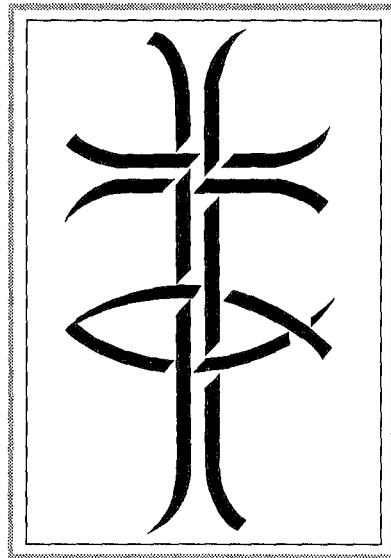


The United Reformed
Church

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996



July 6th - 9th York

**Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers**

From the General Secretary

To assist your preparation for this year's General Assembly, we have endeavoured to produce the annual reports, notice of resolutions and associated papers two months before we meet. This is to allow representatives time to study them, and local churches and district councils to consider any matters with which they are concerned.

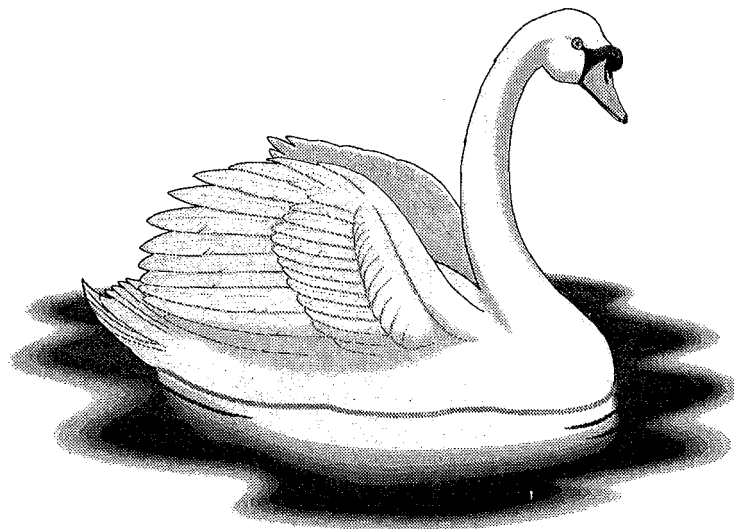
The layout is similar to last year, except we have changed the page size to A4. The reason is that this will make production easier and therefore assist in reducing costs. We intend to use this format in future years.

Anthony G Burnham

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**SYNODS REPORTS
and RESOLUTIONS,
CHURCHES - CHANGES
and PROVINCIAL
MODERATORS' REPORT**



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996**

Northern Province

For two years we have dreamed dreams and made plans; we have shared some of those with Assembly. Now we are at the point of seeing how far there was inspiration in our dreaming and the purpose of the kingdom of God in our planning. The subject heads are the same as we reported last year - but we are in a different place.

Development Team

The team is up and running. Terry Oakley was inducted as Development Officer in September and he was joined by Janet Turner serving from January as Youth and Children's Work Trainer. We now have appointments for two of our part-time tasks - a Skills Agent to coordinate the recruiting and release of skills and talents across the Province, and a Creativity Officer to promote activities such as music, drama, dance and craft in our churches.

They are supported by a Management and Strategy Group which tries to ensure both that the team works in the context of the policy of the District Council and Province, and also has space and opportunity for a prophetic and challenging role in the process of how the councils of the Church do their thinking and planning.

Holy Island Project

Northumberland District Council looks forward to the first Friends of St. Cuthbert's weekend which culminates in the induction on September 8 of Ian Fosten as Director. This project aims to show the Church alive today to the many people who come as tourists to Lindisfarne, to provide a resource for those increasingly exploring Celtic spirituality, as well as a centre for local church groups seeking to reflect on their life and work.

All pilgrimage is a learning experience, and this one is no exception. The final planning process has involved our ecumenical partners, groups with a special interest in the island's cultural and spiritual heritage and ourselves in confronting what partnership and cooperation really means.

Music Bank

In response to David Jenkins' sabbatical discoveries, the Province has established a Music Bank of anthems and other pieces offering an effective contribution to worship for churches with modest musical resources.

There will be a subscription membership and the opportunity to borrow sets of music for up to a month at a time. Initially we are running this as a pilot project for a year within the churches of our own tradition within the Province. If experience proves that it is worth it, we may extend its scope more widely.

North Western Province

Building for the Future

At each Assembly, we hear of the sad decline of some churches, leading to closure. We also hear of new congregations joining the United Reformed Church. This year we would like to share some good news with you about those churches in this Province which have faced considerable challenges with great fortitude. They have a 'new lease of life' through rebuilding, enabling a new approach to worship and outreach into the community.

The Church of St Andrew and St George

The Church of St Andrew and St George is situated in the town centre in Bolton. Last year, while it was in the midst of a radical rebuilding programme within, it discovered a major outbreak of dry rot which had the effect of doubling the estimated cost of the work from £250,000 to nearly £500,000. Very generous and sacrificial giving by the congregation (who are not particularly wealthy) together with a substantial grant and loan from the Province have ensured that the work can be completed. An attractive all purpose sanctuary, a number of renovated rooms, and a block of flats for single homeless people built within the former church hall now affords accommodation for a vast range of church and community activities.

Darwen Central Church

Darwen Central Church spent many years trying to demolish a grade 2 listed building which was unsuitable for worship in the 1990's. They have now succeeded, and have planning permission for a splendid new church. The congregation are full of enthusiasm to find the resources to build it!

Kirkham Church

Kirkham Church plans to demolish an old church hall and Sunday school rooms, and rebuild them on a different piece of land adjoining the church. They will also completely re-roof the church. This project costing £225,000 will be paid for by a supermarket next door in exchange for some land. The Local Authority will pay for the church to be floodlit. This church will celebrate its 100th birthday next year and is certainly preparing for Mission and Outreach into the next century.

Grosvenor St Aidans Church, Manchester

Grosvenor St Aidans Church, Manchester, seriously damaged by an arson attack in 1992 is now refurbished. The good thing members say about the fire is 'it brought us closer together and made us realise how much support we have in the community'.

Youth and Children's Work Trainer

We have now appointed Mr Leo Roberts. He has made a promising start to this demanding job. F U R Y members enjoyed their own programme of activities at the Synod in Weaste 1995. We are planning more F U R Y events to coincide with Synod culminating in Worship together.

Provincial Day 1995

Over 2,000 people joined in Worship at the beginning of Provincial Day held in Heaton Park to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of L.M.S., and we calculate that more than 3,000 spent part of the day in the village of tents erected for the occasion, focusing on 'Mission then and now'.

Growbags

To encourage members to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Christian Faith, we have developed 'Growbags'. These are study guides which can be used by individuals or groups. Subjects include: Jesus in the Gospels, Spirituality, Christ and Society, Christians Together, Starting to Lead Worship (Yorkshire Province), Understanding the United Reformed Church, The Sacraments, Eldership. Members of other Provinces are welcome to use this material.

Mersey Province

Last year's report from our Synod pointed to the Changes we wanted to see:

- i. a better response to the financial challenges facing us and more of our churches taking up TRIO/Stewardship programmes;
- ii. helping our Districts to overcome personnel problems in seeking to be more effective.

What has been achieved? Since last Assembly some fourteen percent of our churches have participated, or are in the process of pursuing, TRIO or 'Financial awareness campaigns' in responding to the challenges - we still have a much to do. The best result in one of our churches was a 120% increase in giving.

Three of our Districts Councils are being merged into two north of the River Mersey during this year to enable them to appoint new officers and committees from a wider pool of people.

We are pleased to report that a **major re-organisation of Synod Committee Structures (*Becoming More Effective*)** has been approved and implemented. A new Mission Executive has been formed with associated committees and task groups; soon we hope we will have become more effective in the pursuit of the Church's Mission within the Province.

The **signs are encouraging for our work with children and young people** in the appointment of **John Brown** as our full-time Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer. To service the new kinds of work needing to be done in local churches the appointments of a Training Officer and part-time Communications Officer are in the process of taking place. As in other Provinces we are seeking to meet the need for **trained local leadership in our churches**. At the March 1996 Synod approval was given to the programme - '**Developing the Eldership and Others for Local Ministry**' - Detailed plans are to be brought to the Autumn Synod.

We know that overall in the URC the number of applications to train for the Ministry is less than the needs; we feel encouraged that Mersey Province has been able to forward four new candidates for training and one for CRCW training.

ECUMENICAL The loss to the Merseyside Churches ecumenical scene has been deeply felt through the death of Archbishop Derek Worlock earlier this year. We hope and pray that his successor will continue to build on the good foundations of commitment and co-operation developed over the years. In 1995 Dr. John Newton retired and in 1997 Bishop David Sheppard and Bishop Michael Baughen (Chester) retire. What will happen with the new generation of church leadership in Merseyside and Cheshire?

Links with the **Presbyterian Church in Ireland** have continued during 1995 with an exchange of personnel having a special interest in aspects of Education. The **Churches of Christ (USA)** Exchange, in partnership with the Northwestern Province, has begun well and those directly involved have benefited from the experience.

Resource Sharing: our Province is eager to follow through the early conclusions outlined in the report concerning the twelve provinces and it is only plain common-sense to work in partnership wherever we can as a Church Family of the URC. This applies to resources of finance, information, ideas and expertise as much as it does to ministerial personnel.

There is a great deal to be done in helping all our Churches to learn how to grow in numbers, in faith which relates to every day life and in worship which is lively and attractive. The outcome of our mission research project (*What makes Churches Grow?*), undertaken by one of our ministers on sabbatical, is a handy report with much to encourage and challenge us. **We hope it will be of interest and help to the wider Church.**

DISTRICT BOUNDARIES. The Synod formally reports to the General Assembly, under para 2(4)(ii) of the Basis and Structure that at the meeting of Synod on 9 March 1996, it was agreed that the districts north of the Mersey be reduced from three to two with effect from 1 September 1996. The membership of the new districts has been given to the General Secretary.

Yorkshire Province

1995 proved to be a year for remembering that we belong to a world Church. The highlight came when, on 16 July, 700 of us filled Selby Abbey, as we commemorated the Bicentenary of the LMS/CWM at a service led by our provincial Moderator, with Bernard Thorogood as the preacher. Perhaps we needed the Bicentenary to remind us afresh that mission is the purpose of the Church. During the summer, our Ecumenical and Deployment Committee urged each of our District Councils to draw up a Strategy for Mission: we must 'dare to dream' of what might be possible in Yorkshire. Meanwhile, John Hardaker was seeing the Church at work in South Africa, as he returned the visit that we (and Northern Province) had hosted in 1992.

Europe

Links with other European Churches, especially in Germany, were also strengthened during this year, as we remembered the events of 1945. For 18 years now, the Women's Committee has been in regular touch with the Protestant Church in the Palatinate, and in September a group of German visitors joined us at Hazelwood Castle, in a conference attended this year, for the first time, by representatives from Anhalt in Saxony, in what used to be Eastern Germany. Later that month, under the auspices of the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council, our members in Leeds were involved in a five cities conference, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Leeds/Dortmund twinning, on 'The Use of the Peace 1945-95'. Dortmund's other sister cities (Amiens, Zwickau, and Buffalo) also sent representatives.

Children and Young People

Synod debates continued to be lively in style and unpredictable in outcome. In March, Synod rejected an Executive recommendation that we appoint a full-time Youth and Children's Work Trainer. This decision means that, for the first time in many years, we face 1996 without a resident professional in this field. Agonised debate continues about our priorities in the provision of ministry. A working party is looking again at how we can best provide the training that will enable us to tackle one of our most worrying problems: the virtual disappearance from many of our churches of children and young people. Of course, there are still churches with strong Pilots and FURY groups - and, indeed, where the number of children and young people is increasing rather than diminishing; but, sadly, they are the exception rather than the rule.

Adult Training

The visit to the Ministers' Summer School (held jointly with Northern Province) of Bishop Jack Spong raised a host of related issues that have been explored in subsequent training days: how do adults best learn? How do we prepare an effective programme of Christian education for a local church? How can we make the insights of Biblical scholarship available to members of our congregations? Training has also focused on the need for efficiency in our local church life - in the Organisation of meetings, in ensuring that the local congregation is properly represented in the councils of the church, and that there is regular reporting back, either orally or through the Church News or magazine. There is heartening evidence of the continued success of 'Starting to Lead Worship' in developing confidence amongst participants.

Priorities

Mission Council's invitation to us to consider what should be the URC's priorities for the next five years provided much of the agenda for the Executive Committee's annual residential meeting in September, at which we tried to relate these priorities to the question of organisational structure. How much, we asked ourselves, does structure really matter? By this time, life in parts of West Yorkshire was being dominated by a much more fundamental question: how can society cope with the interruption of its regular water supply? The October Synod passed a resolution reminding Yorkshire Water of its responsibility for one of God's most precious gifts and, in writing to all our Yorkshire MPs, we made at least a modest contribution to the pressure that led to effective action to maintain supply. As we celebrated Christian Aid's 50th birthday, we had been allowed the merest glimpse of the abyss into which, each year, millions of our brothers and sisters helplessly plunge.

East Midlands Province

1 We were pleased that Assembly 1995 accepted the resolutions on organ donation and post-mortems. There has been some progress in the province in raising awareness.

2 Varieties of ministry. The calling, recruitment, training and deployment of ministers, full and part time, stipendiary and non-stipendiary continues to exercise us. We have set up a Lay Training Fund with the windfall grant from Congregational & General Insurance to assist with all kinds of lay training especially lay preachers.

3 East Midlands has still not been able to find the full finance needed for a Youth and Children's Work Trainer although we hope to have interim arrangements in place to enable us to make an appointment to start in January 1997.

4 General Assembly. Province members of Assembly meet for a day of preparation before Assembly and value the Province time towards the end of Assembly.

5 Yardley Hastings Centre: we have been delighted at the undoubted success of this project, not least in the revival that has taken place in the local congregation, and have shared in planning for the future.

6 We rejoice that there are some growing churches in the province but there will be some closures to report next year and membership losses elsewhere still off set this growth.

7 The Moderator challenged all churches to be MaD, Making a Difference, and some have taken up this theme with enthusiasm.

8 We are glad to see progress in sharing of resources nationally and want to encourage this. It raises questions for us about sharing between local congregations so that all churches can be effective in their communities regardless of their own financial resources. There is a continuing debate about how the province MandM contribution can be fairly shared among the churches and if a national policy would be helpful.

9 Buildings for mission - Quinquennial surveys and Ecclesiastical Exemption procedures seem helpful: we are reviewing the Province Trust funds to provide maximum help from the small resources available. The aim is always to use buildings creatively and imaginatively within the main purpose of the church.

10 Province events - a major training event led by the Wild Goose Resource Group was held this year and Family Day is planned for 1997: retreats, quiet days, ministers summer school and other training events, some at the initiative of groups such as the Musicians Guild and GEAR, all make a rich contribution.

11 Ecumenical boundaries and working are always on the agenda. In some parts of the province ecumenical practice is well developed and seems natural to all the denominations. Elsewhere the ecumenical road is full of obstacles as we struggle with people who appear to have little vision of churches working together. In all these places we value the help provided by officers of Churches Together in England and the financial help of the denomination as we relate to many different structures.

12 We maintain a voluntary Evangelism Team of elders and ministers who meet to learn and pray together and act as a inspiration. However, we recognise that greater resources than we can muster are needed to move this from the fringe to the centre of our being.

13 Links with the Reformed Church in Croatia have provided a stimulus to many people - not just to help refugees but as a two way process. Bishop Endre Lanhg visited the province in the summer and some of us have visited Croatia.

14 Mission Council - our four members produce a HOTLINE three times a year to try and keep churches in touch and members of Mission Council visit Districts and churches. How do larger Provinces with more than our six Districts manage?

15 We notice an apparent increase in special national consultations either for all who want to go or called to discuss particular issues. We are not always clear how these relate to the formal structures.

16 District visitations - we have been piloting a new pattern of 'consultations'. In these churches are encouraged to review their own life and to make their own presentation of their mission objectives to District Council. After a full review we expect to host a national conference on pastoral visitation next year.

17 The sexuality debate is provoking a lot of interest. There is some negative reaction but also a genuine desire to understand the issues.

West Midlands Province

Change

The last year has certainly been one of obvious change. In its wisdom, Assembly appointed our Moderator Deputy General Secretary to the denomination from 1 December, and so the Province was suddenly faced with a vacancy some two years before it was expected. To make sure that life continued interesting, the period of office of our greatly experienced Synod Clerk, Wilma Frew, ended just as the process to find a new Moderator was about to begin, and her successor was on a very sharp learning curve!

At the October Synod tribute was paid to John and Margaret Waller, who had given us so much in their ten years in the West Midlands. While we have no doubt of the wisdom of John's new appointment, we shall miss sorely his vision, commitment and care for us, always supported so warmly by Margaret. We wish them well in their own period of change and relocation.

The search for a successor proceeded smoothly, and we hope that by the time this is read Elizabeth Welch and Peter will feel settled amongst us.

In the meantime, we have been very grateful to many who have shouldered additional responsibilities, especially John Slow, who has exercised a special oversight and even been persuaded to revive his Moderatorial skills by chairing the March Synod.

Highlights

Some things stand out over the past few months.

There was a very successful Provincial Day at Trentham Gardens near Stoke-on-Trent ably organised by the Staffordshire District. 200 years of LMS/CWM was appropriately remembered, and the day even made a profit, enabling a substantial donation to be sent to CWM.

Three years ago a group from the Province was the guest of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. In October, we were delighted to welcome twelve visitors from the island. They made a memorable contribution to Synod, telling us about some of the challenges that the churches faced, spent a weekend visiting different parts of the West Midlands, and then provided fascinating insights into the political situation at an open meeting on the eve of their departure.

SYNODS

The joint Methodist/URC Liaison Committee continued trying to find ways in which our life could be shared, culminating in a wider meeting in January between representatives. We were pleased to hear that an application for Special Category Ministry to support a joint ecumenical area in North Warwickshire has been approved. At a lower, but no less important, level, we agreed that committee conveners from both denominations should meet each other at least once a year to see what could be done jointly. This could be of real benefit to some of our committees which struggle to find their role, as well as encouraging future cooperation.

The Province is running a pilot appraisal scheme for ministers in place, and its continuation after the initial two years was agreed. We are pleased to be able to share our experience with other Provinces.

On the theme of cooperation, we look forward to the working out of the recommendations and advice from the Resources Sharing Working Party, and hope that there can continue to be sharing of good practice between Provinces at the very least.

On the development side, over 50 people attended a training day for new Elders in November. The new Consultant for Children's Work conducted a detailed survey of children in the churches, and continues to raise the profile of this sometimes marginalised group. The YCWT and joint Youth Coordinators continued their valuable work with older young people. One visible sign of this was what appears to be becoming an annual event - a Youth Synod held in parallel to the 'adult' one, with increasing participation between the two age groups.

Issues

Ministerial deployment continues to require detailed attention by all Districts, frequently leading to difficult decisions. However, it is pleasing to report that some groups of churches in the less populated areas of our Province now have ordained leadership for the first time for some years.

Some of the Provincial committees struggle to find their role, and to attract sufficient members to make a real impact. Under the new Moderator, we see this as an area needing exploration.

In 1997 we face the retirement of our Administrative Officer. This has encouraged us to establish a group to review the administrative support and Organisation that the Province will need in the next few years. The demands have changed greatly recently, and it is no longer appropriate to prescribe 'more of the same', but we do not know where our enquiries will lead us yet.

We are sure that under Elizabeth's leadership other issues will emerge and that life will not be dull!

Eastern Province

In common with many other areas of the country, the Eastern Province is suffering a decline in numerical membership. Yet in many places, attendance at worship and other activities reflects a commitment that differs from our traditional understanding of the definition of membership. The historical independence of many of our rural chapels still remains in significant parts of this region. Yet social and economic changes have also disrupted the old pattern of church life. The exploration of new forms of ministry is thus not only a desirable theological movement, but also a practical necessity.

We live in a changing society, in which it is sometimes hard to find ways of using our Christian heritage as the basis for common values. Yet in the Eastern Province we have a direct contribution to make in many fields. One of our Ministers is the URC member of the ecumenical Norfolk and Waveney Industrial Mission Team as Industrial Chaplain to Great Yarmouth; here he ministers to the workers associated with the off-shore gas fields as well as to those in land-based manufacturing industry and the tourist trade. Another works in the ecumenical team that ministers to the many thousands of people every week who work, visit or, are treated at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge; people of every nationality and race, of every faith and none. Here, the issues of ethics, faith, hope and despair are sharply focused every hour of the day and night.

The Province is conscious too of the great benefit that is enjoyed by the presence of Westminster College within our region. The generous and expert assistance which staff and students give is highly valued. The courses run by the College have drawn attendance from many parts of the Province. In addition, the College has been making resources available in conjunction with the Training & Development Team of the Province.

During this year, the team of Provincial Staff has been completed; it now comprises the Youth Leadership Training Officer, Children's Work Training Officer, Life & Mission Development Officer and Finance Officer, together with their vital and highly-valued secretarial support. Work on the new Provincial Office at Whittlesford is near completion - together with the new church in a local ecumenical project with the Church of England. We look forward to enjoying the benefits of working together from a common base.

Our Continental European relationships continue to develop too, both by the Province and through local church limits. A visit was made to the rural churches in Groningen Province in the north-east of the Netherlands - meeting both the *Hervormde* (Netherlands Reformed Church) and the *Gereformeerde* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands - our only partner church in the European region of CWM). Here, as in other places in the Netherlands, the local churches are talking about closer co-operation and possible union in a process known as 'Together on the Way'. Local churches in our Province too, continue to foster their links in countries as diverse as the USA, India, Germany and China. At the Provincial Retreat Centre at Houghton Chapel near St. Ives, we welcome people from all over the world to make use of this magnificent residential centre. which has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

We rejoice in the diversity of gifts that exist amongst our members in the Eastern Province; we give thanks for unstinting service, so often publicly unremarked. We pray that in the coming months of change in our Province, we shall remember that as God's people, we exist not for our own sake, but for tile world's.

South Western Province

Celebration

More than 1700 people found their way in the height of the tourist season last July to Paignton Leisure Centre for the Province's celebration of the LMS bicentenary, 'Dare to Dream', which was also our Provincial Day. It was challenging to our churches to receive guests from South Africa, Madagascar, Zambia, Nauru and Taiwan, but it also provided an opportunity for us to share stories and experiences of mission in the South Western Province through local church displays, music, drama, talks and banners. Five panels, consisting of smaller pieces of needlework depicting LMS history and current partner churches of CWM, were made by people throughout the Province. The panels are now touring the churches, and provide an excellent resource for worship and learning.

Structures

The Synod has continued to work at its structures, trying to make them both realistic in scale (recognising the large area covered by the Province and responsive to the new central structures. A Provincial Pastoral Committee was formed, to encourage consistency and good practice throughout our nine Districts and United Areas. The committee, made up of conveners of District Pastoral Committees, meet for support and training through sharing experiences and drawing up guidelines. The Christian Life Committee covers, at a Provincial level, areas addressed nationally by Discipleship and Witness, Church and Society, Doctrine Prayer and Worship, Ecumenical (World Church). This has shown its effectiveness by the committee having responsibility for planning the 'thematic' part of Provincial Synods twice a year, and by making sure that the four Provincial representatives on Mission Council are also 'ex officio' members of the committee. We hope that the result is both economical in the use of people's time and in providing a much-needed bridge between local churches and national structures, through the Synod itself.

Children and Youth

The March Synod provided alternative entertainment for children and young people with computers, singing, jugglers and clowns during the morning session (not the Synod itself, strangely!) while in the afternoon Ivan Andrews, our Youth and Children's Work Trainer, reported that the 65% of churches in the Province which responded to a questionnaire, are themselves in touch with 6777 children and young people. Lively presentations incorporating children about the Pilots' 60th anniversary and a Youth Exchange with our partner church in the Wisconsin Synod of the Churches of Christ, clearly indicated that there is still 'Unfinished Business' to be addressed in our children's and youth work in the Province.

People

There has been considerable movement in personnel during the year. Mr Malcolm Summers was appointed Administrative Officer in 1995, and Mrs Rosemary Maskell as Administrative Secretary in June 1996. The Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, appointed by Mansfield College, Oxford to be its new Associate Director of Ministerial Education and Training, moved out of the Province in March, leaving vacant the post of Director of Training. We owe Catherine a great debt of gratitude for using her gifts so effectively in our churches during the past three and a half years, and we wish her every blessing in her future work.

Carpe Diem

We are living through a period of noticeable change. Some Districts are temporarily weakened when ministers on whom they have depended for a number of years, retire or move on. It reminds us of the need constantly to be discerning the gifts of others, and finding alternative ways of working. We give thanks for modest yet encouraging signs of growth in a number of our churches. It is those which are able to adapt to new circumstances, and grasp new opportunities with confidence and hope, who find their bearings for mission and service in today's world.

Wessex Province

The last year has been a period of change for the Wessex Province with the retirement of the Rev Nelson Bainbridge as Moderator and the Induction of his successor the Rev Derek Wales. Also in September, the Province appointed the Rev Stephen Thornton to be Provincial Training Officer and the Rev Dick Wolff as a half-time Mission Enabler. Together with the YCWT and the Properties' and Trust Officer, these five, with the Synod Clerk, make up a team, so that the work being done in the local churches and Districts is coordinated and duplication is avoided. At the last meeting of the Provincial Synod, emphasis was given to the availability and the interest of training. The Province is looking at the moment at Synod structures and are considering how best these can come into line with Mission Council ideas for the Church centrally. The Province tries to continue to make contributions to the work of the wider church and at the moment there is a group looking at working with the Discipleship & Witness Committee on the question of Evangelism. We are glad that we are continuing to be a net contributor to the Ministry & Mission funds, for we are conscious that we are well blessed and seek to do what we can in the wider opportunities of the Church.

In the ecumenical field, work continues to implement the 'Next Steps' initiatives with the Wessex Province and the Southampton District of the Methodist Church and enquiries are being made to see how the work of World Church & Mission and Church & Society can be done together. There are also hopes that Lay Preaching could also include training across denominational boundaries. A paper on the question of Evangelism was presented at the March 1996 Synod. At the October 1995 Synod the Moderator of Assembly, the Rt Revd John Reardon, spoke on Ecumenism. We are involved with representatives concerned with rural evangelism and play a large part at Sarum College, Salisbury where our non-stipendiary ministers are trained and where there are many initiatives concerning lay training. Sarum College is the former Salisbury & Wells Theological College and the Rev Stephen Thornton makes sure the Reformed emphasis goes into that group's thinking. In the wider affairs of the Church we have continued contacts with the French Reformed Church and sent representations over the nuclear testing. A group of young people from Bangladesh were also in the Province last summer celebrating the London Missionary Society's 200th anniversary.

The Province is taking seriously the question of Human Sexuality and the young people are holding a conference on this subject. We are looking forward to welcoming the General Assembly back to Portsmouth in 1997 and have already done some work in that direction. The review of our Youth & Children's Work Trainer, Miss Ann Martin, takes place this spring. We have been well served for the past years by Miss Ann Martin and appreciate the initiative that she has taken, along with the Provincial and District Youth Secretaries, to keep young people and Children's work much on the agenda of our Provincial meetings.

A very useful debate took place at the Synod meeting over the National Health Service and with a lively group such issues including marriage and divorce, the Arms Trade and values in the family are receiving much prayerful thought. A Provincial Day was held in Reading by the River Thames, together with overseas missionary visitors' celebrations. This was a good day for bringing the members of the churches together and was something that is very much appreciated.

West Lulworth

West Lulworth Church began its history in 1845 by a German representative of the London City Mission. Worshippers usually met in a cottage where class distinctions were rigidly observed. The gentry, including local farmers, gathered in one room; the labourers assembled in another. The preacher apparently stood with his back to the open doorway and it is suggested that that might well have encouraged shorter sermons in cold or windy weather. The church building was opened in 1869 and was capable of a congregation of 120. In the 1920's the church flourished with a recorded membership of 71 in 1922. After the disruption of the war years, when the church was closed as the area was used for military exercises, the church remained closed for some time, but was restored in the early 1950's. Unfortunately it has been found that there is a lot of dry rot in the timbers of the present building and the roof and floor timbers are suspect. Reluctantly the church felt it right to close, which they did on 30th September 1995.

Thames North Province

Painting a Picture of the Future

Thoughts of growth, looking ahead and meeting challenges, have dominated the work of the Province in the past year. At the synod in October the Moderator challenged each church and district to have their own vision, to seek to develop it into a long term plan, and to move rapidly along that path to the future. A partnership was offered - churches to provide the vision, the Province to provide the resources to help shape it. A programme of one and two day Vision Seminars was put in place, led by a professional training organisation, and all ministers and churches invited to attend. The series ran from October to March, held in various venues around the Province. Over 75% of ministers and churches participated in the seminars which gave techniques for articulating a vision, putting a plan together, and for leading its implementation. Churches responded with enthusiasm, some sending the entire eldership on a seminar, and pictures are being painted where there were none before.

The October synod was also memorable and influential for the challenge from John Drane, talking on his theme of the relevance of the church to the world. He urged us to learn from the un-churched, to make the gospel meaningful by taking away the barriers we put up to protect our church life, to accept people on their terms, not ours. Uncomfortable but positive messages to invite action and change.

The Province continued to pursue its priorities. A team of Pastoral Consultants was sought, to provide local support to ministers and churches with crisis situations. Personal problems in a minister's life, or disagreements between church and minister, cause the work of proclaiming the Word and serving the people to be diminished, and need resolving rapidly. Supporting the Moderator, these four part-time Consultants will be pro-active in seeking to prevent misunderstandings from becoming problems, and enable access to care on a broader basis than the Moderator can possibly cover at present. The operation of this scheme will be reviewed after a while but it is a bold attempt at addressing the need to keep life in harmony for all our ministers and churches, and to prevent or relieve the enormous stress that work in a church sometimes seems to bring.

Another identified priority is work with young people, how to encourage and develop, and here we are seeking input from a range of organisations outside the URC on how they tackle this need, and what their success is.

Training for the leadership needs of the future has had much attention. The certainty, at least in the medium term, of fewer full-time, ordained ministers, has led to radical consideration of the needs of ministry within our congregations. Recruitment, an approach that perhaps does not completely fit our traditional concept of calling to ministry, is now under serious focus. Planning the development of our people in the vocation of ministry is a related subject that is also somewhat alien to the thinking of past years. We expect to divert resources away from buildings to investment in people. A Provincial Director of Training has been appointed for the first time as part of this trend.

The Province has carefully and thoughtfully considered its responsibilities in encouraging and preparing people and churches for meaningful debate on the issue of human sexuality. Meetings at all levels have been held at the initiative of members, elders and district councils. A seminar to assist leadership of meetings on the issue was made available to ministers.

Events are still important in the life of Thames North and in September 1996 the Royal Festival Hall in London will be the venue for the Provincial Day. A major production of 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat' is under preparation for the day. The cast, singers, orchestra and stagehands are all provided from among the membership of our churches - there are hundreds involved. It is not just intended to be a happy occasion, though this is guaranteed! A major funding appeal to help the homeless through Crisis is a key part of the build-up to the day, involving churches in their own events with local communities.

Looking ahead, yes, but actively engaged in the work of the gospel today also.

Southern Province

'Southern Province will encourage the growth of all our local churches'. Whatever term is used, training, enabling, facilitating, educating, the practical aim is to 'equip members for ministry' and there is no shortage of opportunity to do so if congregations are willing to expose themselves to the challenge of the Gospel today and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the help of those with a training ministry in the Province.

Home Front Resources Used in the Province

Ongoing training of elders, new and seasoned, is crucial in recognising that none of us works on our own. Teamship and leadership seminars emphasise that the elders' meeting does not have to do everything, rather see that things are done.

Most districts in Southern Province have now completed a review of the five year district/local church pastoral consultation. The reviews revealed weaknesses in the system which some have actually noted caused more trouble than help. Reports now coming to the Province are of considerable new perception of the value of the consultations.

Vision Workshops led either by provincial or national officers are proving popular as a non-threatening exercise for the local church. One notes that there is a bonus in the workshops helping members to see one another as disciples of Christ not 'frozen people'.

Medway District has imaginatively created a part-time post of District Lay Enabler, Revd Andrew Francis. He has launched a number of training opportunities including 'Starting to Lead Worship' and 'Basic Leadership'. The provincial trainers see the districts as the frontline in supporting and equipping members and believe this appointment is likely to be the first of its kind.

Congregational Weekends still prove to be positive events, especially in a ministerial vacancy where members have sought to find a vision and share it with a prospective pastor.

The Urban Churches Support Group continues to provide special resources in London and beyond and regularly mails Southern and Thames North Provinces.

In Youth and Children's Work Training, local 'Spectrum' and 'Kaleidoscope' courses are happening. Local ecumenical Youth and Children's Officers have met together and, due to the greater need for local trained tutors, are running a Tutor Training Course based on an agreed list of competencies. Most training with districts and churches is based on the needs of the local situation. For example - disappearing teenagers; all-age worship; making the Church relevant for children and young people, and good practice.

Outside Resources Used in Southern Province

We are indebted to Scottish Churches House, Dunblane, for the new Training for Learning and Service course for lay preachers now in full swing: to Yorkshire Province for the Starting to Lead Worship course to assist in drawing out the gifts of members who are sometimes needed to lead worship in non-Sunday occasions: to Wessex Province for their Elders' Resource pack, much appreciated by Elders' Meetings in setting up a programme of in-house training: to Holy Trinity (CofE) Brompton for its Alpha course which many local churches have begun to use, with one or two adaptations: to the URC and the Methodists for 'Developing Discipleship' - a new course for church members.

So there is no shortage of resources for those looking for help. Sometimes the comment is made that people should be concentrating on growth and are too busy to bother with training. Which brings one finally to the exciting new work in Southern Province promoted by Revd Peter Southcombe, our Evangelism Enabler.

Evangelism Enabling in Southern Province

The primary task of evangelism enabling is to remove the fear that all of us have in sharing our faith and to build confidence in being effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. Fear is generated by lack of knowing what to say, a lack of experience or encounter with the living God and a natural fear of being unable to answer awkward questions or being rejected by friends because we might be perceived as being religious 'nuts'.

The 'Training in Evangelism' course consists of two residential weekends with top speakers, from various denominations, who share in some foundational seminars. For those who wish to receive a certificate acknowledging completion of the course, two pieces of written work are requested: - one a theological reflection on an aspect raised in the first weekend and the other an evaluation of a mission project in the local situation. Fifty two people have attended the first weekend and now form the base for a future mission team for the Province. It is hoped that in future years two practical training days will be offered to continue the weekend studies.

Supplementing the TIE course are two initiatives. '50 Ways for 50 Days' is a leaflet with a collection of ideas on how to share the faith through the local church. The Poster Campaign is soon to be launched. We have collated three sets of 50 slogans and produced them in various sizes to be displayed outside churches, one for each week of the year. These two projects are available for others.

The last exciting project that the Province has launched is the 'New Growth Fund'. An initial £20,000 fund has been set aside by the Province to promote new growth, not for building work but for people and projects. Each district has been allocated £1,000 to promote a district initiative. The remaining funds are shared by churches applying for funds.

We in the Southern Province long to see our churches grow again and pray that soon we will be planting churches instead of closing them. Please pray for us as we develop a strategy for the multi-million pound Thames Gateway projects and the Millennium celebrations to be held at Greenwich.

Wales Province

Synod has decided to embark on a process arising from a report by its Church & World Committee which proposes a model of theological transformation in the local church with the theme 'Discerning the Cry of God in the World'. This theme aims to prompt the local church to engage itself with its theological understanding of the world and the Gospel today. It seeks to challenge those in the local church to theologise about the world and themselves through the perspective of a current issue which they are invited to explore by the Province. Through this issue they will seek to identify the ways God is calling to them from the world, to perceive the presence of God in passion and in pain in the world. In doing so the local church, and through it the wider church also, can identify how it is called to be present in and to the world.

