA
Pastoral ministry at Workington

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 Dale Rominger and Dr Karen Labacqz: United Church of Christ (USA)
Pastoral ministry at Wigton and Silloth, Cumbria

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

The Revd Froukina Smit: Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
Pastoral ministry with the King's Hall Interfaith Project, Southall

38.5 People from overseas receiving scholarship support from the URC:

The Revd Moses Muligna Bakar: Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana

The Revd Hsu Tien-Hsien: Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Ms Kim Jee Son: Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

The Revd Johnson Apenad Mbillah and Mrs Mbillah: Presbyterian Church of Ghana

all at St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak.

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

ST ANDREWS'S HALL REPORT FOR 1986/87

Principal: The Revd David Grainger

39. 1987 marked the 75th year of the founding of Carey Hall, so on June 20th we held a special celebration at the College, at which many ex-students and staff were present. It coincided with Open Day for Selly Oak Colleges and was thus a welcome opportunity to catch up with recent developments in the Federation.

40. We were glad to see high numbers of students being maintained, amongst them a group of 10 participants in the CWM Training in Mission programme. The increased numbers have meant the need to appoint a part-time Tutor, the Revd Dr Jack Thompson. He is the director of the Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements, also based at Selly Oak.

41. The URC scholarship programme continues to attract leadership from a number of different churches. At the moment Johnson Mbillah, from Ghana, is engaged in studies for the Diploma in Islamic Studies, having already received a Certificate in Mission in 1987.

MISSION AND OTHER FAITHS COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Roger Tomes

Secretary: The Revd John Parry

42. During the last year a visit to Israel and the West Bank was organised. It was not a pilgrimage as such but an attempt to meet and understand people of differing faiths and from both sides of the political divide. The Committee would suggest that our leaders seriously consider sparing time to meet Jews, Christians, both Palestinian and Hebrew, and Muslims. There are a number of groups which have been established to foster reconciliation and peace. These deserve support and prayer. Details of names and addresses for contact are available from the Secretary.

43. The links we have with the Jewish community in the UK have been maintained through two consultations held during 1987. We now have sufficient material from both perspectives for a small book dealing with the Holocaust, the role of women and feminist theology and attitudes to race. This constitutes a follow-up to the well acclaimed *Christians and Jews in Britain*, first published in 1983. It is hoped to further deal, in a similar manner, with Zionism, Missions and Liberation Theology.

44. In November 1987, the Committee organised a one day meeting entitled *Dialogue and URC Integrity*. Those who attended agreed that whilst Dialogue is as much about listening to other people of faith it also requires us to find ways of speaking about our own faith which are articulate and within the understanding of our partners in dialogue. In no way, therefore, does an evangelical faith preclude dialogue. Many found that their contact with Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs had

led them back to their Bibles in their search for a deeper faith. However, all were of a mind that our dialogue is not simply about theological issues, but, as a life-style, it involves us as a community of faith, in mission with other faiths, seeking justice and peace and striving for the Kingdom of God.

45. The last meeting with representatives of the Unification Church was held in January 1987. The Committee believes that the exchanges have been useful and would not want to re-erect barriers, but in view of the pressure of its other tasks has decided that no further meetings should be arranged at present.

46. During the year the Committee met representatives of the Doctrine and Worship Committee to reflect together on the theological significance of the experience of dialogue. We were encouraged to prepare for Assembly a statement which would both attempt a theological justification of dialogue and an indication of the consequences of dialogue for theology. We were asked, not to describe the various attitudes Christian theologians have taken, but to outline a position for Assembly consideration. The Committee now offers for discussion the statement which follows in *Appendix 1* as the basis on which it does its work and the consequences as it understands them (*Resolution 2*).

47. The Revd Kenneth Cracknell, who completed his period of service as Secretary of the BCC Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths in 1987, was a regular attender at our meetings, and a most supportive, well informed and stimulating colleague. We are glad to know that the Cambridge Federation is to have the benefit of his teaching. We have welcomed his successor at the BCC, the Revd Clinton Bennett, to two of our meetings already.

48. The Committee has asked two people to serve as consultants for particular areas of its work. Dr Jack Thompson, who has succeeded Dr Harold Turner as Director of the Centre for New Religious Movements at Selly Oak, will cover that area, and Miss Janet Orchard will be the consultant on feminism, to provide a feminist voice on inter-faith dialogue and a Christian critique of feminism.

MISSIONARY AND ECUMENICAL WORK AT HOME COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd John Slow
Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

Mission and Unity

49. "Identified priorities in mission should be shared, for mission and unity are ultimately indivisible" *Not Strangers but Pilgrims - Swanwick Conference Report*.

"We believe that unity and mission are two dimensions of the same holy calling"
CUS/URC Proposals.

"Only by working together can we provide an effective pastoral care for God's people; only together can we hope to equip the church effectively to present the gospel to this land and people. We believe that the demands of unity and mission co-incide" *Ministry in a Uniting Church - Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales*.

Not Strangers but Pilgrims

50.1 Those who took part in the Swanwick Conference in September 1987 were privileged to share an event which will transform our ecumenical life and structures. Many expectations were centred on this meeting of almost 350 people from more than 30 Christian denominations in Britain, with several observers from the Irish Churches. All participants were being asked to build on the results of the national Spring Conferences held at Nottingham, Bangor and St Andrew's and to suggest the next steps forward in our pilgrimage together. The way ahead became clearer during the week: in the small groups where people met each other at a deep level of faith, openness and commitment; through a wide variety of worship, especially in the eucharists; as young people shared their vision of the future and urged the churches to "travel light"; by seeing the unity of the Church against the background of the unity of humankind. Ecumenical shuffles forward were interspersed now and again by a giant stride such as the statement by Cardinal Basil Hume on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, recommending that the move from co-operation to commitment should become official policy at every level.

50.2 The Report of the Swanwick Conference, *Not Strangers but Pilgrims*, was published on 23 November and is available from Tavistock Bookshop at 95p. It outlines the shape of future ecumenical instruments within each of the four nations and for Britain and Ireland as a whole.

50.3 Three working groups will have prepared interim reports on:

- a) The British and Irish Council
- b) English Churches Together
- c) Scottish Churches Together
- d) The Welsh Instrument or Council
- e) Prayer materials, Educational material and Promotion.

They will have been presented to the Inter-Church Meeting in March and are being made available for discussion within the participating churches. Following revision in the light of the comments made by the Churches, a Final Report will be sent to the Churches for final decision in 1989. The new ecumenical instruments are planned to come into being on 1 September 1990 (*Resolutions 3, 4 and 5*).

England

51.1 Local Ecumenism. Arising from discussion of the Committee's report at the last General Assembly, Provinces were asked whether they would be helped to have a referee to advise on both Sharing Agreements and Constitutions. Replies pointed to a considerable demand for such expert help but some were already adequately served. It was agreed to appoint, on a voluntary basis, an Adviser for Local Ecumenism in England, whose brief would be:

- a) To be an ex-officio member of MEW at Home Committee and to be responsible for that part of its agenda.
- b) To help those who seek advice from within the URC, referring them to others as necessary.
- c) To keep in touch with a legal specialist on Sharing Agreements.
- d) To keep in touch with the General Secretary about the national implications of local ecumenism.
- e) To share with the Methodist Local Ecumenical Officer responsibility for the Methodist/URC liaison Committee.

The appointment has become increasingly important in the light of the emphasis on the local rather than the national aspects of ecumenism. The Committee is pleased to report that the Revd Peter Poulter has accepted the invitation to become Adviser for Local Ecumenism in England.

51.2 Methodist-URC. A helpful meeting took place in December 1987 when the Revd Ivan Selman and three Methodist District Chairmen met the Provincial Moderators to discuss the practical matters and some of the difficulties which arise in shared pastorates, eg vacancies, availability of ministers, alternating ministers, length of appointment, induction/welcome of ministers. Matters which require further action will become part of the agenda of the Methodist-URC Liaison Committee.

Scotland

52.1 Congregational Union of Scotland and United Reformed Church. The document containing the Proposals to form the United Reformed Church in Great Britain was published on 18 January 1988, at the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Proposals represent the work of the Joint Negotiating Group during the past two years. Copies have been circulated to all representatives with Assembly papers. The Proposals are presented to the Assemblies of our two Churches for consideration and decision.

52.2 Approval of the second CUS/URC Resolution (*Resolution 7*) by General Assembly 1988 requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. 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 31 December 1988 to oppose the proposals, the matter will not proceed. If there is no such opposition, the General Assembly of 1989 will be invited to ratify the proposals, a simple majority being required. The views of the Mid-Scotland District Council, following full consultation with its local churches, will be specifically reported to the Assembly (*Resolutions 6, 7, 8 and 9*).

Wales

53. The text of *Ministry in a Uniting Church* is attached as *APPENDIX 2*. The document, which provides a means whereby a fully reconciled ministry could serve in a united body, was given careful consideration by the Ecumenical Committee of the Synod of Wales following responses from all six districts, from churches and individuals in Wales, as well as the Doctrine and Worship Committee and the MEW at Home Committee. The Synod of Wales meeting in October 1987 approved the response at *APPENDIX 3* which Assembly is asked to endorse and forward to the Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, (*Resolution 10*).

Ireland

54. The Committee has been pleased to receive a further visit from the Revd David Nesbitt, Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, who is also one of the ecumenical representatives to the URC General Assembly. We rejoice in the growing relationship between our Churches.

Mission with the Poor in Urban and Rural Britain

55. A group has been set up by the Committee to monitor and promote initiatives for the whole Church arising from reflection on *Faith in the City* and rural deprivation.

The Group has a membership drawn from across the Departments. It sees its task as not only to alert the Church to issues of poverty in Britain, but also to confront poverty itself.

Rural Mission and Ministry

56.1 The Rural Consultant, the Revd John Clarke, has visited local churches, Districts and Synods during the past year. He is keen to develop continuing links with small rural congregations where he can be used as a resource person, over a period of time. John Clarke would also like to meet with local ministers who have pastoral charge of groups which include both urban and rural churches.

56.2 The Rural Consultants Group has reconstituted under the Chairmanship of the Revd Stanley Wilton. The Committee is looking to the Group for some imaginative thinking on rural themes.

56.3 The present crisis in British agriculture, rural poverty, deprivation, housing and unemployment are national issues which call for an ecumenical response. The Committee commends *Christian Unity in the Village* by Anthony Russell (£1.50) and the Report of the second Hereford Consultation *The People, the Land and the Church*.

56.4 *The Archbishop's Commission on the Countryside* (which will complement *Faith in the City*) will have members other than the Church of England. The URC and Methodist Churches have offered some financial support.

Ecumenical Representatives to Assembly, Synods and District Councils

57.1 Following the decision of the General Assembly in 1985, we have been pleased to welcome ecumenical representatives to subsequent Assemblies, although one or two sister Churches have felt able to send only observers. Our Assemblies are enriched by the contributions which they have made to our fellowship and to our debates.

57.2 An enquiry by Roddie Grant on behalf of the Coventry District World Church and Mission Committee has revealed that only a minority of Synods and District Councils have so far utilised the Assembly resolution to invite voting members from other churches. Where this has been developed, it is warmly regarded.

New Enterprise in Mission Fund

58.1 Nineteen projects received grants totalling £22,600 during 1987, ten of which were new applications. Increasingly the fund is being used to help local churches to respond to the mission opportunities of their neighbourhoods, by providing pump-priming contributions to encourage local initiatives.

58.2 The summary of the projects to which grants were made in the period 1985-1987 is: 61% areas of deprivation; 21% anti-racism; 17% educational, outreach and evangelistic; 2% community mental health.