The following process of reflection will be encouraged:

Biblical

Such a biblical approach needs to be understood as both textual and canonical. It is clear from the debate regarding human sexuality that 'proof texting' is distracting and distorts the issue and the participants in the issue. Texts need to be explored with a critical awareness of the context of Scripture and the Canon as a whole, and of the contexts of the various Scriptural communities. Techniques of exploration should be participative and creative, drawing people into the story, identifying with the action and dynamic of the account.

Socio-Historical

Our awareness of the scope, detail and impact of an issue needs to be deepened as we approach a theological judgement. A sensitive grasp of the issue, particularly as it affects a local church's own community, will deepen our perception and discernment of God's presence in our world. Questions which seek to establish the level of unemployment, or spending on overseas aid, or the level of ethnic minority settlement and so on are important, as indeed are interpretative questions which seek to identify motives behind people's actions, policies or opinions.

Experiential

Our own experience of the issue in question, or indeed inexperience, needs to be explored so that our insight and prejudice can be released. Equally, a more immediate or personal sense of what this issue means may be sought by approaching and getting alongside those directly affected by the issue in question.

These stages in the reflection will throw up a variety of questions, and two which are seen to be important to set before those reflecting are these:

1. What is the impact of this issue in your local community, and Wales?
2. What is there about this issue that hurts you, that distresses you, that perplexes you, that angers you, that moves you?

Conclusions/Confusions/Resolutions

These stages in the reflection move towards making an interpretation of the issue and ourselves as God's people in relation to that issue. This interpretation is to be led by this theme '**DISCERNING THE CRY OF GOD IN THE WORLD**'. What is the cry of God we hear in this issue? How should we respond to this issue? There are particular questions which can be suggested as part of this interpretative process:

1. What is the Good News in this issue? Who bears these tidings of Good News?
2. How can this draw us, the local church, into indicating where God and the Gospel is at work (Evangelism)? And how can this draw us, the local church, into participating and experiencing where God and the Gospel is at work (Mission)?
3. How and with whom can we work to respond to this issue? Who are our partners?

This process is being adopted as an experiment in looking at Church & World issues whereby the Province, or a District, will commission a local church to explore a particular issue on its behalf. Through the process a lead should be given to the Province and District; but our especial hope is for a real theological transformation at the level of the local church, making it more open to the presence and call of God in the world and to partnership with the wider church and the wider community.

RESOLUTIONS

West Midlands Synod

- 1 General Assembly agrees to add at the end of paragraph 24 of the Basis of Union the additional clause:**

'except that all internship students for the ministry of the United Reformed Church may preside at the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the church or churches in which they are serving their internship should the Church Meeting(s) invite them to do so.'

Proposer:

Seconder:

A resolution to this effect was brought by the West Midlands Provincial Synod to the 1990 General Assembly, at which the Doctrine and Worship Committee was asked to consider the matter further without a vote being taken. At the 1991 Assembly the paragraph containing the Committee's thinking was removed from their Report by Assembly decision. Subsequent consideration of the matter was included within the 'Patterns Of Ministry' debate, but was never specifically decided upon.

This resolution is brought so that there might be clarification of this issue, in view of the varied practice of our different colleges and their surrounding Districts, which means that some students for the ministry are allowed to preside at the Sacrament of Holy Communion during their internship, and some are not.

- 2 **General Assembly agrees that all churches should have the opportunity of representation, ministerial and lay, to all its meetings and requests the Finance Committee to re-examine the financial implications of such a change.**

*Proposed: Revd Stephen Newell
Seconded: Revd Basil Rogers*

This case is put forward because it is believed that General Assembly has become unrepresentative, and is sometimes unresponsive to the needs of the local church. This is not the fault of those present at Assembly, rather it is a failure of the system.

There is constant complaint within the United Reformed Church of poor communication, of people not being aware of what is happening, and yet our central decision-making body does not permit every local church to send a representative. The result is that, often, where local churches are affected by Assembly decisions, they feel they have had little opportunity for input.

The present system of representatives coming from District Councils and Provincial Synods, means that opportunity to attend General Assembly for both ministers and lay people is infrequent. One result is the perpetuation of 'novice representatives'. There are a considerable number of representatives attending for the first time who tend to feel, often, inexperienced and thus feel unable to contribute. A consequence of this is that Assembly may become 'platform-dominated'.

Since Mission Council was established the feeling in many local churches is that decisions are taken by 'those in the know'. It is therefore essential to make General Assembly more fully representative of the local churches.

This motion does not attempt to deal with detailed financial costings, it is considered that it ought not to be part of the debate at this time. The principle should be 'If this is the right thing to do, God will provide'. However, the sending of representatives from every local church could save the national church some money since, for the most part, local churches would fund their representatives, a system which applies within some other denominations.

It is considered that, if passed, this motion will allow General Assembly to change in character, becoming increasingly a celebration of the love of God at work within the national and local church.

- 3 Assembly requests the Mission Council to review the prioritising of the business of the General Assembly with a view to improving its relationship with Synods, Districts and local churches - particularly to improve the drafting and channelling of resolutions through more effective consultation, and giving greater time between publication of papers and General Assembly.

Proposer: Mr C Walker

Seconder:

General Assembly

1. As described in the 1995 Annual Reports, Resolutions and Papers for General Assembly at Eastbourne:
"The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body'.
2. This resolution originated from Christ Church, Sevenoaks where concern had been expressed at a perceived gulf between the activities of General Assembly and local Churches. The concern specifically drew attention to the short period of time in which representatives to General Assembly might discern the mood of local Churches and Districts on matters being brought to Assembly for decision. Resolutions accepted for debate should be clear, well thought out and effectively worded. To facilitate constructive debate of the topics, individual Churches, Districts and Synods should have the opportunity to consider resolutions in a reasonable timescale. If these aims are to be achieved then the whole procedure needs to be reviewed.

- 4 **General Assembly is requested to recognise Interim Ministry as a valid and authorised form of ministry for the URC, as full-time or part-time appointments within the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration.**

*Proposer: Mr Gale Salmon
Seconder: Revd Ray Vincent*

In 1990 the Provincial Moderator, Roding District and the URC Ministries Department recognised that some churches in prolonged vacancies need more in-depth support than could normally be provided by an interim moderator. The value of short-term ministry in particular circumstances was well known but this form of interim ministry had not been applied in the URC. Early in 1991 Revd Roger Heimer was called to one of the churches in Roding District. He and his wife Nancy brought experience of the working of interim ministry in the USA. Having a number of churches in long term vacancy and the prospect of more, the District offered to introduce interim ministry on a trial basis, and the project was recognised by the Ministries Committee.

Part-time ministry was to be provided to a number of churches in turn. The terms, known by each church from the start, were that the appointment was for a limited period (possibly six to twelve months but to be reviewed) with defined objectives, working primarily through the elders to:

- ◆ enable the church to evaluate its resources, strengths and weaknesses, and to define its mission
- ◆ draft or renew the church profile
- ◆ address any particular problems, necessary before calling a minister
- ◆ identify and assist in the development of current and potential leadership
- ◆ lead some of the worship, including communion, and preside at elders and church meetings
- ◆ deal only with urgent pastoral problems, the elders tackling the routine
- ◆ assist, as would an Interim Moderator, in the process of calling a minister but not to be available to be called to the pastorate permanently.

This was recognised as offering much more than could normally be expected from an Interim Moderator who would already be likely to have full pastoral responsibility elsewhere. It was also recognised to be distinct from short-term ministry.

Thames North Provincial Synod reviewed the Roding interim ministry project in October 1995, pronounced its success, and agreed the above resolution.

RESOLUTIONS

Churches - Changes

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

1. CLOSURE OF LOCAL CHURCHES

1.1 **Batley Carr** *Yorkshire*
Batley Carr was opened in 1875 as a mission church of Ebenezer Congregational Church (now Longcauseway United Reformed Church), Dewsbury. This relationship continued until 1954, when Batley Carr Congregational Church became a separate fellowship. In recent years, the membership was declined as those upon whom the church has been able to rely have grown older. A closing service was held on 11 November 1995.

1.2 **Norwood Green** *Yorkshire*
Norwood Green Congregational Church opened in 1882, in the heyday of Victorian nonconformity. There is evidence of a Sunday School in the village from 1864. The new church served a rural community between Halifax in the west and Bradford in the east.

During the twentieth century, the church was for long periods without pastoral oversight, and it came to depend heavily on the devoted service of a small number of members, many of whom lived outside Norwood Green. The character of the village changed, as it increasingly served as a commuter area, and the church was able to make little contact with the new population. Membership dwindled, and a closing service was held on 23 April 1995. The Huddersfield and Halifax District Council is not without hope of making some constructive use of the building.

1.3 **Norton Fitzwarren** *South Western*
With the death of the remaining Elder last year, and with church membership down to one, the worshipping community decided no longer to meet and the District Council recognised that the church had closed. The remaining church member was transferred, with her consent, to Paul Street URC, Taunton. The Synod offices are situated in the manse adjoining the church building and the hall has been used for Provincial meetings for some time. Care of the church buildings will pass to the Province. A local school will continue to use the church for Assemblies.

1.4 **Othery** *South Western*
At the time of a recent District Visitation, a survey of the church at Othery was carried out. It was found that the building needed extensive repair. The small, elderly congregation, most of whom worshipped elsewhere as well as at Othery URC, decided the church must close.

1.5 **Fetter Lane, Leyton** *Thames North*
Having been in a sharing agreement with the New Testament Assemblies for some years, the church held its own last service of worship on 31 December 1995. The building has a long history and will continue in active use by the NTA, who are purchasing it. Local witness continues through the Grange Park church where members from Fetter Lane have found their new home. The closure was endorsed by Synod on 9 March 1996.

1.6 **Bethany, Aberaman** *Wales*
Bethany English Congregational Church was founded in 1898 to serve an industrial village in the Aberdare Valley, Glamorgan. The early membership was around 60; by the mid-1920's this had doubled, and remained fairly constant until 1939. The war years saw a sharp decline in numbers which continued until, by the mid-1960's, the membership had gone back to that at the turn of the century and was still falling. By the autumn of 1995, with membership down to single figures, the church decided to close and sadly, just short of its centenary, ended a chapter in the story of a South Wales valley.

6 The Assembly receives notice of new local churches listed below.

2. NEW CHURCHES

2.1 St George's, The Hoskers, Westhoughton. North West Manchester District *North Western*

When a new estate of private housing was planned for the south west side of Westhoughton, the Church of England seized the opportunity to build a new primary school and incorporate a worship centre in the dual purpose plant. This would replace an existing school/church centre in an isolated site and the new venture was opened to other denominations. The Bolton Circuit of the Methodist Church and our own North West Manchester District took up the invitation and will be full partners in the church which will be known as St George's, the Hoskers, Westhoughton. A scheme of 'Friends of St George's' will allow local Christians to assist the new venture with their prayers and donations without distracting them from their loyalty to their present churches in the Westhoughton area.

The new church will be opened on 23 April, St George's Day, with an Ecumenical Service at which the Ecumenical Officer for Greater Manchester, Revd Simon Oxley will be the Preacher.

The North West Manchester District is considering ways in which the United Reformed Church can play its part in the pastoral care and worship of the new congregation and the Province has encouraged the venture with a grant of £2,500.

*Proposed: Revd Keith Forecast
Seconded: Revd Ruth Wollaston.*

2.2 The New City Christian Centre, Newham *Thames North*

Planted by the Newham Group in 1994, this new fellowship meets in the former Lenwood Hall in the heart of the New City housing estate of some 5,000 people. Currently with 14 members, it witnesses through many community activities, including the King's children's club, and vibrant Sunday worship. Synod on 9 October welcomed its addition to Plaistow and the Brickfields Centre within the Newham Group and recommends its inclusion as a member church of the URC.

Provincial Moderators' Report

1. CALLED TO LEAD

1.1 When Provincial Moderators share in the conversations of churches during a vacancy, leadership is often on the agenda. The leadership expected of the next minister is only one part of the conversation; the occasion provides an opportunity to think about the leadership that elders, youth leaders, children's workers, the treasurer, the choir, the interim moderator, and many others will offer in the changed situation. Questions are often raised about the style and purpose of leadership.

1.2 Leadership is critically important to the Church as to all other institutions. It can both empower and cripple individuals and groups. It can give us vision or despair. The purpose of this report is to affirm the importance of Christian leadership, and to raise some general questions so as to stimulate further debate.

2. A BIBLICAL THEME

2.1 'Leadership' is a theme that runs through the Bible. The emphasis changes with the circumstances to which the authors speak. There are questions about the style of leadership appropriate to the people of God, and even whether human leadership is necessary for a people committed to a sovereign God.

2.2 Moses stands as an example of a strong and persuasive leader who helped Israel discover its sense of purpose although even such strong leadership needed consultation and a sharing of responsibility among seventy others. (Numbers 11. 16 -17). Conciliar authority was born early in the story of the people of God. But Moses was not applauded all the way to Canaan; he was neither the first nor the last leader to be turned into a scapegoat. Neither did Canaan provide all the answers; the writers of the Book of Judges looked for strong leadership fearing the chaos which might come in an age when, there being no king 'every man did what was right in his own eyes.' (Judges 17.6).

2.3 1 Samuel 8 enters a different insight. As Samuel approaches the end of his life and the people demand a strong successor, at least two strands of thought emerge. The first suggests that a request for such leadership is a denial of divine authority. Why should anyone want a human leader when they already have God? (1 Samuel 8. 7) The second strand is a warning about leadership styles and is based on hard experience: 'Tell them what kind of a king they will get!' Successive verses describe those autocratic, oppressive, and abusive attitudes and actions which have marred many powerful leaders.

2.4 The Church has found a powerful resource in the servant-leadership expressed in Deutero-Isaiah, not least because it matches the leadership we see in Jesus. The willingness to suffer in reconciling love becomes an essential part of leadership amongst the people of God.

2.5 It is a lesson hard to learn. James and John had not learned it when they asked Jesus to let them 'sit in state with him' in his coming Kingdom. (Mark 10. 32 - 35). Mark emphasises the stark contrast in leadership styles by placing that tragic request immediately after Jesus' declaration of the suffering he is to endure. Paul weaves some of those strands into the life of the Church by his appeal (Philippians 2) that 'there must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among you' if we are to be disciples of the one who, though 'the divine nature was his from the first, did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave'.

2.6 Such biblical reflections become critically important sign-posts in any discussion about leadership-style in our own Church as we seek to harness the skills and abilities of the whole people of God and find our way forward.

3. CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES; CHANGING LEADERSHIP

3.1 Leadership needs to be adaptable so as to match the needs of the situation and the moment. Some times and situations need high profile, up-front leadership; some times and situations need unobtrusive leadership. Thus there is a prior 'leadership in discernment' involved, and a sensitivity to evaluate the needs of any given church at any given time, in its search for appropriate leadership. Such discernment will come from conversations, reflection on experience, and prayer so that the church understands its true needs, and potential leaders are able to discern the style of leadership required.

4. LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Neither society nor the church can be simply divided into 'leaders' and 'followers'. It may be right to hope that there are many born-leaders but we should make no assumptions about there being any born-followers. We have to take account of:

4.1 **Growth.** Today's follower may be tomorrow's leader. This means more than that the young teenager who is willing to accept the guidance of older people may grow up to be a church secretary, and one day become a respected senior elder. Growth is not so systematic. It may also mean that the thirty year old, who has been happy to take a back seat in church life, suddenly discovers that s/he has gifts of which no-one was previously aware but which are desperately needed by the church. It might also mean that the sixty year old whose job has prevented a more active leadership role in the church finds, on retirement, that long-neglected gifts can now be nurtured and refined, and offered to the church. Growth is potentially life-long.

4.2 **A variety of gifts.** God is generous to the Church. Leadership is a gift of God in itself (Romans 12. 8) but it also empowers and motivates the use of other gifts such as inspired utterance, administration, teaching. Gifts are widely dispersed around each congregation, and are varied. No-one holds them all. One person may be inept in leading a group but have a head for figures. Another who finds preaching impossible may have profound insight as a counsellor. Another who lacks confidence and remains silent in a large group may have sensitive gifts of leadership in one-to-one situations. Romans 12. 6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12. 4-11, with their delight in the variety of the gifts God gives the church, underlines the generosity of God though the verses may mislead us if we think Paul was describing a fixed position in which particular gifts of the Spirit rest permanently on specific persons. The Spirit is not so hidebound. Paul's snapshot of one moment in the life of a church might look very different as time passes and the inarticulate gain confidence, and the long-time administrator discovers the ability to preach. Encouragement, training and risk-taking are ingredients of such growth and we shall not receive any gift in its fullness until we accept God's greatest gift, and learn to 'put love first' (1 Corinthians 14.1).

4.3 **All are leaders.** Once we have lost the mind-set which divides the church into fixed categories of leaders and followers we begin to recognise the leadership skills of every person, and the continual activity of God in human make-up and experience. We fail to recognise this widespread leadership when we use too narrow categories in defining 'leadership'. Our commitment to one high profile style can stifle the Spirit's gifts, and cripple potential leaders.

5. RELEASING LEADERSHIP

It needs a conscious effort to seek to release the leadership inherent in all disciples. A positive programme is required:

5.1 The recognition and awareness that 'all are leaders' is itself a release. Over the last eighteen months there have been a number of 'Poverty Hearings' around the country. One consequent report was significantly called 'Powerful Whispers' During the Hearings the more readily recognised leaders in the Church and local communities contracted to be silent, and listen to those marginalised, usually poor, and largely inarticulate people who have suffered most during the stringent social conditions of recent years. Often struggling for words to describe their condition the poor of our nations told their story of deprivation and poverty. In doing so they became powerful leaders. Their courage in so speaking has been astounding; as has been the willingness of existing leaders to sit and learn. 'To shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly' (1 Corinthians 1.27). The danger is that we may regard their leadership as a temporary novelty; the test will lie in whether such powerful whispers will be allowed to become co-operative action.

Can the Church learn a lesson from this and thus discover new and active leaders amongst its own members?

5.2 We thus learn that to release the leadership skills of many, some of the more obvious leaders have to learn to shut up. A moratorium on the leadership of the few might yield wonderful returns in releasing the leadership gifts of the many. It is more than the willingness to give people time and space; it is the willingness to trust that God's gifts are widely dispersed. A poster in one of our churches reads:

It often shows a fine command of language to say nothing.

A Chinese philosopher expressed a similar truth:

Leaders are best
 When people barely know that they exist;
 Not so good when people simply obey and acclaim them;
 Worst when they despise them.
 But of good leaders who talk little,
 When their work is done
 And their aim fulfilled
 The people will say, 'We did it ourselves.' Lao Tzu

5.3 To have one's skills recognised can become a call to leadership. One of our churches organised an Arts Festival. It followed a period in which people from a deprived area of a major city were helped by professional artists to discover and nurture latent skills. There was no doubt about who was leading whom. A contributor who had previously seen herself as 'one of this world's losers' discovered painting skills she did not know she had. One of her paintings was independently valued at 50. The price tag on her painting was nothing compared to the fact that her gifts were valued for the first time in her life. From such an affirmation of skills new leadership can emerge.

Is our church life such that we can readily affirm and use newly discovered leadership gifts?

5.4 Practical steps can be taken. Mission Council is not the only part of the United Reformed Church to discover the use of small groups and find in the process that the normally silent ones find a voice. Further, local churches, as well as the Church nationally, have made the discovery that service on committees can be for specific periods of time thus allowing committee members to slip in and out of service without embarrassment, thus making space for others. Similarly, a real attempt to balance age and gender has led to the discovery of talents and leadership skills not previously seen. More painfully, though often even more significantly, churches have learned to take a risk and call the bluff of long-standing office-holders when they say they would like to resign 'but there is no-one to take my place'. There usually is someone but they have been hiding in the shadow of the incumbent. Similarly, the United Reformed Church has a significant contribution to make to our ecumenical partners in sharing our discovery that during a ministerial vacancy hitherto unrecognised leadership skills can emerge in a local church.

Such practical steps have a further advantage. They prevent the development in local churches, District Councils and wider councils of a 'them and us' leadership pattern. Christians are not exempt from power-seeking. If decisions are always made by a select few it is not surprising that the rest fail to 'own' the decisions, or feel commitment to them.

If leadership and decision-making were to be passed around a wider number of people, would wider commitment in discipleship develop?

6. IGNORED LEADERSHIP

Some leaders are ignored because we structure the church in a way that keeps them invisible. For example, we ignore:

6.1 the leadership of children. Spontaneity is a major gift that children can bring to leadership. Their contribution is butterfly-free. To try to capture it in our official structures would pin it to a deadened page. But,

If we will let them, children will lead us to the freedom that is their heritage: to creative day-dreaming, to wonder over truth They will teach us something about limits and littleness, tenderness and transparency. And something about the upside down kingdom where paupers become princes, and cripples dance, and Zaccheus has the best view. (Joan Puls)

The upside down gospel-world in which little is great, and big is insignificant is not one in which the Church finds itself any more comfortable than the rest of society.

6.2 The leadership of young people. The United Reformed Church can take pleasure in its re-valuing the leadership of young people, away from the patronising attitudes of earlier years. The task is not complete. Still, we often imprison young people and their leadership gifts in the future or, alternatively, seek to value them with uncritical applause. It is just as foolish to accept everything young people say as once it was patronising to ignore all they said; young people can be as prophetic as the rest of us - and as daft. Youth leadership is no different from adult leadership; younger people are subject to all the constraints and opportunities in their leadership as older people. Like the rest of us they can empower, cripple, enable, and manipulate.

One of the great assets of our youth work is that it provides opportunities for young people to develop leadership and committee skills through FURY. Whilst these should never be an automatic passport for later responsibilities such developed skills enrich our church life.

How competent are local churches, District Councils and Synods in utilising the abilities our young people develop through FURY? Further, how willing are our young people to accept the constraints and frustrations of our structures as a part of their Christian discipleship and church membership?

6.3 The leadership of the stranger. Although we may not yet be skilful in using them, the Mission Council normally invites a Theological Reflector to comment on its meetings. Also, the United Reformed Church is still unusual, if not unique, in granting membership of General Assembly to visitors from other denominations. Some Synods and District Councils have followed the same pattern. These are attempts to accept the leadership of the stranger.

If they will accept it local churches have similar opportunities to receive the leadership of the stranger. Newcomers are sometimes welcomed for the fresh experience they bring but too often it is accepted only when the newcomers have conformed and become 'one of us'. If we let them, they have an earlier contribution to offer, for example in asking innocent questions:

Why do you do it like that?

Just what does that word mean?

If Jesus is so important why do you mention him so infrequently?

6.4 The leadership of the elderly. Just as we imprison the leadership gifts of young people in the future, so we often imprison the leadership gifts of older people in the past. We assume that they will offer the same leadership they gave when they were 40 - but more slowly. In fact, if we will acknowledge it, age brings new leadership opportunities.

Often older people can communicate with children in ways closed to parents. The slower pace of age can be a symbol of reflection and calm that evades younger people No longer driven by careers, and often with a different perspective on possessions, older people can sometimes offer a corrective to the materialism and ruthlessness of contemporary life. *'I have often thought what a melancholy world this would be without children; and what an inhuman world without the aged.* (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

7. PERSONAL LEADERSHIP/ CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

One of the inevitable tensions in the United Reformed Church is between the leadership of thoughtful, strong-minded, articulate individuals, and our convictions about conciliar decision-making.

7.1 The Church has always valued individual leaders. They can challenge and inspire us, even chide us. They can offer prophetic insight. Some of them bring knowledge and experience which the rest of us do not have but desperately need. But following strong leaders has potential snags. They can be maverick and lead us astray. They can be so silver-tongued that we are coerced by their eloquence rather than persuaded by their convictions. They can make assumptions about their length of service and manipulate us so as to retain power. In recent history they have tended to be male and middle-class and have thus bred assumptions about leadership styles which might have been modified had there been a balance of gender and social position.

7.2 Conciliar leadership has been equally significant. It invites conversation and the sharing of experience. It widens our perceptions and insights. We hear of experience we may never ourselves enjoy or endure. Corporate and representative decision-making invites wider commitment. Yet conciliar leadership also has its snags. We can spend so much time in committee discussion that we get nothing done. We can drag our feet waiting for everyone to catch up and thus miss vital opportunities. Councils can be distorted by patriarchal and hierarchical patterns. The over-careful scanning of diaries so that no-one misses a meeting can lengthen processes interminably.

Can we develop such confidence in each other that we learn to trust the decisions of smaller groups rather than assume that everyone must agree each decision before action is taken?

7.3 Effective conciliar leadership demands hard work and time. How many members of District Council or Assembly give adequate time for preparation? Are agendas circulated in advance, and with adequate notes to clarify agenda items? How often do members of District Council sit expectantly, pens at the ready, so as to report back to Church Meeting? And how many people would there be at the Church Meeting to hear the report? Have we thought through the appropriate relationship between Elders' Meeting and Church Meeting in decision-making?

If the conciliar process fails, is it because it is the victim of our own neglect and indolence?

7.4 We may never fully achieve the balance between individual and corporate leadership, and will continue to debate amongst ourselves whether our conciliar patterns inhibit decision-making or create a consensus in the church which values each individual and empowers our total ministry and mission. But we have made our choice. We are a Reformed Church. Our belief in the priesthood of all believers has clear implications for a commitment to corporate leadership. If all have equal access to God then due account must be taken of the insights and God-given gifts of all; amongst them the gifts and developed skills of leadership.

7.5 Thus, our Basis of Union with its careful definitions of the make-up and purpose of our various councils, defines our conciliar nature, and assists in achieving a sensitive balance between individual and corporate leadership. There is more than personal inclination or even ecclesiology behind this; there is a theology involving both our view of humanity and the God who made us. Given the risks we recognise in both individual and corporate leadership we have consciously opted to live with the risks involved in conciliar decision-making. It is hard work, it can be lengthy, but it is worthwhile and an expression of our understanding of the Gospel.

7.6 It is possible, of course, to over-emphasise the tension between the two patterns of leadership. In practical terms, and in local, regional and national situations, we have learned to value and receive individual leadership and vision, and incorporate it usefully into a conciliar structure.

8 THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MINISTER

One of the valued examples of personal leadership is that of the ordained minister. Such leadership is inherent in a minister's calling and is affirmed by the Church. At best it is expressed in service rather than status. Pulpit and committee chair are important symbols that express this leadership but no less important are the symbols of bowls and towels, wilderness-searching, and sometimes a cross.

PROVINCIAL MODERATORS'

8.1 The nature of such leadership needs constant re-evaluation. The minister, by virtue of call, inclination, and training is a resource of biblical insight, teaching, and interpretation, carrying the responsibility of sustaining study throughout ministry. The minister is a preacher, teacher, and a liturgical resource alert both to tradition and new liturgical developments. The minister provides a fulcrum within the congregation for pastoral concern. S/he also leads in representing the local church to the wider church and vice versa, and the local church to the wider community.

Ministers carry further responsibilities. It is their task to develop an intimate knowledge of the congregation so as to enable the gifts of each member to be recognised, developed and thus released. Whilst elders will share this task, the role of ministers both in 'routine' and crisis visiting cannot be over-estimated. They will demonstrate that Christian leadership is accountable both to God and his people and, at best they will exemplify the conviction that ministry is privilege not status, service not power-seeking.

8.2 Sometimes, the 'searching in the wilderness' of ministry becomes fact rather than symbol. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his opposition to the Nazi regime, is a twentieth century personification of such leadership in an acute form. At different levels, such searching is always a part of committed ministry. For example, as today we wrestle with the meaning of faith in a secular age, or the political expression of the gospel, or the Christian response to medical advance, ministers and other leaders can enter a wilderness of indecision and quest.

8.3 Leadership can involve pain, even suffering. Leaders sometimes know what it means to 'take up a cross'. For example, laying on a minister the responsibility of several widely-spread local churches with few resources could bring unreasonable demands. Similarly, if dissension tears a church, the minister can become the scapegoat, and attempts at reconciliation be construed as partisan. We ask some ministers to work in difficult circumstances without providing the necessary support and resources. The minister and family can be emotionally and spiritually neglected if elders omit to include them in the organised pastoral visiting.

8.4 The gifts we see in ministers are not unique to ministers. Others, especially elders, also exhibit them. Some people are more highly trained theologians than the ministers who serve them. Some are better communicators. Some have more ready access to the experience of children. Ministers are not alone in learning to use bowls and towels in servant leadership. But these gifts are clearly expected in those whose call from God and extensive service is recognised by both the local church and the denomination.

Do ministers need to hold the reins of the local church tightly? Are they inevitably the right people to chair all the meetings they attend? Are they able to hear the prophetic word in evangelism or community service when it comes from others? Do local churches give enough freedom to all their members to 'paint their own picture' of the church?

There is ever a sensitive balance between the recognition that all are leaders and that the minister has a specific role as leader. It is a sensitivity of which Provincial Moderators seek also to be aware as they respond to the Church's call to leadership.

Have we learned to value the role of the ordained minister and yet not to ignore the widespread and comparable gifts of others?

9. THE MODEL IS JESUS

Just as our ministry derives from the ministry of Jesus so our leadership derives from his leadership. It is a multi-faceted jewel; he combines all the elements of effective leadership. He declared truth in a way which brooked little discussion in the Sermon on the Mount. His was the clear initiative as he steadfastly made his way to Jerusalem. Yet when his disciples and others expected up-front leadership and clear answers to direct questions, he often asked 'What do you think about it?'

Matthew's account of Jesus meeting the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matthew 15. 21 - 28) is written in a way which portrays a development of Jesus' understanding of the place of Gentiles in the Kingdom. He is a learner as well as a teacher. He used such methods as parables which left room for listeners to work out the meaning for themselves, and was ready to take the risk that his hearers might misunderstand what he was saying. He seemed instinctively to know the style of leadership required in each situation. In his leadership, words and actions were all of a piece, even to utter self-giving.

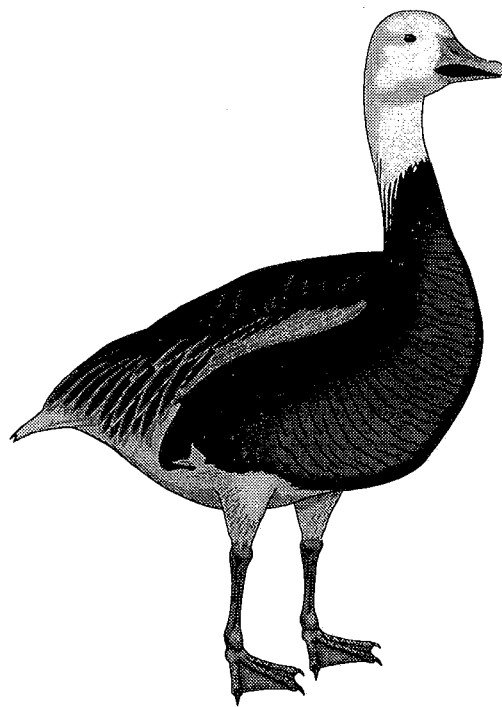
10. **SUMMARY**

Leadership is a rich resource in the Church for which we give daily thanks to God. It is a gift to us and God will decide upon whom it is laid in each place and time. Our corporate response and task is recognise it, deny none of it, utilise all of it, and be grateful. The task of each individual disciple is to value the gift in ourselves and nurture it to God's glory.

11. **PERSONALIA**

During the course of the last year we have bidden farewell to John Waller, and have been glad to see his extensive gifts being used in further service to the Church. We have been pleased to note John Humphreys' re-appointment, and to welcome Elizabeth Welch, whilst enjoying the renewed company of John Slow in the period between John Waller's departure and Elizabeth's arrival. Before Assembly next meets Bill Gathercole will have retired; we have been enriched by his contribution over a period of ten years and wish him and Betty a healthy and long retirement.

MISSION COUNCIL
REPORTS & RESOLUTIONS



GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996

Mission Council

The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community. Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole Church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body.

1. OUR MEETINGS

- 1.1 During the year Mission Council has held meetings in Damascus House, Mill Hill; Central Church, Derby; and St Joseph's, Upholland.
- 1.2 The Moderator has made a significant contribution to the meetings through his challenging bible studies and purposeful chairmanship. His chaplain, Elizabeth Welch, has made sure that worship, using the riches of the world-wide church, was the context of all the meetings. The March meeting was considerably helped by the presence of Preman Niles, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission.
- 1.3 Much of the business of Mission Council is necessarily domestic to the United Reformed Church. The Council was therefore glad to receive greetings from the Church of Lippe in Germany and to hear of the Moderator's visit to the Churches of North and South India; it sent a message of solidarity to the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan; it gave thanks for 50 years' service through Christian Aid; and sessions were devoted to mission in a rural context and to the needs of small churches.

2. RESPONDING TO THE ASSEMBLY

- 2.1 **Oversight ministries.** In 1995 the Assembly asked Mission Council to carry out a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight (Resolution 50, Record p.47). The Council set up a group to do this, on the advice of the Nominations Committee. The members are: Revd John Slow (Convener), Revd. Roberta Rominger (Secretary), Revd. Bill Gathercole, Mr Geoffrey Lawrence, and the Revd Gethin Abraham-Williams. The group has been asked to consider the appointment and review of Provincial Moderators within its brief.
- 2.2. **Westminster College.** The Assembly in 1995 passed a resolution regarding the operation of the College (Resolution 11, Record P.21) in which Mission Council was instructed to take any necessary steps to give effect to the working out of the proposals that had been agreed. In response to this instruction Mission Council had much pleasure in appointing the Revd Dr David Cornick as Principal of Westminster College from 1st September 1996 to 31st August 2001. It was further agreed that appointments be made for five years from 1st September 1996 of a Director of Studies in Systematic Theology and a Director of Pastoral Studies.

The following statement on the College was agreed as a framework within which the Board of Governors will operate:

- 2.2.1 Westminster College seeks:
 - (a) to offer training to the United Reformed Church that is of high academic quality, complemented by a constant and sharp awareness of the challenges facing the Church and its life and mission;
 - (b) to offer training for the ministry of word and sacraments, and for lay ministries - both preparatory training, and continuing education for those already in service;

- (c) to support this training with personal and pastoral care, as those who commit themselves to extending their service in the Church are liable to be stretched intellectually and spiritually, and may also experience family and financial strain;
- (d) to participate actively in the development of new training initiatives within the Church;
- (e) to work within a spirit and environment of committed ecumenism, from a Reformed base;
- (f) to sustain a broad and lively range of contacts with the world church, thereby enriching the setting of our training;
- (g) to act as a theological support and resource for the whole denomination: by the provision of an outstanding theological library; by the encouragement and support of study, research and scholarship; through the service of staff on councils and committees of the church; through personal support and counsel; and through the availability of staff to travel to teach groups.

2.2.2 Board of Governors

2.2.2.1 There shall be a Board of Governors for the College appointed by the General Assembly, consisting of fourteen members as follows:

- (a) a Convener, chosen for that purpose;
- (b) a clerk or secretary to the Board, chosen for the purpose;
- (c) eight other persons, of whom at least two shall have expertise in management, finance and the administration of buildings, two shall have expertise in education, and two shall have ministerial experience;
- (d) the Principal of the College *ex officio*;
- (e) a member of the teaching staff of the College, chosen by them;
- (f) a student member of the College, chosen by the students;
- (g) the Chair of the Cheshunt Governors *ex officio*.

2.2.2.2 Within the total membership there shall be a representative of the Cambridge Theological Federation, a representative of the University of Cambridge or the Faculty of Divinity of the University, a representative of Anglia Polytechnic University and the Secretary for Training.

2.2.2.3 The nomination of Governors in classes (a), (b) and (c) shall be made by the Nominations Committee of the General Assembly, and the period of service for such Governors shall be six years. At least nine Governors shall be members of the United Reformed Church. The Nominations Committee shall ensure a regular rotation of Governors.

2.2.2.4 The quorum for meetings of the Board of Governors shall be eight.

2.2.3 Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

2.2.3.1 The Board of Governors shall be responsible to the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church for:

- (a) the determination of the educational character and mission of the College and for the oversight of its activities;
- (b) the effective and efficient use of resources, the financial management of the college within policies set by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church acting through its committees and Mission Council, and for safeguarding the College's assets.

MISSION COUNCIL

2.2.3.2 The Board of Governors shall report annually to the General Assembly through the Training Committee.

2.2.4 Committees of the Board of Governors

2.2.4.1 The Board of Governors shall establish a Board of Studies, consisting of the members of the teaching staff (the Senatus) and other members nominated by the Board of Governors, to oversee the admission, teaching and examination of candidates for the ministry studying at the College, and other educational activities of the College.

2.2.4.2 The Board of Governors shall establish an Appointments Committee, which shall include a member nominated by the Training Committee, representatives from the Cambridge Theological Federation and such specialist members outside their own number as they consider necessary, to make recommendations to them for appointments to the teaching staff of the College. These recommendations, if approved by the Board, shall be submitted to the General Assembly for approval.

2.2.4.3 The Board of Governors shall establish a committee or committees to determine or advise on such matters relating to finance, property management and employment policy as the Board of Governors may remit to them. The Board of Governors shall not, however, delegate the approval of annual estimates of income or expenditure, or their responsibility for the financial management of the College and for safeguarding its assets.

2.2.4.4 The Board of Governors shall maintain an Audit Committee to receive and approve independent assessment of the finance and management of the College.

2.2.5 The Principal

The Principal shall be appointed by the General Assembly and shall be responsible to the Board of Governors. The Principal's main responsibilities are:

- (a)
 - (i) to ensure that the policies established and the practices agreed through the Board of Governors and its committees are put into operation;
 - (ii) to hold the overall responsibility for the teaching, management, financial administration, and pastoral relationships with staff, students and residents of the College;
- (b) to play an active role in ensuring that the work and life of the College is integrated into that of the Cambridge Theological Federation;
- (c) to establish and maintain, as appropriate, relationships within the wider community in Cambridge (such as the Faculty of Divinity, the University of Cambridge, Anglia Polytechnic University, city public authorities and the voluntary sector) and with other colleges in the Cambridge Theological Federation;
- (d) to establish and maintain relationships with the Church, its District Councils, Provincial Synods, General Assembly, and with related Churches overseas; and with other Colleges and Courses for the training of students from the United Reformed Church;
- (e) to contribute to the teaching of the Cambridge Theological Federation and on occasion, as required, to teach more widely within the United Reformed Church (for example on lay/part-time, weekend or short courses);
- (f) to represent the College through the written and spoken word, and to be a focus for public relations and advocacy for the College in order to achieve the integrity of the College's life and witness;
- (g) to ensure, through the Bursar, that the College and its staff comply with health and safety at work provisions;

- (h) to be open to new styles of work and new responsibilities as required by the decisions of the Board of Governors or the General Assembly and its Mission Council.

2.2.6 Finance

2.2.6.1 The powers formerly vested in the College Committee of the Presbyterian Church of England and by the General Assembly of 1978 (Reports p.21, Record p.18) vested in the Ministerial Training Committee of the United Reformed Church and in the Board of Studies and the Westminster College Management Committee as its sub-committees are hereby vested in the Board of Governors for the College, henceforth to be exercised by it either directly or through such of its committees as the Board shall decide.

2.2.6.2 The annual budget for Westminster College (including the stipends of the teaching staff), based on estimates approved by the Board of Governors, shall be submitted to the Resource Planning Advisory Committee for inclusion in the church budget presented to the General Assembly. The finances shall be managed by the College officers within a framework approved by the Board; and arrangements for the maintenance of accounting records and the preparation of regular financial reports will be developed in consultation with the Honorary Treasurer and the Chief Accountant of the Church.

NOTE

The Board of Governors will prepare additional material on the Senatus (including the Principal's relationship to it) and the relationship between Westminster College and the Cambridge Theological Federation with the hope that this might be ready in time to be added to the existing material at General Assembly.

3. ACTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE ASSEMBLY

3.1 Most of Mission Council's actions in this regard have been in relation to people:

- Mr Graham Stacy was appointed as Honorary Treasurer until General Assembly 1996, when a normal term of appointment will be sought.
- The Revd Eileen Sanderson's appointment as National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer was extended to 31st December 1996.
- The Revd Elizabeth Welch was appointed Moderator of the West Midlands Province from 8th April 1996 to 31st August 2003.
- The Revd Michael Diffey was released from his post as Secretary for Ministries as from 15 June 1996 in order to allow him to be inducted as minister of St John's, New Barnet.
- The Revd John Waller was inducted to the post of Deputy General Secretary.

3.2 **Remit of the Ecumenical Committee.** A revised form was agreed. It appears at the head of the Committee's report.

3.3 **Reimbursement to ministers for the cost of using privately-owned cars.** Mission Council was asked to make a decision by the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee. This is a complex matter and, in making the following decision Mission Council asked the Finance Office to produce explanatory papers for both local church and District Council treasurers. The resolution agreed was: 'Mission Council, acting for General Assembly, resolves that: (i) all churches be required to restrict the amount of their direct reimbursement to ministers for the use of privately-owned cars to mileage rates which do not exceed the limits for Class I National Insurance contributions. (ii) Churches should determine the additional sum necessary to cover the shortfall (if any) between the reimbursement under (i) and the real costs incurred (the "fixed car allowance") to be paid by the URC Finance Office through the stipend payroll system. This sum, plus the attributable employer's National Insurance contribution (currently 10.2%), will be collected from the local church with its Ministry and Mission contribution.'

4. OTHER ACTIONS

- 4.1 Mission Council reviewed the work of its Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL). The following points were agreed:
- AGOGAL should be retained as an advisory group to Mission Council
 - Inter-denominational grants would become Central Church grants and would be reported to Mission Council each year.
 - The membership would be a Convener, Secretary, the General Secretary and the staff persons responsible for Church & Society, CRCW's, Discipleship & Witness, Ecumenical Relations, International Church Relations, Ministries and Youth and Children's Work.
 - The Convener and Secretary should not be staff members but one of them should already be a member of Mission Council.
 - Mr Simon Rowntree was appointed as Convener and the Revd Roger Whitehead as Secretary.
- 4.2 **Task Group on Human Sexuality.** The Group was thanked for its work so far and asked to collate replies which were received by the General Secretary before 1 December 1996 and to suggest resolutions to be offered to General Assembly by the Mission Council.
- 4.3 **Resource Sharing Task Group.** In order to enable the Group to complete its work, particularly in regard to Provincial consultations, the Council appointed the Revd Tony Burnham as Convener in place of the late Mr Alistair Black. The Task Group's proposal that greater priority should be given to small churches has been taken up through the Discipleship and Witness Committee. Other concerns identified in the 1995 Provincial visits are on the agenda of the Mission Council Advisory Group.
- 4.4 **Appointments to Advisory Groups and Committees.** Mrs Angela Hughes, the Revd Julian Macro, the Revd Margaret McKay and the Revd Peter Poulter were appointed to the Mission Council Advisory Group. Mr Geoff Lunt and the Revd Graham Maskery were appointed to the Staffing Advisory Group. The Revd Derek Wales was appointed to the Resource Planning Advisory Committee.
- 4.5 **The 25th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church.** The Council discussed how this should be marked in 1997. It was agreed that a major national event was not appropriate but a small group has been set up under the convenership of the Revd David Jenkins (Northern Province) to prepare a leaflet suggesting how the anniversary might be celebrated locally and in other ways.
- 4.6 **Yardley Hastings.** Growth at both the National Youth Resource Centre and the local church had placed an intolerable burden on the Revd Martin Nicholls and the staff members. It was agreed to grant additional funds to the Centre in 1996 and 1997 to relieve the pressure and allow time for a new pattern of financing to be devised.
- 4.7 **Title of Assembly Moderator.** The Council noted inconsistencies in the titles given to Moderators in recent years. It was agreed that there should be no distinctive title for the Moderator of General Assembly. The use of the title 'Right Reverend' will be discontinued from 1997 onwards.
- 4.8 **Continuation of staff posts.** The recommendation of the Staffing Advisory Group that the posts of Secretary for Ministries, Secretary for International Church Relations and Chaplain of the National Youth Resources Centre should be continued a further five years was approved.
- 4.9 Council approved **minutes of appreciation** of missionary service in respect of the Revd David and Mrs Jenny Fraser, Mr John and Mrs Janny Harris, the Revd Geoffrey and Mrs Ann Marsden and Mr Ivor and Mrs Joan Shepherd.

- 4.10 **The Training Review.** The report was presented to Mission Council which agreed to forward it to the Assembly with the advice that the Assembly should defer decision on that part of the review dealing with the YCWT programme for a further consultation period. In order to allow this consultation, the post of National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer should be extended to 31st December 1998. (The voting on this proposal was 39-12).
- 4.11 **The Millennium.** It was agreed to set up a Millennium Task Group representative of the programme committees and in contact with the ecumenical group planning the churches' response around the themes of The Lord's Prayer and Jubilee.
- 4.12 **Induction of Assembly-appointed staff.** It was felt helpful to clarify present practice, which is that staff are inducted at the General Assembly or the relevant Mission Council. The exceptions are Provincial Moderators (inducted in their Provinces) and Westminster College staff (inducted at the College). In the case of ministers it is appropriate that Schedule D should be used in one of the approved forms and the minister should make the affirmations in Schedule C. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has been asked to prepare draft affirmations for lay staff.
- 4.13 It was agreed that the **Staffing Advisory Group** had proved valuable in providing an independent assessment of staff posts as they came up for review. Its work had resulted in a number of changes in posts to meet changing situations. In view of this, the Group's work is to be continued.

RESOLUTIONS**Mission Council****7 Multi-racial ministry post**

Assembly instructs the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee, in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Committee, to use one of its 5 special ministry posts for the appointment of a multi-racial and multi-cultural development worker within the United Reformed Church for an initial period of 3 years.

This proposal originates in a request from Thames North Province to the Assembly of 1994. Advice was sought from the Equal Opportunities Committee, which needed time to come to a mind because it was a completely new committee. At each of its meetings in 1995/96 Mission Council has considered ways in which the objectives of the Province and Committee could be met. The key to unlocking a difficult discussion was the decision that we should seek help from our CWM partners. The objectives of the post would be:

- To help the URC at every level to be more open and integrated culturally and socially
- To explore the task of mission in our multi-cultural society
- To foster awareness of issues of racism and racial justice in congregations and councils of the URC.

The job description would include:

- challenging the committees and councils of the church
- working through the provincial networks, especially of the Equal Opportunity Officers
- travelling extensively throughout the URC, while being based in Tavistock Place
- cooperating with the other churches and other organisations who share all or part of the brief
- providing, in due course, both an objective analysis of the present and some guidelines for the future.

The postholder would be part of the central staff team, and would be a member of and work through the Equal Opportunities Committee. The funding of a special category mission post is already in the budget and the Finance Committee has been asked to consult with the Resource Planning Advisory Committee concerning the provision of housing costs and expenses. The help of the Council for World Mission would be sought both to identify a person suitable for such a post and to advise on the details of the appointment.

8 Divorced and separated spouses of ministers

Assembly renews its 1982 commitment that if a Provincial Moderator presents a case for the church to give assistance towards the housing costs of a minister's spouse at the time of divorce or separation, the Welfare Sub-Committee will consider making a contribution towards rent, mortgage payments or other housing costs for not more than 12 months, the amount being judged according to all the resources available.

This resolution is brought in response to a request from the 1995 General Assembly that consideration should be given to the question of assistance and support for divorced and separated spouses of United Reformed Church ministers. Mission Council through its Advisory Group considered many aspects of a difficult and painful matter. It was realised that circumstances differ in every case and a provision that was helpful in one case might be harmful in another. The response focuses in two areas: housing and pastoral care. The General Assembly passed a resolution in 1982 offering short-term help with housing costs. This help has only been sought in a handful of cases. In the belief that many may not be aware of this decision, Mission Council proposes that the 1982 commitment should be renewed in the terms of the resolution above.

At the same time it is recognised that pastoral care is a vital but complex ingredient in the support of ministers and their spouses at the time of divorce and separation. The following guidelines are offered to help in such situations. District Councils and provincial moderators will need to devise strategies whereby the guidelines can be made available whenever they are needed.

Pastoral care at the time of divorce or separation
Mission Council Guidelines

The pastoral support of divorced and separated ministers, their spouses and families, is a responsibility shared by the local church, relevant pastoral committees, and the provincial moderator. It is vital that they all work together because it is extremely unlikely that any one of them has the information and resources to give all the help needed. The following check list is offered:

- (a) There must be an early consultation between the local church, relevant pastoral committee(s), and provincial moderator. Any of them should feel free to initiate it but it is essential that the provincial moderator is brought in from the outset.
- (b) The provincial moderator will have knowledge of and access to appropriate financial resources in the Province or in Assembly funds. S/he also has access to the Assembly Pastoral Committee which may need to be consulted (through its Secretary) about the details of the case or about resources available. S/he should also have information concerning groups (such as Broken Rites) which can provide expert continuing support.
- (c) Separate sources of support for each of the parties must be identified and agreed quickly, and channels of communication established. Both the minister and spouse need to know what is proposed and be able to comment on it.
- (d) The District Council may need to arrange for a representative to be present (and possibly take the chair) at church and elders' meetings dealing with the consequences of divorce or separation.
- (e) Care needs to be taken not to prejudice the legal position of either of the parties by the church taking hasty or uninformed action.
- (f) The parties need to have accurate and up-to-date information on their rights and responsibilities. Anyone helping them should direct them to a reliable source. The local branch of the Citizen's Advice Bureau is often the best place.
- (g) No action in regard to the occupation of the manse by other than the minister should be taken without legal advice and consultation with the District Council and trustees.

9 Health and Healing Task Group

Assembly agrees to the establishment of a Joint Health and Healing Development Group with the Methodist Church, to begin work on 1st September 1996 with a review after five years.

This Task Group was set up as part of the new structures accepted by the General Assembly in 1994.

The rubric reads: *'This group will complete outstanding work undertaken by the previous committee. In addition it will explore how the URC may continue to express its concerns in those matters ecumenically. The group will report not later than General Assembly 1996.'*

- 1 'Praise to the Lord who is my health and my salvation'
Health and salvation in scripture are closely linked. When Jesus heals people who are sick it is one sign of the kingdom drawing close. People in many local churches have become more aware of a ministry of healing in recent years. The need is to bring together our concern for health, as expressed in National Health Service and chaplaincy and public life, with the prayer, worship and pastoral care of the church in a total concern for healing and wholeness. Health and healing is part of the good news. This report offers a pattern of closer working with the Methodist Church as we seek to work out what it is to sing with Wesley that the name of Jesus 'is life and health and peace'.
- 2 The Task Group explored broad ecumenical co-operation through the Churches Council for Health and Healing. An annual meeting of denominational representatives has been created but at the present there seems no more scope for co-operative working through that group.
- 3 The Task Group has had regular representation from the Methodist Church and we are now able to report that the proposal for a **Joint Health and Healing Development Group** to be formed between the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church (to be reviewed in 2001) has been agreed by Mission Council. Methodism is reorganising its committee structures and this H&H Development Group would become a part of its Pastoral Care and Christian Education activity. It is suggested that the central staff member responsible for liaison within the United Reformed Church would be the Secretary for Church and Society, though links with other Assembly committees (Discipleship and Witness, Ministries, Ecumenical) will be appropriate from time to time.
- 4 The terms of reference for the new joint Group will be as follows:
To support and stimulate Methodist District Secretaries for Health and Healing and URC Provincial H&H Consultants
To provide a link with the Churches Council for Health and Healing (CCHH).
To link with and be responsible to the respective denominational structures.
To initiate joint work (e.g. Health and Healing Bulletin, Training materials, Annual Consultation/Conference).
To initiate new work.
To explore further ecumenical co-operation and working.
- 5 Membership of the new joint Group will comprise:
Four members from each denomination - chosen to ensure some continuity with the existing groups and potential for new leadership, to include at least one member from each denomination with specific work experience in a health related field.. Nominations Committee will be offered suggestions of names to ensure that these criteria are met.
The Secretary of the Health Care Chaplaincy Board of the Free Church Federal Council.
- 6 The group at its first meeting will appoint its own chairperson and secretary and agree representation to CCHH. Each denomination's representatives will be responsible for reporting to their own denomination.
There should be at least one meeting of the Group per year apart from wider meetings, recognising that, in addition, the CCHH meeting and the national consultations with District Secretaries and Provincial

- 7 The new Group would need a budget of £800 to cover costs of meetings.
- 8 In addition to the resolution, the H&H Task Group hopes to be able to report to Assembly that the revised Health and Healing Study Pack will have been published in the first half of 1996, thus completing the other part of the brief, completion of outstanding work. The title will be *Into Wholeness*.

We also draw attention to the Methodist publication *Limited Resources, Unlimited Demand*, as a good resource for looking at the Ethics of Health Care Delivery, published at a time when the issue of resources in Health Care is very much debated (see REFORM review, December 1995).

10 Mission and other Faiths Task Group

Assembly agrees to set up a Committee for Inter-Faith Relations, with a review of its work to be completed in time for the General Assembly of 2001.

The Task Group was set up in 1994 with a particular brief to seek ways in which the 'Other Faiths' work could be continued on an ecumenical rather than a denominational basis. A report was sought for the General Assembly of 1996.

In bringing the above resolution, Mission Council accepted the advice of the Task Group that the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland's Commission for Inter-Faith Relations depends on effective work by the denominations. It has neither the financial resources nor the staffing levels to take on more responsibilities. The withdrawal of denominational work would cause the Commission's work to cease to be significant. Our denomination has continued to make a valuable contribution to the work of the Commission. The convener, Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow, and the secretary to the Educational Issues Group, the Revd Brenda Willis, are both members of the URC.

During the past year the Task Group has met twice, in Birmingham when they heard of the work of the Birmingham Council of Faith, and in Leeds when the Task Group met local Muslims and Jews. A Christian/Jewish/Muslim Trilogue has been arranged for June 1996.

Many requests have been received from churches for information about New Religious Movements. One of the group has undertaken to study some of these movements as part of her sabbatical.

The work of the Task Group has become more important during the last year as more of our churches find themselves in inter-faith situations. It has continued to work with local churches, with our partners in other denominations as we face the many questions raised when living in a multi-faith society, and with other faith communities in areas of common ground.

The proposed Committee would have a Convener, Secretary and four members plus specialist consultants. It would relate to a designated staff member and operate within the same budget as the Mission and Other Faiths Task Group.

11 Constitutional Change

The Assembly ratifies its decision made in July 1995 to amend paragraph 2(3)ix of the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church to read:

'to appoint from time to time such number of representatives to the General Assembly (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) as the General Assembly shall determine. This shall include, when possible, a representative under the age of 26. As far as possible all appointments shall be made in rotation from local churches within its district.'

No objections from synods had been received by the General Secretary by the due date to the amendment to the Basis and Structure regarding Assembly representatives under the age of 26.

12 1997 Budget and 5-year plan

Assembly adopts the budget and 5-year plan as set out below.

The Resource Planning Advisory Committee has worked throughout the year with the Mission Council preparing the background for the first 5-year plan.

THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR 1997-2001

1 WHAT IS A FIVE-YEAR PLAN?

It is a tool to help us use our resources for mission more effectively.

Our past practice has been to plan one year ahead on the basis that we must try to balance the budget for every one year. Such a practice makes innovation almost impossible and it leads to short-term decision making which can so often result in unjustified pessimism.

By planning over a longer period, we allow time to make change gradually. We can assess the consequences of various choices. We can see how a change in one policy would make another one more or less practicable. And we recognise the fact that very few programmes or policies relate only to one year.

A Five-Year Plan does not remove problems or difficult decisions. It simply gives us a means of facing them more hopefully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2 POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Policies are agreed by the General Assembly to determine ways in which the URC intends to conduct its life in matters which are generally under our control. In matters where we are much less certain of the future or over which we have little control, we need to make assumptions and to check those assumptions regularly. The Mission Council has tried to set down the policies and assumptions which will indicate the resources which will be needed and the use to which they will be put over the next five years. These are documented as an Addendum to this Plan.

3 SUMMARY OF THE PLAN

- most basic programmes will continue and costs will rise in line with the Retail Prices Index (RPI)
- an increased emphasis on training will cause costs in that area to rise by 5% a year
- the deficit in the Ministers' Pension Fund will be reduced by means of a significant one-off payment, followed by annual subventions of a fixed amount, rather than increasing the amount of the subvention each year
- the number of stipendiary ministers in 1997 will be about 5% less than the budgeted figure for 1996 but will then soon move to a constant figure.
- consultation on a fair way of sharing stipendiary ministry between the Provinces has begun and will need to continue
- after increases in Ministry and Mission Fund contributions below the rate of RPI have been accepted in 1996 and 1997, they will return to RPI level thereafter. TRIO will be a significant help in this
- the balance in the Ministerial Training Fund will be run down by the end of 1998 and the costs previously met from this Fund will then be met entirely out of general funds
- although some reserves of unexpended income will be used to take us through the early years of the Plan, we shall soon be back to balanced budgets

4 THE FINANCIAL PLAN

The financial part of the Five-year Plan is essentially a series of budgets. The budget structure accepted for the 1996 Budget is used as the basis for these projections.

The top four rows of the spreadsheet show some of the assumptions that have been made for various indices for each of the years of the plan and for the immediately previous and subsequent years, viz. for the plan period under consideration, 1997-2001, the years 1996-2002 are included. Other assumptions accord with the policies and assumptions set out in the Addendum.

The indices have been applied to each line of the full budget as appropriate and the resultant totals under each main section of the budget are shown in the following rows of the spreadsheet. Some budget items, such as grants from Memorial Hall and New College Trusts, cannot be treated in this way and require specific assumptions to be made.

5 THE BUDGET FOR 1997

This is in the same format as last year. Direct comparisons are made with the 1996 budget.

6 MISSION PRIORITIES

The Mission Council spent some time identifying broad mission priorities for the United Reformed Church. These were developed in the context of prayer, worship and Bible study and the Lordship of Christ was affirmed. The priorities, which received general support from District Councils, are

Identity To consider the identity of the Church, united and reformed, and its consequence for the ecumenical scene.

Collaboration To improve communication and the sharing of resources.

Growth To be a growing Church where people want to be and which is relevant to their lives.

Discipleship To encourage every local church to enrich its discipleship both in its own life, and the life of the community.

Children and Young People To give special attention to children and young people, nurturing those within the Church and speaking with those who are not.

Outward-Looking To foster the Church's engagement beyond itself, with the community, with society and with the world church.

Local Training To provide materials and people for training local leaders and members.

Ministers' Training To place particular emphasis on the training and in-service training of all ministers as agents of encouragement and vision.

7 FUTURE WORK

- The assumption that the present programmes and projects will continue needs to be continuously challenged. The Mission Council can be a good forum for that purpose. Having identified general priorities some more specific thinking is needed. Perhaps the General Assembly will need to initiate additional programmes?
- Different questions like; How many ministers do we need? How important are stipendiary ministers for the mission strategy and care of the church? What other paid ministries may we need? must remain high on our agenda. This is a matter not only for the Ministries Committee, but also for District Councils - and for dialogue between our various councils.
- The United Reformed Church has considerable reserves of unexpended income. The Finance Committee has decided to look at whether these can be used more effectively for mission. Their advice may be very significant.

- There are different voices among us as to what is the right level of local church giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund. Some imply, 'as little as possible' and give their reasons. Others say, 'give us a challenge' and are disappointed by our adherence to the Retail Prices Index. The different voices need to listen to each other so that we can come to a common mind.

There are other pieces of work, of course. But if we make good progress on these, then we should be able to see whether in 1998 and subsequently, it is 'business as usual' or whether we are able to develop our life in new ways in response to our calling in Christ.

8 THE PLANNING CYCLE AND CALENDAR

The Five-year Plan will be presented to Mission Council in March each year following consultations in the previous September/October between the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and representatives of each Province. One of the consultations will focus on the deployment of stipendiary ministers and the other on M and M contributions.

The Five-year Plan for 1997-2001: Policies and Assumptions

Addendum

1 INTRODUCTION

This addendum to the Five-year Plan for 1997-2001 sets out the policies and assumptions which form the basis of the plan. It represents a considerable amount of new work by the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and substantial consultation in Mission Council. The Committee is grateful for the help that has been given in the preparation of the paper by those with whom it has consulted. It is clear from the paper that the process of consultation is ongoing.

2 CHURCH MEMBERS

The task of the URC is to respond to God's call to worship and mission. In that task, the primary resource is the prayers, commitment and service of the people in the local church. Any long-term plan for the use of the church's resources must arise from a strategy aimed at fulfilling that task most effectively.

3 THE NUMBER OF MINISTERS

It is clear that the stipendiary ministry is the most significant resource of the URC for which money is required. It is also clear that the only significant source of regular income is the membership of the URC, using the channel of Ministry and Mission (M and M) contributions. This points to a critical balance between the cost of ministry and the capacity to pay for it. Work is being undertaken currently to determine the number of ministers on the payroll in the next few years. The discussion is largely about how the number might be controlled; but this is only a short-term question. For the longer-term, we should be tackling the issue in response to the church's vision of its task:

- what are the URC's growth targets?
- what ministry resources are needed to achieve these targets?
- what is the cost of these resources?
- how can the church meet these costs?

The decision process which deals with these questions is probably to present (and indicate the outcome of) two scenarios:

- continued decline at the same rate as in the past fifteen years (see Priorities & Resources Report of 1979). This would require a shift in the source of ministry to non-stipendiary etc. and/or a dilution of ministry
- a reversal of decline; e.g. to restore numbers to the 1990 level by 2000.

An important question, which needs further investigation, is how far and in what ways the placing of paid ministers affects the growth and development of the church. Is an increase in their number the only, or the best, way of achieving growth?

Ministries Committee has been asked to advise the number of stipendiary ministers which should be included in the 5-year plan, year by year. It is intended that the figures should be derived from an assessment of need. There is concern that stipendiary ministry is often deployed in response to a church's ability to pay for it; rather than in response to mission opportunity. Having regard to the number of ministers on the payroll in March 1996 (considerably fewer than budgeted a year ago), it has been assumed that the number will drop by about 5% in 1997 but that the decline in numbers will slow down considerably in 1998 and 1999 and thereafter numbers will be constant.

The Ecumenical Committee has been asked to advise the likelihood of a further union of the URC with another church during the next decade and to predict the numbers of united local churches over the 5-year plan period, year by year.

4 STIPENDIARY MINISTERS' CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

On the advice of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-committee, it is assumed that:

- **Basic stipend**

In accordance with present policy, stipends will be increased in line with RPI throughout the plan period. The increase for the stipend year Jan 1st to December 31st is based on the figure for RPI announced in the November thirteen months before the beginning of the stipend year.

- **Pension provisions**

There will be no change in the basic pension fund rules during the plan period.

- **Housing**

During the plan period there will be no changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration as regards ministers' housing.

5 TRAINING

It is evident that the cost of training in the URC represents a very significant proportion of the expenditure budget (approximately 8% in 1995/6). It is assumed that the cost of ministerial training (per person) rises at the rate of 5% p.a.

The cost of ministerial training should, in principle, be a charge on the M and M budget. As a transitional measure, part of the accumulated income in the Ministerial Training Fund is being used each year with the intention of reducing it to zero by the year 2000.

It is understood that the Accreditation sub-committee is to review policy with regard to the age of acceptance for stipendiary ministry training. The RPAC has expressed concern that shorter terms of ministerial service lead to increases in the cost of training and has asked the Accreditation sub-committee to give serious consideration to the financial implications of any new policy.

The General Assembly must set clear policy for the use and financial management of the Windermere Centre, Yardley Hastings and Westminster College. Use will be determined by the General Assembly on the advice of the Training Review. The Training Committee has been asked to coordinate the preparation of five-year plans for all three institutions.

It is assumed that the patterns and cost of training are likely to change significantly during the plan period as a result of the Review of Training in the URC which is due to be reported to the General Assembly in 1996.

The Training Committee has been asked to consider the impact upon resources of its recommendations arising from the Review. Discussion at the Mission Council in March 1995 pointed to the need for a greater emphasis on training both ministers and lay people in the URC. Mission Council also approved an increase in the 1996 Budget to provide grants for lay training. Concern has been expressed to the Training Committee that, in the light of this emphasis and the assumption that the annual increase in the cost per person of ministerial training is likely to exceed the rate of inflation, it is essential that training is carried out as economically as possible.

6 HOUSING MINISTERS AND WIDOW(ER)S IN RETIREMENT

The policy of the URC Retired Ministers Housing Committee is agreed by the General Assembly. In recent years, about £2M has been withdrawn from unrestricted income of the church and lent to the Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited to meet the cost of operating that policy.

Changes are taking place in the age distribution of ministers, arising in part from a declining number overall and in part from the increase in the average age at ordination. Those entering the ministry later in life may be more likely to have housing of their own. The level of legacies and donations is variable. It is very difficult to assess the impact of such factors upon future requirements for retirement housing, but the URC Retired Ministers Housing Committee has made an assessment and offered advice. In the light of that advice, it is assumed that no further request will be made for money from central church funds but that, in the near future, none of the loans will be repaid.

Consideration must be given to the level of care that might be appropriate for retired ministers and widows who are not in a position to sell their property to pay privately for care.

7 PENSION FUND ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION

This is required to bring the value of the Pension Fund to the level required as a result of actuarial valuation. It was agreed, as a result of the last actuarial valuation, that annual contributions to the Pension Fund (of about £1M in 1995) should be increased each year at the rate of 10% compound up to and including the year 2005. This represented a very significant, and increasingly significant, item of expenditure and did little to reduce the overall deficit for a number of years. There has been some consultation with the officers of the Ministers' Pension Trust and of the Finance Committee and with the church's actuary. In the light of this, the Plan has been prepared on the assumption that the payment of the subventions will be restructured by making a one-off payment of £2.76M at the end of 1996 and annual payments of £1.13M in each of the following twelve years. It should be noted that there will be a further actuarial valuation as on 31st December 1996. The further assumption has been made that this will not require either an increase or a decrease in the proposed contribution schedule. These assumptions are necessarily provisional and will depend on continuing advice from the Finance Committee and Ministers' Pension Trust.

8 SALARIES OF LAY STAFF

The policy is that lay staff salaries are determined by the Salaries Committee. Salaries are reviewed with effect from 1st. July each year and a number of factors are taken into account. The latest available RPI figure is considered, and salaries are normally increased in line with this figure (to the nearest 0.5 percent).

Other factors, particularly for central office staff, include increases in commuting costs. For the purposes of the five-year plan, it is assumed that, during the plan period, lay staff salaries will rise in line with RPI.

It is also assumed that the number of lay staff remains constant throughout the plan period. It must be acknowledged, however, that decisions of the General Assembly could vary the number and/or change the balance of central church staff between lay and ministerial.

9 GENERAL COSTS

It is assumed that such costs as travel, housing-related costs, office supplies etc. will rise in line with RPI. It is acknowledged that the RPI is a crude index in relation to such elements of the budget but it is felt to be acceptable in view of the comparative insignificance of these items and the work involved in a more rigorous approach.

10 GENERAL ASSEMBLY COSTS

In consultation with the Provinces and in response to the resolution of the 1994 General Assembly (Resolution 35), it has been agreed that the full cost of attendance at Assembly be included in the expenditure budgets of 1997 and thereafter. A figure of £30,000 has been provided for subsistence at non-residential Assemblies.

11 RESERVES

Considerable reserves of both capital and income have been built up in central church funds. Some of these are restricted in their use by the trusts on which they are held. Others are unrestricted, although not necessarily available for immediate use. The case for taking a longer term view and for responding to short term 'blips' only in the context of the long term plan has already been made. One consequence of this should be a willingness to use reserves to overcome short term deficits. A policy is needed to determine appropriate levels of reserves and the use of accumulations of income in restricted Funds.

The Finance Committee is to consider the matter of reserves and make policy recommendations.

12 ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Two economic indicators, over which the URC has no control, directly influence the financial aspects of the five-year plan. It is notoriously difficult to forecast these, but it is essential to make some assumptions:

- **RPI**

Policies set out in Sections 3, 7 and 8 identify RPI as a significant influence upon expenditure. URC Pool investment income is expected to rise in line with RPI. The rate of inflation is also a factor which is increasingly taken into account by local churches, Districts and Provinces when they consider what M and M contribution they might make. A figure of 3.5% p.a. is assumed throughout the plan period. Whatever the outcome of the next General Election, inflation at more than about 4% appears to be politically unacceptable.

- **Interest Rates**

This factor is taken into account in projecting income from deposits and from government stock. More significantly, it is a key element in actuarial valuation of the Pension Fund and therefore contributes to the determination of future Fund valuations and therefore the need for any subvention (see Section 6). A figure of 7.5% p.a. is assumed throughout the plan period.

Two other economic factors influence the financial five year plan:

- **Company Share dividends**

Projections for dividends on equity investments are of little significance as most investment income arises from holdings in the URC Pool where 'dividends' are planned to rise in line with inflation (see RPI above).

- **VAT**

It is assumed that the rate of VAT will remain unchanged throughout the plan period and that no further exemptions will be granted to churches.

13 **ADVOCACY AND TRIO**

TRIO is based on the belief that our giving is part of our response to God's love in Christ. TRIO has been extremely successful in enabling local churches to increase their income from direct giving. Only about one third of churches have, so far, used the programme. It is envisaged that, by the end of the plan period, all churches will be using TRIO, or a similar programme, to inform and challenge their congregation.

- Ministers and Elders need to accept it as their responsibility to inform and challenge the congregation.

Local churches have increased their giving to M and M a great deal in recent years. This has sometimes been at the expense of meeting local needs. This may well explain why the increase in income in the churches which have used TRIO has not usually been reflected in increased contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. It is assumed that, in the later years of the plan period, this will change and thereby maintain increases in M and M contributions at least at the rate of RPI. It is also assumed that increases in costs above the rate of inflation will be explained, and justified, at all levels of the church. There is strong evidence that churches will give more if presented with the challenge.

Provincial Financial Resources Committees have a key role to play in challenging churches to increase their M and M contributions.

14 **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

- **The relation between local and national**

The underlying assumption of the five-year plan has been that the mission task is largely focused in the local church. Clearly, local social and economic factors directly affect this mission. But so also do national factors and trends. It is the task of Assembly to anticipate, trace and make sense of such trends (the whole picture) and their effect upon the mission of the local church. It is its task also to address the issues of policy behind such trends, whilst also being supportive and complementary to the local mission. The latter may well have appropriate financial implications.

- **The role of local church in community and national church in society**

Local churches may be affected by national policies, in that pressure to reduce expenditure on the 'welfare state' may, during the next five years, transfer public expectations for community care and services increasingly to the voluntary/charitable sector, including the Church.

Meeting these expectations as well as maintaining the very wide-ranging services already provided by local churches will cost money. The 'capping' of local authority budgets indicates that financial assistance from such sources may be further restricted. Need is frequently most acute in places where the local church has limited resources. The national church will need to help the local.

If society develops away from the welfare state as we have known it, then it is even conceivable that the URC would have to consider denomination-wide programmes of social care. The financial implications of this would be immense.

- **Policies and legislation affecting the church locally and nationally**

Apart from the policies referred to in the previous sub-section, there are particular pieces of legislation which have actual or potential impact upon church finances. The continued liability for VAT on some church building construction and repair work and the imposition of VAT on fuel are two examples. The costly procedures for Ecclesiastical Exemption from Listed Building Control is another. It is impossible to anticipate whether the impact of these and other products of legislation will ease or increase the financial burden during the plan period.

- **General economic conditions**

The church is, at all levels, very largely dependent upon the giving of local church members. Despite the ideal that giving to the church is the first call on income, their ability and desire to give generously may be affected by a number of economic conditions. Chief among these are both the availability and security of employment. Other factors will be the structure of income tax and the rate of interest on both savings and mortgage payments. Levels of state benefits and the performance of pension funds also have their effect. Stability along these fronts will aid planning and, perhaps, encourage generous giving.

- **Other factors having an economic effect**

Attention has been drawn to the age profile of URC membership and evidence drawn from the URC advocacy programme which points to an 'ageing' Church. Whilst more women are in paid employment it may still be true that many, and they form perhaps two thirds of the Church's membership, remain dependent upon a partner's income. It is recognised that these are important factors but, because their effect cannot be quantified at this stage, no assumptions have yet been made.