58.3 The Committee hopes to make available at General Assembly a new leaflet on *New Enterprise in Mission*.

Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches

59. The Committee re-affirms its support for the Community and Race Relations Unit

but regrets that it has only been possible in the past to make a nominal financial contribution towards its work. In implementation of the Resolution of the Church and Society Department at last year's Assembly, the Committee intends to press for a central budget contribution to the Unit for future years, even though this may not be a large amount; this may encourage individuals or churches to make contributions.

EVANGELISM AND MISSION EDUCATION GROUP

Convener: The Revd Christopher Baker

Secretary: Mrs Muriel Garrow

60. This new group is taking forward work from the inter-departmental Working Party on Evangelism and supports the new Mission Education Secretary, Mrs Muriel Garrow. Muriel Garrow comes to her new post with a lot of experience and we warmly welcome her.

Mission Enabler Teams

61. Mission Enabler Teams exist in ten Provinces. Setting up such Teams is sometimes difficult because of the geography of a Province and it may take time for a Team to be accepted. Experience shows that Teams can be very helpful in enabling churches to consider their own situation more fully, and to go on to find ways into mission. The Teams have an annual Day of Exchange and share information through the *Ferment* news-sheet, which is being produced by Geoffrey Duncan.

62. Muriel Garrow is presently spending two or three days a week in London and on other days she is out visiting Teams or churches, or working from her home. This pattern will enable her to give major support to the Teams.

63. Training courses have been run at the Windermere Centre for new Team members, for newly ordained ministers, and, more recently, for anyone interested in *Growth for Their Sake*. The Group will continue to encourage training for the Teams.

Mission Pursuit

64. In 1986 the General Assembly declared that it "welcomed CWM's emphasis on Education in Mission and looked forward to sharing in it". One exciting way of sharing in this is by using *Mission Pursuit*. *Mission Pursuit* is a spiral of studies, stories and things to do. It is written bearing in mind that many of our churches have less than fifty members, and its style is easy to read. It can be used by all ages working together. The Evangelism and Mission Education Group wish to promote this material vigorously. It is hoped that *Mission Pursuit* becomes an indispensable tool in the ongoing life of the Church. Members of the Mission Enabler Teams and others will be able to help churches to get going on *Mission Pursuit*. With each copy of *Mission Pursuit* there is a list of people who can offer practical help.

Other Material

65. *PUB 5* - material for children which has been produced by a team of writers and edited by Helen Lidgett will be published shortly. *What is the URC?* (Italian version) is now available on request.

66. The Evangelism and Mission Education Group are looking at further ways of helping churches to share ideas and experience, both in this country and world-wide. The Group is excited by the task the Church has given it and will play its part in working and praying for *Growth for Their Sake*.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

1. Assembly, recognising that both Jews and Palestinians have well founded claims to own territory and live autonomously within the same land, urges members of the United Reformed Church to inform themselves about the Palestinian situation, to pray for a reconciliation of the conflicting claims, and, when visiting Israel, to make contact with the Palestinian Christian community.
2. Assembly commends the statement *A Theological Perspective on Inter-Faith Dialogue* to local congregations and councils of the church for discussion. Assembly requests the Mission and Other Faiths Committee to receive responses, to continue discussion with the Doctrine and Worship Committee, and to bring a further report to Assembly.

Not Strangers but Pilgrims

3. The Assembly acknowledges with thanksgiving the Report and Declaration of the Swanwick Conference, and assures the other churches of the URC's full commitment to continuing the pilgrimage together.
4. As part of the same Process the Assembly authorises the World Church and Mission Department to prepare, and Executive Committee to consider and decide, a response from the URC to draft proposals for the new ecumenical instruments or councils.
5. The Assembly requests that the final form of the proposals be available in January 1989 so that this may become part of *Reports to Assembly*.

Scotland - Congregational Union/URC

6. The Assembly agrees that the process of decision for the URC on the Proposals for Unification be according to Section 10/1 of the Structure of the URC.
7. The Assembly gives first approval to the Proposals for Unification with the Congregational Union of Scotland (document dated December 1987) including the Amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC listed in Part VIII of the document, and refers these Proposals to Synods and District Councils.
8. The Assembly, through this referral, invites the District Councils and Synods to discuss the Proposals and agrees that should any Council or Synod wish to pass a resolution "that these Proposals be not proceeded with", such resolution must reach the General Secretary by 31 December 1988 (Structure 10(1)e).
9. The Assembly authorises the URC representatives on the Joint Negotiating Group to continue with this work.

Wales

10. The Assembly, recalling that in 1972 it encouraged the churches in Wales to develop a covenant relationship as a way towards church unity in Wales, receives the text of the response to *Ministry in a Uniting Church* prepared by the Wales Synod and forwards this to the Commission of the Covenanted Churches with the endorsement of the General Assembly.

APPENDIX 1

A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

From the Mission and Other Faiths Committee

A Towards a theological justification of dialogue

1. Christians have often found themselves living in multi-faith communities. Whenever this has happened, they have had to think about their relationship with people of other faiths. This is obviously true of Britain today, and indeed the mix of religions in some of our cities is as varied as anywhere in the world. Many Christians have come to believe that the relationship we should aim at is one of "dialogue". This does not mean saying "every religion is as good as any other" or trying to create a new religion out of the best of the existing ones or even holding inter-faith services. Dialogue by no means excludes witnessing to our deepest convictions. But it does mean having the patience to get to know people of other faiths, so that a relationship of mutual confidence and trust can be built up, and being ready to listen and learn ourselves as well as expecting others to do this. It also means being willing to work together for the common good, without making that depend on agreement in matters of faith. This understanding of dialogue is spelt out in the British Council of Churches' *Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain*, which the URC Assembly "adopted as its own" in 1983.

2. But what is our warrant for aiming at such a relationship? At first sight the Bible seems to point in an entirely different direction. It characterises religions other than Judaism and Christianity as idolatry. It mocks the pagans who pray to something their own hands have made (Isaiah 44:10-20; Jeremiah 10:3-5) and it warns believers not to have anything to do with pagan gods or practices (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; 13:6-18; 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7.1). Then the New Testament makes exclusive claims for Jesus Christ: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:6); "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:2). The duty of Christians is therefore to preach the gospel as the one message all people need to hear. The missionary work of our churches, at least in its pioneering days, was often inspired by these convictions. How can the aims of dialogue be justified in the face of such clear directions?

3. The biblical witness however does not all fall neatly into this pattern. The great figures of the Old Testament were not Christians, and we do not know how they would have responded to the gospel; but God made himself known to them, and they were able to exercise faith and please God before its day (Hebrews 11). In both testaments, pagans are sometimes praised for their faith and devotion to God and even held up to Jews and Christians as examples. Malachi believed that the nations worshipped the same God as Israel did, and in a way that did him greater honour

(Malachi 1:6-14). Cornelius is acceptable to God before he becomes a Christian: the gospel is in a sense a reward for his previous way of life (Acts 10:1-2, 22, 34-35). In the gospels, Jesus commends both the centurion (Matthew 8:5-10 = Luke 7:1-10) and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30) for their faith, but we do not know whether they, or many others Jesus helped, became Christian believers later. We do know that, when Naaman explained to Elisha that he would have to continue to bow down in the house of Rimmon, Elisha did not condemn him (2 Kings 5:17-19). When Paul was face to face with pagans at Athens (Acts 17:16-34) he did not denounce or ridicule their idolatry, but tried to find common ground with them. There may be here a realisation that a person's religion cannot easily be labelled true or false. There is a persistent note in the New Testament which maintains that Jew and Gentile and Christian will be judged by what they have done rather than by their particular religious allegiance (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 22:12).

4. The conclusions we can draw from these pieces of evidence are however very tentative compared with the clear statements and directives we considered earlier. Yet there are questions to be asked even about the clear statements. Many Christians would accept them as truths revealed and commands issued by God himself. But other Christians would argue that the gospel has come to us in language and thought forms largely determined by the situation of the original writers and readers. Thus the polemic against idolatry in the Old Testament is to be explained partly as arising out of a fear of something threatening but not fully understood. The prophets and lawgivers make no attempt to be fair to other religions. Similarly, the exclusive claims made for Jesus have to be read in context. Acts 4:12 occurs in the context of a healing miracle, and is a claim that all healing takes place through Jesus rather than a judgement on all other faiths. John 14:6 is primarily a positive statement about Jesus: the evangelist is not ruling for all time on all other religions there were or might be. He has in fact introduced Jesus at the beginning of the gospel as Word or Logos, whose relationship with the world is not exclusively through the historical Jesus, because he is the true light which illumines everyone. The word of God has to be "discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (as the URC *Basis of Union* declares), not read off from this text or that. Taking in the whole of what scripture has to say and allowing for these human factors are parts of that process.

5. Then the Bible was written a long time ago. Its writers were often working out the implications of their faith in situations and for problems as they arose, drawing on the knowledge they had at the time. It is our Christian duty to work out the implications of our faith for the situations which face us, using the knowledge we have. Sometimes this means making a Christian judgement on issues the biblical writers never dreamed of, such as questions of medical ethics. Sometimes it means revising the judgements biblical writers made, because of new knowledge, for example about the age and size of the universe, or because of profound changes in social attitudes, for example about the acceptability of slavery as an institution or about the role and status of women. It is not always right to give in to the spirit of the age, but it is not always right either to pretend that we are still living in the social world of the eighth century BC or the first century AD. In the area of our relationships with people of other faiths the situation is not the same as it was when the Acts of the Apostles was written nor even as it was in the heyday of Christian missions. The religions concerned are not the same, and need to be judged in their own right, not as if they were the same as Canaanite or Graeco-Roman polytheism. Throughout Christian history we have seen the terrible things which intolerance of other religions can lead to, and therefore a deliberate policy of

seeking understanding is necessary and a high priority for Christians today. The quest for justice and peace in the world today is not helped if people of different faiths distrust each other and have as little to do with each other as possible. And people of other faiths have become our neighbours, so that how we are to live with them has become a live issue for us. These are some of the factors which convince us that the Holy Spirit is calling us and people of other faiths to a relationship of dialogue.

B Some theological consequences of dialogue

6. Just as in the ecumenical movement Christians this century have been discovering how much they have in common, though on the face of it separated by great differences in tradition and culture, so in the experience of dialogue people of different faiths have begun to recognise that they too have things in common, none the less real for being difficult to define. Often they will recognise a common concern about the younger generation or a common reappraisal of the role of women or a common longing for the peace of the world, since the same outside pressures affect them all. To some extent this is simply a recognition that they share and prize a common humanity, which is true also of people who have no religion at all. But the study of scriptures and the practice of prayer and the sense of religious obligation, however different the forms these take may be, suggest that the religious quest is more fundamental than any of its particular manifestations. It is difficult to resist the conviction that we are all serving the one true God, and that the same power is at work in them as in us.

7. Such a conviction has consequences for our understanding both of other people's faiths and of our own. It would be wrong for us to jump to hasty conclusions about the part that faiths other than Christianity play in the purpose of God, because their chief function would be to make us feel secure in our own ideas. It would be far too sweeping to say that they are all alternative ways of salvation, fitted for people with different cultural backgrounds, and far too patronising to treat them as mere preparations for Christianity or responses to God's general revelation. Their adherents after all believe that they embody the truth which God has revealed quite as firmly as we believe that the gospel is true. Even within a Christian frame of reference, it would be arrogant for us to speculate on the standing which people of other faiths have with God. The pull between believing that God recognises and honours goodness wherever it is found and believing that faith in Christ is essential should be an inner tension in every Christian rather than one which divides Christians into opposing camps. It is best to suspend judgement on these questions and meanwhile to allow our own theological agenda to be enlarged, as people of other faiths tell us in their own words and demonstrate in their lives what concerns and sustains them.