FINANCIAL FIVE YEAR PLAN

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
INDICES (% p.a.)								
RPI November	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Stipendiary Ministry numbers increase/decrease			-5.1	-0.5	-0.5			
M&M contribution increase/decrease above RPI November			-1.2					
Pension Fund Subvention	10.0	10.0	3.0					
EXPENDITURE								
MINISTRY		14539	14276	14672	15079	15567	16072	16595
TRAINING		1473	1586	1611	1662	1716	1721	1798
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF		531	547	566	586	606	628	650
MISSION		1132	1232	1325	1320	1419	1414	1521
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL		144	144	149	154	160	166	171
ADMINISTRATION		616	671	694	719	744	770	797
		-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
		<u>18435</u>	<u>18456</u>	<u>19017</u>	<u>19520</u>	<u>20212</u>	<u>20771</u>	<u>21532</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE								
INCOME								
INVESTMENT INCOME		495	430	425	423	380	380	388
GRANTS		751	816	820	824	829	833	838
MINISTRY AND MISSION CONTRIBUTIONS		16464	16797	17385	17994	18623	19275	19950
LEGACIES		151	223	231	239	247	256	265
SUNDRY INCOME		-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
		<u>17861</u>	<u>18316</u>	<u>18911</u>	<u>19530</u>	<u>20129</u>	<u>20794</u>	<u>21491</u>
TOTAL INCOME								
(SURPLUS)/DEFICIT IN YEAR		574	140	106	-10	83	-23	41

NOTE: The deficits shown above will be shared between the Ministerial Training Fund and the General Fund (see Policies and Assumptions Section 5).

BUDGET FOR 1997

(with 1996 figures for comparison)

EXPENDITURE	1996 Budget £'000	1997 Budget £'000
a		
MINISTRY		
Stipends, NI & Pension (Local & Special Ministries)	12578	12319
Stipends, NI & Pension (CRCWs)	152	157
Disturbance Allowance, grants etc.	356	301
Provincial Moderators - stipends, housing, expenses	353	369
Pension Fund Additional Contribution	1100	1130
	-----	-----
	14539	14276
b		
TRAINING		
College Training for the Stipendiary Ministry	760	763
Other training for the Stipendiary Ministry	64	79
Non-Stipendiary ministry training	113	79
YLTO/YCWT programme	323	432
Support for Westminster College	55	58
Support for Windermere Centre	36	37
Support for National Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings	32	45
Lay Training	12	12
St. Andrew's Hall Grant	78	81
	-----	-----
	1473	1586
c		
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF		
Salaries/Stipends - Executive staff	239	248
Salaries/Stipends - Support staff	190	205
Housing and expenses	102	94
	-----	-----
	531	547
d		
MISSION		
Council for World Mission	593	623
Missionaries	92	92
Grants for national and local mission	205	192
Ecumenical Councils	109	123
General Assembly	63	102
Assembly committees/conferences	44	71
Mission Council committees/conferences	26	29
	-----	-----
	1132	1232
e		
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL		
Salaries	116	112
Other costs	28	32
	-----	-----
	144	144
f		
ADMINISTRATION		
Salaries - Personnel & Finance	226	267
Management and personnel services - other costs	17	26
Finance - other costs	3	6
Premises costs	142	152
Professional Fees	50	66
Miscellaneous expenses	178	154
	-----	-----
	616	671
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>18435</u>	<u>18456</u>

INCOME		1996 Budget £'000	1997 Budget £'000
m	INVESTMENT INCOME		
	Dividends	324	164
	Income from WCM Funds		50
	Interest on Cash	171	216
		-----	-----
		495	430
n	GRANTS		
	Memorial Hall Trust	440	475
	New College London Trust	216	225
	Deed of Covenant - URC Insurance Co Ltd	37	66
	Department for Education	58	50
		-----	-----
		751	816
o	MINISTRY AND MISSION CONTRIBUTIONS	16464	16797
p	LEGACIES		50
q	SUNDRY INCOME		
	Donations and Profits on activities	64	28
	Provincial Contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	87	195
		-----	-----
		151	223
	TOTAL INCOME	<u>17861</u>	<u>18316</u>
	DEFICIT IN YEAR	574	140

NOTE: The deficits shown above will be shared between the Ministerial Training Fund and the General Fund (see Policies and Assumptions, Section 5)

WORKING PARTY ON MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE REPORT TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1996

1. In 1988 Assembly agreed to a Pastoral Measure concerning the suspension and resignation of ministers and deletion from the Roll of Ministers. This Pastoral Measure is set down in the Manual page J27.
2. For some time the Vocations Committee (as it then was) worked on revisions to this Measure. Mission Council decided, however, in January 1995 that more work was necessary and therefore set up a task group to continue the work and report to Mission Council in October 1995. The Task Group has consisted of the Conveners of the Ministries Committee and its Accreditation Sub-Committee, the Clerk to the Assembly, the Secretary of the Assembly Pastoral Committee (who was at the time the General Secretary), the Legal Adviser and the Secretary for Ministries who acted as Secretary. It presented its final report to Mission Council in March 1996 and now brings recommendations to Assembly. As an interim measure the Mission Council has approved the issue of guidelines to help those operating the present Pastoral measure. These have been circulated to District Secretaries, Synod Clerks and Provincial Moderators. The guidelines apply from 20 January 1996 until such time as the Pastoral Measure is revised or rescinded by the General Assembly.
3. Issues of misconduct are given a high profile in our society and evoke much concern, indignation and anger. The Church is, sadly not immune from such matters and from time to time experiences instances within its own fellowship. As a matter of duty to those involved, to the body of the Church, and to the community the Church must be able to deal with them justly, fairly and with compassion. Recent instances have indicated that the present Pastoral Measure is inadequate to enable us to do this.
4. The Task Group, as it has examined the situation, has come to realise that merely to revise the existing Pastoral Measure would not be sufficient. A new approach, involving changes in our structure and procedures, is we believe, essential if we are to have an adequate way of tackling these issues. We therefore bring proposals to that effect.
5. Assembly will note that our proposals deal only with matters of ministerial discipline and not with other forms of discipline and dispute. This is because we believe ministers have a particular relationship with the Church which means that, if and when they are alleged to have offended, the Church must have particular procedures to deal with them.
6. In making our proposals we have worked according to an important basic principle. Hitherto matters of discipline have been handled entirely by the various Councils of the Church, seeking to act in an appropriate manner with inadequate guidelines. This has led sometimes to confusion. One of the main reasons for that confusion, we believe, is that the same people who have been seeking to exercise discipline have also been required to exercise pastoral care of the very people involved in the disciplinary issues. We are therefore making proposals which aim to separate these two strands as far as is possible. The Councils of the Church are still involved. For they are offering a mechanism to deal with discipline which relieves them of this responsibility and releases them to address the pastoral connotations. This is what lies behind our proposal for the creation of an Assembly Commission and an Appeals Commission.
7. Our proposals involve changes to the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church. Such proposals require one Assembly to give notice that they will be presented at a subsequent Assembly for final decision. This explains why our resolutions are phrased as they are. The Annex to our report sets out in full the Process we propose. Part 1 presents the substantive provisions; Part 2 the rules of procedure. Technically only Part 1 requires the notice referred to above, but it seems sensible to present the whole document as the two parts belong inextricably together. We have taken the opportunity of suggesting some further minor amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure which are required as a consequence of our main proposals.
8. We believe that our proposals will be of assistance to the Church as it seeks to deal with sad and sensitive matters in an appropriate manner which will also carry legal integrity. Our work has involved many hours of careful negotiation and is presented on behalf of us all. We want to say, however, that without the advice and painstaking work of our legal adviser, Mr Hartley Oldham, always offered in a spirit of pastoral care and concern, we should never have been able to come to Assembly with such proposals. We are immensely indebted to him for this and for all the help he gives the Church in such a conscientious manner.

13 TO AMEND THE BASIS OF UNION to make various provisions concerning Ministry (Section A of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church:

- i. To add the following additional sentences at the end of Paragraph 25:
'The totality of ministers who fall within any of the categories defined in Schedule E, Paragraph 1 and are in good standing may be referred to as the Roll of Ministers. Ministers shall conduct their ministry according to the criteria set out in Schedule E'.
- ii. To add the following Schedule E to the Basis of Union:

SCHEDULE E

- 1 The following constitute the categories of ministers comprising the Roll of Ministers of The United Reformed Church:
 - a. Ministers of the former Congregational Church of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England who became ministers of the United Reformed Church at its formation in 1972.
 - b. Ministers of the former Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ who became ministers of the United Reformed Church in 1981.
 - c. Ministers who have been ordained as ministers of the United Reformed Church and inducted to a local pastorate (or some other post approved by District Council and Synod) after having received a call with the concurrence of the District Council.
 - d. Ministers of other churches who have been granted a Certificate of Eligibility by the General Assembly, or the committee designated by the General Assembly with the responsibility to grant Certificates of Eligibility, and who subsequently transferred to the United Reformed Church upon Ordination and/or induction to a local pastorate following a call with the concurrence of the District Council.
 - e. Ministers of other churches who, with the approval of a District Council and Synod, have been permitted by the General Assembly, or the committee delegated by the General Assembly to act on its behalf, to transfer to the United Reformed Church without receiving a call to a local pastorate or without being appointed to a post approved by District or Synod.
- 2 Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.
- 3 Acting in due exercise of their functions as contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church, the councils of the Church have authority in certain circumstances to suspend a minister, which involves a temporary ban on the exercise of ministry by the minister concerned but not his/her removal from the Roll of Ministers.
- 4 A minister under suspension, whether in pastoral charge or not, shall not present him/herself as a minister and shall not preside at Communion. The minister shall refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a minister of religion. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the ministerial rights of membership of any council of the Church. Suspension does not remove any of the rights accorded by the process of determining the disciplinary matter which has led to the suspension.
- 5 A person whose name has been removed from the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and who remains a member of the United Reformed Church has the privileges and responsibilities of that membership, but not those of a minister of Word and Sacraments, and should refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a minister of religion. However, should that person be re-instated to the Roll of Ministers, he/she would, on being called to a pastorate, need to be inducted to that pastorate, but not ordained, since ordination is not repeatable.

14 To introduce a NEW DISCIPLINARY PROCESS for MINISTERS of THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (To become Section D of the Manual)

Assembly, accepting that the existing provisions contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church (Section B) and in the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church (Section C) for dealing with disciplinary matters involving Ministers are no longer adequate, resolves as follows:

- 1 To introduce a new Disciplinary Process with effect from July 1997, to make certain provisions regarding the role of District Councils and to provide for an Assembly Commission to resolve matters of Ministerial Discipline in the name of Assembly, such process being set out in Annex of this Report to Assembly.
- 2 To constitute the Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel and the Appeals Commission referred to in the Annex, (with effect from July 1997) and to instruct the Nominations Committee to consider names of persons suitable for appointment to the Commission Panel and as Secretary to the Assembly Commission with a view to bringing nominations to Assembly in 1997 for appointment if that Assembly resolves to introduce the new Disciplinary Process.

15 To amend the Functions and one of the Categories of Members of District Council as set out in the STRUCTURE of THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (Section B of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

- 1 Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the functions of the District Council in Paragraph 2(3) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church:
 - 1.1 After the heading 'Functions' the following sentence shall be inserted:
'(A) The District Council is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below):'
 - 1.2 The existing Function (i) shall be amended to read:
'(i) To exercise oversight of all ministers falling within any of the categories 2(3)(a), (b), (f) and (g), except moderators of provincial synods who are members of each district council in the province and are responsible to the General Assembly.'
 - 1.3 The existing Function (xviii) shall be re-numbered as Function (xx).
 - 1.4 There shall be inserted as Function (xviii) the following:
'(xviii) Where following initial enquiry the District Council considers that a Minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process.'
 - 1.5 There shall be inserted the following Paragraphs as Paragraphs (B) and (C) in that Section:
'(B) Once the case of any Minister has been referred to the Assembly Commission, the District Council shall not exercise its Functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the decision of the Assembly Commission (or on any appeal therefrom) has been made.
(C) No Appeal shall lie against a decision by the District Council to refer any case to the Assembly Commission under Function (xviii) above'

- 1.6 The existing un-numbered final Paragraph in that Section shall be identified as Paragraph (D) and the opening of the Paragraph shall be amended to read : 'All the Functions set out in Paragraph (A) above....'
- 2 Assembly further resolves to amend Category (g) of Paragraph 2(3) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church to read:
'All other ministers who do not fall into any of the categories (a), (b) and (f) above in that or any other district but who are resident in the district who shall be associate members of the council having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the council, except moderators of provincial synods, who are members of each district council in the province and responsible to the General Assembly.'

16 To amend the Functions of Provincial Synod as set out in the STRUCTURE of THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (Section B of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the Functions of the Provincial Synod in Paragraph 2(4) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

- 1 After the heading 'Functions' the following sentence shall be inserted:
'(A) The Provincial Synod is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below)'
- 2 The following words shall be added at the end of Function (viii):
'(but excluding consideration of any matter which is being dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xv) below)'
- 3 The existing Function (xv) shall be re-numbered as Function (xvii).
- 4 There shall be inserted as Function (xv) the following:
'(xv) In the absence of any reference to the Assembly Commission by the appropriate District Council and where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the Provincial Synod considers that a Minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, to refer the case of that Minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process.'
- 5 There shall be inserted the following Paragraphs as Paragraphs (B) and (C) in that Section:
'(B) Once the case of any Minister has been referred to the Assembly Commission, the Provincial Synod shall not exercise its Functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the decision of the Assembly Commission (or any appeal therefrom) has been made.
(C) No Appeal shall lie against a decision by the Provincial Synod to refer any case to the Assembly Commission under Function (xv) above.'

17 To amend the Functions of General Assembly as set out in the STRUCTURE of THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (Section B of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

Assembly resolves to make the following amendments to the Functions of the General Assembly in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

- 1 After the heading 'Functions' the following sentence shall be inserted:
'(A) General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions (subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below).'
- 2 The following words shall be added to Function (xi):
'...and Part I of the Statement of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below.'
- 3 To amend Function (xii) by adding the words 'and commissions' after the word 'council' on the second and last line.
- 4 To amend Function (xviii) to read as follows:
'(xviii) To decide upon questions regarding the inclusion on the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church which have been previously considered and transmitted with recommendations by Provincial Synods (but excluding any matter which is being dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process referred to in Function (xxiii) below).'
- 5 The existing Function (xxi) shall be re-numbered as Function (xxiv).
- 6 There shall be inserted as Functions (xxi), (xxiii) and (xxiii) the following:
 - '(xxi) To make and (if necessary) to terminate all appointments to the Commission Panel and to any administrative office under the Process for ministerial discipline contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and to exercise general oversight and supervision of the operation of that Process (save only that decisions in individual cases taken in accordance with that Process are made in the name of the General Assembly and are final and binding).
 - (xxii) To provide for the setting up of an Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Section O, Part I of the Manual for any appeal brought under Paragraph 11 of Section O, Part I of the Manual.
 - (xxiii) In the absence of any reference to the Assembly Commission by the appropriate District Council or Provincial Synod (the case of any minister who is a provincial moderator being necessarily dealt with under this provision) and where following initial enquiry either on its own initiative or on a reference or appeal brought by any other party the General Assembly (or the Mission Council acting on its behalf) considers that a minister is not or may not be exercising his/her ministry in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Schedule E to of the Basis of Union) to refer the case of that Minister to be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and in every such case to suspend the Minister concerned pending the resolution of the matter under that Process.'
- 7 The following additional Paragraph shall be added at the end of that Section:
'(B) Once the case of any Minister has been referred to the Assembly Commission, the General Assembly shall not exercise its Functions in respect of that Minister (save only in the provision of such pastoral care as may be appropriate) until the decision of the Assembly Commission) (or on any appeal therefrom) has been made.'

18 To amend Paragraph 5 (Appeals) of the STRUCTURE of THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (Section B of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

Assembly resolves to amend Paragraph 5 (Appeals) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church as follows:

1 The following Paragraph shall be introduced as Paragraph 5(1):

'5(1) No right of Appeal shall lie against the decision of any council of the Church (acting with due authority in the matter) to refer any case to the Assembly Commission, and once such reference has been made that case shall be resolved in accordance with Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church and not under Paragraph 5(2) below.

Any decision reached in accordance with the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church has the status of a decision of the General Assembly and is final and binding.'

2 The existing four Paragraphs under Paragraph 5 (Appeals) shall become 5(2) and shall be prefixed by the following sentence:

'The Procedure for dealing with references and appeals falling outside Paragraph 5 (1) is as follows:'

19 To exclude MINISTERIAL DISCIPLINE from the GENERAL RULES OF PROCEDURE on Appeals (Section C of the Manual - 4th Edition, 1995)

Assembly resolves that there shall be added the following additional Paragraph 10 to the Section headed 'Rules of Procedure on Appeals' in the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church:

'The provisions of this Section headed "Rules of Procedure on Appeals" shall not apply to cases which are being determined by the Assembly Commission under the Disciplinary Process set out in Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church.'

ANNEX

Process for dealing with cases of Ministerial Discipline To be introduced as Section O of the Manual

PART I

Substantive Provisions

(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

1. Under the provisions of this Section O an Assembly Commission (as defined in Paragraph 3) shall operate under the authority of the General Assembly for the purpose of deciding (in cases properly referred to it) the question as to whether the name of a Minister shall for reasons of discipline be deleted from the Roll of Ministers.
2. The Assembly Commission, the Commission Panel, the Appeals Commission and all aspects of the Process set out in this Section O shall at all times remain under the jurisdiction and control of the General Assembly which has the authority through the exercise of its functions as contained in Paragraph 2(5) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church to amend, enlarge or revoke the whole or any part of this Section O, save only that, so long as they remain in force, the decision reached in any particular case in accordance with these provisions shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding.
3. For the purpose of this Section O, the following words and expressions carry the following meanings:
 - 3.1 'The Section O Process' shall mean the Process set out in this Section O (subject to such variations as shall from time to time be made).
 - 3.2 'The Rules of Procedure' shall mean the Rules of Procedure governing the system of ministerial discipline commencing with the exercise by the District Council, Provincial Synod or General Assembly of its function as set out in Paragraph 2(3)(xviii), Paragraph 2(4)(xv) or Paragraph 2(5)(xxii) of the Structure as the case may be and continuing and concluding with the Section O Process such Rules being contained in Part II of Section O.
 - 3.3 'The Roll of Ministers' shall have the meaning given to it in Paragraph 25 of the Basis of Union (Section A of the Manual).
 - 3.4 'Minister' shall mean a person whose name is on the Roll of Ministers at the time when the Section O Process is invoked in relation to that person.
 - 3.5 'The Commission Panel' shall mean a Panel consisting of twentyfive (25) members of the United Reformed Church from whom shall be chosen the persons to form the Assembly Commission to hear each case being dealt with under the Section O Process.
 - 3.6 'The Assembly Commission' shall mean a Commission consisting of five (5) persons selected from the Commission Panel for the purpose of hearing and deciding each such case.
 - 3.7 'The Secretary to the Assembly Commission' shall mean the person appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee to be responsible for all secretarial matters relating to the conduct of the Section O Process, and the period and terms of office of that person shall be such as the General Assembly shall decide.

- 3.8 'The Appeals Commission' shall mean the Commission constituted for the hearing of each Appeal in accordance with Paragraph 12.
- 3.9 'Referral Notice' shall mean a Notice specified in the Rules of Procedure whereby a District Council, Provincial Synod or General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) as the case may be refers a case concerning ministerial discipline to be dealt with according to the Section O Process and shall include any statement of reasons for such referral which may be appended to it.
- 3.10 'Notice of Appeal' shall mean a Notice specified in the Rules of Procedure whereby a Minister who has been the subject of any case under the Section O Process or the Council issuing the Referral Notice in any case indicates his/her/its intention to appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission.
- 3.11 'To suspend' and 'Suspension' shall have the meanings assigned to them in Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union.
- 3.12 'To delete' and 'Deletion' shall mean to remove/the removal of the name of a Minister from the Roll of Ministers other than at the request of the Minister concerned or by the acceptance of his/her resignation or by his/her death.
4. 4.1 Appointment to the Commission Panel shall be by Resolution of the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee, who shall in considering persons for appointment take into account the need for balance and for a variety of skills and specialisations, particularly in the following areas - experience in ministerial oversight, theology and doctrine, law, counselling, psychology, mental health, experience in conduct of meetings and tribunals.
- 4.2 Members of the Commission Panel shall be appointed for such term not exceeding five (5) years as the General Assembly shall in each case think fit with power for the General Assembly to determine any such appointment during its term or to renew any such appointment for successive terms of five (5) years each. Any temporary reduction of the number on the Commission Panel below twentyfive (25) shall not invalidate the operation of the Section O Process.
- 4.3 The General Assembly shall appoint from the Commission Panel one member to be the Convener of the Commission Panel and one member to be the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, each (subject to the provisions of Paragraph 4.2) to serve for such period as General Assembly shall decide.
5. 5.1 The Section O Process shall be initiated in every case by the service upon the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of a Referral Notice by the District Council, the Provincial Synod or the General Assembly (or by Mission Council acting on its behalf) in pursuance of their respective functions as contained in the Structure of the United Reformed Church.
- 5.2 Once the case of any Minister has been properly referred into the Section O Process, it shall be dealt with and concluded entirely in accordance with that Process and not through any other procedure of the Church.
6. 6.1 The Convener of the Commission Panel and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel (or the person or persons deputising for them or either of them as provided in Paragraph 6.2 and 6.3) shall jointly appoint five (5) persons from the Commission Panel to constitute the Assembly Commission for the hearing of that case and in making such appointments shall have regard to the provisions of Paragraphs 6.4 and 7.1.
- 6.2 In the absence of either the Convener of the Commission Panel or the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, the General Secretary shall act jointly with the other one in the appointment of the Assembly Commission under Paragraph 6.1

- 6.3 In the absence of both the Convener of the Commission Panel, and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel, the General Secretary and the Moderator of the General Assembly shall together appoint the Assembly Commission under Paragraph 6.1.
- 6.4 Those charged under this Paragraph 6 with the appointment of the Assembly Commission shall (so far as possible) have regard to the nature of the case and the skills and specialisations of the members of the Commission Panel.
7. 7.1 No person shall be appointed to sit as a member of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission in the hearing of any case in which he/she has any involvement, whether as a member of any local church, District Council or Provincial Synod connected with the case or (in the event of a re-hearing under Paragraph 14.7) a member of the previous Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission, or whether on account of some personal or pastoral involvement as a result of which it is considered by those responsible for selecting the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission for that case or by the proposed appointee him/herself that it would not be appropriate for him/her to hear the case.
- 7.2 Under the Rules of Procedure, a Minister or the council lodging the Referral Notice may object on any of the grounds set out in Paragraph 7.1 to the proposed appointment of any person to either the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission for the hearing of his/her case and, in the event of any such objection, the decision of those charged under the Section O Process with making the appointment shall be final and binding.
- 8 All procedural matters from the date of receipt of the Referral Notice by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to the conclusion of the Section O Process shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.
- 9 In considering the evidence and reaching its decision, the Assembly Commission or (in the case of an appeal) the Appeals Commission shall in every case have full regard to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E thereto which states the responsibilities undertaken by those who become Ministers of the United Reformed Church and the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry.
10. 10.1 The decision of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission shall be either to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers or to allow his/her name to remain on the Roll of Ministers.
- 10.2 If the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission considers that there has been some conduct, statement, act or omission on the part of the Minister which, although not sufficiently serious to justify deletion, is nevertheless of sufficient concern to justify lesser disciplinary action against the Minister, it may, whilst allowing the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll, issue a written warning to him/her that any repetition thereof might be considered a cause for Deletion by a future Assembly Commission.
11. 11.1 A Minister may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete his/her name from the Roll of Ministers under Paragraph 10.1 or to issue a written warning under Paragraph 10.2, by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, stating the ground/s of such appeal.
- 11.2 The council of the Church which lodged the Referral Notice in any case may appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete the name of the Minister concerned from the Roll of Ministers by lodging a Notice of Appeal in accordance with the Rules of Procedure stating the ground/s of such appeal.
- 12 The Appeals Commission for the hearing of each such appeal shall consist of five (5) persons and shall include the Clerk to the General Assembly and the Moderator of the General Assembly (subject in both cases to the provisions of Paragraph 7.1). The remaining persons to be appointed to the Appeals Commission, who must all be members of the General Assembly at the date of

- receipt by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of the Notice of Appeal, shall be selected by the officers of the General Assembly, taking into account the need for balance.
- 13 At the appeal, there shall be no further investigation or re-hearing of the evidence nor any further evidence introduced, except for the purpose of considering whether there are sufficient grounds for referring the case for re-hearing in accordance with Paragraph 14.7.
- 14 The Appeals Commission may reach any of the following decisions on the Appeal:
- 14.1 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete, or
- 14.2 It may uphold in its entirety the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete (whether or not this also includes a decision to issue a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph 10.2), or
- 14.3 It may uphold the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete, but in addition may issue a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph 10.2 if the Assembly Commission has not itself already done so, or
- 14.4 If the Assembly Commission has decided not to delete but has issued a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph 10.2, the Appeals Commission may uphold the decision not to delete but may direct that the written warning be withdrawn, or
- 14.5 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission not to delete, or
- 14.6 It may reverse the decision of the Assembly Commission to delete, but may if it considers it appropriate issue a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph 10.2, or
- 14.7 It may refer the case for re-hearing by another duly constituted Assembly Commission (but only if it considers that there has been some procedural irregularity or serious misunderstanding by the Assembly Commission of the information before it or if material new information becomes available which could not reasonably have been produced before the Assembly Commission).
- 15 There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Appeals Commission.
- 16 16.1 In recording its decision, the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be shall state whether the decision was unanimous or by a majority and shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching that decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it. It may, however, in its statement append any suggestions or recommendations which it considers to be helpful, and in particular it is requested to include appropriate guidance to assist District Councils, local churches and others within the Church concerning any restrictions which might be placed upon any church-related activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion.
- 16.2 If it issues a written warning to the Minister under Paragraph 10.2 that shall also be noted in the record of the decision.
- 17 17.1 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 11.1 within the period allowed under the Rules of Procedure, the suspension shall continue up to the first day after the expiration of such period, on which day the deletion shall automatically take effect.
- 17.2 In the event of the Assembly Commission deciding not to delete and there being no appeal against that decision under Paragraph 11.2 within the period allowed under the Rules of Procedure, the suspension shall automatically cease on the first day after the expiration of such period.
- 17.3 In the event of an appeal from the decision of the Assembly Commission, the suspension of the Minister shall continue up to the date upon which the Appeals Commission formally notifies its

decision under the Rules of Procedure. If the Appeals Commission decides not to delete, the suspension shall automatically cease on such date. If the Appeals Commission decides to delete, the deletion shall have immediate effect on such date.

- 18 The legal adviser to The United Reformed Church shall be available for the purpose of advising the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be on matters relating to procedure, evidence and interpretation at any point in the Section O Process, and shall, if requested to do so, appoint a representative to attend any hearing conducted under the Section O Process for such purpose.
- 19 Every decision reached under the Section O Process (whether or not on appeal under that Process) is made in the name of the General Assembly and is final and binding on the Minister concerned and on all the councils of the Church.
- 20 Deletion as a result of the Section O Process shall have the effect of terminating any contract, written or oral, between the Minister concerned and the United Reformed Church or any constituent part thereof in relation to his/her ministry.
- 21 Those so deleted from the Roll of Ministers wishing to apply for re-instatement shall in the first place consult the Provincial Moderator. All enquiries shall be referred to the Accreditation Sub-Committee (or such other Committee as may in the future perform the functions of the existing Accreditation Sub-Committee), which will call for at least two references and a report from the Provincial Moderator before determining whether or not it is appropriate for an application for re-instatement to be submitted. If it is considered to be appropriate, then formal application shall be made to the Province and the normal assessment procedure shall apply as for those applying for training (local church, district, national assessment, province) except that attendance before a National Re-assessment Panel shall take the place of the National Assessment Conference.
- 22 This Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church.

PART II
Rules of Procedure
(governed by General Assembly Function 2(5)(xii)
of the Structure of the United Reformed Church)

A. INTRODUCTION

- A.1 These are the Rules of Procedure referred to in Paragraph 3.2 of Part I.
- A.2 In addition to words and expressions defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I, the following words and expressions used in these Rules shall have the following meanings:
- A.2.1 'Council' shall mean the council of the church which issued the Referral Notice.
- A.2.2 'Mandated Group' shall mean the group mandated to act on behalf of a District Council under Section B of these Rules.
- A.2.3 'The Appointers' shall mean the persons responsible under Paragraph 6 of Part I for the appointment of the Assembly Commission.
- A.2.4 'The Investigatory Process' shall mean the process of investigation by the Assembly Commission as set out in Section D of these Rules.
- A.2.5 'The Hearing' shall mean any formal hearing conducted by the Assembly Commission under Section E of these Rules.
- A.3 These Rules provide the framework for the operation of the system of ministerial discipline commencing with the exercise by any one of the following councils of the Church, that is to say the District Council, the Provincial Synod or the General Assembly of its Function as set out in Paragraph 2(3)(xviii), Paragraph 2(4)(xv) or Paragraph 2(5)(xxii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church as the case may be and continuing and concluding with the due operation of the Section O Process.
- A.4 The role of the Assembly Commission is to investigate the matter before it and to decide the questions whether the Minister has committed a breach of discipline and whether on that account his/her name should be removed from the Roll of Ministers. The Minister may elect either that the Assembly Commission shall follow the Investigatory Process or that it shall carry out a formal hearing as in Section E of these Rules. Once the election has been made, it can not be changed since the two methods are in some degree incompatible in their approach to the gathering of information.
- A.5 In the interests both of the Minister and of the whole church, the Section O Process once begun should be conducted and concluded as expeditiously as possible, consistent with a proper investigation of the matter in hand. To this end, these Rules impose time limits for the various steps which have to be taken. However it is equally in the interests of all that the Assembly Commission should conduct its investigation with flexibility and that the Section O Process once begun should not be aborted, delayed or hindered by an unduly narrow or restrictive application of these Rules.
- A.6 Accordingly if any of the time limits specified in these Rules of Procedure are not complied with, the Assembly Commission may in its discretion allow a reasonable further period for such compliance, except as regards the strict time limits imposed upon the right to elect for a formal hearing (Paragraph D.2) and the right of appeal (Paragraph G.1). In other cases, if the Assembly Commission considers that sufficient time has been allowed and the action required has still not been carried out or that there has been an unreasonable delay in the carrying out of the action (whether or not these Rules imposed a time limit in such case), it may proceed with its investigation and attach whatever weight it believes appropriate in the circumstances to such failure to comply, or to any delay in compliance.

MISSION COUNCIL

- A.7 The sole object of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process is to enable a decision to be reached in accordance with Paragraph 10 of Part I. All statements, whether written or oral, made during and in the context of this process shall be regarded as being made in pursuance of that object and for no other reason. All such statements shall be treated as confidential within the framework of the Disciplinary Process.

B. ROLE OF DISTRICT COUNCIL

- B.1 To enable it properly to carry out its Function 2(3)(xviii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, every District Council shall appoint a Standing Group ('the Mandated Group') to act with mandated authority on behalf of the District Council in every matter requiring consideration under that Function. If any member of the Mandated Group is the subject of the Disciplinary Process, the Mandate falls to the remainder of the Mandated Group.
- B.2 The District Council may appoint a Mandated Group consisting of either (i) the Provincial Moderator and such other persons (not exceeding three) as it shall decide who shall normally be appointed for a period of one year (renewable) or (ii) the Provincial Moderator, the President and Secretary of the District Council and the Convener of the Committee of the District Council which deals with pastoral matters.
- B.3 Should the District Council fail to appoint a Mandated Group or should it allow appointments to a Mandated Group under Paragraph B.2(i) of these Rules to lapse, the District Council will be deemed to have appointed a Mandated Group consisting of the persons identified under Paragraph B.2(ii) of these Rules.
- B.4 It is not the task of the Mandated Group or of any other party concerned with a possible reference into the Section O Process to conduct a thorough investigation into all the circumstances of the case. That is the role of the Assembly Commission.
- B.5 As soon as the Mandated Group becomes aware of any information concerning a Minister under the oversight of the District Council which might require disciplinary investigation and concludes that this is indeed so, it shall in the name of the District Council suspend the Minister and initiate the Section O Process by serving a Referral Notice in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I
- B.6 In certain circumstances, the Provincial Synod and the General Assembly are entitled under their respective Functions to issue a Referral Notice and, although their procedures will differ from those of the District Council, they too must have regard to the substance of Paragraphs B.4 and B.5 of these Rules and must act in accordance with Paragraph B.5.
- B.7 B.7.1 In order to initiate the Section O Process, the District Council (or the other council of the Church as the case may be) ('the Council') shall within seven days of the suspension of the minister under Paragraph B.5 take the following steps:
B.7.1.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice containing a statement of the reasons for the action taken (Notice 1), and
B.7.1.2 Serve on the Minister notice of his/her suspension and of the issue of the Referral Notice (Notice 2)
- B.7.2 The actions specified in Paragraphs B.7.1.1 and B.7.1.2 shall have the effect of initiating the Section O Process.

C. REFERENCE TO AND CONSTITUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

- C.1 Within two weeks of the receipt of the Referral Notice, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall take the following steps:
- C.1.1 Acknowledge receipt of the Referral Notice (Notice 3)

- C.1.2 Serve on the Minister a copy of the Referral Notice and a Notice inviting the Minister's preliminary response (Notice 4)
- C.1.3 Inform the Convener and the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel (or in their absence or the absence of either of them the person or persons specified in Paragraph 6.2 or Paragraph 6.3 of Part I) ('the Appointers') of the receipt of the Referral Notice and pass to such person or persons copies of the Referral Notice and any other papers received in connection with the case.
- C.2 The Appointers shall, within one month of service upon the Secretary of the Assembly Commission of either (i) the Referral Notice or (ii) Notice from the Appeals Commission of any reference back for re-hearing under Paragraph 14.7 of Part I (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require), appoint the Assembly Commission in accordance with Paragraphs 6 and 7 of Part I.
- C.3 C.3.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall send to each member of the Commission Panel whom the Appointers propose to appoint to the Assembly Commission notice of his/her proposed appointment (Notice 5), together with a copy of the Referral Notice and of any response from the Minister. Notice 5 shall draw the invitee's attention to Paragraph 7.1 of Part I and shall request confirmation that the Invitee is willing to accept appointment and that he/she is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Assembly Commission.
- C.3.2 The Invitee shall within two weeks of receipt of Notice 5 serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a Notice (Notice 6) indicating whether he/she is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph 7.1 of Part I.
- C.4 C.4.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice on the Minister and the Council (Notice 7) setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 of Part I and requiring notice of objection to any of the proposed appointees under Paragraph 7.1 of Part I to be served upon the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within two weeks of the service of the Notice given under this Paragraph.
- C.4.2 Any such Notice of Objection (Notice 8) must state the grounds for such objection.
- C.4.3 To ensure that the Section O Process is moved along in a timely manner, any Notice of Objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- C.4.4 The Appointers shall consider any objection properly delivered and shall decide whether to uphold or reject the objection.
- C.4.5 If they reject the objection the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof on the objector (Notice 9).
- C.4.6 If they uphold the objection, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice thereof upon the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other party upon whom Notice 7 was served (Notice 10).
- C.4.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in the Paragraphs C.3 and C.4 of these Rules shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Assembly Commission and to give notice to those concerned of the person appointed.
- C.5 The Appointers shall appoint one member of the Assembly Commission to be its Convener, but he/she shall not have a casting vote, unless the Assembly Commission shall in circumstances arising under Paragraph C.6.1 of these Rules consist of an even number of members.

- C.6 C.6.1 In the event that during the Section O Process any member of the Assembly Commission shall, by reason of death, illness, absence or any other cause, be unable to continue to serve on the Assembly Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Assembly Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.
- C.6.2 In the event that for the reasons stated in Paragraph C.6.1 of these Rules the Assembly Commission shall be reduced to less than three members, the Appointers shall be authorised to take whatever action they consider appropriate in the circumstances.
- C.6.3 If the Convener of the Assembly Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reasons stated in Paragraph C.6.1 of the Rules, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Appointers, appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.
- C.7 C.7.1 As soon as possible after the Assembly Commission has been appointed, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve a Notice (Notice 11) on the Minister, informing the Minister of his/her right under Paragraph C.7.2 to elect to have the matter dealt with by formal hearing under Section E of these Rules.
- C.7.2 If the Minister wishes to avail himself/herself of such right, he/she must serve Notice of Election (Notice 12) on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission within three weeks of service of Notice 11 on him/her (time being of the essence for this purpose).
- C.7.3 If the Minister shall validly exercise such right to elect, the matter shall proceed under Section E of these Rules and, except as mentioned in Paragraph E.1.2, the provisions of Section D of these Rules have no part to play.
- C.7.4 Unless the minister has elected under this Paragraph C.7 to call for a formal hearing under Section E, the matter shall be dealt with in accordance with the Investigatory Process under Section D of these Rules, in which case the provisions of Section E have no part to play.

D. THE ASSEMBLY COMMISSION - INVESTIGATORY PROCESS

- D.1 D.1.1 The Assembly Commission's sole purpose in carrying out its investigation under this Section D is to establish whether or not there has been a breach of ministerial discipline, having regard to Paragraph 9 of Part I.
- D.1.2 In the conduct of its investigation under this Section D, the Assembly Commission shall not be obliged to follow strict rules of evidence, but may proceed in the manner which seems to it to be the most appropriate, bearing in mind the need on the one hand to reach its decision as efficiently and expeditiously as possible and on the other hand to treat the Minister and all other persons involved with the Investigatory Process with all due consideration.
- D.2 As soon as possible after their appointment, the members of the Assembly Commission shall consider together the statement of reasons in the Referral Notice and any response received from the Minister and shall decide upon their *modus operandi*.
- D.3 D.3.1 In pursuance of the investigatory role of the Assembly Commission, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall serve notice on the Minister and the members of the Mandated Group (Notice 13), inviting them each to meet separately with the Assembly Commission.
- D.3.2 In further pursuance of its investigatory role, the Assembly Commission may take all or any of the following steps as shall be required by the circumstances of each case:
 - D.3.2.1 Hold further meetings with the Minister and members of the Mandated Group and hold meetings with the Provincial Moderator and with any other person or persons

who, in the opinion of the Assembly Commission, might be able to assist in its investigation.

D.3.2.2 Call for and consider written statements from all or any of the persons specified in Paragraph D.3.2.1

D.3.2.3 Meet with and/or obtain written reports and/or statements from any person or persons known by the Assembly Commission to have special qualifications or expertise (professional or otherwise) on any relevant aspect of its investigation.

D.3.2.4 Refer information received from time to time during the Investigatory Process to the Minister and/or the Council for comment and generally to communicate progress of its investigation to them as it deems appropriate.

D.3.2.5 Consult and maintain contact with the Police if the Minister is the subject of a criminal charge for an alleged offence relevant to the subject matter of the Section O Process or if information has been laid before the Police which may result in such relevant criminal charge being brought against him/her.

D.3.2.6 Take such other steps and make such other enquiries as appear to it to be appropriate in the circumstances.

D.3.3 The various processes of investigation referred to in Paragraphs D.3.1 and D.3.2 may all be continued simultaneously.

D.3.4 It is envisaged that, as the investigation proceeds and more information is made available, the Assembly Commission may wish to hold further meetings or obtain further written statements from persons whom they have already met and from whom they have already received statements.

D.3.5 It shall be the responsibility of the Minister, the Provincial Moderator and the Council to report to the Assembly Commission any new information relevant to the investigation which may come into his/her/its possession at any time during the Section O Process.

D.4 D.4.1 It is not essential for all members of the Assembly Commission to be present at all meetings held during the Investigatory Process although at least two of its members should normally be present at each such meeting.

D.4.2 On considering how many of its number should be present at each meeting it should have regard to the complexity of the issues involved, whether there appears to be a significant disagreement as to the facts of the matter or as to the conclusions to be drawn from them or both and the extent of the involvement of the person to be interviewed.

D.5 D.5.1 When requesting statements or calling meetings in the course of the Investigatory Process, the Assembly Commission should explain to those who are participating the purpose of the Investigatory Process as stated in Paragraph D.1 of these Rules and inform them that, in pursuance of that purpose, any information which is provided may be referred for comment or corroboration to the Minister and to others involved in the Investigatory Process (if the Assembly Commission considers it appropriate).

D.5.2 In the event that any such person (other than the Minister) supplying information to the Assembly Commission indicates that he/she does not wish the Assembly Commission to disclose to the Minister either the information itself or that he/she is the source of the information, the Assembly Commission shall normally disregard the information, save only in the most exceptional cases where the following factors are present:

D.5.2.1 The Assembly Commission has the reasonable belief that the disclosure to the Minister of the information or of the identity of the informant might place the latter in some physical danger or cause him/her personal hardship or distress and

D.5.2.2 The Assembly Commission has the reasonable belief that information given by the informant is accurate and considers it to be material to its investigation.

D.6 The Assembly Commission may at any time adjourn its investigation for so long as it considers it appropriate, but always having regard to the need to conclude the Section O Process as expeditiously as possible.

- D.7 D.7.1 In the course of conducting its investigations, the Assembly Commission may come into the possession of information damaging to the reputation of other named or identifiable persons. Such information, if untrue, could be defamatory and caution must be exercised by the Assembly Commission.
- D.7.2 In such circumstances, the informant should be advised by the Assembly Commission as to the potentially defamatory nature of the information and warned not to repeat it either orally or in writing to any other party outside the context of the Section O Process.
- D.7.3 If in its opinion the information is not material to the investigation, the Assembly Commission should disregard it.
- D.7.4 If the Assembly Commission considers that the information is material, it should nevertheless not regard it as proven even if admitted by the Minister without giving the other person(s) concerned the opportunity of either corroborating or refuting it.
- D.7.5 The Church's legal adviser should be consulted before the Assembly Commission takes the action referred to in Paragraph D.7.4.
- D.8 D.8.1 Where (i) the Minister is the subject of a criminal charge for an alleged offence falling into any of the categories set out in Paragraph D.8.2 below relevant to the subject matter of the Section O Process or (ii) information has been laid before the Police which may result in such relevant criminal charge being brought against him/her, in either such event the Assembly Commission shall (unless the circumstances of Paragraph D.9 apply) adjourn its own investigation pending the decision of the criminal court or the withdrawal of the charge (in relation to alternative (i) above) or the notification that no charge is to be brought (in relation to alternative (ii) above).
- D.8.2 The categories of criminal offence relevant to Paragraph D.8.1 are:
- D.8.2.1 Deliberate or reckless, actual or threatened, infliction of physical injury to the person or damage to the property of another.
- D.8.2.2 Rape, sexual abuse or any other offence of a sexual nature or
- D.8.2.3 Fraud, blackmail or theft.
- D.8.2.4 Any other offence in relation to which the Assembly Commission shall (on advice from the Church's legal adviser) apply the provisions of Paragraph D.8.1.
- D.8.3 In the event of the Minister being found guilty of any of such offences by a criminal court, the Assembly Commission shall for the purposes of its own investigation regard the verdict as conclusive evidence of the facts proved to the satisfaction of the court.
- D.9 Any of the following, that is to say:
- D.9.1 Failure on the part of the Minister without reasonable and proper explanation to supply statements and/or to attend meetings with the Assembly Commission as part of its Investigatory Process or
- D.9.2 Any unreasonable delay on the part of the Minister in the supply of statements or the attendance at meetings or
- D.9.3 Any obstruction caused by the Minister to the Assembly Commission in the conduct of its investigation may of itself be deemed by the Assembly Commission to constitute a breach of ministerial discipline which the Assembly Commission shall be entitled to take into consideration in reaching its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I.
- D.10 D.10.1 When the Assembly Commission considers that it has concluded the Investigatory Process, it shall assess the position. There may be a basis of agreed information. There may be other information which has been alleged but not agreed, but which, as a result of its investigation, the Assembly Commission may feel has been established to its satisfaction. There may be other information which it feels that it can disregard as not central to the issues under consideration.

D.10.2 The Assembly Commission should consider whether in the light of Paragraph D.10.1 it is led to the conclusion that there has been a breach of ministerial discipline.

D.10.3 The Assembly Commission has no power to accept the voluntary resignation of a Minister. A Minister may however at any time during the Section O Process and of his/her own free will make a written statement to the Assembly Commission admitting the truth of some or all of the facts or circumstances alleged, on the basis of which the Assembly Commission would consider it correct to make a decision to delete or to issue a warning under Paragraph 10 of Part I. In such circumstances the Assembly Commission can, if it considers it appropriate so to do and having warned the Minister of the consequences of such an admission, conclude its investigation and on the basis of that admission reach its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I.

D.11. Having deliberated on the information in its possession and on the conclusions to be drawn from it, the Assembly Commission (always having Paragraph 9 of Part I in mind) must make its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I and, in so doing, shall comply with Section F of these Rules.

E FORMAL HEARING

E.1 E.1.1 This section of the Section O Process shall apply only if it is invoked by the Minister under Paragraph C.7 of these Rules.

E.1.2 Paragraphs D.8, D.9 and D.10.3 shall apply to the Section E process (with the necessary changes)

E.1.3 The Minister and the Council are, for ease of reference in this Section E only, called 'the parties'.

E.2 The object of Paragraphs E.3, E.4 and E.5 is to ensure that the parties are aware beforehand of the evidence which will be presented at the Hearing and that they have time to consider the same.

E.3 The notice to undertake the formal process set out in this Section E (Notice 14) shall:

E.3.1 Set the date of the Hearing.

E.3.2 Notify the parties that the Referral Notice and any statement from the Minister lodged in response to Notice 4 will be part of the documentary evidence at the Hearing.

E.3.3 Invite the parties to lodge copies of any documents or of any further statements relating to matters to which they may wish to refer at the Hearing (the Notice should indicate to the parties that copies of any such documents or statements may be made available to the other party).

E.3.4 Invite the Council to state whether it wishes to take an active part in the Hearing and in the questioning of witnesses and if so inviting the Council to nominate a spokesperson for the purpose.

E.3.5 Invite the parties to state:

E.3.5.1 The names of persons whom they propose to invite to attend the Hearing and, briefly, the purpose of their attendance and

E.3.5.2 The approximate length of time which each of the parties will require at the Hearing. This Paragraph E.3.5. will always apply to the Minister but will only apply to Councils who have responded in the affirmative to the invitation contained in Paragraph E.3.4

E.3.6 Inform the parties of the names of persons whom the Assembly Commission itself proposes to invite to attend the Hearing and the purpose of their attendance.

- E.3.7 Invite the Minister to state whether he/she wishes to have a friend present with him/her at the Hearing pursuant to Paragraph E.7.3 of these Rules and if so the name and status of such person.
- E.3.8 (If the Assembly Commission considers it appropriate so to do) attempt to establish a basis of agreed fact in order to simplify the Hearing, and invite the parties to indicate whether this is accepted (either in whole or in part).
- E.4
 - E.4.1 Within two weeks of the service of the Notice under Paragraph E.3 of these Rules, the parties shall comply with Paragraphs E.3.3, E.3.4 and E.3.5 by serving on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the documents, statements and information requested, and shall respond to the invitation contained in Paragraphs E.3.7 and E.3.8 (Notice 15 of these Rules).
 - E.4.2 As soon as possible after the expiration of such period of two weeks referred to in Paragraph E.4.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall provide each party with a copy of the information delivered by the other party under Paragraph E.4.1
- E.5
 - E.5.1 After the completion of the Process set out in Paragraphs E.3 and E.4, if either party wishes:
 - E.5.1.1 To introduce new evidence to which the attention of the Assembly Commission and the other party has not been drawn beforehand or
 - E.5.1.2 To invite persons to attend the Hearing who have not been previously notified under Paragraph E.3 or E.4, the Assembly Commission may refuse any request for the admission of any such new evidence or the attendance of such persons
 - E.5.2 In considering any such request set out in Paragraph E.5.1, the Assembly Commission may at its discretion take all or any of the following steps:
 - E.5.2.1 It may seek the agreement of the other party to the request.
 - E.5.2.2 It may conclude that, even in the absence of such agreement, it would be just and expedient for the request to be allowed.
 - E.5.2.3 It may refuse the request.
 - E.5.2.4 It may postpone or adjourn the Hearing to enable further consideration to be given to the request.
- E.6 The Assembly Commission shall be at liberty to postpone or adjourn the Hearing at any time if it considers that for any reason it would be right and appropriate so to do.
- E.7
 - E.7.1 The Assembly Commission shall if it considers it appropriate so to do issue directions to the parties with regard to the arrangements for the Hearing (Notice 16).
 - E.7.2 No legal representative is allowed to appear in his/her professional capacity at the Hearing.
 - E.7.3 The Minister may have a friend present with him/her at the Hearing to provide him/her with support and guidance, but such person shall not take part in the Hearing either by questioning witnesses or by addressing the Assembly Commission. Such person may not appear as a witness for the Minister at the Hearing.
- E.8 All members of the Assembly Commission should (unless there are very good reasons to the contrary) take part in the Hearing itself.
- E.9
 - E.9.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall normally attend the Hearing for the purpose of taking such notes and giving such procedural advice to the Assembly Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing.
 - E.9.2 In the event that the Secretary of the Assembly Commission cannot be present at the Hearing, the Assembly Commission may itself appoint such person as it considers appropriate to deputise for the Secretary for that purpose.

- E.10 E.10.1 The conduct of the Hearing is in the hands of the Assembly Commission and at the outset of the Hearing the Convener of the Assembly Commission shall explain to the parties how the Hearing is to proceed.
- E.10.2 The Minister shall be given the opportunity to present his/her evidence, question his/her witnesses and state his/her case. The Minister and any persons called to give evidence on behalf of the Minister are then open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Council (provided that the Council shall have responded in the affirmative to the invitation contained in Paragraph E.3.4 of these Rules).
- E.10.3 Subject to the last mentioned proviso, the Council through its spokesperson shall be given the opportunity to present its evidence, question its witnesses and state its case. The spokesperson and any persons called to give evidence on behalf of the Council are then open to questioning by the Minister.
- E.10.4 The Assembly Commission may wish to call other persons of its own motion and when such persons have presented their evidence, they shall be open to questions from the Minister and the spokesperson for the Council.
- E.11 E.11.1 The members of the Assembly Commission (and the church's legal adviser if he/she is in attendance at the Hearing) shall be entitled to ask questions and interject during the examination of witnesses if they consider the questioning to be oppressive or immaterial to the matter in hand and if for any other reason they consider it appropriate so to do.
- E.11.2 Persons who have already been questioned may be asked to answer further questions later in the Hearing if it appears to the Assembly Commission that this would be helpful and appropriate in the circumstances.
- E.12 So long as the parties have been given the opportunity to present their cases and address the Assembly Commission, the Assembly Commission shall have authority to conduct the Hearing and the Section E Process generally in the manner which in their view shall be most appropriate and suitable in accordance with the general principles set out in Section A of these Rules.
- E.13 When the process of examining the evidence has been concluded, the Minister and the spokesperson for the Council shall be given the opportunity to address the Assembly Commission, following which the Assembly Commission shall conclude the Hearing and this will bring the procedure under this Section E to a close.

F. THE DECISION of the ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

- F.1 F.1.1 When the Assembly Commission has completed the Investigatory Process under Section D or when the Hearing under Section E has been concluded, whichever course of action has been taken, the Assembly Commission shall as soon as possible consider and arrive at its decision (which may be taken unanimously or by a majority vote) in accordance with Paragraph 10 of Part I.
- F.1.2 In recording that decision, it shall comply with Paragraph 16 of Part I.
- F.2 F.2.1 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall thereupon serve on the Minister and the Council and the General Secretary Notice of the decision and of the written statement of reasons given under Paragraph 16.1 of Part I (Notice 17). Such Notice shall draw the attention of the Minister and the Council to the strict time limit for serving Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1 of these Rules.
- F.2.2 If Paragraph 10.2 of Part I applies, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall also serve on the Minister the written warning referred to in that Paragraph, and shall serve on the Council a copy of such warning.

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- F.3 The decision so taken shall conclude the involvement of the Assembly Commission in the Section O Process and shall have the effect provided for in Paragraph 17 of Part I.
- F.4 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly the decision of the Assembly Commission and state whether this is subject to Appeal.

G. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- G.1 Any Notice of Appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission given under Paragraph 11 of Part I (Notice 18) must be served on the General Secretary no later than 21 days from the date of service of the decision of the Assembly Commission on the appellant and for this purpose time shall be of the essence, and such Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the appellant chooses).
- G.2 On receipt of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1, the General Secretary shall as soon as possible take the following steps:
 - G.2.1 Serve notice of receipt of the Notice of Appeal (Notice 19).
 - G.2.2 (If the Appeal is brought by the Minister under Paragraph 11.1 of Part I), serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Council, (Notice 20), attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice of Appeal served under Paragraph G.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and invite the Council to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement (Notice 21) containing any comments which the Council wishes to make in connection with the Appeal.
 - G.2.3 (If the Appeal is brought by the Council under Paragraph 11.2 of Part I) serve Notice of the receipt of the Appeal on the Minister (Notice 20), attaching to such Notice a copy of the Notice to Appeal served under Paragraph G.1 and of any accompanying statement of reasons and invite the Minister to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement (Notice 21) containing any comments which the Minister wishes to make in connection with the Appeal.
 - G.2.4 Request and obtain from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission all papers in the hands of the Assembly Commission relating to the Section O Process.
- G.3 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within one month of receipt by the General Secretary of the Notice of Appeal under Paragraph G.1 of these Rules (or within such further time as they shall reasonably require) appoint the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Part I.
- G.4
 - G.4.1 The General Secretary shall send to each of the proposed appointees to the Appeals Commission an invitation to serve (Notice 22) together with copies of the following:
 - G.4.1.1 Notice of the Assembly Commission's decision, indicating whether this followed an Investigation or a Hearing
 - G.4.1.2 Any statement of reasons given by the Assembly Commission.
 - G.4.1.3 Any written warning issued.
 - G.4.1.4 The Notice of Appeal, containing the grounds for the appeal.
 - G.4.1.5 Any counter-statement (Notice 21) received under Paragraph G.2.2. or Paragraph G.2.3.
 - G.4.2 Notice 22 shall draw the attention of each proposed appointee to Paragraph 7.1 of Part I and shall request confirmation that he/she is willing to accept appointment and that he/she is unaware of any circumstances which in the present case might prevent him/her from serving on the Appeals Commission.
 - G.4.3 The invitee shall within two weeks of receipt of Notice 22 serve on the General Secretary a Notice (Notice 23) indicating whether he/she is able and willing to accept appointment and, if so, confirming compliance with Paragraph 7.1 of Part I.

- G.5 G.5.1 The General Secretary shall serve notice on the Minister and the Council (Notice 24), setting out the name and office or credentials of each proposed appointee, drawing attention to Paragraphs 7.1. and 7.2 of Part I and requiring notice of objection to any of the proposed appointees under Paragraph 7.1 to be served upon the General Secretary within two weeks of the service of the notice given under this Paragraph.
- G.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection (Notice 25) must state the grounds of such objection.
- G.5.3 To ensure that the appeals process is moved along in a timely manner, any notice of objection received outside the period allowed will not normally be considered unless very good reason can be shown for its late delivery.
- G.5.4 The Officers of the General Assembly shall consider every objection properly notified and shall decide whether to uphold or to reject the objection.
- G.5.5 If they reject the objection, the Clerk to the General Assembly shall serve notice thereof on the objector (Notice 26)
- G.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the Clerk to the General Assembly shall serve notice (Notice 27) thereof on the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other party on whom Notice 24 was served.
- G.5.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in Paragraphs G.4 and G.5 of these Rules shall be repeated to complete the appointment of the Appeals Commission and to give notice to those concerned of the person appointed.
- G.6 The Moderator of the General Assembly shall be the Convener of the Appeals Commission but he/she shall not have a casting vote, unless the Appeals Commission shall, in circumstances arising under Paragraph G.7.1 consist of an even number of members.
- G.7 G.7.1 In the event that any member of the Appeals Commission shall, be virtue of death, illness, absence or any other cause, be unable to continue to serve on the Appeals Commission, the remaining members shall continue to act as the Appeals Commission, subject to there being a minimum of three members.
- G.7.2 In the event that for the reasons stated in Paragraph G.7.1 the Appeals Commission shall consist of less than three members, the Officers of the General Assembly shall be authorised to take whatever action they consider appropriate in the circumstances.
- G.7.3 If the Moderator of the General Assembly is unable to continue to serve for the reasons set out in Paragraph G.7.1, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Officers of the General Assembly, appoint a former Moderator of the General Assembly to be the Convener of the Appeals Commission in his/her place.
- G.7.4 Notwithstanding that, during the conduct of the appeal, a new person may assume the office of either the Moderator of the General Assembly or the Clerk to the General Assembly, the person previously holding such office shall continue to serve as a member of the Appeals Commission to the exclusion of his/her successor in that office.
- G.8 G.8.1 The Appeals Commission when constituted shall first consider the following matters:-
- G.8.1.1 Whether there is or may be new information which has come to light and which could not reasonably have been available to the Assembly Commission before its decision was taken under Paragraph 10 of Part I.
- G.8.1.2 Whether any such new information would in its opinion have been material in that, had it been tested and proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly Commission, it might have caused it to reach a different decision.
- G.8.1.3 Whether there may have been some procedural irregularity or serious misunderstanding of the information before it by the Assembly Commission.

- G.8.2 If it considers that all or any of the considerations raised in Paragraph G.8.1 may be present, it may itself investigate the matter by seeking such further information as it considers relevant in such manner as it sees fit to enable it to reach a decision as to whether to refer the case for re-hearing under Paragraph 14.7 of Part I.
- G.8.3 If, after due consideration, the Appeals Commission decides on any of the grounds set out in Paragraph G.8.1 to refer the case back for re-hearing under Paragraph 14.7 of Part I, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the Minister, the Council and the Secretary of the Assembly Commission (Notice 28).
- G.9 In the absence of a direction under Paragraph G.8.3, the Appeals Commission shall (always having in mind Paragraph 9 of Part I) consider the information laid before it (but disregarding any information which it may itself have obtained under Paragraph G.8.2) and shall reach its decision on the appeal as provided in Paragraph 14 of Part I.
- G.10 The General Secretary shall thereupon serve on the Minister, and the Council notice of the decision of the Appeals Commission and of the accompanying statement of reasons (Notice 29).
- G.11 G.11.1 If the decision is taken either in accordance with either Paragraphs 14.3 or 14.6 of Part I, the General Secretary shall also serve on the Minister the written warning referred to in those Paragraphs and shall serve a copy thereof on the Council and lodge a copy of the Notice with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.
- G.11.2 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 14.4 of Part I, the General Secretary shall serve notice on the Minister that the written warning issued following the decision of the Assembly Commission is withdrawn (Notice 30) and shall also serve a copy thereof on the Council and lodge a copy of the Notice with the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.
- G.11.3 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 14.7 of Part I, the Section O Process shall be repeated commencing with Paragraph C.2 of these Rules.

H. DEFINITIONS, FORMS, SERVICE of DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

- H.1 The Appendix to these Rules contains a list of the forms of Notice for use at various stages of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, all of which are referred to by number in these Rules. Copies of the forms can be obtained from the Secretary of the Assembly Commission. The forms of Notice may be amended from time to time and new forms introduced. Also minor variations in the wording will not invalidate the Notice being given, but it is strongly recommended that the model forms be used and followed as closely as possible to avoid confusion and to ensure that all relevant information is supplied at the proper time.
- H.2 H.2.1 Service of any document required to be served on an individual shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:
- H.2.1.1 By delivering the document personally to the individual to be served.
- H.2.1.2 By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the last known address of the individual to be served in a sealed envelope addressed to that individual.
- H.2.1.3 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.
- H.2.2 Service of any document required to be served on any Council shall be deemed to have been properly effected in any of the following ways:
- H.2.2.1 By delivering the document personally to any person nominated by that Council to accept service.
- H.2.2.2. By delivering the document or sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to such nominated person at the address specified in such nomination.

- H.2.2.3 If no such person has been nominated to accept service, by delivering the document or by sending it by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery Post addressed to the Secretary of that council at his/her address as given in the current issue of the Year Book or as subsequently notified to the General Secretary.
- H.2.2.4 In such other manner as the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission (if service relates to the Appeals Procedure) may direct having regard to the circumstances.
- H.2.3 Service of any document required to be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or on the General Secretary shall be deemed to have been properly served if delivered or sent by first class pre-paid post or by Recorded Delivery post addressed to the Secretary of the Assembly Commission or the General Secretary as the case may be at the address given in the current issue of the Year Book or subsequently notified or (in the absence of any such address in the Year Book) in an envelope addressed to that person at Church House, 86 Tavistock Place London WC1H 9RT and marked 'Section O Process'.
- H.2.4 All documents required to be served shall be placed in a sealed envelope clearly addressed to the addressee and marked 'Private and Confidential'.
- H.2.5. In the case of service of documents by pre-paid first class post, service shall be deemed to have been effected on the third day after the posting of the Notice (both days inclusive).
- H.3 Where any issue or question of procedure arises whilst the matter is under the jurisdiction of the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission that Commission shall resolve each such issue or question or give such directions as shall appear to it to be just and appropriate in the circumstances.
- H.4 The cost of operating the Section O Process and the reasonable and proper expenses of persons attending any meeting or hearing under such process and the costs of any reports obtained by or on the authority of the Assembly Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Assembly Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of such process shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.
- H.5 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall be responsible for the keeping of the record of decisions taken by the Assembly Commission and by the Appeals Commission, and for the custody of all papers relating to concluded cases. The importance of retaining all written records is emphasised.

APPENDIX TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

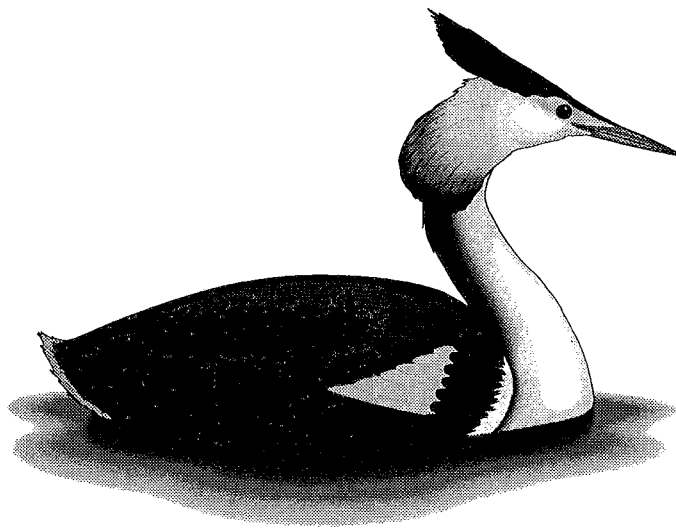
FORMS of NOTICE

Form No.	Notice	Paragraph
1.	REFERRAL NOTICE	B.7.1.1
2.	NOTICE of Suspension and of issue of Referral Notice	B.7.1.2
3.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of Referral Notice	C.1.1
4.	NOTICE to Minister inviting comments	C.1.2
5.	NOTICE to Invitee to serve on Assembly Commission	C.3.1
6.	INVITEE'S response	C.3.2
7.	NOTICE to Minister and Council of proposed Appointees to Assembly Commission	C.4.1
8.	NOTICE of objection to proposed Appointee	C.4.2
9.	NOTICE rejecting objection	C.4.5
10.	NOTICE upholding objection	C.4.6
11.	NOTICE of right to elect for formal hearing	C.7.1
12.	NOTICE of intention to elect for formal hearing (time being of the essence)	C.7.2
13.	NOTICE calling Minister and Mandated Group to meet with Assembly Commission	D.3.1
14.	NOTICE to undertake formal process	E.3
15.	RESPONSE to Notice No. 14	E.4.1
16.	NOTICE as to arrangements for formal hearing	E.7.1
17.	DECISION of Assembly Commission	F.2.1
18.	NOTICE of appeal (time being of the essence)	G.1
19.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of appeal	G.2.1
20.	NOTICE of receipt of appeal	G.2.2 and G.2.3
21.	COUNTER-NOTICE relating to appeal	G.2.2 and G.2.3
22.	NOTICE to Invitees to serve on Appeals Commission	G.4.1
23.	INVITEE'S response	G.4.3
24.	NOTICE to Minister and Council of proposed Appointees to Appeals Commission	G.5.1

Form No.	Notice	Paragraph
25.	NOTICE of objection to proposed Appointee to Appeals Commission	G.5.2
26.	NOTICE rejecting objection	G.5.5
27.	NOTICE upholding objection	G.5.6
28.	NOTICE of reference back for re-hearing	G.8.3
29.	DECISION of Appeals Commission	G.10
30.	WITHDRAWAL of written warning by Appeals Commission	G.11.2

**COMMITTEES
AND
TASK GROUPS**

REPORTS & RESOLUTIONS



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996**

Assembly Arrangements Committee

Convener: Mrs Wilma Frew

Secretary: Mr Hilary Gunn

This committee plans and budgets for future assemblies.

The Committee meets several times during the year, working from early Autumn when we hold a 'debriefing' session following the recent Assembly to try to identify areas which could be improved, through to the morning of the next Assembly when we check that our detailed arrangements are all in place.

The Committee supervises the planning and domestic arrangements for the Assembly, working through the local arrangements committee, whose Convener serves on the AAC for the relevant year.

It orders the timetabling of the Assembly programme once the agenda has been approved in outline by the Mission Council.

It selects suitable venues for the years ahead. At present we are looking to the next century, and maintaining the pattern of July meetings on an alternating residential and non-residential basis.

It keeps budgetary requirements in mind and in this context has recommended the inclusion in the Budget for 1997 of the sum of £50 per representative per Assembly to cover the 'essential costs' of attendance referred to in the resolution passed in 1994.

RESOLUTION	Assembly Arrangements
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20	Assembly in 1998 meets residentially at the East Midlands Conference Centre, University of Nottingham, from 11-14th July.
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Church and Society

Convener: Professor Malcolm Johnson
Secretary: The Revd Peter Brain

The revised brief given to Church and Society committee in 1994:

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

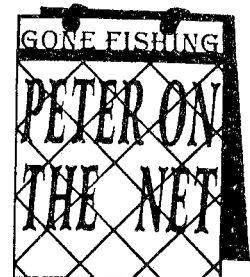
1 Despite some efforts to change it, our committee persists with the **name** 'Church and Society'.

1.1 That 'and' is no mere conjunction, as in 'fish and chips' or 'communications and editorial'. It points to a relationship, more like 'husband and wife'. And as in any profound, interdependent relationship, sometimes it seems like 'church **vs.** society' and sometimes like 'church **for** society' while always remaining 'church **in** society'. This sustains our claim that this work is an authentic and part of mission, since the Word of God is in all these three modes of relationship with the world, confronting, supportive, always involved. How shall Christianity engage with contemporary Britain? Some aspects of our common life (our culture) must be resisted and some welcomed, while none can be ignored or dismissed or excluded from the reckoning of faith.

1.2 Our role is not only authentic, it is **necessary**. Since there is no disembodied Christianity, no timeless or culture-free faith, there will always be a context with which the church has to come to terms. On the other hand, since there is no absolute materialism there will always be beliefs - and the necessity for the church to express its claim to what is true about the purposes of God as they impact on human history.

1.3 Our actual committee agenda and the activities of staff look rather ordinary when set alongside such high principles! The **general features** of our work are much as before:

- As in past years, much (perhaps most) of what we do is done through an ecumenical body. Last year's report listed a dozen such; we give grants to a dozen more.
- The Secretary attends another half-dozen or so, most closely linked with the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI), without which we should be ill-informed and poorly-prepared.
- We co-operate with other Assembly committees and their staff in bringing items to Assembly and Mission Council.
- The Secretary also serves with the Health and Healing Task Group, the Ecumenical Committee and the Human Sexuality Task Group.
- This year we lose our Associate Convener, Aubrey Curry, to whom the committee extends its warm appreciation of service rendered; we are pleased that Val Morrison is to be the next Associate Convener.
- We do have new Church and Society pages on the World-Wide Web: the home page is at <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~atlan/chsoc.html>.



2 Sometimes we have to **challenge** what is going on.

2.1 We have protested about the absurdities of the **National Lottery** which border on the damaging and even dangerous. We joined in ecumenical representations to press and government, especially about the problem of roll-over jackpots and potentially addictive scratch-cards; we submitted evidence on this to the Commons Select Committee enquiry (copy available on request). We also complained to Camelot about their advertising in which the heavenly hand parodies religious symbolism; perhaps in response to these complaints but probably not, this feature is now much less prominent in Lottery advertising.

2.2 We have protested about the dreadful **treatment of asylum-seekers**, thousands of whom were left without any financial support - and prohibited from working - by the change in benefit rules; at least this damage was reduced after an outcry in which church voices were prominent. And the new Bill (before Parliament at time of writing) comes close to criminalising anyone whom an immigration officer rejects, even some who still bear torture marks on their bodies, because they have the wrong papers or came via France. God may be a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble, but the UK is not.

2.3 We have protested about the **changes to homelessness legislation** in which families (yes, that does include single parents with children) are offered a maximum of 12 months' shelter, after which there is no obligation on, and no money available to, the local authority to house them. There are several good ideas in the Housing Bill (again, still before Parliament at time of writing) but going back to the time of 'Cathy, come home' is not one of them.



2.4 We have supported the campaign by **Church Action on Poverty** to allow some of those from the 'wrong side of the tracks' to speak about what it means to be poor in Britain today; this was the subject of a resolution passed by Assembly last year. The regional hearings of '**Local People, National Voice**' comes to a climax in what should be a well-attended and reported National Poverty Hearing in March.

2.5 We have promoted the CCBI plan to lobby all MPs on the **arms trade**. Last year we published 'Arms and the Ban!' by Malcolm Compston as a contribution to this debate. Our concern is concentrated on the increasing importance of this industry to the UK economy, highlighted by the publication of Lord Justice Scott's report.

2.6 Where is **the embodied love of God** in these stories of excluded travellers with pregnant partners, of families driven into exile, of the prospect of riches as a snare and delusion, of someone sitting down with outcasts, bringing hope to the poor and good news of peace and reconciliation? Or are such connections too simplistic to count as serious theology?

3 Sometimes we try to **contribute to the debate** but do not take a particularly partisan stance.

3.1 Our hearts went out to the people of **Ireland** when the campaign of violence was resumed in January. While the media coverage concentrated on those immediately caught up in the London explosions, tens of thousands crowded the city centres of the province to call for peace but not one rally was held in mainland Britain. Have we given up? What can be said or done?

3.2 Church and Society has kept in touch with our Presbyterian friends and colleagues in Ireland and also maintained the (slight) contact with Sinn Fein that was reported at Assembly last year. But there is a real danger that we do little more than give a religious 'spin' to essentially secular opinions culled from favourite editorials; it is hard to find commentators who wrestle at any depth with the theological and spiritual issues entwined in 'the Irish question'. We commend two recent exceptions to this: 'A Precarious Belonging' by former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland John Dunlop, and the report 'Sectarianism' (published by The Irish Council of Churches) from an ecumenical group (including Catholics). Both get close to the heart of the matter.



3.3 Similarly, Christians can encourage and contribute to the necessary debate on **environmental damage** that is leaving our grandchildren a horrendous mess to clear up; it is increasingly perceived as an inter-generational issue. As an example, the World Council of Churches is promoting a petition on global warming and climate change which will be circulated to all local churches later in the year. It will ask not only for signatures asking 'them' to do something but will require a commitment from 'us' to moderate our own use of energy which contributes to pollution.