8. At its deepest level, dialogue must be about what is true for all people. Our partners in dialogue expect to hear from us what we believe to be the truth which everyone needs to embrace and live by, just as they expect us to listen to them. Therefore the experience of dialogue need not lead to any minimising of our belief in Jesus or to any suppression of our witness to him. Some other faiths already have a place for Jesus - as a renegade Jewish teacher or one whom Christians have misunderstood, as a prophet of Islam, or as one *avatar* or incarnation among many - but not a place which would satisfy any Christian. Dialogue makes it clearer than ever how important it is that all that Jesus said and did should be better known, so that he can make his own distinctive impression. The significance of his death and the reality of his resurrection must not be played down. But it is also important

that Christians should not participate in dialogue as people who have nothing to learn about Jesus. It is less important that Jesus' person should be correctly defined and his work orthodoxly understood than that he should be bringing new hope, new light and new life to the world and to every person in it, non-Christian and Christian alike. It is better that the significance of Jesus should be expressed in lively images and in loving actions than in rigid dogmas. The response to Jesus may not always be conversion, but it is better that he should be respected and honoured than that he should be ignored or dismissed or hated.

9. Therefore the Christian mission must have the character of dialogue. Whether that mission is directed towards people of other faiths or people who profess no faith or lapsed Christians, it must be based on people meeting each other, building a relationship of confidence and trust, working together for the common good and witnessing to their deepest convictions. The witness does not have to be trimmed to what people would like to hear, but it must not be expressed in avoidably offensive ways, and it must not harass people into belief but be content to leave the outcome to God.

For further reading:

Relations with people of other faiths: guidelines for dialogue in Britain (BCC)
Towards a theology for inter-faith dialogue (CIO Publishing)
With people of other faiths in Britain (URC)
My neighbour's faith - and mine (WCC)
Towards a new relationship by Kenneth Cracknell (Epworth)
The Bible and people of other faiths by Wesley Ariarajah (WCC)
Christianity and other faiths (Paternoster)

APPENDIX 2

Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales

MINISTRY IN A UNITING CHURCH From Recognition to Reconciliation

Presented to the Churches, March 1986

INTRODUCTION

1. Article 5 of the Covenant states:

We recognise the ordained ministries of all our churches as true ministries of the word and sacraments, through which God's love is proclaimed, his grace mediated and his Fatherly care exercised.

We intend to seek an agreed pattern of ordained ministry which will serve the gospel in unity, manifest its continuity throughout the ages, and be accepted as far as may be by the Church throughout the world.

As to the authors of *Principles of Visible Unity in Wales* (PVUW) add: "the question of the ordained ministry involves the hardest decisions that must be taken by the

churches as they seek to come together in visible unity".

2. These hard decisions, however, have to be faced, and they have to be faced with a considerable degree of urgency. In some parts of Wales, in particular in the rural areas of the North West and in the valleys of the industrial South, the difficulties in developing the sort of leadership the churches need if they are to respond to the missionary challenge of the times are reaching crisis proportions. The search for 'one church, renewed for mission' is not an academic exercise which can be conducted at a leisurely pace.

3. In 1980 we invited the churches to respond to PVUW. Many comments were received, not least on the proposals for ministry in a Uniting Church. Those responses lead us to think that the document was correct when it concluded that ministry in a Uniting Church must include a constitutional episcopacy on the lines indicated there. We do not underestimate the difficulties some churches will have in wholeheartedly accepting this conclusion. We believe they can be eased, if we can obtain a clearer picture of how such a pattern of ministries will actually operate, and how it might liberate churches in each locality for effective mission. Drawing not only on PVUW, but also on the insights given in the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order paper, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) and in the more recent report of the Anglican/Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and our Unity* (GROU), we have attempted to draw the outlines of such a picture in the first main section of this paper.

4. The paragraph in PVUW from which we quoted earlier goes on to speak of the need for radical changes, the readiness for which is the acid test of our commitment to visible unity. Radical changes are needed. This means we can no longer simply ask what alterations are desirable to the patterns with which we are familiar in any of our existing churches. Our method has been to go back to first principles, and then, taking into account the convictions deeply held in our various traditions, attempt to map out a new pattern for a renewed Church - a Uniting Church in Wales. What we are proposing, therefore, will appear in some degree unfamiliar to all of us. To help our churches come to terms with what follows, we offer the following preliminary observations:

5. Changes are being proposed not simply for the sake of unity, but to meet the pastoral needs of the people of God, and the demands of mission. All our denominations, in their different ways, are today facing a crisis of ministry. Only by working together can we provide an effective pastoral care for God's people; only together can we hope to equip the Church effectively to present the gospel to this land and people. We believe that the demands of unity and mission coincide.

6. Our starting point has been what is already happening. Already newly developed areas are being served by Local Ecumenical Projects; already the Free Churches are developing patterns of Community Ministry; already Church Leaders' Meetings and Area Planning Committees are laying the foundations for an ecumenical oversight of the mission and ministry in the Church. Our proposals seek to draw all this to its logical conclusion.

7. We are not proposing changes that need to be imposed everywhere overnight. We do not believe that unity can be imposed. It must grow out of the experience and conviction of the people of God. The pattern we envisage will take a decade or more to implement completely. Those who are now reluctant to take the steps we advocate are not being asked to do what they do not believe in. We simply ask that those who

share our vision may be freed to pioneer a way which we hope and believe that others will see and want to follow.

8. When we came to review PVUW and the churches' responses to it, we became aware of two crucial questions to which that document did not address itself.

9. The first concerns the ordination of women to the various ministries of the Church.

10. In some of the covenanted churches women as well as men have been ordained to the ministry of the word and sacraments for as long as seventy years. These churches believe that their ministries have been richly blessed by God and would therefore find it impossible to exclude women from any ministry simply by reason of their sex. The Church in Wales ordains women as well as men to the diaconate. In common with some other provinces of the Anglican Communion it sees no fundamental theological objection to their ordination to other ministries, but, like many other Anglican provinces, it has not as yet opened the other ministries to women.

11. Our view is that in a Uniting Church all ministries should be open equally to men and women. Our hope is that by the time these proposals come to be implemented all the covenanted churches will have come to share that conviction.

12. If, however, that conclusion has not been reached, we do not believe that our proposals as a whole need founder on this particular rock. As *God's Reign and Our Unity* points out, the debate over the ordination of women is not simply about ministry. It is also about the authority of Scripture, "the nature of the church and of Christ's salvation of humanity, and is indeed central to an understanding of the nature and being of God". All our churches at present encompass within their existing unity those who differ profoundly on one or more of these fundamentals, yet they regard it as important to maintain their present unity in diversity in the hope that they will thus grow closer to God's truth. We believe that no less a diversity of conviction and practice ought to be tolerable within a Uniting Church; that any who cannot accept the ordination of women might wish to avail themselves of the provisions of any conscience clause that may be included in the Scheme of Union of a Uniting Church; and that through the experience of living together in a Uniting Church God will lead us to a resolution of what continues to divide us.

13. PVUW did not discuss the process by which a Uniting Church might be inaugurated. Yet in the past this process has proved one of the most contentious areas of ecumenical debate. We can no longer evade this question. Fortunately the history of the ecumenical movement in the last few decades has mapped out for us the nature of the problems which need to be surmounted if a Uniting Church is to be born. In our second main section we briefly review this history and indicate a possible way forward.

Part One

THE PATTERN OF MINISTRY

A. The Ministry of the People of God

14. We take as our starting point the same understanding and vision that we find in

the opening paragraph of the Ministry section of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

15. In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. For this purpose God chose Israel and then spoke in a unique and decisive way in Jesus Christ, God's Son. Jesus made his own the nature, condition and cause of the whole human race, giving himself as a sacrifice for all. Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are foundations of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the Gospel and the gifts of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world. Belonging to the Church means living in communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

16. This paragraph points to basic truths which we need to remember in formulating a doctrine of ministry. The Church is called by God and entrusted with a mission to the world. It is truly apostolic; as Christ was sent by the Father, so he in turn sends the Church into the world in the power of the Spirit. The ministry of Christ inspires and constitutes that of the Church, constantly summoning it to a renewed fidelity to his example. The Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God by announcing the gospel to the world and by being built up as the body of Christ.

17. Within these two commissions each member of the body is called to live his faith and account for his hope. Each stands alongside men and women in their joy and suffering and witnesses among them through loving service.

18. To fulfil this mission the Church has to be equipped by the Holy Spirit with the necessary gifts. As BEM puts it:

These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. They may be gifts of communicating the gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, of praying, of teaching and learning, of serving, of guiding and following, of inspiration and vision. All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent.

19. These varied gifts have at different times and in different places led to varied patterns of ministries being developed. Some of this variety can be seen in the New Testament itself. Some ministries have been permanent, others provisional; some have been spontaneous, others institutional; some have gone through a number of different guises. But from early times, in order to fulfil its mission the Church has had an ordained ministry, ie:

persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity.

This ministry consists of men and women who have been called by God and endowed with the gifts of the Spirit. In the act of ordination by the invocation of the Holy Spirit and with the laying on of hands, they are solemnly set apart, and authorised by the Church to exercise their ministry. As the document *Towards Visible Unity* puts it:

The ordained ministry is both for the Church and for the world; its

responsibility is to enable the whole Church to be fully the visible body of Christ, glorifying the Father in and for the world. The ordained minister is a representative figure portraying to the Christian community Christ's Lordship and care for his people, and Christ's gathering of all his people into his own eternal worship of the Father.

It can truly be described as a gift of Christ to his Church.

B. Determinative Factors

20. Before we expound the pattern of ministry we envisage for a Uniting Church there are two further points to be made.

21. The first concerns the way in which ministry should be exercised within the Church. BEM argues that personal, collegial and communal dimensions must be given expression. The point is well summed up in *God's Reign and Our Unity*:

To the extent that ministry conforms to Christ, it reflects the character of God as revealed in the incarnation. As God in Christ deals with us in a personal way, so all ministry must have a *personal character, providing in a specific person a focus for the unity and witness of the community. As God calls us into a reconciled fellowship, so all ministry must have a collegial character - exercised not by one person alone but in shared responsibility with colleagues. As the Church is the body of Christ, quickened by the Spirit, so the ministry must have a communal character, so that every member is enabled to exercise the gifts which the Spirit gives and so that the whole community is, as far as possible, associated in the process of teaching and decision making.*

If these are the marks of the whole ministry of the people of God, the ordained ministry needs to be ordered and exercised in such a way that each of these three dimensions is afforded adequate expression. In the past in all our different churches we have not always succeeded in holding all three together and in balance, and so the pattern we seek for a Uniting Church must more successfully achieve this.

22. The second concerns the framework of Church order within which the ministry is exercised. It is beyond the scope of this report to enter into a detailed description of the synodical or conciliar pattern which a Uniting Church will require. At this point we would simply affirm our conviction that the corporate and decision making bodies the Church will need should relate as closely as possible to the patterns of community life that exist in the society to which it is called to witness and that ecclesiastical boundaries should as far as possible be co-terminous with those of local government. These are some of the implications of this which we envisage:

23. The *basic communities* in which people live their lives today are the residential neighbourhood and the workplace. The Uniting Church will inherit a highly structured pattern of neighbourhood congregations, but only a vestigial pattern of support for Christians in their places of work. One of the challenges of unity will be to give expression to the visible unity of God's people in each neighbourhood; one of the challenges of mission will be to establish a framework of support and witness in the place of work. As will emerge below, the Church will look principally to the diaconate for leadership in these tasks.