3.4 Following the resolution on **Israel and the occupied territories** at last year's Assembly, the Secretary and a number of other URC members attended a conference on 'The significance of Jerusalem for Christians and of Christians for Jerusalem' in that city. We continue to encourage any minister or local church contemplating a visit to arrange a meeting with local Christians through the good offices of the Middle East Council of Churches; encounters with the 'living stones' of the land add greatly to the appreciation of the sites and buildings. We should be strong in support of a just settlement to the current

controversy over Jerusalem which will respect the 'two peoples / three religions' distinctiveness of that city against continuing violent opposition from extremists from both peoples.

4 The matters chosen for **direct presentation at this Assembly**, however, emphasise the perceived responsibility of Church and Society to keep the **local church** informed and (we trust) inspired within its own situation rather more than our responsibilities in representing the church at **national level**: through being concerned for the general social and political context of their life and work; through compassionate response to particular and sometimes controversial cases; and through a commitment to the needs of people far away which turns into an enrichment of the life of those who are willing to contribute time and money.

4.1 At the time of writing (mid-March) it is not easy to anticipate the political situation in July. But there will certainly be a **General Election** before the 1997 Assembly, so we are bringing a **resolution** commending the programme of all-party constituency meetings which the churches have organised, usually ecumenically, for nearly 20 years. This is a contribution which can uniquely be made by the churches and which is appreciated by the politicians, while at the same time not preventing other more specific comment on particular political issues.

4.2 In 1997 the ministry of the **National AIDS Adviser** will come to an end after ten years in its current form. All three post-holders in this 'special category' ministry, including the current post-holder Revd **Justine Wyatt**, have earned for the URC considerable credit as a church willing to face up to this issue and devote precious human resources to it. Church and Society will bring a **presentation**, reminding Assembly of the continuing challenges and opportunities of HIV and AIDS in our society and in the church. The United Reformed Church should support an appropriate ecumenical body and also identify a small group of people with a mixture of skills and jobs in the URC who can ensure that collectively we build on what has been achieved.

4.3 The **COMMITMENT FOR LIFE** programme is to be presented afresh at Assembly with a **resolution** and debate (including a contribution from Michael Taylor, Director of Christian Aid), a fringe meeting and a book launch. Mission Council agreed to commend this re-launch; the report and resolution is based on the review conducted last year and incorporates comments made at Mission Council. This is a twin-track programme for the whole church, with a simple financial appeal to members and adherents (the 1% appeal) and a complementary appeal for time and effort to be co-ordinated primarily at congregational level. The revised programme will pay special attention to the potential and the limitations of smaller congregations.

5 Church and Society has been using some **specialist part-time Advisers** in recent years, the equivalent of our second full-time person; both the current Advisers are moving on this year.

5.1 **Fieldworker / Animateur:**

In recent years a cross-section of churches in six Districts of four Provinces have been targeted in an experimental initiative of the committee, to devote some time to highlighting the inter-relationship of faith and justice. **Susan Flynn** has worked hard to get this message across with varying success - like the sower in Jesus' parable. As she demonstrated at Assembly last year with colleagues from the region, the call to 'do justice and love mercy' is at the heart of faith and not peripheral; it is part of the main agenda, not 'any other business'. We must recognise that practical relief is simply not enough; as with 'world development', we must question the causes of poverty and injustice if we really wish to see the transformation of society. This Assembly presentation was based on a survey conducted by Susan and the full report is most revealing.

In addition to her main work of visits and meetings, Susan has contributed a significant paper on the reasons why churches do not become involved in social justice questions, plus some pointers to remedies for this, which we see, not surprisingly, as a problem. She has drafted a guide to specially designated Sundays which will be produced ecumenically.

More fundamentally, Susan's work and survey has produced clear evidence that work on social responsibility issues at local and 'intermediate' levels must be tackled **ecumenically** much more than is done at present, e.g. through Churches Together in X. It is important to set priorities for this work since the potential agenda is overwhelming; the survey showed that churches are most concerned over



Unemployment, Young People and The Elderly. This matter will be taken to the Ecumenical Committee as a contribution to our overall strategic thinking on ecumenism.

A 'starter' pack will be prepared for local churches to help them discover how to make the vital link between faith and concern for social justice.

5.2 European Issues Adviser:

The term of Revd Philip Woods comes to an end this year; there is considerable progress to record:

- An introductory volume 'The United Reformed Church as A European Church' was published to coincide with a major debate at the 1993 Assembly; a second edition will be available at this Assembly.
- An autumn visit by Free Church leaders to Strasbourg has been established; each year our own Assembly Moderator, accompanied by other leaders, meets with representatives at the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the Commission offices there.
- Provincial European link co-ordinators have now been appointed in all Provinces following the Assembly resolution in 1993; an occasional newsletter and annual meeting keeps them in touch.
- The Adviser has acted as secretary to the Task Group whose report and recommendations appear under the business of the Ecumenical Committee.
- The URC has been an active partner in EECCS (the European Ecumenical Commission for church and Society); in addition to Philip Woods who has been a member of their working group on political and economic union, David Pickering has served on the working group on economy and ecology and Neil Messer (another URC minister with a science doctorate) is to serve on their working group on bio-ethics.
- The CCBI has now decided to establish a Europe Forum to handle matters relating to the EU and Council of Europe, and links with EECCS.
- As our contribution to the preparations for the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in June 1997 (reported by Ecumenical Committee) we have commissioned a volume of words and pictures (featuring new works by Pamela Pavitt) on the EEA2 theme of 'Reconciliation: gift of God and Source of New Life'.



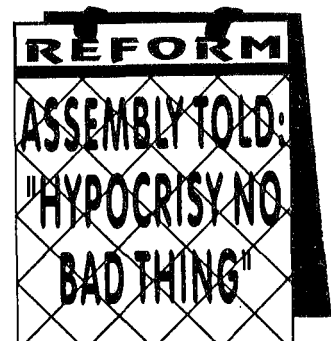
We have done nothing to resolve the embarrassment of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, the controversies over ice-cream and sausages or the many other issues which render 'Europe' a matter for laughter, tears, anger or boredom. But we did, jointly with the Quakers and the London office of the European Parliament, organise a consultation in October 1995 on the Inter-Governmental Conference which was much appreciated.

In indirect ways the URC can claim to have made a contribution to the broad-based debate on what Jacques Delors called 'the search for the soul' of Europe. And we have contributed to the greater coherence among British churches on the issues, which is not to say that disagreements (often quite profound) do not exist among us but that we now know more clearly where they lie and how to tackle them.

6 Values

6.1.1 For two years Church and Society has been reflecting quite specifically on 'values in contemporary society'; we reported on this to Assembly at some length in 1994 and 1995.

It is almost a truism to say that values underpin society. Our presentation at Assembly based on the Scott Report, offered slightly tongue-in-cheek, will point out that this is still the case, despite some evidence of outright amorality in public and private life. We can all see that recognisably Christian values seem to be mostly 'honoured in the breach'; they may actually be disappearing from the collective subconscious, no longer 'there' to give a framework or baseline for behaviour. Not even lip-service is paid; traditional values are thought to be inappropriate or unnecessary or even meaningless in a secular post-modern society.



6.1.2 In common with other churches and bodies, we have been analysing the current malaise, the deep disquiet over this development. (Our report in 1995 conveyed some of this analysis.) If we ask how Christian values can make a contribution we find ourselves indicting growing individualism and consumerism, both of which cut across traditionally understood values based more on collective responsibilities and qualities that defy objective measurement.

It is not that 'Christian' values are those peculiar and unique to our faith; but we can scarcely deny that God has given humankind some universal values which are enriched and empowered by, but do not ultimately depend on, faith (whether Christian or other). Having said that, it is inevitably and necessarily Christian values that have been our own preoccupation during the programme of work which will draw to a close during this year.

6.1.3 The steering group for this work (which was strengthened during 1995) began with ecumenical consultations; then we outlined a programme; we convened a consultation at Windermere; we appointed someone (Alan Hart of Bolton) to give time to it; we commissioned a survey (from Christian Research); then we consulted some local churches at depth. In other words, we approached the topic as we would any other of this major importance.

Some of our hopes are unfulfilled, notably in the production of non-verbal materials. But we are confident that the survey findings due in the spring, to be presented at a fringe meeting during Assembly, will stimulate more ideas and suggestions. We shall publish a compilation of the papers generated during this work and will endeavour to make it all as interactive as possible, rather than one solid report. This will include, for example, material for two sessions at a local church, with suggestions for a quiz, role-play, Bible study, etc.

6.1.4 Dismay at the perceived decline in values may lead some people towards fundamentalism and others into deeper confusion. But neither condition is helpful nor particularly honourable. Either tendency can develop into extremism; either can be open or unacknowledged.

Christians have to live in the so-called 'real world' by faith; most find the everyday task of being principled people a continuing trial. Yet it was in the ordinary scene that Jesus transformed values by such total love in everything he said and did that love itself was redefined in him. He would never use miracle to impress or coerce supporters or enemies, else we could never follow. It is in everyday human interaction that Christian values are most required, most authentic and (by grace) most evident. 'Living for others' is a platitude until it costs more than you are prepared to pay. We would prefer to use the language of values (nouns such as justice, peace, goodness, community) with reference not so much to high abstract ideals but of the palette from which the human predicament is coloured-in, as signposts on the way rather than distant horizons, aspects of love, faith and hope, never disembodied, always applicable in context but not as merely relativist terms.

6.1.4 The experience of the steering group meetings is in itself evidence that such discussions about values are *intrinsically* worthwhile as well as for the contributions into other areas of life. It is the human encounter that we covet for others. Hence our desire to produce materials to enable this experience to be replicated.

The United Reformed Church, as local congregations and as General Assembly, needs to work hard at gaining confidence to acknowledge and to respect diversity among its members. Everyone honours the old slogan: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in everything, charity". That might seem to express an authentic Christian stance on values, were it not that the real issue is around which things are indeed essential!

So we are very far from anything that might be called a grand conclusion, a definitive statement. To paraphrase the over-familiar words of T S Eliot, we are back where we started - though maybe we "know the place for the first time".

6.2 Family

6.2.1 The programme of work generated some responses from local churches on the subject of 'family', an emphasis we chose, partly because this work followed so closely on the International Year of the Family which featured at Assembly in 1994 and partly because of the (not unrelated) publication of 'Something to Celebrate', the Anglican book about family life.

6.2.2 13 local churches responded in some depth to the material sent out about family. They were a theological mix from contrasting social contexts in 10 Provinces, clearly a limited sample for any broad conclusions. These are some abridged findings:

- Values identified as contributing to healthy family life were (in single word answers) trust, acceptance, honesty, respect, love, faithfulness, perseverance; these were universally accepted in principle.
- What worries people most may be summarised as fragmentation, though there is an acceptance of a variety of household patterns.
- There was some nostalgia expressed for the more cohesive family but no demand for a return to the nuclear family with a 'breadwinner' father so often implied in the call for 'family values'.
- It is recognised as a paradox (to be lived with) that churches must welcome and accept everyone while maintaining high ideals for marriage.
- There is widespread agreement that the Biblical passages dealing specifically with the family are not very helpful, though the general emphasis on the quality of relationships is, of course, acknowledged.
- But there are intolerable pressure on the family when so much of the rest of life is full of hardship in a society that seems to acknowledge only economic considerations.

6.2.3 Some fresh definition of 'family' is clearly required to enable realistic policy discussions. Family is a living thing; relationships cannot be static and much help is needed to change healthily as the balance of strength and need changes between generations.

The family is a kind of microcosm of society (though clearly not so in important aspects):

- space and material security are vital for good relationships;
- without mutual care and respect it will not 'work';
- selfishness is as destructive inside a family as anywhere;
- good family life does not happen without much effort;
- there is no single blueprint for success.

RESOLUTIONS

Church and Society

- 21 Assembly acknowledges the revised programme *COMMITMENT FOR LIFE*, as examined and endorsed by Mission Council, to be an authentic response of the whole United Reformed Church to God's call for justice for the poor of the world and therefore urges every local church to participate fully.

1 Preamble

1.1 In 1995 the Church and Society committee commissioned a review of the *Commitment for Life* programme and received the report of the review group in January this year. That was communicated to Mission Council in March which endorsed the programme in the following terms:

'Mission Council welcomes the report of the Church and Society committee following the review of the *Commitment for Life* programme and instructs the committee to proceed to a re-launch of the programme at General Assembly in July 1996 for a further four years on the basis of the recommendations in this report.'

1.2 The full text of the review group report and recommendations, including the report of the survey referred to and some financial details, is available from Church and Society. Much of that report is contained in the book on 'Commitment for Life' due out at this Assembly, which will also feature an essay on the theology and economics of world development plus an extensive selection of worship from around the world, designed for services with this theme.

2 Summary of review process

2.1 In 1992 the *Commitment for Life* programme (hereinafter *CforL*) was endorsed by the General Assembly. (*Book of Reports to Assembly 1992, pp201-205*). The programme was the result of a reappraisal of the World Development Appeal which had been in existence for 25 years as the '1% appeal'. Fund-raising was not to be the sole emphasis; there would be a widening of the programme to feature other things.

2.2 The launch in 1992 caused confusion and misunderstanding in a number of ways which the review has highlighted. For one thing, the impression given was that the 1% Appeal had come to an end altogether. The programme floundered badly during the early months but lessons were learnt and the financial side began to pick up. There is evidence that in some places the broad approach of the programme has made a real impact on the life of the church. But it is disappointing to note that the number of churches supporting *CforL* is roughly the same as the number which had supported the 1% Appeal and that they are largely the same ones.

2.3 It was promised at the launch of *CforL* that the programme would be reviewed for the 1996 General Assembly. This review was conducted during the latter part of 1995 by a team of Wilma Frew as convener, David Batchelor and Anne Martin; Church and Society committee have expressed their great appreciation of their efforts. Questionnaires were sent out to 120 churches - 60 participating in the programme (46 replies) and 60 not participating (40 replies). Chief reasons adduced by non-participating churches for their stance were 'other support for Christian Aid' (in a majority of responses), 'existing involvement with other charities or projects', 'the growing demands of M&M assessments on churches' and 'the complexity of *CforL* materials'. World Development Movement with its political campaigning role was not a cause of non-involvement - mainly because few knew of WDM at all!

2.4 Assembly is invited to add its endorsement to the following **objectives** for the *Commitment for Life* programme, offered by the committee and welcomed by Mission Council:

- *To promote as a central part of the life of the church an understanding of world poverty and our responsibility.*
- *To present to the United Reformed Church a planned programme for promoting these issues throughout the church.*
- *To strengthen the partnership between Christian Aid, the World Development Movement and the United Reformed Church.*
- *To seek to reach and enthuse local churches and all their members and adherents with appropriate and effective advocacy; and to that end to produce new and attractive materials about the various aspects of the programme in ways that are relevant to people of different ages and levels of involvement.*
To aim to double the income of CforL and number of participating churches by 2000AD as a sign of and contribution to the advancement of God's Kingdom.

3 Re-launching the programme

The Church and Society committee and, on their recommendation, Mission Council agreed with the main recommendations of the review, with the effect that *Commitment for Life* should continue with some significant changes.

Being determined 'to get it right this time', we outline here the **main features of the revised programme**.

3.1 The ambiguity in the **title 'Commitment for Life'** has caused confusion and argument but it is a good peg on which to hang the scriptural authority of 'life in all its fullness' (John 10,10). The title will be kept for a further 4 years.

3.2 Though other denominations have moved away from the 1% concept in fund-raising, there is much support for the concept within the United Reformed Church. It invites people to contribute 1% - '*a penny in the pound of disposable income*' - to the struggle for world development. Thus, the 1% principle remains the *CforL* guideline for giving, though always in a non-prescriptive way:

- it invites personal giving in proportion to ability to give (the basis of Christian stewardship);
- it implies a degree of self-discipline and sacrifice in doing this;
- it provides a regular contribution over years and not a one-off response on impulse;

**CHURCH AND SOCIETY
RESOLUTIONS**

- it allows the giver to determine what constitutes 'disposable income' rather than imposing a formula like a tax-code;
- in this spirit a 1% appeal provides grounds for protesting that the Government is not moving towards fulfilling the UN target of 0.7% of Gross National Product in overseas aid.

3.3 The programme has been seen as too complex. There will now be **two main thrusts** - financial and non-financial. The 1% appeal for money (for personal response) and 'action for justice', including worship, education, campaigning etc. (primarily co-ordinated at congregational or District level).

3.4 **Advocacy of the programme** across the country has been reactive rather than proactive and the result has been very patchy. We certainly do not underestimate the difficulty of generating a good response in local churches; more advocacy will be a major feature of the relaunch. Churches which already participate are being offered better materials and resources this summer. And there will be a nation-wide effort to reach non-participating churches through until Easter 1997 with people based in every Province able to introduce the programme; smaller churches (whose members may suppose this programme is not for them) will be specially catered for.

3.5 A programme already raising somewhere in excess of £250,000 a year and aiming to grow needs a tighter management structure, rather than depending on already over committed people. Therefore a **management group** will be set up to oversee the *CforL* programme, answerable to the Church and Society committee.

3.6 The reviewers identified two areas of work for which **extra human resources** will be needed if the programme is to make progress and become an effective instrument of the church. These are the co-ordination of the advocacy work and some more administrative tasks involved with the development and expansion of the programme. These could be two separate people but on balance it was agreed that there should be a single person; at the time of writing this person is being sought.

3.7 Advocacy and education cost money, as does extra administration; the committee feels that this should not result in less money for campaigning and overseas grants. Mission Council concurred with the committee's view and resolved that the **apportionment of the *CforL* income** be slightly revised, to allow 75% to go directly overseas to the core partner organisations, 10% to go for campaigning and the remaining 15% to be split between education (which includes £8,500 for One World Week and around £7,000 of other grants), advocacy and administration. We expect administration and advocacy will cost more in 1996/7 than in 1998/9 because of the relaunch.

3.8 The concept of overseas **core partners** has not taken off except in a few churches. These are development organisations in different countries, links which enable us better to understand their situations, learn from them and support them more knowledgeably and carefully. One partner at a time is as much as one local church can cope with. We shall therefore prepare a 'menu' of 4 or 5 partners with the suggestion that participating churches be invited to focus on one partner at one time.

3.9 It is important to stress how much **Christian Aid** appreciates *CforL*. The committee is glad that Michael Taylor, Director of Christian Aid, will visit General Assembly to speak in support of *CforL*. We need to stress the reciprocal link with Christian Aid as our partner agency in *CforL*.

3.10 Perhaps the least understood part of the programme is the link with **World Development Movement** (WDM), even though they receive 10% of the income. Participating churches will be given an opportunity to become more closely involved through a specially negotiated link.

- 22 Assembly, noting the concern of the Churches Commission for Racial Justice and in support of their statement, gives its full support to those in local churches and communities who feel constrained by conscience to offer sanctuary to individuals and families facing deportation, providing they are satisfied that sanctuary is a last resort and that at least one of the following applies:
- a) there is a well-founded fear of persecution;
 - b) there is a serious threat to family life;
 - c) there would be a basic denial of justice and compassion.

Preamble

The full statement on *'The Churches, Immigration Law and Sanctuary'* was commended to churches for discussion and debate by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland last year.

We reproduce here a **summary** of that statement (*with minor editorial comments in italics*); it is available from Church and Society or from the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ), Inter-church House, Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL. A number of other Christian bodies have issued a 'declaration on sanctuary' incorporating the terms of the CCRJ statement; this is also available from CCRJ.

The text of the above resolution derives from the conclusions of the CCRJ statement.

1 General background

1.1 Immigration law in Britain has become increasingly restrictive since the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in the early 1960s. The authorities have always resisted arguments that racism has been a factor in the restrictions but those most affected have always been in black communities, often originating from Commonwealth countries.

1.2 One aspect of the tightening laws has been the increasing number of deportations, rising to over 5,000 in 1993. In response to some threatened deportations local communities, including churches, have set up campaigns to oppose what they see as the more outrageous cases. A small number of people have as a last resort gone to 'sanctuary', where an individual or family have moved into a church or other religious building. A number of examples are recounted in the booklet *'Why Sanctuary?'* published by the former British Council of Churches in 1989.

2 The Biblical and historical basis

2.1 Those in the Sanctuary movement which surfaced in the United States in the early 1980s based their actions on the tradition of sanctuary which originates in the Old Testament (Numbers 35, 6-15). Several Psalms speak of the protection offered by being close to God, suggesting the possibility of asylum in a holy place for someone in danger.

2.2 The Hebrew tradition from Numbers found its way into the Europe. It may well have grown out of the experiences of the early Christians in persecution. The first English saint St Alban was canonised because he was martyred for giving sanctuary to a fleeing Christian. The basis for sanctuary has always been moral and theological rather than legal; the legal right was in fact removed in Britain in 1623.

2.3 Some of the theology evolved in recent struggles for justice in South Africa and Latin America translates without too much difficulty into theological undergirding for a Christian challenge to harsh forms of deportation and for the concept of sanctuary.

2.4 It should also be noted that there has been a degree of co-operation with other faith communities over anti-deportation campaigns and sanctuaries. *'Why Sanctuary?'* gives examples of sanctuaries in a Muslim Mosque, a Hindu Mandir and a Sikh Gurdwara.

3 Effects of recent legislation

3.1 There has been strong opposition from the churches to increasingly restrictive immigration law over the last thirty years, e.g. the 1962 and 1965 Acts, the 1971 Immigration Bill and the 1981 Nationality Act which removed the principle of *ius soli* by which any child born here has the right to British citizenship. Further church resistance surfaced over the 1988 Immigration Act and the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act (*and again most recently over the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Bill*).

3.2 The harshness of the law (and the attitude of some sections of the police and immigration services) has led to people being picked up for some minor offence, questioned as to their immigration status, detained and even deported without ever getting to see their family or friends. There were even three deaths in 1993/4, including the celebrated case of Joy Gardner.

3.3 Three other groups of people who have faced deportation in recent years, about whom the churches have been concerned, are students in the midst of courses, religious leaders and women retreating from violent marriages.

4 Conscience and the law

4.1 Western societies are clearly based on the tradition of obedience to the law, as long as it is arrived at by democratic processes. Civil disobedience does have a tradition in democratic societies.

4.2 From time to time, in different contexts, Christians have felt the law must be opposed because it has begun to have results dissonant with moral law, human rights and natural justice. The more extreme recent instances of this relate to Germany in the 1930s, South Africa under apartheid and totalitarian regimes in eastern Europe.

5 Sanctuary

5.1 During the twentieth century the rebirth of the idea of sanctuary was probably the hiding of Jews in religious and other communities where Nazi regimes were in power.

5.2 In 1993 the Dutch Council of Churches made a statement pointing out that over 20 years sanctuary has never been violated in the Netherlands, suggesting that the church communities concerned have considerable moral authority. It says 'The aim of granting sanctuary is to hold up a mirror; as an alarm bell, Church sanctuary has a symbolic value.' Germany, Denmark and Sweden are countries where sanctuary is a live issue. (*The full statement sets out examples of church action and statements in these countries.*)

5.3 In Britain sanctuary was offered in the 1970s for refugees in the home of Bishop Colin Winter in East London and at the Regents Park Mosque for two Moroccans. The first church sanctuaries were in 1985, and since then there have been at least a dozen open sanctuaries and many more hidden ones. The only current open sanctuary in the UK is the Ogunwobi family in Hackney Downs Baptist Church which began in March 1994 (*to which Church and Society has sent support*).

5.4 Supporters of sanctuary in the UK have taken care to make clear that overt sanctuary does not break the law, as the authorities know very well the whereabouts of the people concerned.

6 The position of the churches

6.1 The Executive Committee of the British Council of Churches discussed the issue of sanctuary in 1989, having already given support to the Viraj Mendis case through the Community and Race Relations Unit. The Committee was clear that where Christians feel on grounds of conscience they must oppose deportations 'they can claim no special privileges with regard to the consequences of their action'. Nevertheless 'the Council fully respects the courage and integrity of those who stand with and support vulnerable and fearful people and their families'.

6.2 '*Why Sanctuary?*' listed a number of conditions under which a sanctuary would be more likely to be successful. There is little doubt that over the past ten years a number of individuals and families have been saved from deportation, either by taking sanctuary or threatening to do so.

6.3 Recently the Home Office rejected the idea of an 'amnesty' for certain designated settled overstayers (*see 1994 Record of Assembly, resolution p59*). There is resistance from the authorities to any suggestion that something might be wrong with the system as such, though people are still being sent back to places like Zaire; there is a complete refusal to accept that the system is racist in effect even if not intent. All this suggests that pressure on the authorities must be sustained.

7 The Commission's position on sanctuary

Given that the churches have stated frequently over the last 30 years their concern at increasingly restrictive immigration law and practice;
given the increasing emotional and psychological suffering of many families and individuals - almost entirely from the black and minority ethnic communities - who are faced with deportation from the UK;
given the failure of Government to respond to requests from many quarters to adopt a more human and compassionate approach to deportations;
the Churches Commission for Racial Justice is inviting churches to support authentic cases of sanctuary.
(*The terms of such support are outlined in the resolution.*)

23	Assembly urges every local church to participate fully in the ecumenical programme of all-party constituency meetings at the next General Election.
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1 It is constitutionally certain that there will be a General Election before Assembly 1997 but unlikely that there will be one before July 1996. Many of the matters on the agenda of Church and Society will feature in party manifestos and campaigning. Sometimes the stance taken by the church aligns with a particular party platform, sometimes with several or with none. What is certain, however, is that URC members will vote for all the main parties. On the matter of the political process, however, we are united:

- a) everyone eligible to do so should vote; and
- b) candidates should explain themselves and their party's policy proposals to each local electorate.

2 Under the auspices of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI) a working party, again convened by the Secretary for Church and Society, has been preparing material for constituency meetings at the time of the next Election. These have been held for over 20 years with the endorsement of party leaders over the years. They are not in themselves lobbying or campaigning meetings but intended as occasions (often the only ones during the Election campaign) when candidates of all persuasions will share a platform and deal with issues raised from the floor.

3 An initial letter was circulated in January; those registering as potential organisers of constituency meetings (who are primarily representatives of Churches Together in X) will receive a mailing after Easter 1996 although the briefing paper on the issues will not be finalised until the Election is called.

Local churches are urged to **discover** whether their local ecumenical body is planning to hold such a meeting and, if not, to **press** for one to be planned. Copies of the materials will be available from Church and Society or from CCBI.

Communications and Editorial

Convener: Mr Christopher Wright

Secretary: Mrs Carol Rogers

This committee is responsible for the setting and maintenance of standards of all publications. It acts as the Editorial and Management Board of REFORM, and is responsible for media relations.

1 PUBLICATIONS BOARD

The Publications Board meets bi-monthly to co-ordinate the publishing programme and to advise on all matters relating to the publications of the General Assembly and its committees. The Board oversees all publishing matters including style presentation, marketing and pricing and reports to the Communications and Editorial Committee.

In 1995 there were seven titles as well as the annual publications of the Year Book, Diary and Prayer Handbook. 1996 will see the publication of the post membership course '*Developing Discipleship*' and an anthology featuring embroideries by Pamela Pavitt on the theme of reconciliation. These books should be launched at General Assembly 1996.

Items planned for the future include a substantial work on the History and Ethos of the URC by David Cornick and a more personal reminiscence by Arthur MacArthur.

All copies of the URC Diary for 1996 were sold. The Year Book for 1996 was published on January 1st. Sales of the loose leaf version continue to rise.

A much improved full colour catalogue has been produced showing the range of materials available.

2 REFORM

After a period of 17 years, during which he developed the magazine and consolidated its position at the heart of the life of the URC, Norman Hart retired in September 1995. The new Editor, David Lawrence, began working in July and took sole responsibility as from the November issue. With the handover came a significant development in patterns of working. A considerable investment in new equipment now allows *Reform* to be designed and originated by the editorial team, working from an office at United Reformed Church House. It is gratifying to note that the significant changes of format which have resulted have been well received by the vast majority of *Reform's* readers. Future priorities include an increase in the use of colour and major initiatives in promotion.

3 URC BOOKSHOP AND DISTRIBUTION

1995 saw problems with several changes of staff in the despatch operation. Hopefully these have now been overcome and once again the target of turning round orders within 48 hours is being met in 90% of cases.

Ministers and students continue to take full advantage of the discount scheme and it has been a source of great interest to see exactly what Ministers read - from theology and biography to science fiction and fantasy. The number of titles stocked continues to grow as new sources of material, particularly in worship resources, are found. The bookshop continues to administer the free will offering sequi envelope scheme in conjunction with John Thomlinson and Sons of Glasgow. The range of church requisites and logo goods carried has been increased.

The bookshop continues to provide material for Provincial Days and Synods and other special events.

4 **DESIGN AND IN-HOUSE PRINTING**

The standard of material designed in house has continued to improve. New equipment for producing smaller items 'in-house' will be introduced during 1996.

5 **INFORMATION SERVICE**

The Information Service continues to be despatched to all church secretaries at regular intervals. A personal subscription is available at a modest cost. All retired ministers are offered a free information pack. The URC is indebted to the volunteers who collate and pack the Information Service.

6 **MEDIA**

David Lawrence is now the Media Officer. He deals with enquiries and issues press releases and is establishing links with the Media. A 24 hour consultation has been arranged for later this year for those in the Provinces who have been appointed as Provincial Media Links (as instructed by the Resolution to General Assembly 1992 and others who have connections with the media, particularly at local level.

7 **VIDEO**

The small library of videos for loan has recently been updated. A catalogue has been sent to all churches through the Information Service.

8 **CHURCH RETURNS FORMS**

All information from the Church Returns Forms is collated and entered into a Database. Those who interpret the information are aware of differences in the methods used by local churches to complete statistical sections of the forms, which leads to less than accurate figures being published each year. This matter is to be addressed in the near future and hopefully guidance will be given to churches to enable accurate statistics to be produced.

9 **ECUMENICAL LINKS**

The Churches Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting.

The Secretary has represented the URC at CACLB but will hopefully shortly be replaced by a member of the sub-group on broadcasting. The Secretary has served as a judge for the 1996 Andrew Cross Awards which are awarded annually by CACLB for the best in local broadcasting.

Media Awareness Project

The Media Awareness Project has now completed a period of review and restructuring. The Secretary continues as a member of the Ecumenical Group which provides a forum for representatives of all denominations/organisations interested in promoting media awareness to meet together for feedback and discussion. The excellent resources produced by the Project will continue to be available and will be updated and added to. The Project will continue to be co-ordinated from the Mothers Union Action and Outreach Unit.

Church Publishers Network

A network of church publishers has been set up through CCBI and the Secretary represents the URC.

Statistical Group

Churches Together in England, Churches Co-ordinating Group for Evangelisation are exploring the possibility of a 1999 Church Census. A small group of those who deal with the collection of statistics has been set up to look at the feasibility and possible use of a central church data base. The Secretary is a member of this group.

RESOLUTION

Communications and Editorial

24 Assembly Resolves

- 1 to negotiate with Christian Copyright Licensing to take out a group copyright licence to cover the reproduction in service sheets, on display boards and through overhead projector slides and similar mechanical means, of the words of hymns, songs and other worship material, which fall within the scope of the licence, and the recording of acts of worship on audio and video tape, in all local churches of the United Reformed Church which agree to opt into the scheme and to meet their share of the costs of the annual licence fee.
- 2 to instruct the Secretary for Communications to operate the scheme on behalf of the Church, under the oversight of the Communications and Editorial Committee, and furthermore it instructs the Secretary no longer to arrange copyright cover for individual local churches which do not opt to take part in the scheme, but merely to provide information about where such cover may be obtained.
- 3 believing that churches bring no honour to God by continuing to defy the law, to urge all local churches to take advantage of this scheme and thus to ensure that they are covered, and it deplores the action of any local church which attempts to avoid its commitment to honest dealing in this regard.
- 4 if such negotiations prove unsuccessful, Assembly recommends that all congregations ensure that the laws concerning copyright are upheld.

COPYRIGHT

Over many years the Communications and Editorial Committee has advised and encouraged local churches to ensure that the regulations regarding copyright are being adhered to. From January 1996 the period of copyright was extended to 70 years.

A resolution carried by General Assembly in 1990 '...urges all provinces, districts and local congregations to ensure that they are keeping within the law as covered by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, giving special regard to Hymn Book Supplements, Service and Hymn Sheets, together with items reproduced in church magazines.'

The Communications and Editorial Committee is aware that at present a proportion of UR Churches (less than 20%) participate in the Christian Copyright Licence scheme. Discussions took place in 1994 with the CCL exploring the possibility of a "blanket licence" which would cover all local congregations for the reproduction of **words only** of the majority of hymns still in copyright and also the recording and videoing of church services. The sum then suggested was £79,000 per year - a saving of approximately 25% if every church were to pay their correct fee. This amount was thought to be too large to be met centrally. A further discussion with CCL has been arranged with suggestions for an alternative scheme by which local churches would register with the Communications and Editorial office at a discounted rate. If this scheme is agreed then the Communications and Editorial office would administer it in conjunction with CCL. Churches would be informed of the names of the publishers which were covered by the licence, and would, as now, be responsible for seeking permission to use any material not thus covered.

At present individual permissions are sought on behalf of local churches by the Communications and Editorial office. Any fees levied are paid by the office and invoices then issued. Churches often send in lists of 20 or more items to be cleared. The time taken in answering and dealing with such queries including the resulting correspondence averages 2 days each week.

After noting which churches request assistance and which churches already are participating in the CCL scheme it is obvious that something over 40% of local congregations are risking prosecution and substantial fines (some have been over £8000) by not observing the regulations concerning the reproduction of words (including OHP transparencies), and any recording, both audio and visual of services.

Discipleship and Witness

Convener: The Revd Elizabeth Caswell
Committee Secretary: The Revd Roger Whitehead
Staff Member: Mrs Muriel Garrow

The committee's task is :

- to encourage growth in faith among people of all ages;
- to support the work of exercising pastoral care, particularly by elders, lay preachers and members of local churches, and the work of District Councils in their pastoral oversight of the local church;
- to challenge the local church to share the gospel and stimulate Districts and Synods in the development of their own strategies for outreach;
- to encourage churches in their participation in the Decade of Evangelism;
- to listen to concerns raised, to share information and provide appropriate support;
- to be responsible for the Windermere Centre.

1 WAYS OF WORKING

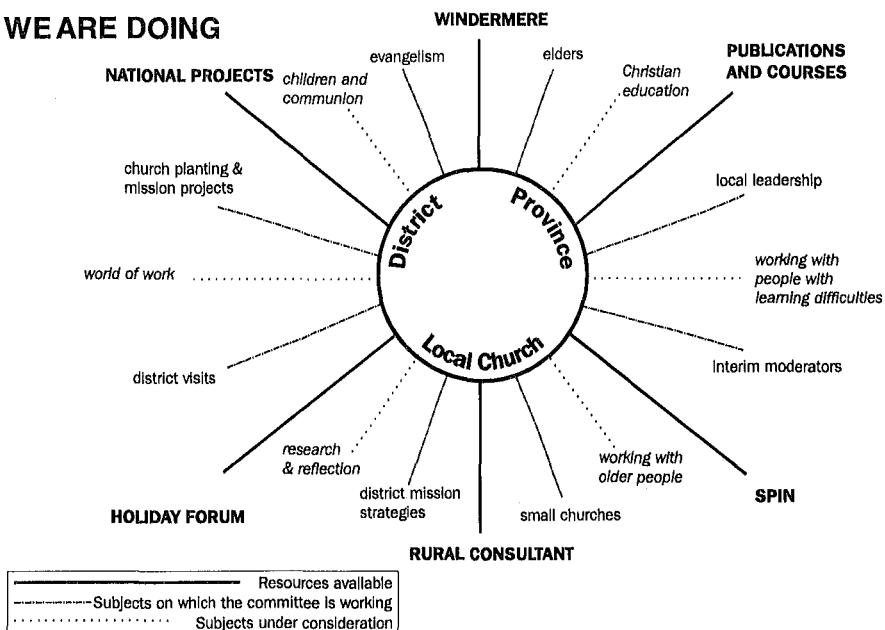
1.1 We are fortunate in having a committee in which individual members are willing to do considerable work between meetings. In particular we continue to be indebted to the Secretary for Discipleship and Witness, Muriel Garrow. Muriel makes her wide knowledge and experience available to the whole church through extensive travelling around the Districts and local churches, and also by drawing together those engaged in enabling and development work. We thank her for her ceaseless energy and enthusiasm. However, eight people, plus staff, meeting twice a year, with a limited budget find it difficult to fulfil the remit of the committee. We are therefore approaching the work by:

1.2 **Focusing** - asking of each agenda item how it arose, what priority it ought to have, what we can realistically hope to achieve, how it relates to the Kingdom of God.

1.3 **Collaborating** - asking specific provinces, districts, local churches to join us in a partnership to test our ideas and so that we can learn from their experience; and to whom we can 'subcontract' work. We are also inviting individuals (some of whom may not be members of the committee) to take on particular areas of responsibility as 'correspondents'.

1.4 We are grateful to those people and Provinces who have accepted our invitation to work with us. We know we are not the only committee making such requests; we know that Provinces have their own programmes to pursue. It is encouraging when the practice of collaboration works both ways, and Provinces, Districts and congregations tell us about innovative work. Thank you.

2 WHAT WE ARE DOING



3 RESOURCES

3.1 The Windermere Centre

3.1.1 **Your house in the Lake District** continues to be home for many who use its facilities. In 1995 the door opened **more than four thousand times** to a whole variety of people for a whole variety of reasons.

3.1.2 They came as churches, groups, committees, families, individuals, couples, young and not so young, all sorts and conditions from all over the country and beyond. They came to relax, reflect, study, plan, sing, pray, walk, talk, debate, vision or rest. They came to find peace, ways forward, healing, each other, space, refreshment. They came for a day, a weekend, a week, B&B, and more, and it was very good.

3.1.3 To date there are **Windermere contact persons** in more than 450 congregations which helps us relate directly with the people for whom the centre exists. Our hope is that every congregation will appoint such a contact so that those who might find great benefit in coming to the centre might be encouraged to do so.

3.1.4 During 1995, there were changes. The cook left and a new cook was found. Meals continue to be of a high standard with all dietary needs being met. A chair lift was installed thanks to generous and unsolicited donations, and because of it, the less able now enjoy a choice of single or double room as well as experience the comfort of the lounge. Two en suites were also provided for added convenience, again through spontaneous generosity. It is encouraging when people care.

3.1.5 **Your house in the Lakes has now been open ten years**, which means its door has opened **over forty three thousand times** to welcome people in. That is a wonderful resource for our church, so we intend to give thanks! A special **TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** has been planned from July 10th to 17th this year, immediately following Assembly. During that period the centre will have special events, exhibitions, workshops, speakers, concerts and worship. It will be a week in which to spend a day there, or stay for a few days, or come as a coach load, to give thanks for the many ways God's spirit has been at work in this place over the years and fulfilled many times the vision and faith of those who brought it into being and sustained it. In this matter a special thanks to **Sue Kendall** who has worked in an administrative capacity at the centre since it opened in 1986 and to whom the church owes a real debt of gratitude for all her care, loyalty and support.

3.1.6 **What is the Centre after these first 10 years?** Certainly still a place to call home whatever the need or circumstance, and still a special place for retreat, healing, training, conference, study and sanctuary. In the end it needs to be whatever the church needs it to be so that it might continue to enliven, enrich, and encourage the Kingdom of God within the lives of our congregations and the lives of those who seek the many benefits which it offers.

3.1.7 **Administrative change.** Following consultation, agreement was reached that the committee structure offering support and advice to the Director should be streamlined, whilst retaining its representative character. It is proposed that the existing **Programme and Policy and Planning Committees** should be merged into a new Windermere Advisory Group. Its remit would be to advise the Director on programme, policy and planning and make recommendations as necessary to the Discipleship and Witness Committee. Membership would consist of: A Convenor appointed by General Assembly (the current Convenor of Policy and Planning, the Revd David A L Jenkins), the Centre Director, the Centre Administrator, the Convenor of the Centre Management Committee, the Convenor of the Discipleship and Witness Committee (or alternate), one representative of Carver URC, and three others nominated by the Nominations Committee. The Group will meet twice per year.

3.2 Publications and Courses

3.2.1 **'Developing Discipleship'** is now available and we hope that churches will take advantage of this course which leads on from 'Members Together', enabling church members to continue exploring faith, as well as providing a solid base for those who will subsequently train for particular ministries.

3.2.2 **The Open Learning Centre** continues to offer a wide range of useful courses for home-based study.

3.2.3 We are aware that there is a need for updated **material about the URC** which can be used with enquirers, and also in schools. Preparation of a variety of such materials has begun.

3.2.4 We are also planning to produce a pack concerning **eldership** because earlier publications are now out of print.

3.3 **SPIN (Sharing People in Network)**

Opportunity has been taken to examine the original aims of SPIN which was set up as the URC response to the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Woman. Plans are in hand to make stronger links with the provinces. Issues in line with the concerns of the WCC are being tackled. We were pleased to receive a visit of a team from the World Council of Churches in February. A fuller report is printed in the information section of these reports.

3.4 **Rural Consultant**

3.4.1 The Rural Consultant's Strategy Group established in 1995 under the Convenership of the Revd John Humphreys, has enabled development of work in several Provinces. This ranges from training days, to specific help for local churches as agreed with the host Province.

3.4.2 Rural Ministry training conferences continue in the Arthur Rank Centre both for those new to, and those experienced in, rural ministry, 1995/6 sees the development of a number of regional conferences for ordained and lay leaders in rural churches.

3.4.3 A new video 'Hidden Treasure' has been developed ecumenically. It uses personal stories of pilgrimage as discussion starters for practical evangelism. It will be on show at Assembly.

3.4.4 The consultant, with the other members of the ecumenical team at the Arthur Rank Centre, is involved in the discussion of ethical issues pertinent to rural life and work, ranging from transportation and welfare of livestock to associated agricultural issues and the future of employment in both town and country.

3.4.5 Visits to councils and churches continue to be an important part of the work, and Michael Cruchley is always willing to share in discussion of the future patterns of life and work of rural churches in the URC

3.5 **Holiday Forum**

HOLIDAY FORUM began its life when the URC found itself unable for a variety of reasons to continue running the FORUM at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick. It is run by a Steering Group of regular URC FORUM people, and has taken place for the last two years. Both weeks were successful, both in terms of the number of people attending (of all ages) and financially. Building on the basics of URC FORUM, the Steering Group have attempted to ensure that there is a balance between the holiday aspect of the week and the more serious content. Gratitude is expressed for the support, encouragement and advice that we have had from our theme leaders. HOLIDAY FORUM in 1996 (from 17th to 23rd August) will be led by Revd John Slow on the theme 'This is the Life' (exploring down to earth spirituality). The Hayes at Swanwick has already been booked for the next two years, and it is hoped that in time the organisation of HOLIDAY FORUM will be undertaken by a committee elected by those attending. The Steering Group would like to place on record its thanks to those in the URC who have co-operated with and helped it, and it looks forward to closer links in the future through the Discipleship and Witness Committee.

3.6 **National Projects**

3.6.1 Local churches have already received a leaflet about **Pilgrim's Way (1997)**. A pilgrimage from Rome will mark the 1400th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine at Canterbury. From 26th May pilgrims will travel by three routes through England, Wales and Scotland to arrive in Derry on 9th June marking the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Columba. In addition to joining in the celebrations on the routes of the pilgrimage, this is an opportunity for local churches to learn lessons from the past and celebrate with other Christians our pilgrimage of faith today.

3.6.2 **The Open Book** is a long term project aimed at "opening the Bible to people and people to the Bible" by engaging the Bible with the Church and contemporary society. A leaflet about it should be circulated early in the autumn. The opening phase will be from Advent 1997 to Easter 1998, and will include the CCBI Lent study course. The Prayer Handbook for 1998 will pick up the themes of the Open Book.

DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS

3.6.3 **The Millennium** looms large. Churches Together in England is co-ordinating the churches' response to the Millennium celebrations. The URC is represented on this group, and we have also convened an inter-committee group to keep all committees involved in what is planned ecumenically, and to feed in URC ideas.

3.6.4 **Lent '94.** The Discipleship and Witness Committee has undertaken on behalf of the CCBI Churches Commission On Mission to take forward the findings of the Lent Course for 1994. A work-book is being produced, based on the responses from participants, which it is hoped will assist local churches in identifying factors which are instrumental in bringing people to faith today. This is an example of one principle of ecumenical cooperation being put into practice: namely, that one can work on behalf of all.

3.6.5 We continue to receive and circulate information about the **Christian Enquiry Agency**, the **Churches Advertising Network** and other initiatives which provide ideas and resources for the churches.

4. ONGOING WORK

4.1 **Elders** - we are beginning work on a pack to help local churches in the selection, training and work of elders.

4.2 **Local leadership** - we are furthering the work on local leadership resulting from the Patterns of Ministry debate in 1995. We are proposing a period of listening and reflection during 1996, drawing on responses to 'Patterns of Ministry' and current work undertaken in some Provinces. This will be followed by a consultation in 1997, with a report to Mission Council. Firm proposals will be brought to Assembly as soon as possible.

4.3 **Interim Moderators** - there is a wide variety of practice across the church with regard to the preparation of interim moderators and their terms of reference. Research is in progress and it is hoped that guidelines in the form of a resource pack for District Councils will be made available for Districts which wish to use it.

4.4 **Small Churches** - in an effort to hear those who may feel marginalised, the Mission Council has asked the Committee to focus on small churches and discover what changes would be necessary in church structures in order for small churches to feel that those structures serve them, and not vice versa. The South Western Province has agreed to collaborate with us in this work.

4.5 **District Mission Strategies** - a conference of District representatives was held in November 1995 at Swanwick. Examples of how different districts had developed a mission strategy were shared, and the issues discussed. Provincial development/training officers are now looking for people in each Province who would be available to help Districts develop their own mission strategies.

4.6 **District visits** - material showing the evolving patterns of district visits to churches has been collated. We plan to hold a conference in partnership with the East Midlands Province in mid-1997 to evaluate progress.

4.7 **Church Planting and Mission Projects** - with the help of a correspondent, we are continuing to research the development of new congregations and projects across the URC.

4.8 **Evangelism** - Wessex Province is collaborating with us in using work we have done to date as the basis for exploring issues connected with evangelism. We shall be holding a consultation with them in July 1996, and hope that a representative of the Ministries Committee will join us so that we can think together about the work and role of evangelists. This may lead to a new strategy statement on evangelism in the URC.

5 NEW WORK

'Discipleship' covers the development of faith and the application of faith among people of all ages and experience. 'Witness' involves us in relating the gospel to the whole of life. 'Spurred' on by interested individuals and by requests for help, we hope to explore the issues raised by the need for the church to take seriously the faith and needs of children, the elderly, and people with severe learning difficulties - the need for all of us to be learning from each other. We shall also be looking at different ways of encouraging the church to think clearly and reflectively about the theology of mission, lest the very thing which should unite us become the thing which divides us most.

RESOLUTION

Discipleship and Witness

- 25** Assembly resolves to replace the Windermere Programme and Policy and Planning Committees with a **Windermere Advisory Group**.
-

Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

Convener: Dr David Thompson
Secretary: The Revd Dale Rominger

The responsibilities of the Committee are:

- a) to lead the Church in its continual study of theology, enabling it to reflect upon and express the doctrines of the United Reformed Church;
 - b) to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on the doctrinal matters;
 - c) to advise the Assembly, its officers and committees on questions of doctrine;
 - d) to listen to the concerns of local churches, district councils and provincial synods about public worship and personal devotion;
 - e) to develop programmes and material which will encourage the growth in faith and spiritual experience of those involved in the life of the Church;
 - f) to encourage by such means as may be appropriate at national level the greater participation of all ages and both sexes in the worship, prayer and work of the Church as it serves the mission of God;
 - g) to respond to requests for national materials and consultations;
 - h) to share ideas for the prayer and worship life of local congregations with and from the national and world Church and to develop ecumenical collaboration in the area of faith and order, and spirituality;
 - i) to publish regular and occasional worship materials for the use of the Church, including the Prayer Handbook, Orders of Service for Public Worship and Hymnody;
 - j) to oversee the network for Silence and Retreats.
-

- 1 The Committee had two residential meetings in the year: one in July at Mill Hill and one in January at Windermere. The main business has been:
 - the Church Hymnary Trust
 - ecumenical discussions
 - presidency at the sacraments
 - resources for worship
 - further revision of the version of the Statement of Faith in inclusive language.

Ecumenical discussions

- 2 The Committee has been involved in the consideration of progress in four different areas of work. First, it has responded to three reports from the fourth General Assembly of the Leuenberg Fellowship of Churches at Vienna in 1994 on the doctrine and practice of baptism, on the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper and on the contribution of the Reformation towards ecumenical dialogue in its understanding of the Church. Dr Donald Norwood has replaced the Revd Geoffrey Roper as our representative on this group. Secondly, the Committee has been consulted about the discussions between the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union concerning baptismal policy in Local Ecumenical Partnerships. The Agreement reached in the joint working group set up to examine this question is referred to in the report of the Ecumenical Committee, but Assembly should know that this agreement has the full support of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee. Thirdly, the Committee has been represented in the informal discussions which have taken place between ourselves and the Church of England, and has received reports on those discussions. Lastly, the Committee prepared a provisional response to the Pope's encyclical letter, *Ut Unum Sint*.

Patterns of Ministry

- 3 Two matters were remitted to the Committee as a result of Assembly's decisions on the Report of the Working Party on Patterns of Ministry last year. One concerned the statement on the theology of ministry which was Appendix A of the Report. Work has begun on that but is not yet

complete. The second concerns presidency at the sacraments in cases of emergency, which the Mission Council asked the Committee to consider, along with the Ecumenical Committee. The Committee has prepared its advice to Mission Council, and it will be for the Council to report to next year's Assembly.

Resources for worship

- 4 Last year's report referred to discussions over the development of a common lectionary among the Churches. It is now clear that there is a growing body of support for the adoption of the Revised Common Lectionary, which has a three year cycle of lessons. That is the basis of the Church of Scotland's lectionary in the 1994 edition of the Book of Common Order. The Methodist Conference in 1996 is to be invited to adopt it with effect from 1998. The Roman Catholic Church in these islands and the Church of England are also seriously considering its adoption. The Committee has agreed to advise those responsible for the preparation of Partners in Learning to adopt it as a basis within the 1997-98 material. It is preparing a paper which compares the Joint Liturgical Group four year lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary, and intends to commend the latter to Assembly in 1997.
- 5 A reprint of the 1989 Service Book took place this year. The Committee has also been considering the possibility of publishing a short Guide to Worship, possibly with a collection of prayers, since there seems to be a continuing demand from congregations for such material. The possibility of publishing a revised Marriage Service is being considered in view of the likelihood that an Act of Parliament will be passed this session permitting a more modern version of the legally required words in England and Wales. The Committee has also agreed to a request from Mission Council to prepare worship material to mark the 25th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church.

Membership

- 6 This year the Committee says farewell to the Revd Dale Rominger and the Revd Alan Gaunt. Dale has been a member of the Committee since 1989 and Secretary since 1993 and now wishes to resign. Alan has been a member since 1993. The Committee is grateful to both for their dedicated service.

Church Hymnary Trust

- 7 The publication of *Rejoice and Sing* in 1991 raised the question of whether it was either necessary or desirable for the United Reformed Church to remain a member of the Church Hymnary Trust. The Church's membership of the Trust dates back to the decision of the Presbyterian Church of England in 1926 not to proceed with plans to publish a new copy of its own hymn book, *Church Praise*, and instead to prepare a Supplement to the forthcoming *Revised Church Hymnary*. A contribution was made towards the capital outlay involved, in return for which the Church became entitled to a share of the surplus on royalties, related to sales in England. When the United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 plans were at an advanced stage for the publication of *The Church Hymnary* (Third Edition) and for this reason there was no immediate move for the publication of a new church hymn book.
- 8 When the Assembly decided to publish a new hymn book of its own, the Doctrine and Worship Committee began to wonder whether continued membership of the Trust was necessary. The Trust's decision in 1994 to prepare a fourth edition of *The Church Hymnary* made the matter more urgent. At that point the Doctrine and Worship Committee initiated enquiries as to whether it would be possible to withdraw from the Trust, and realise the Church's current share of the assets. The Annual Meeting of the Trust in March 1995 agreed to propose to the constituent churches that the United Reformed Church be allowed to withdraw and that a distribution of 7% of the Fund be made to the Church, based on the percentage of royalties paid out to the Church since 1972. The URC representatives on the Trust, Mrs F.E. Smith and the Revd G.R. Barr, advised the Committee that the proposal was reasonable. The share of the Fund was estimated at about £27,000, though the actual figure would depend on the stock market valuation at the point of sale.

- 9 Mission Council in September 1995 agreed to accept the proposal to withdraw from the Trust, and this was agreed at the Annual Meeting of the Trust in March 1996. The Trust Deed, which is made under Scottish law, has been examined in order to see whether there are any restrictions on the use which can be made of the resulting assets. Clause 8 of the deed provides that 'The profits from the sale of the publications belonging to the Trustees shall be paid to each of the said three Churches or their respective Psalmody Hymnody and Praise Committees and to such other Church or Churches as may from time to time be associated with them as aforesaid in such proportions as shall either be agreed upon by the Trustees or as shall be fixed and determined by the President for the time being of the Society of Chartered Accountants in Edinburgh whom failing the Solicitor General for Scotland...' The three Churches referred to are the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The Presbyterian Church of England joined the Trust in 1927. The primary use of the funds was clearly intended to be the publication of future Hymn and Psalm Books.
- 10 Since the United Reformed Church is withdrawing from the Trust, it may be argued that any obligation to use the funds so realised for purposes akin to the original is moral rather than legal. When the matter was raised with the former Treasurer and the Chief Accountant in the spring of 1995, both expressed the view that the funds should be added to the general funds of the Church, one reason for this being the fact that this is the way in which the profits from Rejoice and Sing have been treated.
- 11 The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee considered this matter again in January. The Committee is clear that it would not wish this sum to be treated as a separate trust fund, of which only the income could be used. But it would wish the sum to be so designated that it could be drawn on from time to time as necessary to fund the publication of worship materials. It considers that this would be a responsible use of the money given the nature of its source, and it could be an indirect (rather than a direct) subsidy for the general work of the Church, in that it would not be necessary to make such a large provision for the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee from the general budget. The Committee therefore proposes a resolution to this effect.

Statement of Faith in inclusive language

- 12 Paragraph 17 of the Basis of Union contains a statement of the faith of the United Reformed Church at the date of its formation in 1972. It was not therefore appropriate to amend it in 1990 when the wording of the rest of the Basis of Union was changed to inclusive language (i.e. language which does not words such as 'men' to refer to women as well), and it is not intended to amend it now. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has, however, been asked to provide a statement of faith which avoids the use of language for God which implies that God is male and such a statement was included in last year's report to Assembly. At the Assembly it was necessary to withdraw it for technical drafting reasons, but Assembly encouraged the Committee to present a revised version in 1996 for use in addition to, but not in place of, the statement in paragraph 17. This version meets that request. Following last year's Assembly several members wrote to the Committee and the revision tries to take account of the views expressed. It was also felt that a commentary on the proposed statement might be helpful.
- 13 The version follows the pattern of paragraph 17 and the sections correspond to those in the original, except that the first and last have been divided into two. The change in style is intended to make it more readily usable in worship, since that was the wish of several of those who requested such a version. The original. paragraph 17 was not drafted with that intention, though it was so used in the inaugural service in Westminster Abbey in 1.972.
- 14 The Committee believes that its proposals do not change the substance of the faith stated in paragraph 17.

COMMENTARY ON THE STATEMENT

Introductory: 'Father-Son' imagery in the naming of God

- 15 In recent years there has been increasing concern that the use of 'Father-Son' imagery in the naming of God conveys the impression that God is male. Christian theology teaches that God is neither male nor female; nevertheless, since the way in which we speak is so important in conveying what we really mean, it is right to take the utmost care to use language which expresses that teaching.
- 16 All human language about God is metaphorical. If certain particular ways of naming God are believed to have been divinely revealed, they are still metaphors. The name for God used in the Old Testament, *Yahweh*, is not really a name, and this is part of its point. Devout Jews never utter the name, thereby symbolising the fact that it is impossible to name God. God is not male, nor indeed can any human name express the fullness of God. To imagine that the meaning of God has been totally expressed in any name is a form of idolatry, i.e. worshipping the image rather than the reality.
- 17 Nevertheless the fact that Jesus called God 'Father' is a matter of supreme significance. This is not simply the insight of a great prophet or poet. The one who called God 'Father' was 'the eternal Word of God made flesh'. What Jesus meant by Calling God 'Father', and even 'abba' (the more word), is an indispensable element of Christian faith in God.
- 18 Some are concerned that the human use of father has limited our understanding of God: this is felt particularly by those whose fathers have been unloving or absent from their lives. But Jesus' use of the term for God has transformed the human understanding of fatherhood. The pattern for human fathers is that they too must be those whose love for their children never fails. The oft-quoted words from Ephesians 3:14, 'I bow my knees to the Father, from whom every family on earth is named', contains a pun in Greek which is lost in English, since the Greek word translated as 'family' might be more accurately translated 'patrimony' or 'fatherhood', i.e. that which belongs to the father. The use of the word 'family' in English points to a more inclusive conception of God, in which the significance both of motherhood and childhood may be similarly transformed.
- 19 Similarly the term 'Son', when applied to Jesus' relationship to God, is emphasising the family relationship between parent and child. To speak of Jesus Christ as God's Son is to express the notion of a family intimacy within Eternal God like that of a human family. As a human being Jesus had to be either male or female. Thus the proclamation of Jesus as 'Son of God' is balanced by the more inclusive declaration that he is 'the eternal Word of God made flesh'. For women, as also for men, it is the human-ness of Jesus, not his maleness, that is ultimately significant in salvation.

The Statement

- 20 The first section affirms our belief in God as Eternal Trinity without using the masculine terminology 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' in paragraph 17. There is an echo of Romans 11:36 (REB) and also I Corinthians 8:6. Our belief is more than the affirmation of what we think about God. We trust in God and we worship God alone. The connection between belief and worship is emphasised by the use of the words 'We worship' to introduce the next three sections.
- 21 The second section concerns the distinctive attributes of the first person of the Trinity. The same God who is the source and sustainer of Creation is the one whom Jesus called Father. This affirms the profoundly important historical fact that Jesus called God 'Father', and at the same time makes it clear that 'Father' is not the exclusive name of God, nor is God male. The Lord's Prayer teaches us that we may call God 'our Father', so that statement affirms that we are sons and daughters of God (cf. Galatians 3:25 - 4:7; I John 3:1-2, 5:1).
- 22 The third section states that in Jesus Christ the eternal Word of God was made flesh. Jesus lived our human life, died for sinners on the cross and was raised from the dead. Therefore Jesus was 'proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God' (cf. Acts 9:20; Romans 1:3-4; Hebrews 1:2; I John 3:23).

This is a historical statement; but its apostolic authority gives it a more than historical significance. The apostolic proclamation comes to us with divine authority. We proclaim the Gospel as successors of the apostles; that is the characteristic Reformed understanding of apostolic succession; our Gospel is the Apostolic Gospel.

- 23 Christ is also described as the one 'who is coming in judgement and mercy', as distinct from the simple description 'judge' in the existing paragraph 17. There are several understandings among Christians about the meaning of 'the coming of Christ'. Some refer to a future, final event in history; others affirm a continual coming of Christ, for example, in the sharing of the broken bread and poured out wine in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or in the transformation of individual lives and the corporate experience of the Church. Similarly some Christians see God's judgement as a future event still to come at the end of time, whilst others see the cross of Christ as the point when human sin was ultimately condemned and God's holiness ultimately honoured. We do not have to choose between these views: each contains an important truth. The use of the phrase 'who is coming' deliberately takes into account these different understandings and may be interpreted as including both 'continual coming' and 'final coming' as realities of Christian faith. Finally, the reference to mercy is a reminder that eternal life depends on the grace of God rather than our own actions.
- 24 Like the existing paragraph 17 the new statement makes no judgement on the extent of salvation. All the affirmations in the statement begin with 'we'. The statement is therefore made by those who believe that their own sins, and those of the Christians with whom they are in fellowship, will be forgiven and that they will be brought to eternal life. It is intended to refer to all those whom God wills to be saved. In keeping with the earliest strands of the Reformed tradition no judgement is made about those who do not profess this faith.
- 25 The fourth section has been changed so as to place the emphasis on the Holy Spirit. 'This Gospel' refers to the statements about Jesus Christ in the previous section. The transforming power of the Spirit is spelt out in three statements about the Spirit's action in assuring us of forgiveness, strengthening us to do God's will, and bringing us into a new relationship with God as sons and daughters.
- 26 The fifth section affirms our belief in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The unity of the Church, expressed in the phrase 'the communion of saints', bridges time and space. The characteristics of the Church on earth and the Church in heaven have also been indicated. On earth the Church as the body of Christ empowered by the Spirit glorifies God and serves humanity, two tasks which are closely linked: the Church in heaven is united with God in Trinity (cf. verse 3 of Isaac Watts' hymn, 'Nature with Open Volume Stands', *Rejoice and Sing* 219).
- 27 The sixth section now puts the belief that God will ultimately renew and gather in one all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10; John 121:52; Colossians 3:20) before the final doxology. As in the existing statement, the biblical reference makes it unnecessary to choose between later theological differences over whether everyone will be saved or only some.
- 28 The seventh section is a final doxology, which is Trinitarian without using the language of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God makes us what we are. God is with us: God shares our humanity so that we may share God's glory. God is the source of our prayer and the power which enables us to praise (cf. P.T. Forsyth, 'The Christian Prayer is the secretary of Creation's praise', *The Soul of Prayer*, p 32). Thus the whole meaning of creation and redemption is captured in these words. Our praise leads us to state our faith and directs it aright. Paul puts it this way, 'When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.' (Romans 8:15b-17, NRSV.)

RESOLUTIONS

Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

26 Church Hymnary Trust

Assembly

- a) gives thanks for the past collaboration with partner churches in the Church Hymnary Trust;
- b) endorses Mission Council's decision to accept the proposal of the Trustees that the United Reformed Church should withdraw from the Trust and receive 7% of the Trust Fund at the point of withdrawal;
- c) agrees that the monies so realised should be added to the general funds of the Church with the intention that they might be used from time to time to fund the publication by the Church of material for use in worship.

27 Statement of Faith in inclusive language

Acting under paragraph 18 of the Basis of Union, Assembly exercises its right to make a new statement of its faith, and agrees to insert at the end of paragraph 18 the following words:

'At the General Assembly of 1997 the United Reformed, Church adopted the following alternative version of the statement in paragraph 17 to be available alongside the 1972 statement:

- 1 We believe
in the one and only God,
Eternal Trinity,
from whom, through whom and for whom
all created things exist.
God alone we worship;
in God we put our trust.
- 2 We worship God
source and sustainer of creation,
whom Jesus called Father,
whose sons and daughters we are.
- 3 We worship God
revealed in Jesus Christ,
the eternal Word of God made flesh;
who lived our human life,
died for sinners on the cross;
who was raised from the dead,
and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God; who lives eternally,
as saviour and sovereign,
coming in judgement and mercy,
to bring us to eternal life.
- 4 We worship God,
ever present in the Holy Spirit;
who brings this Gospel to fruition,
assures us of forgiveness,
strengthens us to do God's will,
and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus,
sons and daughters of God.

- 5 We believe
in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church,
united in heaven and on earth:
on earth, the Body of Christ,
empowered by the Spirit
to glorify God and to serve humanity;
in heaven, eternally one with the power,
the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.
- (6) We believe
that in the fullness of time,
God will renew and gather in one
all things in heaven and on earth through Christ,
and be perfectly honoured and adored.
- (7.) We rejoice in God
who has given us being,
who shares our humanity
to bring us to glory,
our source of prayer and power of praise;
to whom be glory, praise and adoration,
now and evermore.

Ecumenical

Convener: The Revd Murdoch MacKenzie
Secretary: The Revd Sheila Maxey

AIM

The role of the Ecumenical Committee is to foster ecumenical development in the life of the URC:

a. in response to the Basis of Union (para.8)

The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as a part of what God is doing to make his people one, and as a united church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.

b. in relation to other churches and the wider community - in these islands, across Europe, and throughout the world.

The Committee will seek to ensure that wherever the URC meets, locally or nationally, in worship, council or committee, it is working in partnership with Christians in the locality, the World Church and the whole human family.

TASKS

Among the tasks of this committee is listening to those with experience of the World Church, including other Christian traditions in Britain and Ireland, and to those with experience of current affairs and experience of other faiths.

The Committee will maintain official URC links with overseas churches and world and regional ecumenical organisations, in particular the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Disciples' Ecumenical Consultative Council and the Conference of European Churches. It will guide the URC's participation in the Council for World Mission.

Through its official contact will be made with British and Irish ecumenical bodies.

It is responsible for the URC's involvement in St Andrew's Hall.

The work of selecting, training and caring for missionaries and overseeing exchange of personnel will be undertaken by the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee.

1 MEETINGS

The Committee met over two days in September 1995 and January 1996. The September 1996 meeting will in part, be a shared one with the Unity Committees (or equivalent) of the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. The committee members who represent other URC central committees have broadened the agenda, and the invited visitors from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of England and the Methodist Church have made important contributions.

2 NETWORKING

The networking described in last year's report has meant that each province and district is regularly resourced with useful material such as 'Filings' and 'News from the Ecumenical Committee'. Consultations at Windermere for Ecumenical and World Church representatives have also been planned, the latter jointly with the Europe Link Co-ordinators.

3 EUROPE

The report of the Europe Task Group, as amended by Mission Council, appears under Resolution 28. Preparations are well in hand for the second European Ecumenical Assembly to be held in Graz in 1997. Provincial Europe Link Co-ordinators are being used to promote the event and to encourage people to attend.

4 COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

4.1 The Committee presents a resolution (Resolution 29) to regularise the status of the CWM representative to Assembly.

4.2 The Report of Dr D Preman Niles, General Secretary of CWM, to Assembly appears as Appendix II.

4.3 The Committee broadly supported the proposal of the Executive Committee of the Council for World Mission that the £92 million received **from the sale of the Nethersole Hospital**, Hong Kong should be invested as a form of inter-generational partnership and that discussion should centre on the right use of the interest. No final decisions will be taken until the meeting of the full Council of CWM in July 1997.

4.4 **The URC/United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands/Guyana Congregational Union Youth Exchange** has received a grant from CWM.

4.5 The European Region of CWM is to appoint a half-time Mission Enabler and the committee pledged £1,500 p.a. towards this post.

5 HONG KONG

The Ecumenical Committee and the Church and Society Committee jointly present a resolution to Assembly (Resolution 30).

6 REPORT OF THE OVERSEAS EXCHANGE SUB-COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes

Secretary: Revd Tony Coates

The work of selecting, training and caring for missionaries and overseeing exchange of personnel will be undertaken by the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee.

6.1 As this sub-committee is concerned with people going from and coming to the United Reformed Church it illustrates the breadth of ecumenical involvement of our Church.

6.2 Retirement of long-term missionaries and deaths

The committee has marked the long service given in the Church of South India by Geoffrey Marsden (1957 to 1995) and his wife Ann (1963 to 1995) and by Ivor and Joan Shepherd in the Tunghai Christian University, Taiwan from 1958 to 1995.

We have noted also the death of the Revd Iorwerth Thomas, who after long missionary service in India, was URC World Church and Mission Personnel Secretary, 1977-82.

6.3 Missionaries to the United Kingdom

The URC has continued to be well served by missionaries from the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, South India and Ghana. The latest arrival will be Revd D John Samuel Ponnusamy from Madurai, South India who will serve for three years as a theological educator at Northern College. In May 1996, most of these missionaries together with a few others with experience of cross-cultural mission, shared in a consultation on 'Mission and Culture'. With their various cultures and ethnic backgrounds and experience, these special category ministers through CWM (and beyond) bring enrichment and challenge to the Church in this country both locally and more widely.

6.4 Scholarship-holders

The URC offers scholarships at St Andrew's Hall Missionary College, Selly Oak, Birmingham. In the year 1995-6 this will include men and women of a number of different church traditions from Romania, Ghana, Sudan, the Czech Republic, Korea, Hungary, Syria and Germany. We are also supporting two theologians from Slovakia and Latvia studying respectively at Cambridge and at Oxford.

6.5 Short-term Volunteers Abroad

Through the Sub-Committee arrangements have been made for nine British volunteers to serve in a number of countries for up to a year - four in Hungary, two in Romania, and one each in Italy, Madagascar and Guatemala. The one going to Madagascar comes from the Society of Friends.

6.6 Servicing those who volunteer to serve abroad in this way adds greatly to the burden of administration of a staff with limited time and resources, so the Sub-Committee has recommended that the URC become a sponsoring body of Scottish Churches' World Exchange and that our volunteer programme be merged with theirs. It is hoped that links through the volunteers with certain traditional partner churches can be maintained.

6.7 Inter-Church Exchange

Note: the following lists, which cover the year March 1995 to February 1996 are not exhaustive, but give only those appointments made through the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee. All serving missionaries, at present 14, are included in the List of URC Personnel Overseas on pp 244-45 of the 1996 Year Book.

URC AS SENDING CHURCH**Short-Term Volunteers**

Ms Susan Bell, with the Waldensian Church, Italy
 Mr John Fenemore, with the Reformed Church of Romania
 Mr Dylan Morgans, with the Survival Association, Hungary
 Ms Alison Taylor, with the Reformed Church in Hungary
 Ms Gwenllian Watson, with the Reformed Church in Hungary
 Ms Nicola Watson, with the Reformed Church in Hungary
 Mr Paul Watson, with the Reformed Church of Romania
 Mr Robert Westerdale, with the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
 Ms Naomi Young, with the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala

URC AS RECEIVING CHURCH**a) Special Category Ministries**

Revd Dineke Ferwerda-Arends, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, serving with the Kings Hall Inter-Faith Project, Southall.
 Revd Emmanuel K Frimpong, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, serving as Ghanaian Chaplain.
 Mr Johnson Jesudoss, Church of South India, serving in the Peace and Justice Centre, Milton Keynes.
 Revd Andrew Midian, United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, serving at Christ Church, Estover, Plymouth.

b) Short-Term Volunteers

Mr Rakatovao Andrianomenjanahary, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, at Llanfair LEP, Penrhys.
 Ms Jitka Krausova, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, at the National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings.

STUDENTS**a) At Westminster College, Cambridge**

Ms Eva Khasarova, Reformed Church of Slovakia

b) At Oxford University

Ms Kristine Suna, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (jointly supported by Oxford University, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and URC)

c) At St Andrew's Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham (See report at Appendix X)

Revd Veronika Benecke, Evangelical Church of the Church Province of Saxony, Germany
 Ms Eva Debreczeni, Reformed Church of Romania
 Revd Miroslav Erdinger, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
 Revd Obed Kwami Fiagbenu, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana
 Mr Zickry Gayed, Presbyterian Church in the Sudan

Revd Tomas Jirku, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren
Revd Jae-Sung Kim, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
Revd Andrea Krasznai, Reformed Church in Hungary
Revd Dr Mihaly Markus, Reformed Church in Hungary
Revd Johnson Mbillah, Presbyterian Church of Ghana
Revd Albrecht Naumann, Evangelical Church of the Goerlitz Church District, Germany
Revd Joel Ruml, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren

7 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND VISIBLE CHRISTIAN UNITY

The committee has prepared a statement on **The United Reformed Church and Visible Christian Unity** (Resolution 31). Assembly is invited to discuss it and to adopt the resolution attached to it.

8 COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOR BRITAIN AND IRELAND

The Committee noted the response which the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is making on behalf of the URC to the Papal Encyclical UT UNUM SINT. It has accepted an invitation from CCBI to also take part in the preparation of a joint response. The Committee formally supported changes to the constitution of CCBI. These will allow certain councils of churches, like the Free Church Federal Council, to become full members. They also remove the Observer category of membership and merge it with Associate Membership.