24. The next wider layer of community life we will call the *locality*. This can

perhaps be most easily envisaged by thinking of a typical market town and its dependent villages. Equally "localities" could be defined as the cluster of communities along the floor of a Valley, or along the radial roads of a large city. In these localities the covenanted churches will have, typically, three or four stipendiary ministers serving a dozen or more congregations. These are the basis for the pastorates we describe below (see para 36). Each pastorate we envisage having a Council consisting of the ordained ministers, the deacons and the elected lay people of the pastorate, charged with overseeing and planning the mission and activities of the Church within the locality.

25. It might be expected that we would see the next wider layer as the civil county, with the bishop relating to that area. However because of our convictions about the style of episcopacy called for in a Uniting Church (see para 39 below), we propose that there shall be several dioceses within each civil county. In the less densely populated areas we see the diocese as co-terminous with the old counties, eg Pembroke, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Merioneth, Anglesey, Caernarfon, Montgomery, Radnor & Brecon. In the more urbanised areas, if the bishop is to exercise the highly personal ministry we envisage, we would look for dioceses in each of the following areas: East Clwyd, West Clwyd, North Gwent, South Gwent, Cardiff, South Glamorgan and the Vale, Swansea, Bridgend, and Pontypridd and the Valleys, resulting in at least 18 dioceses. Each pastorate would elect ministers and lay persons to serve on a Diocesan Council which would co-operate with the bishop in planning and implementing policy for the diocese.

26. A Uniting Church would have a very special opportunity and responsibility in representing the gospel to the *province or nation*. This responsibility would be exercised through a national or provincial synod which would also serve as the final decision making body for the whole Church and would be made up of the bishops and elected ministers and lay persons from each diocese.

C. A Variety of Ministries

The Ministry of the People of God

27. We begin by stressing what has already been referred to in section A, above, namely the general ministry of the whole people of God. The recovery of the awareness of the centrality of this ministry is one of the most striking features of Christian thinking in the last forty years. As long ago as 1948 the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam urged Churches to awaken to the importance of their lay members of both sexes, reminding them that the laity constitutes more than ninety-nine per cent of the Church:

Only by the witness of a spiritually intelligent and active laity can the Church meet the modern world in its actual perplexities and life situations.

The Second Assembly at Evanston in 1954 went further:

The laity are not mere fragments of the Church who are scattered about in the world and who come together again for worship, instruction and specifically Christian fellowship on Sundays. They are Christ's representatives, no matter where they are. It is the laity who draw together work and worship; it is they who bridge the gulf between the Church and the world, and it is they who manifest in word and action the Lordship of Christ over that world which claims so much of their time and energy and labour. This, and not some new order or

organisation, is the ministry of the laity.

There has been a similar development in the thinking of the Roman Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council issued a Decree on the Apostolate of the laity:

The lay apostolate is a participation in the saving mission of the Church itself Every layman, by virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church herself.

28. This vision needs to be realised in concrete and practical ways in a Uniting Church. It will mean that the gifts, abilities and skills of lay people will be used in the building up of the life of the Church. Some will assist in the administrative work of the churches - in the care of property and finances; others in maintaining the round of worship, as organists and choristers, as lay preachers or readers, in reading the lessons and leading the prayers, in assisting with the distribution of the elements in Holy Communion; others in the educational work of the churches, as Sunday School teachers, Youth Club leaders, etc. Above all church members must be encouraged and trained to witness to Christ in their places of work and leisure, to be involved in the political and social structures of their local communities and to be engaged in different aspects of social service and welfare. The educational task of equipping and preparing people for this lay apostolate must be given a high priority in the life of the church.

The Ordained Ministry

29. When we turn to the *ordained ministry*, as already mentioned, one of its primary tasks is to equip and enable the whole people of God to realise their gifts and fulfil their calling. Earlier documents relating to the Covenant have suggested that although many patterns of ordained ministry are theoretically possible, one embracing the ministry of deacons, presbyters and bishops best meets our criteria of continuity and renewal. What follows seeks to re-affirm that conviction as the basis for a Uniting Church. In doing so, however, we would point out that God's gifts of ministry in his Church are not necessarily confined to any particular three-fold pattern. A Uniting Church may be led, in the course of time, to adopt an even more diverse pattern.

30. *The Diaconate.* The ministry of deacons (diaconate) is derived from the Greek word *diakonia*, meaning "service". The diaconate of the New Testament and the early Church, like other ministries from that formative and fluid period, has gone through many changes and developments, so much so that

in many churches there is today considerable uncertainty about the need, the rationale, the status and the functions of deacons.

In the covenanted churches the word "deacon" is used to describe two quite different ministries. In the Church in Wales a deacon is an ordained man or woman in the first of the ministerial orders. Men normally go on to the priesthood after a year as a deacon, so that it is for them a serving period of preparation for the priesthood - although the diaconate, like membership of the whole people of God, remains a characteristic of the priesthood or episcopate. In the Baptist Church the word is used of lay men or women who are elected by the congregation to support the minister in his pastoral oversight and leadership, and are involved with the general administration and smooth running of the church. They are very similar to the

"elders" of the Reformed tradition except that they are not ordained to the office.

31. The ministry of deacons which we envisage for a Uniting Church borrows from both these models as well as from the Reformed eldership, but is also a return to the primitive model of the Church of the first three centuries. It will have a variety of forms which will have in common the intention of spear-heading the ministry of the whole people of God, particularly in its service both to the Church and to the world. Deacons would be called by God, elected by the pastorate, and ordained to their office by the bishop with the laying on of hands. This would not be repeatable, although some might hold office only for a limited period of time.

32. The words "lay", "clerical" and "ordained" have become somewhat distorted down the centuries, particularly as the basic concept of the laity, the *laos*, as the whole people of God including both ordained and non-ordained was largely lost. We see the deacons as belonging to the Church's ordained ministry, but also as being "lay" in the sense that they would not normally be stipendiary, but would earn their living in secular occupations. This would not preclude the possibility that some men or women might be prepared to offer themselves as full time, paid deacons, experiencing a vocation for such a serving role within the Church's mission, without having a vocation to the fuller ministry of word and sacraments exercised by the presbyterate. (Some existing Anglican deacons might opt to continue in such a ministry.) Full time deacons might be engaged in youth or community work, in social welfare organisations and so on. Others might be elected and ordained to the diaconate because they are recognised as giving leadership to more or less formal groups meeting in their place of employment.

33. In the initial stages of a Uniting Church's life, however, we envisage that the great majority of deacons would be serving local churches in a ministry comparable to that of Baptist deacons or Reformed elders. Such deacons would, therefore:

- share with other ordained ministers in the leadership of the church, and in its pastoral oversight, normally having entrusted to them a group of members;
- share responsibility for worship and its conduct, for Christian education, for maintaining proper standards of membership and for promoting witness and service to the community, mission at home and abroad, and the peace, unity and welfare of the church;
- confer together and with the presbyters and fellow members in the Church Council for the good of the whole church;
- give expression to the fact that the celebration of the Eucharist is always related to service in the world, by leading intercessions for the needs of the world, taking and administering the collection and distributing the bread and wine;
- arrange for the proper maintenance of church buildings and ensure the oversight of church finances;
- be ready if called upon to represent the local church in the wider councils of the Church, and by virtue of their membership of these councils, represent the whole Church to the local church.

To equip them for their work, deacons would require some preparatory training, as

well as on-going in-service training.

34. *The Presbyterate.* The minister of Word and Sacraments is variously described in our different traditions as parson, minister, priest, father, padre, pastor, etc. We will use the word "*presbyter*", which is the most traditional of all terms to describe one who ministers to the local congregation, coming as it does from the New Testament word "*presbyteros*". While we do not advocate that it replaces all the other terms in common usage, we will use it as a traditional and exact term with none of the misleading or indeed divisive connotations associated with some of the other terms.

35. Presbyters are called by God and, after an appropriate period of training, ordained to their office by the bishop with the laying on of hands and commissioned by the Church as servants and shepherds among the people to whom they are sent. Their role is defined as follows:

Presbyters:

- proclaim God's Word, call their hearers to repentance and in Christ's name declare the forgiveness of sins;
- prepare candidates for membership of the Church, baptise and share in confirmation;
- preside at celebrations of the Eucharist;
- lead the people in prayer and worship, build them up in faith, teach and encourage them by word and example, joining with them in a common witness to the world;
- exercise pastoral care of the people entrusted to them, minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death;
- share with their fellow ministers and members in the government of the church and the administration of its discipline.

Many presbyters will exercise a stipendiary ministry. We expect, however, that there will be need for an increasing number of non-stipendiary presbyters, who will continue in other forms of employment.

36. It is within the pastorate, as defined in para 24 above, that presbyters will exercise their ministry, apart from those in specialised and sector ministries. The pastorate should be sufficiently small to enable a full personal and communal ministry to be developed and yet large enough for a number of presbyters to work together as a partnership of equals in which various gifts and aptitudes can be exercised. Appointments to the local pastorate would require a system which safeguards the rightful interests of the congregations and their traditions of worship. At the same time, it would be necessary to respect the corporate authority of the Church as a whole in the placing of its ministers for the furtherance of its mission. In each pastorate there would be a Council consisting of the presbyters and elected laity who would plan and supervise the mission and pastoral work of the church in the pastorate. Each congregation within the pastorate would have regular congregational meetings to review and make plans for the development of the life and work of the congregation.

37. *The Episcopate.* Alongside the presbyterate an equally traditional ministry in the Church has been that of the episcopate. It has long been a subject of scholarly debate as to which ministry is primary - did the episcopate emerge from the presbyterate, or did the episcopate delegate responsibilities to the presbyterate? Since there is insufficient evidence it may remain an unresolved issue, but as the Church grew and spread in the second century the ministries became clearly distinguishable. Responsibility for the wider Church, the need for which was seen as established by the example of the work of the apostles, came in time to be exercised by bishops, synods, archbishops and patriarchs. It is this wider ministry of oversight, focussing the unity and apostolicity of the Church in a personal way, which we see as embodied in the bishops.

38. During the course of the Church's history and, indeed, in various parts of the world Church today, the office of a bishop has been exercised in many different ways. There is no fixed pattern to which a Uniting Church would need to conform. There are, however, a number of characteristic functions, in addition to those of a presbyter, which, taken together, would generally be recognised as constituting the work of a bishop. Bishops:

- represent the unity and continuity of the Church, thus enabling it in each place and time to relate to the Church universal;
- exercise leadership and oversight in the worship, witness and mission of the Church;
- act as guardians of the apostolic faith, ensuring that the Word is faithfully proclaimed and the sacraments duly administered;
- carry pastoral responsibility for the people committed to their charge, and especially for the other ministers of whom they are given oversight;
- preside at confirmations and ordinations;
- share in the councils of the Church, with a special concern for those matters which relate to life at regional, national and international levels.

In the Uniting Church bishops would be elected to office by a body which adequately represents the whole people of God not only in the diocese which the bishop is to serve, but also in the Church as a whole.

39. Because bishops are the focal point of unity for the Church in their diocese and sum up in their person and office so many things which belong to the local church as a whole, they represent the diocese to the whole Church and the whole Church in and to the diocese. As one ordained in a succession of bishops, the bishop is a sign of continuity, linking the Church of the present with that of the past. This unifying role is crucial in our understanding of the bishop's ministry. However it is equally important that the authority entrusted to the bishop should not be exercised in a prelatical or autocratic manner. The bishop should be a regular and familiar visitor to each pastorate, sharing in its worship and encouraging it in its mission. It is for this reason that we believe that the dioceses should be at least as small as those listed above in para 25.

40. One of the functions of bishops we have listed above calls for particular mention. When we speak of bishops as "guardians of the apostolic faith" we do not

wish to imply that they have a monopoly of Christian truth. The formulation and declaration of the Christian gospel is and must be a part of the mission of the whole Church. In a rapidly changing world, accepted customs, practices and formulations need constantly to be examined, challenged and re-stated. In the healthy conflict and debate which will be generated, as the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission's *Final Report* puts it,

bishops have a special responsibility for promoting truth and discerning error, and the interaction of bishop and people in its exercise is a safeguard of Christian life and fidelity.

In practice this will mean that all major decisions are the responsibility of the Church as a whole, expressed through the decisions of the national synod. Such decisions would only be reached after a process of consultation involving councils at congregational, pastorate and diocesan levels and in the national bishops' meeting. In recognising the bishops' role as guardians of the faith, the national synod would not want to act in a manner contrary to a consensus reached by the bishops, especially where matters of faith and order are under consideration.

Part Two

INAUGURATING A NEW PATTERN OF MINISTRIES

A. Unity in Diversity

41. In the previous section we have set out the pattern of ministries which we envisage for a Uniting Church. We turn now to the process by which any agreed pattern will need to be inaugurated.

42. Although the churches may agree upon the desirability of having bishops in a Uniting Church and for their invariable participation in ordination, there exist and will remain differences of conviction between those who regard such a ministry as purely functional, and those who regard it as essential to the nature of the Church.

43. In the Anglican Communion episcopal ordination is the universal practice. Most of its members would hold that such ordination is indeed an essential part of God's gracious provision for the salvation of the world. On the other hand, ministers of the other covenanted churches have not been episcopally ordained. Their churches would, however, see their action in ordaining ministers as an act which God has blessed. Furthermore many of them would see their ordinations not simply as an act of their own denomination but, in intention at least, on behalf of the whole Church of God. Anything therefore which can be construed as re-ordination is to them unacceptable.

44. These differences are of the same order, and as equally deeply rooted on both sides, as those which we saw existing over the ordination of women. They cannot be resolved by the submission of one party to the other, only by the mutual recognition of the diversity and of the history and experience on which it is founded. In this case, we take mutual recognition to imply:

(a) that those who see the episcopate as belonging to the essential nature of

the Church need to accept that their view is different from the experience of others, who may nonetheless accept its desirability; and

(b) that those entering a Uniting Church with a functional view of episcopacy need to accept that the practice of episcopacy in the Uniting Church must always be compatible with the other, "sacramental" view of episcopacy.

45. It is because one - or both - of these criteria have not been met that so many schemes for uniting churches having the historic episcopate with those without it have proved unsatisfactory or unsuccessful. As a result many people have come to the conclusion that this particular search should be abandoned in favour of other priorities. It is because we believe that faithful and effective mission in this land is inseparable from the visible unity of the Church, not least across this divide, that we are venturing another attempt.

46. In doing so, we believe it will be instructive, first of all, briefly, to comment on a selection of the more recent schemes and, in the light of these, trace a way forward.

B. Learning from our Mistakes

47. We turn first to three schemes which must finally be judged inadequate, but which nevertheless reveal to us mistakes which need to be avoided.

The South India Way

48. When the Church of South India was inaugurated in 1947, it was the first united church to cross the episcopal/non-episcopal divide.

It was decided to allow for a period of at least thirty years, during which churches would be growing together and the process of unification would be coming to completion. It was agreed that from the time of union, all ordinations would be carried out by bishops with the assistance of presbyters, but all who were ministers at the time of union should be accepted with equal rights and status, except that congregations should be safeguarded against having thrust upon them a ministry which they were not able conscientiously to accept.

The consequence was that, although the scheme met the requirements of the non-episcopal churches, the Lambeth Conference of 1948 decided that the new church could not be recognised as in full communion with the world-wide fellowship of Anglicans until at least the end of the interim period. This means that, although the scheme met our first criterion, it failed to meet the second (and, incidentally, the Welsh Covenant's desire "to be recognised as far as possible by the Church throughout the world" - Article 5b). Significantly, although the pioneering achievements of the Church of South India have been widely admired, no subsequent scheme has sought to follow their way of reconciling the ministries. Nor do we see this as the way forward.

The Church of England/Methodist Church Conversations

49. Unlike the South India scheme the 1968 proposals for the reconciliation of the Church of England and the Methodist Church did not envisage the immediate creation of a new church, but the mutual recognition of churches, members and ministries as

a preliminary stage on the road to organic union. There was to be a national celebration which would include an act of integration of the ministries. First the President of the Methodist Conference, standing with representative ministers, declares the readiness of the Methodist Church to accept the historic episcopate. Then, with prayer, they lay hands on the Archbishop of Canterbury and representative bishops. The Methodist President and ministers then kneel before the Archbishop of Canterbury and four Anglican priests who, again with prayer, lay hands upon them. It was intended that those who had taken part in the national celebration would preside at local services which would follow the national one, and at which the act of integration would be extended. During the following year the Methodist Church would proceed to the appointment of Methodist bishops in the historic episcopate. These proposals were accepted by the Methodist Conference, but failed to achieve the requisite majority in the General Synod of the Church of England.

50. The Methodists might be judged to have gone as far as they possibly could, without denying the reality of their ordinations, in their readiness to fulfil our second criterion. Why, then, did the scheme fail? Was it that the Anglicans were not corporately ready to meet the first criterion? Perhaps they were not; but if so, it was with some justification. The scheme deliberately included an element of ambiguity in its proposals; it was left unclear whether or not the bishops were actually ordaining the Methodist ministers. The Methodists clearly understood that they were not; some Anglicans, accepting the Methodist interpretation, felt obliged to reject the scheme. In retrospect it has become clear that unity cannot be built on ambiguity, but only the greatest possible mutual understanding, however well-intentioned the grounds for the ambiguity.

The English Covenant Proposals

51. The reasons for the failure of these more recent proposals are even more complex. Like the Anglican/Methodist scheme they envisaged unity being realised in two stages. At the first stage, that of the Covenant, the churches were to enter into mutual recognition. The churches without bishops were to incorporate bishops in the historic episcopate into their systems. At the service inaugurating the Covenant each church was to present at least one person (in the case of the Methodists, presumably, a District Chairman; in the case of the URC, it was assumed, a Provincial Moderator) for ordination as a bishop. The remaining District Chairmen and Moderators were to be accepted as "persons carrying out functions analogous to those of bishops" but clearly would not stand within the historic episcopate. Since all future ministers were to be episcopally ordained, during the interim period these "quasi-bishops" would, therefore, always share in ordinations in collegiality with those ordained as bishops, until they, or their successors, had been episcopally ordained.

52. Although these proposals were accepted by the decision-making bodies of both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (URC), it was only in the teeth of powerful opposition, especially within the URC. There was a strong feeling that the need for non-Anglican churches to introduce what was perceived as the "alien" element of bishops into their episcopal systems (systems of over-sight) implied that their ministries were not genuinely being accepted by the Anglicans. On the other hand, three Anglicans, in a minority report, among other reservations, raised implicitly the question whether the URC, in particular, in insisting on the retention of the interim period, was genuinely ready to recognise the convictions of those Anglicans who take a sacramental view of episcopacy. The outcome was that these proposals were abandoned after failing to secure a sufficient majority in the

53. For all their subtlety, therefore, these proposals must be judged to have failed to meet either of our criteria for mutual acceptance. Furthermore, after two failed attempts, we question whether any proposals for the general reconciliation of ministries as a preparatory stopping place on the road to organic union will prove any more successful.

C. Towards a Way Forward

54. We turn now to three documents, drawn from a wide variety of countries and church traditions, which, taken together, we see as more helpful in mapping out a possible way forward. The first is the *Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan* which provided the foundations for the three united churches in North India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The method these churches adopted is substantially the same as that which was subsequently advocated by the informal French joint Roman Catholic/Protestant *Group des Dombes*. It was, in turn, taken up by the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Paper on the Ministry, the Lima Text, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.

55. *The North India/Pakistan Way* sought to create a united church with a united ministry in a way which avoided the delay in achieving full communion with the Anglican family which the South India scheme encountered. Since the churches formed on the basis of this scheme are in full communion with the provinces of the Anglican Communion, though as united churches they are not technically members of that Communion, the method they adopted must be judged to have met the demands of Article 5b of our Covenant for world-wide recognition. Their method, the mutual laying on of hands, though similar to that of the Anglican/Methodist scheme (paras 49/50 above) is less open to the charge of ambiguity which characterised that scheme, while leaving room for a variety of interpretations.

56. It made as clear as possible the intention of the act of laying on of hands. They acknowledge that the ministries of all the participating churches have been in God's providence used by the Holy Spirit, but they recognise that owing to their divisions they have been limited in scope and authority, "not having the seal of the whole Church". By the mutual laying on of hands "they seek the grace of God for the wider and more effectual fulfilment of their ministry". They recognise that there may be different interpretations of this rite, but emphasise that it is not ordination. By prayer and the laying on of hands they seek "whatever of the fulness of Christ's grace, commission and authority each may need for his proper office" in the new united churches.

57. This takes place at a national service of inauguration, in two parts. In the first part after representatives of the uniting churches have read their churches' resolutions accepting the Plan of Union, the union of the church is effected by prayer; then, in the case of North India, there follows an act of bringing together the existing Anglican and Methodist episcopates. In the second part, on the following day, there takes place the act of unification of the ministry and the consecration of the new bishops. Representative ministers from each of the churches say together:

58. In the conviction that God wills one Communion and Fellowship of all who believe in His Son Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, I, believing myself to have been duly and lawfully ordained within the Church to the ministry of

the Word and Sacraments in the Church of God, am humbly prepared to commit myself to God and through the laying on of hands with prayer to receive from Him such grace, commission and authority as it may be His will to bestow upon me for my ministry in the Church of God within the Church of North India/Pakistan.

59. Then after prayer has been offered, representative ministers lay hands on three ministers, chosen beforehand, one of whom is a bishop. These three chosen ministers then lay hands on the delegations from each church in turn, saying together:

60. Forasmuch as thou wast called and ordained within the Church to the ministry of the Church of God, and art now called to the ministry of the Church of God within the Church of North India/Pakistan, mayest thou receive from God the power of the Holy Spirit to continue in thee His gifts, and in accordance with His will to bestow on thee grace, commission and authority for the ministry of a presbyter (bishop) of the Church of God within this Church; and take thou authority to preach the Word of God, to fulfil the ministry of reconciliation and to minister Christ's sacraments in the Church of North India/Pakistan; and see that thou do all these things in brotherly partnership with God's fellow-workers whom in this union of churches He has made thine.

61. Following the national service of inauguration there take place diocesan services of unification, in which the bishop, together with other ministers who have taken part in the national service, lay hands on all the presbyters of the uniting churches in the diocese.

62. *Towards a Reconciliation of Ministries* is the fruit of the discussion in the French Catholic/Protestant Group des Dombes. It takes our understanding of what the North India proposals might imply a stage further. The Group was concerned to find a way to deal with the urgent pastoral problems which exist in France today. It proposed that "reconciliation of ministries might be envisaged in certain cases where serious ecumenical work at pastoral and community level has brought to light a fundamental agreement in faith which makes it unequivocally possible" and suggested that this might be effected by the mutual laying on of hands. The Group goes further in spelling out what it thinks this might imply from the Catholic and from the Protestant sides.

63. From the Catholic side it means recognizing the substantial reality of those ministries which rose outside the episcopal succession, and which can in some cases claim to rest at least on the sign of presbyteral succession. The need is therefore to recover the sign of episcopal succession in order to complete their recognition and give their ministries authority in the eyes of the people of the Catholic Church.

64. From the Protestant side it means recognising the reality of a ministry of the word and sacraments in the Catholic Church and the necessity for their authorities to confer authority on Catholic ministers to minister to their people. Further, Protestants need to recognise that as a result of the rupture in the sixteenth century, they have been deprived of the fulness of the sign of apostolic succession.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

65. The interpretation of the ecumenical situation given by the Group des Dombes is taken up by the World Council of Churches' Lima Text on Ministry. We would, in

particular, draw attention to the important phrase in para 38, which speaks of episcopal succession as "a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church". Then, in para 53, it sets out the steps which different churches need to take to achieve mutual recognition:

66. Churches which have preserved the episcopal succession are asked to recognize both the apostolic content of the ordained ministry which exists in churches which have not maintained such succession and also the existence in these churches of a ministry of *episkope* in various forms.

Churches without the episcopal succession are asked to realize that the continuity with the Church of the apostles finds profound expression in the successive laying on of hands by bishops and that, though they may not lack the continuity of the apostolic tradition, this sign will strengthen and deepen that continuity. They may need to recover the sign of the episcopal succession.

D. Getting the Language Straight

67. We believe that these last three documents, taken together, provide us with a pattern for inaugurating a Uniting Church. Before we describe that pattern, however, confusion might be lessened, if we were to offer our clarification of some of the key words being used, so that the intention of the actions we propose is as free as possible from any unnecessary ambiguity.

Recognition

68. This is a word which has been used in two different senses in the documents from which we have quoted. The ambiguity was acknowledged as long ago as 1971 in the commentary which was written to accompany the text of the Covenant. Expounding the phrase in article 5(a) of the Covenant, which states that "we recognise the ordained ministries of all our churches as true ministries of the word and sacraments", it says:

This article may not go as far as some may wish; but it does not obscure real differences, nor does it imply that complete mutual recognition which would make present ministries fully interchangeable. On the other hand it does not recognize present ministries as true ministries only within the separated churches which ordained them If all the churches are "within the one Church of Jesus Christ" (Article 3) it follows that all ordained ministries are within the one Church also. And since each church sets men apart by prayer in the name of Christ for the ministry of the word and sacraments, all ordained ministries are authentic for the same reason.

The recognition which we have already accorded each others' ministries within the Covenant is one which falls short of interchangeability. However, when the Group des Dombes and BEM speak of mutual recognition, they would appear to be looking forward to a recognition which implies interchangeability. This report seeks to enable us to move to this more far-reaching recognition, which might more accurately be termed the *reconciliation* of churches and ministries. What stands in its way, as BEM in particular makes clear, is the need for churches without the historic episcopate to recover the sign of episcopal succession.

Apostolic/Episcopal Succession

69. This episcopal succession is sometimes, especially in Roman Catholic circles, referred to as apostolic succession, that is the succession of bishops in the Church from the time of the apostles to the present day. In the past the Church's apostolicity has sometimes been identified with such an understanding of apostolic succession. We believe that this is too narrow an understanding. A more adequate description is that given in BEM:

Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles; witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing gifts which the Lord has given to each.

70. Alongside this we would set the important emphasis which *God's Reign and Our Unity* places on "orthopraxis" as well as "orthodoxy". Referring to the acquiescence of churches in *apartheid* and in the injustices of the present international economic order, it affirms:

No discussion of Christian unity in the contemporary world can escape this question. True believing (orthodoxy) should bear fruit in right action (orthopraxis). Yet, because Christians are sinners, they fail to embody in their conduct what they profess in their creed. The Church is a fellowship in which Christ consents to eat and drink with sinners. But the Church is also called to be a school of holiness in which the members "teach and admonish one another in all wisdom" (Col 3: 16) in order that its members may be "presented holy and blameless and irreproachable" before its Lord (Col 1: 22) We have to confess that our search for ecclesiastical unity will be disobedience to the Church's Lord if it does not go hand in hand with the mutual correction and admonition of which the Apostle speaks.

71. Within this much wider context, while some covenanted churches may need to recover the sign of episcopal succession, all need to recover a true apostolicity. To some extent, by God's grace all our churches have been obedient to the apostolic witness, and thus maintained an apostolic succession; equally they have all fallen short and need to seek His pardon and the recovery of an apostolic fulness of life, doctrine and mission.

Laying On of Hands and Ordination

72. We propose, as the way of reconciliation and achieving interchangeability, the mutual laying on of hands. To clarify our intention here, we draw a distinction between laying on of hands and ordination.

Laying on of hands is the normal translation of the Greek expression *epithenai tas cheiras*. This is a sign which Christians use when they pray for particular spiritual gifts to be given by God to the person upon whom hands are laid. In the New Testament and in the practice of the churches it is used in a variety of contexts, in confirmation, for instance, and in healing as well as at ordination. Any single individual may receive the laying on of hands any number of times, because the intention of the act differs from occasion to occasion.

77. Since the reconciliation of ministries is thus so intimately linked to the exercise of the office of the bishop it will now be clear why we cannot see any possibility of the complete and general interchangeability of ministers prior to the inauguration of a Uniting Church. In *Principles of Visible Unity* much of the preparatory work for such a church has been completed. It is our hope that the contents of this report will encourage the churches to proceed as swiftly as possible to the drawing up of a Scheme of Union.

E. The Act of Inauguration of a Uniting Church

78. It remains for us to give some outline of the means by which such a Scheme might be inaugurated. The Commission is at present working on a fuller draft of an act of inauguration and hopes to make this available to the churches by the end of 1986. Suffice it to say here that we propose to take the North India service described in paras 57ff above as our model.

79. The Act of Inauguration we envisage would take place within the context of a celebration of the Eucharist according to the rite of the covenanted churches. It would include the following features:

The Reconciliation of the Churches. This would involve the presentation by each church of the resolution of its governing body giving assent to the proposed Scheme of Union, and the consequent reconciliation of members of the uniting churches.

The Reconciliation of the Ministries, by the mutual laying on of hands of representatives of each of the participating churches.

The Ordination of new Bishops for the Uniting Church.

80. This national act would be followed as soon as possible by further acts of inauguration in each of the new dioceses. The newly created bishop of the diocese together with other ministers who had taken part in the national service would lay hands on all the ministers of the diocese in a procedure similar to that used in the national Act of Inauguration, after a similar declaration and welcoming of representative members into the wider communion of the reconciled churches.

F. In the Meantime

81. What we have so far proposed is the ultimate goal. The consultation needed to draft and adopt a Scheme of Union - not to mention the complex legal work that would be necessary - cannot be rushed. Yet we set out, in producing this report, with a great sense of urgency and of the need to move rapidly to a stage of deeper commitment within the Covenant. We can well anticipate - and indeed share - the feelings of frustration which what we have said so far will generate in some quarters. It is really not possible to make some further advances without waiting for the consummation of a Uniting Church? We believe that it is, in two directions:

82. (a) Local acts of reconciliation

Although we have said that a full and general interchangeability of ministries cannot be envisaged on the principles we have established prior to the adoption of

Ordination, on the other hand, is derived from the Latin word which was used to translate the Greek *cheirotonein* (literally: to vote by stretching out the hand. See Acts 14: 23; 2 Cor 8: 19). It is the word used to denote the action of churches in appointing certain of its members to a particular ministry. Since by covenanting we recognized each others' churches, and therefore each others' ministries, in the sense of "recognition" used in the quotation from *Covenanting for Union in Wales* (see para 68 above), there can be no question of re-ordaining any minister, so long as an equivalent ministry is being exercised in the Uniting Church. (It is perhaps worth noting that although the churches would not countenance re-ordination as a means of achieving unity, they do themselves speak of "ordaining" elders, when they become ministers, deacons when they become priests, or priests when they become bishops. In these cases clearly the intention is different and it is not truly a matter of "re-ordination".)

Our intention, therefore, is the same as that of the Churches of North India and Pakistan, to seek from God those gifts which already ordained ministers need in order to exercise a wider ministry than that for which they have previously been commissioned, when hands were laid upon them at their ordination.

The Sign of Episcopal Succession

73. Once a Uniting Church has been inaugurated, ministers will be ordained by the laying on of hands of bishops in the episcopal succession. Our understanding of episcopal succession is that of the Lima Text when it speaks of it as a "sign, but not a guarantee"; and as a "sign of the continuity and unity of the Church".

74. To speak of episcopal succession as a *sign but not a guarantee* is to acknowledge that the practice of episcopacy does not automatically ensure the purity of the Church nor has it invariably been free of abuse. Those churches which have not maintained an episcopal succession must not therefore be seen as wholly unjustified in the stand that they have taken.

75. On the other hand to speak of it as a *sign of continuity and unity* is to acknowledge that the exercise of the office of a bishop can become, by God's grace, an effective sign of the power of the gospel to reconcile and unite. The sign resides not simply in the laying on of hands by a bishop in ordination, important as that is, but in people who had hitherto been estranged from one another living together in one communion, a communion of which the bishop is the focus. As such it may become a potent sign of the reconciling power of the gospel, not only to the Church but also to a grievously divided world.

76. It would therefore be an over-simplification to see the mutual laying on of hands at the inauguration of a Uniting Church as a means of removing defects. Our intention is that of the Churches of North India and Pakistan:

to seek from God for their ministers whatever of the fulness of Christ's grace, commission and authority each may need for the performance of his proper office In particular they believe that God will assuredly so answer their prayers that any differences between ministers not hitherto episcopally ordained and those already so ordained will be thus transcended, and that by such transcending of this and other differences, as they are known to God himself, the Church of North India/Pakistan will receive from him at the outset a ministry fully and without exception accredited in the eyes of all its members and, so far as may be, of the Church throughout the world.

a Scheme of Union, it will be recalled that the Group des Dombes proposed local acts of reconciliation "*where serious ecumenical work at pastoral and community level has brought to light a fundamental agreement in faith*". Where this exists, and where the existing systems of oversight have come together to form a Sponsoring Body, the situation is surely ripe for a local act of reconciliation to take place. This might happen, for instance

- where all the covenanted churches in an area, and their ministers, have reached such a level of mutual commitment that they have already in effect created the sort of ecumenical pastorate which is described in paras 24 and 35 above;
- where it is desirable for one minister to serve a pastorate including Free Churches and an Anglican parish.

83. Such a local act of reconciliation would include a reconciliation of local churches within the Covenant and the welcoming of members into this wider fellowship. Hands would be laid upon the ministers concerned, both at the inauguration of a local scheme and at subsequent inductions within it, by the authorised representatives of the churches concerned, including the bishop, with the intentions described in Section D above and in a form analogous to that outlined in section E. If it is clearly understood that their commissioning is confined to that particular charge, this will result, we would suggest, in a mutually acceptable and reconciled ministry.

84. There are, we know, a number of areas where plans are being made which might meet the above criteria. If the covenanted churches were to give their approval to local acts of reconciliation, they would need to free participating congregations from some of the constraints of our present denominational structures. There is a considerable body of experience to guide us in these matters, collected in the various publications of the Commission and of the Consultative Committee on Local Ecumenical Projects in England. We have asked the meeting of Church Leaders in Wales to see how these could be applied to local acts of reconciliation.

85. (b) *Parallel Ordinations*

We note that there took place recently in Bristol Cathedral a service in which the appropriate authorities of the Church of England and the United Reformed Church conducted an ordination service, so to speak, in parallel. If the covenanted churches were to accept this practice, ministers ordained at such a service would be in no way different from ministers ordained in separate services; they would still be ordained by and under the discipline of one denomination. This would, however, be one more sign of our commitment to one another and readiness to grow into unity. If the Commission were also to prepare and the churches to approve a common Ordination Service, it could be that such services might become the norm during the period leading up to the inauguration of a Uniting Church.

QUESTIONS TO THE CHURCHES

In presenting this report to the covenanted churches for their consideration, the Commission asks the churches to reply to the following questions. It asks that replies be made at each church's highest appropriate level of authority, and that they reach the General Secretary's office by December 31st 1987.

1. Is the pattern of ministry outlined in Part One of the report acceptable to your church?
2. Do you encourage the Commission to proceed forthwith to draft a Scheme of Union to be inaugurated with the intentions and on the lines of Part Two of the report?
3. Would you be prepared to accept the principle and consequences of local acts of reconciliation as described in paras 82-4 above?
4. Do you encourage the Commission to submit a common Ordination Service for use as suggested in para 85 above?

Appendix 3

The United Reformed Church Province of Wales

MINISTRY IN A UNITING CHURCH

The following is the text of the response which the Provincial Synod agreed, without dissent, on Saturday, October 10th 1987, should be presented to the General Assembly of the URC in May 1988 for its endorsement, and submitted thereafter to the Commission of Covenanted Churches.

As a community of God's people responsible to Christ and to our traditions in the New Testament and the Reformation, and as a United and uniting Church which has discovered a new richer identity out of its constituent parts and longs to see that identity further enriched, we respond to the report "Ministry in a Uniting Church". We believe that the Holy Spirit has led us so far, and is calling us to go on.

Fel cymdeithas o bobl Dduw, sy'n atebol i Grist ac i'n traddodiadau yn y Testament Newydd a'r Diwygiad, ac hefyd fel Eglwys sy'n Unedig ac yn uno sydd wedi darganfod hunaniaeth newydd a mwychyfoethog o'i rannau cyfansoddol, ac sy'n dyheu i weld yr hunaniaeth hwnnw yn cael ei gyfoethogi ymhellach, yr ydym yn ymateb i'r adroddiad "Gweinidogaeth mewn Eglwys yn Uno". Credwn fod yr Ysbryd Glan wedi ein harwain hyd yn hyn ac y mae'n ein glaw ymlaen eto.

Question 1: Is the pattern of ministry outlined in Part One of the report acceptable to your Church?

Yes. As a church which is committed by its tradition to believing itself to be in constant need of reformation (*semper reformanda*), we would begin by affirming that we see nothing theologically inconsistent with that tradition in the pattern of ministry set out in the document. In particular we warmly welcome the basic emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God, and feel that the pattern of pastorates and dioceses outlined will be a more effective instrument for mission than anything we can achieve as a separate denomination. There are two further comments, though, which we would make.

The description of the office of deacon in para 33 seems to follow the Reformed understanding of the local church elder, rather than seeking to define the new office of those called primarily to enable church members to think theologically

about their service to the world. Some elders will see their future ministry within this new form of diaconate. However we are accustomed to authorise elders in some circumstances to preside at the Lord's Supper. Other elders might therefore feel called, after any necessary training, to seek recognition within an enlarged presbyterate. We suggest that this option should be open to them. We would accordingly ask the Commission to give some further thought to the understanding of the diaconal ministry in preparing a Scheme of Union, not least in the light of the extensive discussions that we understand to be likely shortly to take place throughout Britain into the relationship of the eldership and the diaconate.

The definitions of presbyter and bishop are generally acceptable. It should, however, be recognised that, as a matter of historical fact, many among us have seen the office of bishop as a cause for disunity, rather than a sign of unity. Much care and patience will therefore be necessary in the exercise of episcopacy if bishops are to win the affection of many in our churches. Thus, dioceses should be at least as small as the smaller of those indicated in para 25; and, while we accept the appropriateness of the role of bishop as president at confirmations as a means of making clear the recognition of the wider Church within the local church, we wonder whether it would not be permissible on some occasions for the bishop to delegate that presidency to a local presbyter.

Question 2: Do you encourage the Commission to proceed forthwith to draft a Scheme of Union to be inaugurated with the intentions and on the lines of Part Two of the report?

Yes. Although many in the URC would have been happier if it were possible to follow the means of inaugurating a Uniting Church adopted by the Church of South India, we accept the Commission's judgement that the Church of North India way is more likely to bear fruit.

We feel that further consideration should be given to ministers coming from England and other countries. Presumably those who come to serve in a full-time pastorate in the Uniting Church would receive recognition and reconciliation of their previous ministry to the ministry of the Uniting Church (and this from whatever branch of the Church they come). However, we wonder what the position of other visiting ministers, serving temporarily in the Uniting Church, would be.

We appreciate the reference in para 12 to the conscience clause contained in the URC *Basis of Union*. We think it important to note that if such a clause is to be included in a future Scheme of Union, it should, like that in the URC Basis, be of general applicability, and not specifically related to the ordination of women to the presbyterate and episcopate. We envisage that it might be helpful in connection with a wider range of issues, including, for instance, matters relating to baptismal and marriage discipline.

The statement in para 11 that all ministries should be open equally to men and women is a central conviction with us. However we recognise that at the inauguration of a Uniting Church, there will be some presbyters who when ordained did not envisage such openness and who would in conscience be unable to work alongside a woman presbyter. We feel that if in the initial stages of a Uniting Church's life such presbyters were able to appeal to such a conscience clause, this would be a positive help in sealing the Church's unity. We are more concerned with the recognition of women's ministry at diocesan level and feel that anything that could cause the existence of dioceses with totally male presbyterates would be completely

unacceptable. In our view therefore at the inauguration of the Uniting Church, all those elected to serve as bishops should be willing and able to recognise the presbyterate of women and to ordain women to that office in the future.

As a church which has hitherto worshipped and conducted its business almost exclusively in English, we affirm our commitment to a church that seeks to reflect the multi-cultural and linguistic pluralism of modern Wales and affirm that the use of the Welsh language is part of that culture and pluralism.

Question 3: Would you be prepared to accept the principle and consequences of local acts of reconciliation as described in paras 82-4 above?

Yes. This proposal presents no particular difficulties to the URC.

Question 4: Do you encourage the Commission to submit a common Ordination Service for use as suggested in para 85 above?

Yes. Our present practice is for ordination to the ministry of word and sacraments to take place within the pastorate in which the minister is initially to serve. We would be happy, where it is appropriate, for candidates to be ordained at a parallel service, though we would expect that such a service would be followed by one of induction within the pastorate

We pray that God will bless our work
and lead us by his Holy Spirit into
greater unity he desires for us.

Gweddinwn i Dduw fendithio ein gwaith
a'n harwain ni drwy'i Ysbryd Glan i
mewn i'r undod pellach y moe e'n dynumo
drosom ni.

THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd A J Wells

Secretary: Mr H L Gunn

1. Discussion of last year's report on the development of General Assembly has been temporarily set aside because progress in unity talks with the Congregational Union of Scotland has led to a moratorium on constitutional changes within the URC. The matter will be taken up again when a decision has been reached by the two Assemblies on the proposals. The moratorium is therefore likely to extend either to September 1988 or September 1989. Meantime, we are grateful to members of the Forward Policy Group and to others who have shared their thoughts with us.

2. Comments received about the proposed residential Assembly in 1989 have been favourable and we urge Assembly to be bold and to undertake the experiment. The format with which the committee is working allows for an Assembly which would begin early on the Saturday afternoon (1st July) and close at lunchtime on Tuesday (4th July). Advantage would be taken of the University facilities to provide sectional meetings for informal discussion and questions and answers on departmental concerns. There would be three such sessions, each of three simultaneous meetings, and Assembly members would circulate on an organised basis. Departmental presentations in plenary sessions would therefore be briefer and confined to the debating of resolutions. Altogether the programme would be less formal and more participative.

3. Should Assembly not agree to these proposals, the General Assembly in 1989 will be held at Coventry from 8-12 May. Irrespective of the decision made this year, Assembly in 1990 will be of the normal type and held from 14-18 May, to avoid the Bank Holiday Monday, at a place yet to be determined.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

1. That the report be received for debate.
2. Assembly agrees:
 - (a) to hold a fully residential Assembly at York University from 1-4 July 1989;
 - (b) 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.

ASSEMBLY PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd Arthur L Macarthur

Secretary: The Revd Bernard Thorogood

1. The Committee has continued its work with some sixteen cases under consideration during the year. Some of these have been newly referred to us, either by Provincial Moderators or by Councils of the Church. Others have been on our agenda for some time. We have in each case sought to give advice or help with the aim of healing the hurts that arise when ministries run into trouble. These hurts can be wounding to ministers and their families. They can also be damaging to the spirit and well-being of local churches. We have tried to keep both in mind in what we have attempted. Bruised spirits need much closer and more sustained help than an Assembly Committee can give, and nearly always this has to be supplied by the officers and members of District and Provincial Councils with whom at best we can only work in distant partnership. We are much indebted to the Westminster Pastoral Foundation for helpful counselling in several cases.

2. It is only with great reluctance that we have on occasion had to recommend a change of vocation, trying wherever possible to restore confidence and to reconcile those who are at variance. In this context we were glad to have opportunity to comment on the paper on Ministerial Discipline prepared for the Ministries Department and were able to suggest some modifications. In its final form we believe it provides a helpful clarification of the appropriate procedures to be followed in these difficult areas.

3. One concern that has surfaced concerns ministries spread over more than one pastorate. The *Basis of Union* envisaged such situations being brought into greater cohesion than has proved possible. We must urge all who are concerned with calls to such dual or multiple charges to secure, as far as ever possible, a full understanding of the likely strains before a minister is appointed. That understanding needs not only to be between the minister and the churches, but perhaps even more importantly between the churches in the group.

4. We must also draw attention to one aspect of the sadly increasing number of cases of marital breakdown in the ministry. Since a church house is usually involved, the spouse may not only suffer great distress but also the loss of a home. Whatever the circumstances that have caused the breakdown, the church must exercise what care it can for them as well as for the minister and local church. This is an anxiety shared by other Churches, and useful papers have been prepared by Anglicans, Baptists and Methodists. We would especially commend that written by Methodists under the title *Ministers and Matrimonial Problems*. We have arranged for copies to be made available to the Moderators.

5. The Committee is deeply grateful to the Revd Bernard Thorogood for the care and thought that he gives to these matters, and especially so in view of the anxious time through which he has been passing.

RESOLUTION

1. The Assembly receives the Report for debate.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HISTORY SOCIETY

1. A very successful meeting took place during the 1987 URC Assembly in Cardiff when our retiring President, Revd Arthur Macarthur, gave the Annual Lecture on the topic of the process of church union which led to the first formation of the URC in 1972. Apart from its place in the Journal, the lecture was recorded as it was delivered and many people took advantage of the opportunity to buy copies. Before the lecture members enjoyed a fine supper. At the Annual Meeting that evening Revd Dr Buick Knox was elected President for the coming period.
 2. The Council has spent much time considering the advice it should give the Church on the Library at Tavistock Place. Some duplicate stock has been earmarked for disposal but there is still a problem of space. This was made worse by the need to evacuate some items from unsuitable storage in a damp vault beneath Regent Square Church. Matters were then further compounded by a flood in the basement, the third since 1972. The Church should be aware that it has a fine scholarly asset in the Library and the Society will continue to do all it can to secure its future as a resource for learning about the URC and its antecedents.
 3. A related issue is the question of local church archives and those of Districts and Synods. We have constantly urged the deposit of the records of former Congregational churches in county record offices. We still hear horror stories of records kept under beds and in attics. Local church records are not appropriate possessions for individuals - they belong to the whole Church and to the community. We are further reviewing the advice we give on the records of former Presbyterian Church of England congregations, some of which are held at Tavistock Place. There seems a strong case for registers, at least, to be held in local archives where they can be more easily consulted by family historians.
 4. We are meeting at the Floral Hall Restaurant, Southport, for supper at 6pm on Tuesday 9 May when one of our own members, Ian Sellers, will speak about *Zion, Hulme, Manchester - Portrait of a Church* to be illustrated by slides and we invite non-members to join us and discover some of the fascinations of local church history. Our next residential meeting is planned for 2 - 4 September 1988 at Hengrave Hall, Suffolk. We are always pleased to welcome new members.
 5. The Annual Meeting will take place during the meeting on 9 May and officers will be elected for the year. Mrs Jeanne Armour is retiring as Treasurer and the Society records its enormous gratitude to her for her work over the last 10 years.
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UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

Convener: The Revd A J Knight

Vice Chairman: Mr P J Hoskins

Hon Treasurer: Mr S R Harvey

General Manager: Mr D Jones

Secretary: Mr B R Mullinger

1. The last year has been a very busy one for the Association. Three new properties have been opened, including our first venture into Shared Accommodation for the elderly. Sometimes referred to as *Abbeyfield-type* housing, Shared Accommodation meets the needs of elderly people who require greater support than that provided by conventional Sheltered Housing schemes. A resident house-keeper provides the two main meals of the day, which are eaten together as a family group in the common dining-room. Each resident has his or her own room, to which they may bring their own furniture. A number of similar schemes are planned for other parts of the country; one, in Herne Hill, will be opened later this year, and our first project in Wales - at Risca - will be of this kind.

2. Housing Associations are part of the voluntary housing movement and URCHA is especially grateful to those volunteers who provide local management for our schemes. Drawn in the main from United Reformed Churches, members of Local Management Committees are responsible for much of the day-to-day running of our schemes and they provide pastoral care for the residents. They are a vital part of the Association's structure and of the Church's mission in housing.

3. With other Housing Associations we are following the progress of the Government's Housing Bill very carefully. While welcoming the increasing role which is likely to be given to Housing Associations, we would, with other Associations, have reservations about a new funding policy if it made it more difficult for us to provide good homes at reasonable cost for the poorer members of our communities.

4. There was an encouraging response to an article about the work of the Association in a recent edition of *Reform*. We have received some offers of help and requests for further information. There are several ways in which members of local churches might be able to help. If you are planning a redevelopment of your site, or have spare land available, do consider an approach to the Association. An officer of URCHA is always happy to respond to invitations for informal talks about possible housing schemes. And if you have skills - and some time - which you could place at our disposal, we should be pleased to hear from you. As the work of the Association grows, we need new members for the Committee of Management and its sub-committees and, occasionally, for Local Management Committees. At the moment all our meetings are held in central London, so easy access to London would clearly be an advantage.

5. If you would like more information about the work of URCHA, a copy of the annual report can be obtained from our London office. The tape-slide presentation is still available, and is a good way to introduce the work of the Housing Association movement to a Church Meeting. Do telephone, or write, to the above address if we can help in any way.

SCHOOLS LINKED WITH THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

1. In 1987 the Heads and Governors of the 5 schools met twice - in May at Eltham College and in December at 86 Tavistock Place. The May meeting was part of the Five Schools' Conference, attended by over 40 governors and members of staff. The speakers included the President-elect of the Baptist Union and the Headmaster of Eltham Green School. The theme was *School and Community*.
2. Our schools continue to appreciate the support of their denominational community and once again they acknowledge grants made by the United Reformed Church from its share of the Memorial Hall Trust, and by the Milton Mount Foundation. These grants contribute to the education of the children of serving ministers and missionaries as well as those of women and men preparing for ordination.
3. In the past year the context for educational debate has changed but the debate itself remains as crucial as ever it was. Independent schools share in this debate with as lively a concern as schools in the maintained sector. No school is immune from the pressures of this debate. The future of each child and each teacher depends on the outcome. Their Christian foundation gives the 5 schools and the churches responsible for their development an inescapable responsibility, to which the stewardship of their Boards of Governors bears testimony.

CATERHAM SCHOOL

4. We thank the Rt Revd Cyril Franks for his service to the school as a URC representative on the Board of Governors and for conducting our Carol Service during his year as Moderator of the General Assembly. We welcome the new Moderator of the Southern Province, the Revd David Helyar, on to the Board. We said farewell to Mr Ernest de C Blomfield, an elder of Cheam URC, who has served as a governor for 28 years, 6 as Chairman.
5. Our Chaplain, Revd Raymond Lewis, and his wife retired at Christmas. The induction of our new Chaplain, Revd Derek Lindfield, took place in January. The Moderator presided and a former Chaplain, Revd Roy Robinson, gave the address. Mr and Mrs Lindfield have come from the University of Botswana, having been with CWM at Moeding College and at churches in Portsmouth and Norwich.
6. Croydon District made full use of our premises on a very wet July day, which included a celebration of CWM's 10th birthday - cake and all!
7. After 10 years in the Chemistry Department, Mr Bob Day, with his family, has left to train for the URC ministry at Northern College. We are glad to report also that 2 of our young Old Boys, sons of ministers, Stephen Newell and Neil Thorogood, will both be at Mansfield College this Autumn training for the ministry. We rejoice equally that 2 of last year's leavers, both Roman Catholics, are reading Theology, one at Oxford and the other at Cambridge.
8. Mr Horwood retired as Second Master after 17 years. His place has been taken by Mr Nigel Thorne who came to us from Harrow School.
9. The school magazine celebrated its centenary year with a special edition. The 10th anniversary of the Australian Churches' hymn book *With One Voice* was celebrated with a *sing-in* at Westminster Abbey, led by our school choir.

10. On the sporting side, Alistair Brown was awarded the trophy as the best all-round school-boy cricketer in the country; and in hockey we were pleased to have 3 Old Caterhamians in the Cambridge team, including the captain.

ELTHAM COLLEGE

11. The school gives thanks to God for another year of purposeful work and extra-curricular activity.

12. 57 of the Upper Sixth gained places at universities, polytechnics, medical colleges and schools of art, of whom 15 gained places at Oxford and Cambridge.

13. The swimming team won a place at the National Schools' Swimming Finals. The rugby and cricket teams had most enjoyable seasons.

14. The new Music and Drama Centre was completed in November, one of the fruits of the 1985 Appeal. It provided a perfect setting for the school's major Winter production - 4 performances of *Smike* (based on *Nicholas Nickleby*) in December.

15. The hurricane in October blew down 23 trees. A Tree Action Group was formed and, in order to plant new trees, set a target of £750 which has already been passed.

16. The Bishop of Lewes, the Rt Revd Peter Ball, and Prebendary Michael Seward of Ealing were special speakers in Eltham College during the year; their profound and moving addresses were very much appreciated.

SILCOATES SCHOOL

17. We were sad to lose the services of the Revd Alasdair Walker from the Board of Governors, but have welcomed in his place as one of the three representatives appointed by the Yorkshire Province, the new Moderator, the Revd Donald Hilton. Dr R F M Byrn has also had to relinquish his position as the representative of the University of Leeds and his place has been taken by Professor Michael Beddow, Professor of German.

18. The school chapel seems to be the centre of the school community. In addition to welcoming 21 visiting preachers to its Sunday evening services, it has also been used for 2 baptisms, 2 marriages and 2 funerals, of members of families associated with the school.

19. The Religious Studies Department organised a Sixth Form Conference with the intention of encouraging discussion of controversial and stimulating contemporary issues between members of neighbouring schools. Topics discussed were *Religion in a Scientific World* and *The Religious Aspects of Modern Physics*.

20. This has been an outstanding academic year in the record number of pupils who are members of the Sixth Form, the results achieved in Advanced Level examinations, and in the wide variety of university places won by last summer's leavers.

21. The school has acquired an additional 25 acres of land and the governors are actively planning a series of new sports pitches; they have also created a much needed car park.

22. The school has continued its recent high standard of performance on the games fields, particularly in rugby and cricket. Boys have represented West Yorkshire in a wide variety of sports.

23. The Headmaster and Mrs Baggaley enjoyed a period of 2 months' sabbatical leave in India, during which they were able to visit a number of different schools.

WALTHAMSTOW HALL

24. It has been a busy year at Walthamstow Hall preparing for the 150th anniversary of our foundation in 1838 as a school and home for the daughters of missionaries.

25. A Service of Thanksgiving is to be held at the Westminster Chapel, conducted by the Revd Dr R O Latham, at which Bishop Lesslie Newbigin will preach.

26. An appeal was launched for the building of a new Music and Drama Centre, and for the busary fund which enables us to give financial assistance to those in need.

27. Our academic results were again excellent, with pass-rates at Ordinary and Advanced Level of 90%, and our largest number of entries to Oxford and Cambridge for several years.

28. We await with interest the results of the first GCSE candidates this summer.

29. The major drama production was Brecht's *Galileo*, a fascinating and difficult play most intelligently performed, and the boarders' musical this year was a lively, tuneful *Oliver!*

WENTWORTH MILTON MOUNT

30. There are 342 girls in the school (166 boarders), of whom 18 are daughters of ministers - 16 URC, 1 Congregational and 1 Church of England.

31. In May Mr R Harrison retired as Chairman of the Board of Governors and Revd K Colledge, Mr R Harding and Revd D Smith retired from the Board. The school is grateful for the commitment and expertise of all four. The new Chairman is Revd C Mead, an accountant by profession, a minister of the Church of England by calling and a member of the Board since 1968. We welcome as governors Mrs R Goodfellow, representing the Milton Mount Foundation, Mr Ramsay Hall and Mr Peter J Spicer.

32. Miss R Bently has been appointed Deputy Head. In July 1987 Miss M Paton, Head of Music since 1977, left to train for the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

33. The Visitor of the Day at Speech Day was Miss Eleanor MacDonald, Founder and President of Women in Management.

34. Following good results at Ordinary and Advanced Level, the destinations of leavers are once again interestingly varied. They include the study of Languages, various branches of Science, Art, Medicine, Nursing, Business Studies, English, Music, Engineering - the latter a Ministry of Defence Scholarship.

35. The new swimming pool was formally opened by the Olympic Swimmer, Sharron Davies, and is in use for Swimming, Life Saving and Canoeing. Extensions to the senior Biology and Chemistry laboratories were opened by the Mayor of Bournemouth,

Councillor Mrs Barbara Siberry, who is an Old Girl of the school.

36. We maintain links with the local churches of the 3 main denominations represented in the school - United Reformed Church, Anglican, Roman Catholic - and have enjoyed the opportunities we have to lead worship for part or all of some services on Sunday mornings. We are grateful for the ministry of Revd J Mackelvie at Richmond Hill URC and wish him well in his retirement.

37. Extra curricular activities - active, creative and reflective - enhance the quality of school life. Social Service has included doing voluntary work at the hospital, welcoming friends from the Multiple Sclerosis Society to our Christmas party and groups of elderly folk to Contact teas, raising money for Guide Dogs for the Blind, Dr Barnardo's, the YMCA campaign against drug abuse and sponsorship for the primary education of a Colombian boy.

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 the 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 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 its 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 /her 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 Convener 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 of 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 Convener 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 regards any business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the 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.