9 ENGLAND

The **Called to be One** process has now produced an important book of the same name. The committee is urging as many local churches as possible, with their ecumenical partners, to discuss this book, and the proposed guide which will be published this summer. General responses should be made through the March 1997 Synods (see Resolution 31).

Two informal meetings have been held with the Church of England and two more are planned. They have been exploring matters of common theological interest.

Travelling Together: a handbook on Local Ecumenical Partnerships by Elizabeth Welch and Flora Winfield and *This Growing Unity: A handbook on ecumenical development in the counties, large cities and new towns of England* by Roger Nunn are recommended.

10 IRELAND

Jim Waring, from the Church and Government Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has kept the committee up to date on the current state of affairs in Northern Ireland. The prayerful solidarity of all members of the URC is greatly welcomed and much appreciated.

11 SCOTLAND

The initiative of the Scottish Episcopal Church in inviting five churches active in Scotland to take part in talks with a view to unity led to an initial meeting in December with the four which responded favourably (Church of Scotland, Methodist Church in Scotland, Scottish Congregational Church and the United Reformed Church). At that meeting it was agreed to try to prepare a plan of union as quickly as possible. Each church concerned has appointed its delegates and the first working meeting took place in February. The United Free Church and the Roman Catholic Church have been invited to send observers. The Multilateral Church Conversation in Scotland was officially closed down in January after being active for twenty-eight years. The committee expressed its gratitude to those who had worked so hard on our behalf in the Conversation.

Relations with the Scottish Congregational Church continue to be close, being fostered at national level through the Liaison Committee and locally through one united church (Edinburgh) and many examples of local co-operation.

The commissions and standing committees of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) are engaged in discussing how to respond to the criticisms and suggestions of the review after its first five years. Plans are being made for a national assembly of all the churches in the year 2001.

Almost the first ever meeting took place between the URC and the Church of Scotland. It was held at Windermere where a range of topics was discussed including an overview of the main issues facing both churches, our common involvement in Europe, the future of the URC in Scotland and of the Church of

Scotland in England and a very helpful discussion on the place of the eldership in each of our churches. It was agreed to meet again in 1997 to discuss among other matters Church Establishment and the British constitutional debate and also Patterns of Ministry.

12 WALES

Following the passing of Resolution 24 at last year's Assembly the **URC has entered into conversations with the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, Undeb Annibynwr Cymraeg (Union of Welsh Independents) and the Baptist Union of Wales about the possibility of forming one United Free Church.** The Congregational Federation and the Baptist Union of Great Britain are observers at the conversations.

The URC also continues to express its commitment to conversation with the Church in Wales through the medium of the Welsh Covenant and is at present involved in **investigations about the setting up of a number of areas of ecumenical oversight.**

Through CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales) and ENFYSS (Commission of the Covenanted Churches in Wales) a system of regional Sponsoring Bodies is being set up.

13 BAPTIST/UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AGREED GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISMAL POLICY IN LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS

The doctrine committees of the **Baptist Union and the United Reformed Church** have approved **Agreed Guidelines for Baptismal Policy in Local Ecumenical Partnerships.** They appear in Appendix VIII.

14 URC/METHODIST RELATIONS

Close co-operation between the URC and the Methodist Church continues in a variety of ways. A small group from both doctrine committees will meet soon to examine the ecclesiologies of the two churches in order to increase mutual understanding. At the same time, the national Liaison Committee is building on work done in the West Midlands to produce a simple pack to inform local congregations about the other denomination.

15 OTHER MATTERS

The committee paid tribute to the work of Aubrey Curry who retired as Financial Secretary of CWM having served in one capacity or another since its inception.

- 28** The General Assembly accepts the Report of the Europe Task Group, as a policy statement on the URC's involvement with Europe built around the following principles:
- (i) provinces should be the **primary** vehicle for developing and maintaining bilateral and local church partnerships within Europe on behalf of the United Reformed Church
 - (ii) the Conference of European Churches, the Leuenberg Fellowship and the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society should be the focus and primary means of assistance for our engagement with European ecumenical questions and programmes and the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe; and
 - (iii) calls upon the appropriate committees of the Church, nationally and in the provinces, to consider and to act on its recommendations (section 3), in particular concerning European visitors to Assembly, the provision of adequate funding for the URC to develop meaningful European church partnerships at every level, and the provision of support for Provincial European Link Co-ordinators.

The United Reformed Church and Europe

(The Report of the Europe Task Group)

1 Europe is our home

1.1 Whatever we think about being European by way of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union, as a church which claims to give witness to a faith which is both catholic and reformed Europe is the immediate context for our life and work.

1.2 Over the years we have encouraged and supported links with many denominations in continental Europe. So we have a range of activities with the Palatinate, the Anglo-French Colloque, the so-called Tri-National Conference (now usually including participants from at least four churches/countries) and the programme of the Waldensian Fellowship.

1.3 To this can be added many bilateral contacts, frequently expressed through sending and receiving representatives to assemblies and other important events, various exchanges of personnel, and our active participation in the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) and the Leuenberg Fellowship.

1.4 In recent years several provinces have developed (or attempted to develop) partnerships with other European churches (see Appendix ?) and at local level many congregations and districts maintain active European church partnerships.

1.5 As members of the Council for World Mission, the World Council of Churches and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, it is expected that we share in the ministry and mission of our partner churches in the continent of Europe. We thus find ourselves wrestling with what it is to be British in Europe and European in the world.

1.6 The challenge of being European has been more focused in recent years for both churches and society. There has been the development of the European Union and the political, economic and social changes in Eastern and Central Europe. These developments have given new impetus to the quest for church unity which has undergirded bi-lateral and multi-lateral discussions for the last thirty years.

2 Developing a more coherent approach

2.1 However, as our involvement with Europe has developed in a rather piecemeal fashion over the years our present approach lacks the necessary coherence to ensure that we make the best use of the opportunities open to us. In particular:

2.2 We need to make more use of our European partnerships to share agendas at every level of the church. Thus local churches through their partnerships might explore common challenges in their ministry whilst provinces and the national church should be sharing the concerns on their agendas so that we might all be enriched by the perspective of people outside our immediate situation.

2.3 We need to encourage local churches to see their European church partnerships in terms of the life of the whole church, sharing the insights of their partners as appropriate in district and provincial meetings, and assisting others to develop similar partnerships.

2.4 We need to make more use of the partnerships we have as a national church, noting developments in doctrinal conversations, public pronouncements (social and ethical matters), mission and evangelism, solidarity actions (e.g. standing alongside the people and churches of former Yugoslavia), significant church issues (e.g. patterns of ministry) and the many institutional contacts we have with other churches and ecumenical agencies, ensuring that the significance of these developments is communicated throughout the URC enriching our own life and developing the content of our partnerships at provincial and local levels.

2.5 We need to make better use of the routines of church-to-church relations as expressed through representation at assemblies, the Assembly Moderator's visits and other bilateral contacts to pursue the concerns of the URC as a church in Europe.

3 Establishing greater effectiveness

3.1 To achieve the goal of greater coherence in our European work the Task Group make the following recommendations.

3.2 Provinces should be the primary vehicle for maintaining our bilateral relations. If each province established a European church partnership, we would have up to twelve significant church partnerships in Europe. This gives us the potential for a wide range of contacts which need not (indeed should not) be confined just to the reformed family of churches.

3.3 Because of their pivotal role in the URC's structures such partnerships could facilitate further local European church partnerships, whilst at the same time maintaining contacts for and on behalf of the national church.

3.4 With a network of Provincial European Link Co-ordinators already in place we have the necessary infrastructure to pursue and sustain this development.

3.5 The Conference of European Churches, the Leuenberg Fellowship and the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society should be the focus and primary means of assistance for our engagement with European ecumenical questions and programmes (including faith and order matters, solidarity issues, mission and evangelism, etc.), and the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

3.6 This is not to limit the ecumenical agencies we work with in Europe, but to recognise that for the time being these agencies will provide the focus of our European ecumenical involvement. Other more specialist agencies (see Appendix ?) should be used and supported as the need requires, but always mindful of the need for coherence in the overall operation of our European partnerships.

3.7 Both these developments should be given visible recognition in the life of the national church through the invitations to European visitors issued for General Assembly each year. Thus, we propose that the Ecumenical Committee should work to the following guidelines: of the European visitors to General Assembly three should represent churches in partnership with our provinces (on a rotating basis); one should represent one of the three ecumenical agencies mentioned in para 3.5 (on a rotating basis); and

there should be the possibility of one or two other European visitors, with a view to facilitating new partnerships or hearing from a constituency not represented in our existing partnerships (either denominationally or geographically).

3.8 Central staff time should be allocated to support these developments and our European work in general. In particular there is a need for someone to:

- ensure that the URC is adequately represented in work on the European concerns of churches both in this country and at the European level;
- collect and disseminate information;
- have the overview to see that the appropriate connections are made and actions taken; and
- provide support for the Provincial European Link Co-ordinators and the provinces as they fulfil their roles.

3.9 This development would build on the work undertaken through the temporary appointment of the part-time European Issues Adviser by the Church and Society Committee and (as then was) the World Church and Mission Department. This appointment ends in July 1996.

3.10 The Central Staffing Advisory Group, noting the Task Group's concern on this matter, have accordingly amended the job description of the Secretary for International Church Relations to enable him/her to undertake the duties envisaged in 3.8. Such work will need to be adequately resourced to enable the postholder to gather and disseminate information and to support those working at provincial and local levels on these matters. To that end the bodies charged with staffing and resources within the church should keep the situation under review to ensure that sufficient provision is made for the duties envisaged.

3.11 Provinces and the national church need to allocate sufficient money for these developments to happen and to be sustained. Throughout this report the emphasis is on developing meaningful partnerships with other European churches and ecumenical bodies. This cannot be done without an adequate commitment of funds. Meaningful partnerships will involve the exchange of people (e.g. provinces inviting their partner church to be represented at their synods; people attending consultations organised by our partner churches; etc.). Accordingly there needs to be an identifiable budget head in the Church's central budget and in each province to enable this to happen. Recognising that maintaining bilateral partnerships is a collaborative matter between the provinces and the national church it is also likely that a system for sharing some of the costs may also need to be evolved.

3.12 Provincial European Link Co-ordinators need to be adequately supported in their work. Provinces must ensure that their European Link Co-ordinator (a) is linked into the appropriate provincial committee so that the European dimension of the church's life is kept before the province, and (b) that their expenses incurred in the course of their duties are adequately reimbursed.

3.13 The European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society should receive financial support from the URC. The Conference of European Churches and the Leuenberg Fellowship already receive financial support from the URC through the ecumenical grants provision of the Church's central budget. However, EECCS has not been in receipt of such support. Given the extensive use we make of EECCS as we seek to relate to the institutions of the European Union and the Council of Europe (including annual assistance with the British Free Church leaders' visit to the European Institutions, which we organise) it has been proposed and agreed that a grant of £3,000 per annum (adjusted annually for inflation) be made to EECCS from the ecumenical grants provision in the Church's central budget with effect from 1997.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 The Ecumenical Committee having received the report of the Europe Task Group, brings it to Assembly as a policy statement on our involvement with Europe, with the above resolution.

29 The General Assembly gives first approval to an addition to the composition of the membership of Assembly in Section 2 of the Structure of the United Reformed Church as follows:

2(5)(j) A representative of the Council for World Mission

ROLL OF ASSEMBLY - COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

For some years now, the Roll of Assembly has included a representative of the Council for World Mission. There is no constitutional provision for this, and the irregularity has arisen through the continuation of the personal membership of Assembly of the Revd Bernard Thorogood, when he was General Secretary of CWM.

It can be assumed that Assembly would wish CWM to continue to appoint a representative to attend Assembly as a full voting member. In order to regularise the representation, the above resolution is proposed.

HONG KONG 1997

(Jointly submitted by Ecumenical and Church and Society Committees)

30 The General Assembly, in the spirit of resolutions adopted in 1989, which were reaffirmed in 1992 by Assembly Executive Committee, regarding the welfare of the peoples of Hong Kong in the period leading up to June 30, 1997, resolves:

1. to remind the British Government of its political and moral responsibility for the people of Hong Kong, with a request that the United Nations monitor the implementation of the 1984 Agreement;
2. to express its solidarity with the churches of Hong Kong, and especially the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (our partner in CWM) in praying for a peaceful transfer of power which respects the dignity of all peoples;
3. to press for full British citizenship for those groups denied by the 1981 and 1985 Acts of Parliament; and to extend a welcome to those Hong Kong residents who move to these islands;
4. to welcome the production of the pack of material on Hong Kong from CWM and the educational materials produced by the China Forum of the CCBI Churches Commission on Mission.

At midnight on June 30, 1997, sovereignty over Hong Kong and the New Territories will revert to the Peoples' Republic of China in accordance with the 1984 Agreement between the British and Chinese Governments. Until that date the British Government exercises responsibility for Hong Kong and the preparation for its future.

During the last decade many churches in Britain, including our own General Assembly, made statements on aspects of the current process in a spirit of solidarity with the people (especially the Christians) of Hong Kong (*see 1989 Assembly Record pp17-19*).

All these statements touched on:

- ◆ the political and civil rights of the people of Hong Kong;
- ◆ their claim to British citizenship and nationality;
- ◆ the rights of non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong;
- ◆ the pastoral care of migrants to Britain.

Since 1992 a number of significant developments have taken place:

- ◆ democratic elections to a Legislative Assembly (LegCo) in which contested seats were mainly won by pro-democracy candidates; the Chinese Government says it will dissolve LegCo after June 1997;
- ◆ discussions about a Bill of Rights, which is still inadequate and under threat of further dilution;
- ◆ questioning of the independence of the judiciary and the final court of appeal;
- ◆ continuing controversy over citizenship rights and right of abode in the UK for various categories of passport holders; the Governor of Hong Kong has repeated the demand for full right of abode which is not the British Government's policy.

The United Reformed Church has a special relationship through CWM with the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (HKCCCC) which we hope can be preserved beyond 1997. The nature of links between Hong Kong churches and those in mainland China has yet to be determined.

(Thanks are expressed to the CCOM China Forum and the CCBI Hong Kong Steering Group for the substance of this report)

31. The General Assembly

1. reaffirms the commitment of the URC to 'take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people' (*Basis of Union*, para. 8).
2. commits the United Reformed Church to continue to express that commitment to the goal of visible Christian unity through:
 - a) resource sharing of theological insights, people, buildings and money,
 - b) identifying and offering the rich insights of our tradition to others and being open to receive theirs,
 - c) active involvement in ecumenical bodies locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, and
 - d) the development of and support for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and United Areas.
3. urges local churches in England to use the book *Called to be One* (or the popular study guide) in discussion with Christians of other traditions so that an informed grass-roots United Reformed Church view on the direction and goal of the ecumenical movement in England may emerge in preparation for the Churches Together in England Forum in July 1997.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AND VISIBLE CHRISTIAN UNITY

1 Introduction

1.1 In 1972 the Basis of Union stated:

The United Reformed Church has been formed in obedience to the call to repent of what has been amiss in the past and to be reconciled. It sees its formation and growth as part of what God is doing to make His people one, and as a United Church will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.

Almost 25 years have elapsed during which new questions have arisen in response to changes in society and in the churches.

1.2 Within an increasingly fragmented society how can the churches witness to the reconciling love of Christ? Does the United Reformed Church's commitment to visible Christian unity mean a pressing on towards the goal of organic unity or (as was asked in the Moderators' Report of 1994):

Has not a diverse Church, that nonetheless lives in harmony, a powerful and effective message for a diverse world that currently lives in disharmony?

1.3 The aim and purpose of this statement is to reflect on the calling of the United Reformed Church within the Ecumenical Movement and thus to address these questions.

2 The Heart of the Matter

2.1 The key question is: *What on earth is the Church for?* One part of the answer is that, as the body of Christ, the Church is called to glorify God; and the other part is that the Church is called to enable God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. But the body of Christ is divided and its effectiveness as God's instrument is thereby reduced. How can the Church's Christian witness be more united *that the world may believe?* (John 17: 21). What form should this unity take?

3 The Calling of the United Reformed Church

3.1 In 1972 at the date of its formation, the United Reformed Church confessed its faith in these words:

We believe in the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church in heaven and on earth, wherein by the same Spirit, the whole company of believers is made one body in Christ, to worship God and serve him and all men in his kingdom of righteousness and love (Basis of Union para.17).

We hold these beliefs with every other church tradition.

3.2 We believe that the Church is the sign and instrument of the reconciliation of humanity and the whole universe to God. Through the Church, we are drawn by the Spirit into participation in the Son's love and obedience to the Father. This holy love draws us to one another. All our life in Christ is based on the *immeasurable riches of God's kindness towards us in Christ Jesus* (Eph.2:7). Reconciled to God in one body through the cross (Eph.2:16) we are summoned to accept one another as freely as God in Christ has accepted us (Rom.15:7). But the Church is still only the first fruits of the reign of God. The world is still suffering and broken. Only part of the human family has been converted and brought into the life of the Church and those who have are only partly conformed to God's purpose.

3.3 The Church, then, has a missionary calling. Evangelism, social justice, and Christian unity are not conflicting concerns but complementary aspects of the one mission of God. As, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church goes out to bear witness to Christ, its own partial understanding of God's purpose is corrected and enlarged through the action of that same Spirit. It is from this missionary perspective that we begin to overcome the divisions that keep us apart. The goal of Christian unity is the reconciliation of humanity and the whole universe to God.

4 Catholic and Reformed

4.1 The unity we seek already exists; it is in God, the perfection of unity, who gives life to the Church. The Church is not primarily a communion between believers, but a communion of believers with God. Our understanding of that communion is based on our belief in God as Trinity, in which we affirm the three-fold community of God. This communion with God sustains the Church and goes beyond technical discussions about structure. The heart of our Reformed tradition's understanding of this communion with God is that the Word comes from the Father proclaimed by the Son, made alive in us by the Spirit. This Trinity of love nourishes the communion of the individual both with the community and with God. Thus the Lord's Supper is such communion, gift of the Father, in remembrance of the Son, invoking the Spirit. Baptism in the name of the Trinity also gives communion.

4.2 The Reformers had no thought of schism when they proposed improvements in the organisation of the Church. They saw Christian unity as communion which transcends time and place. This was the vision which led to the formation of the World Council of Churches which has always been concerned to call churches to the goal of visible unity. What is clear from the statements from the New Delhi Assembly of 1961 is that unity does not mean uniformity. In the report of the Canberra Assembly of 1992 the notion of *koinonia* (communion) is fundamental. The communion of God's own life is the underlying reality of the Church in which all the baptised share. The report recognises that a certain degree of communion already exists between the churches, but they are called to manifest *full communion*. A second important emphasis which came from the struggles in that Assembly is the emphasis on diversity as integral to

communion. This raises the question of the limits to diversity.. The United Reformed Church is currently facing that question in, for instance, the areas of lay presidency and of human sexuality.

4.3 On 5 October 1972, the United Reformed Church was born, the first church union across denominational lines in this country since the Reformation. But our history did not start with the union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales. When we talk of the history of the United Reformed Church we have to go further back - to 1662, when those ministers who could not subscribe to the Act of Uniformity left the Church of England; and before that, to the Reformation. For the reformers, like us, the Church was catholic and reformed. So we are led further back to the early missionaries like Columba and Augustine, to the early years of the Church, back to those eleven disciples who gathered round their risen Lord after the Resurrection, and back to the women who went to the tomb. All this is our history; our history reaches back across the centuries, a unity between different times and places. Our journey is a single journey with a great company of brothers and sisters in Christ. And the journey continues.

4.4 In 1981 the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ joined the United Reformed Church. Through both the 1972 and the 1981 union schemes the gifts from the various traditions were shared and sacrifices were made. The church that emerged had a new identity. The redefining continues as God shapes and reshapes human history. Called to participate in the one mission of God through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, we define and redefine our identity in the light of this task. The United Reformed Church is not an end in itself. Faced with the contemporary fact of a broken, suffering, conflictive world, the Church is called to be the sign, instrument, foretaste and first-fruits of the reign of God.

4.5 Concern for the unity of all humankind is not a reason for abandoning the quest for Christian unity. Rather, a renewed emphasis on the reconciliation of the whole creation to God as the goal of the Christian gospel gives impetus and urgency to our ecumenical calling. This calling comes from outside as well as inside the Church. Surveys suggest that whereas few people may attend church in the UK, most say they believe in God. Many are aware of a sacred dimension in their experience from time to time. Others work for justice and peace and the protection of the environment. There can be a serious gap between the life and witness of the Church and such experiences and commitments. We, along with all the other churches, are faced with that challenge.

5 The United Reformed Church and Local Ecumenical Partnerships

5.1 Local Ecumenical Partnerships are a sign that is possible to be one at the local level. They establish a local unity between Christians of different denominations that is formally recognised by these denominations. Much of the impetus for these developments has come from grass-roots initiatives.

5.2 The idea of a *Church of churches* is a central conviction of the Reformation and an increasingly important insight in recent Roman Catholic ecumenical discussion. It is spelt out particularly clearly in *God's Reign and our Unity*, the 1984 report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission:

The goal is the emergence of reconciled local communities, each of which is recognisable as 'church' in the proper sense; communities which exhibit in each place the fullness of ministerial order, eucharistic fellowship, pastoral care and missionary commitment; and which, through mutual commitment and co-operation, bear witness on the regional, national, and even international levels.

The aim is

for locally recognisable forms of the Universal Church....something which expresses locally the wholeness of the Catholic Church.

5.3 Of great significance for the United Reformed Church is its participation in Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). Three hundred and thirty of our one thousand eight hundred churches are now Local Ecumenical Partnerships. Two hundred of the three hundred and thirty are joint with the Methodists. There are three United Reformed Church/Methodist United Areas and three regions where the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church are seeking to work together. Many of our ministers are 'Recognised and Regarded' as Methodist ministers and others have been authorised by the Church of England to preside at communion, and, in a few cases, to serve as sole resident minister of an Anglican parish, which is also a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

5.4 For the past twenty years, whilst maintaining its denominational structures and supporting United Reformed churches in England, Scotland and Wales, most of our churches in new areas have been Local

Ecumenical Partnerships. The General Assembly of 1993 called upon every district council to engage with ecumenical partners in research aimed at placing a body of Christian people in every locality. Such new congregations, often fast growing and with a young age profile, have produced some fine ecumenical fruit - a new kind of identity, a grass-roots experience of the sharing of different historical traditions, ministry and styles of building, and a shared ministry to the whole community. However, in some difficult frontier missionary situations where most churches are unable to produce spectacular growth or financial self-sufficiency the Local Ecumenical Partnerships share this experience.

5.5 For some United Reformed Churches now in joint churches or Local Ecumenical Partnerships, local unions offered hope of new life to a shrinking, ageing congregation. For some others it was the answer to a crushing burden of building repairs. Inevitably some of these hopes have not been fulfilled. Strong local churches do not often enter into Local Ecumenical Partnerships, but our cross-denominational unions of 1972 and 1981 did mean that all our churches have that experience to offer to the ecumenical movement. There are also a number of old established Baptist/ Congregational union churches, which are now Baptist/United Reformed Church and they have their witness to uniting to share. Where a local church, strong at least in vision and faith, has felt the call to such united life and has opened itself to the unfamiliar insights of other traditions and exposed its own precious insights to the often puzzled scrutiny of the other partner(s) in this calling, there is a foretaste of God's reign.

5.6 The continued separation of the churches as denominations puts great strain on such Local Ecumenical Partnerships and United Areas. Multiple mailings, the demand for representation on the bodies of each participating church, conflicting systems of ministerial appointment and for the raising of finance are just some of the burdens they carry. The United Reformed Church is committed through Churches Together in England, Action for Churches Together in Scotland, and CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales), through the Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee, through its financial support for ecumenically appointed ecumenical officers, and through its network of district and provincial ecumenical officers, to easing these burdens.

5.7 The majority of United Reformed Churches are not partners in such Local Ecumenical Partnerships, but almost all are long-standing members of their local councils of churches. After the formation of the new ecumenical instruments in 1990, many of the English councils of churches found a new sense of purpose and turned themselves into *Churches Together in...* For many of our local churches this represents a serious ecumenical commitment to joint community work, mission, study and worship, and that commitment is often reflected in a local covenant. Some of these covenants have now become stale as the member churches locally, regionally and nationally have failed to take new steps on the road from co-operation to commitment and from commitment to communion. It is significant that the Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England decided to devote its 1996 conference to this particular form of commitment.

5.8 It is becoming clear that ecumenical progress now depends more and more on the policy-making bodies at every level and the members and ministers of the 'single denomination' local congregations. Shortage of money and ordained clergy is forcing the pace. In some areas, there is already joint District/Circuit/Deanery consultation on deployment. In others, there are shared appointments of specialists in youth or social responsibility work. Joint training courses for ordination, post-ordination, lay ministry and youth work are building up a network of mutual understanding and friendship among the leaders of the churches. Grass-roots criticism of the churches' lack of co-operation in response to new legal regulations and their lack of real consultation on matters on every church's agenda, such as new patterns of ministry, homosexuality and ministry, and central restructuring, is growing. That there is an increasingly shared spirituality across all the churches is evidenced, for example, by the growing retreat/quiet day movement, the large sales of books on spirituality, and the widespread use of Taizé, Iona and Corrymeela worship material. All these existing and potential forms of co-operation, which fall far short of organic union, will, in time, lead the churches to the same hard questions about unity and reconciled diversity which the Local Ecumenical Partnerships are already posing.

6 Further Steps.

6.1 Our understanding of the visible unity we seek is being shaped and reshaped by the experience of our ecumenical living and the insights of theological dialogues. In different contexts, from the local church through to the national and international doctrine committees, similar questions are being asked about the nature of ministry, lay and ordained, where authority lies, how it is exercised and how we are accountable to one another. In community with one another representatives of churches are examining

these matters and redefining their understandings of them. This redefining involves styles of worship, theological formulations, administrative structures and ethical issues. It may also involve reinterpretation of those historical events which divided our traditions. It is interesting that the first item on the agenda of the recent informal conversations between the United Reformed Church and the Church of England was the reconciliation of memories of 1662.

6.2 Progress is slow but steady. At Swanwick in 1987 the British and Irish churches recognised afresh that they were driven on by a gospel imperative to seek unity that the world might believe, and rejoiced that they were no longer strangers but pilgrims together. In 1990 the new instruments were formed and the United Reformed Church became a member of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, Churches Together in England, Action for Churches Together in Scotland, and CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales). Although some would say that, with the formation of these new ecumenical instruments, the ability to act together was substantially reduced in comparison with the former British Council of Churches, the increased number of participating churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and some of the Black Majority Churches, and the respect for each member church's own authority structures, seem a significant compensation and sign of hope. The United Reformed Church also continues its commitment to the Commission of Covenanting Churches in Wales (Enfys) and to the Free Church Federal Council.

6.3 Outwith the United Kingdom the United Reformed Church is a member of the Council for World Mission, the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European Churches, and is a signatory to the Leuenberg Agreement between Reformation churches in Europe. It sent an observer to both the talks between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church in Germany which produced the Meissen Agreement and to the current talks between the British and Irish Anglican churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed churches.

6.4 Within England the United Reformed Church is participating fully in the *Called to be One* process, through which the churches in England are being asked how they see the path to visible unity in the mid-nineties. Churches Together in England is, at present, only a covenanted partnership of churches, but the *Called to be One* process is seeking to help the churches to find and take the next steps to greater unity. The present convictions and experience of the churches are summarised in the book *Called to be One* (available from the bookshop, price £2.50). The convergences and the obstacles are also identified and the book attempts to point the way forward in renewal, unity and mission. The next stage in the process is for local ecumenical groups around the country to discuss and respond to this most valuable account of where we are on the road to greater unity.

6.5 In Scotland, the United Reformed Church is participating in the new Scottish Churches' Initiative for Unity initiated by the Scottish Episcopal Church and involving the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Congregational Church and the Methodist Church. In Wales it has joined the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Union of Welsh Independents, and the Methodist Church in conversations about establishing a Welsh Free Church and, at the same time, is considering seriously the draft proposal of the Commission of the Covenanted Churches (Enfys) for the creation of a few ecumenical areas with oversight from ecumenical bishops.

6.6 In 1992, both the General Assembly and the Methodist Conference declined to support proposals that the two churches take steps towards union. Since then, however, the two churches have been seeking to work more closely together along the lines suggested in the document *The Next Steps*, which was approved by that Assembly and that Conference. In 1995, the United Reformed Church had informal discussions with both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. A working party with the Baptist Union has produced an agreed baptismal policy for joint churches.

6.7 Other recent developments within and without the United Kingdom have affected the ecumenical context in which the United Reformed Church is set. Among these are: the 1995 Papal Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* which calls urgently for the *re-establishment of full visible unity among all the baptised*; the Porvoo Common Statement which commits the British and Irish Anglican churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran churches to establishing full communion with one another; and the mutual acceptance of ministries between the Anglican, Methodist and Reformed members of the Church Unity Commission of South Africa. The United Reformed Church's participation in the ongoing international consultations of United and Uniting Churches is also important.

7 Multilateral or Bilateral?

7.1 Multilateral and bilateral relationships need not be alternatives but can work alongside one another. The provisional responses to the *Called to be One* process indicate that while all the churches accept that it is God's will that there be one universal Church of Christ, it is likely that some churches, which are closer together in their understanding and which share more visible bonds of unity, will seek to enter into closer union with one or two other churches ahead of the rest.

It goes on to state

Such progress towards closer forms of visible unity is to be encouraged, provided that other churches not directly involved are kept fully informed and are not excluded from such progress if they agree and desire it, and provided that these groupings of churches do not distance themselves from the existing commitment they have entered into with all the other member churches (Called to be One, p.58).

8 The witness of the United Reformed Church to Christian Unity

8.1 As a denomination which has resulted from the union of different traditions and which is committed to acting ecumenically, we believe we have a particular contribution to make to the mission of the whole Church. We make this offering of ourselves with praise and thanksgiving.

With other united and uniting churches, the United Reformed Church continues to be

a rare and living challenge to the divided state of much of the body of Christ today; a divided state which has often contributed to rather than healed conflicts between peoples and nations (Built Together: the Present Vocation of United and Uniting Churches. Report of the 1995 Consultation, para.17).

8.2 The existence of the United Reformed Church is a sign that Christians cannot rest content with continuing failure to be in full, visible unity with each other as members of the one household of faith. The unifying work of the Holy Spirit makes acceptance and reconciliation possible among all God's people and encourages them to strive for something more than mutual toleration. That this is a process which requires careful discernment is well described in *God's Reign and our Unity*, the 1984 report of the Anglican - Reformed International Commission.

The life of the Church must, if it is to be true to its nature, neither destroy diversity by the imposition of a false and premature unity which pretends to embody what will only be truly known at the end; nor absolutize the diverse elements by allowing them to destroy the unity which is God's gift (God's Reign and Our Unity, p.66).

8.3 The United Reformed Church demonstrates that unity does not mean uniformity. For the United Reformed Church is inclusive. We welcome into our congregations people from many different Christian traditions, from the United Kingdom and abroad, and gain richly from the sharing of these traditions within the one Church. We have a particular contribution to make to the whole Church in modelling diversity within unity in communities of increasing pluralism.

8.4 But the United Reformed Church also affirms that there are limits to diversity. Schedule D of the Manual states:

Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit, we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction. For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

It is by taking counsel together that the United Reformed Church decides these matters. The Elders' Meeting and the Church Meeting represent a conviction that the guidance of God for the life of the Church is found in a collective waiting on God, trying to hear God's voice and to discern God's will. That same concern underlies the way the United Reformed Church is organised in District Councils, Provincial Synods and General Assembly. We believe that this interaction of committed Christians is one way of mirroring and reflecting relations in the Godhead which we seek to embody in our church life.

8.5 We recognise that responding to the call to unity involves sacrifice. In 1972 we took the step of union before all the outstanding differences were resolved. The process is often painful as we continue to work out the implications of 1972 and 1981 for the life of our church. This was and is an act of faith.

9 Conclusion

9.1 The quest for Christian unity is inseparable from the aim that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The harmony experienced when separated churches worship and witness together in friendly co-operation and mutual respect is, of course, a gift from God. But there are hierarchies of gifts and the better gift is that unity in reconciled diversity which we through our two unions, and the Local Ecumenical Partnerships and United Areas in their local life, have begun to receive.

9.2 Our Reformed tradition challenges us continually to be reformed and that implies continual conversion. This must mean a dissatisfaction with that which is at best provisional and a turning again to that which is eternal, that One Unity who challenges all uniformity and all diversity

Equal Opportunities Committee

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand
Secretary: The Revd Simon Walkling

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

1 **INTRODUCTION** During the past year the Committee has been developing work to be of use to local churches. We have been responding to specific requests, developing a working pattern, and establishing priorities.

2 DEVELOPMENT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICIES

2.1 We grappled with the idea of having one policy document to cover all situations within the denomination. It became clear that we needed a number of policy documents to cope with differences in systems and in scale. To make the task more manageable we considered staff appointments separately from ministerial calls.

2.2 Policy for Appointing Staff

2.2.1 A questionnaire about appointments sent to Districts and Provinces resulted in 50 responses. These responses show that "word of mouth" is the usual form of advertising for both voluntary and paid positions. A number used application forms, or some other written method of application, for paid positions. An application form helps to treat all applicants in a similar manner, but restricted advertising limits opportunity. In developing appropriate policies we shall also suggest guidelines on good practice. The results of the survey can be obtained by writing to the Committee.

2.2.2 We felt that the differences between the local churches, Districts and Provinces, and United Reformed Church House made separate policy documents desirable. In this way a local church could adopt an equal opportunities policy even if it were not an employer. We have prepared a draft policy for local churches, but intend to complete the other policies before presenting them to General Assembly. In the meantime local churches who need suggestions for developing a policy, may obtain draft documents from the Committee.

2.3 Policy on the Call of Ministers

2.3.1 We are identifying strategic points and people in the process of candidating for ministry, and the placement of ministers in pastorates.

2.3.2 Work on the assessment of candidates for the ministry is being done by the National Assessment Board. Work on the rôle of interim moderators is being done by the Discipleship and Witness Committee. We aim to feed the principles of equal opportunities into this work.

2.3.3 We hope to draw on the experience of Provincial Moderators in developing policy and monitoring in this area.

3 **MONITORING** We are concerned with representation on the councils of the church, as well as with employment. To monitor both of these things effectively, we need to get an idea of the make up of the membership. To this end, we shall be sending a form to each congregation asking questions which relate to equal opportunities and access. *Please encourage local churches to complete and return this form in September: the information will provide the basis for future monitoring.*

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

4 **MULTI-RACIAL DEVELOPMENT POST** In response to a resolution from General Assembly 1994, we have offered proposals to Mission Council. We envisaged a post which would provide denominational coverage for the promoting of racial justice, and the encouragement of ethnic minority members to participate in church structures. We saw the development of awareness training and supportive networks as part of this work.

5 **NETWORK** In response to a resolution from General Assembly 1995, we have agreed a way of developing a network to promote the positive diversity of ethnic backgrounds in the church. *We hope to receive 6 names from each Province, from which a core group can emerge to generate the network.* The Committee has agreed to prime the process from its budget.

6 **PENSIONS** We took up with the Pensions Executive the question of removing from the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund the provision that a surviving spouse's pension will be reduced on the advice of the Actuary if the spouse is more than ten years younger than the member of the Fund. Because it is more common for a wife to be ten years younger than her husband than for the reverse to apply, we regard this as discriminatory against the spouses of male ministers, and likely to cause hardship in some cases. The Executive consider that the rule is not unlawful and is justified because it protects the Fund from the costs of meeting claims that are very much larger than normal. The cost to the Fund of cancelling the rule would be in the order of £20,000 per annum. The Committee views the matter with continuing concern.

7 **THANKS** The Committee wishes to thank Justine Wyatt and Alan Hart for their service.

Finance

Convener: Mr Graham Stacy
Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

The Committee is responsible for the proper keeping of accounts and records, the oversight of all funds and properties, and will give advice on all financial matters.

1. 1995 Accounts

The accounts for 1995 are set out in Appendix VI. They are in a substantially revised format and include a report from the Finance Committee which explains the changes and comments on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31st December 1995.

The revision of the accounts format has been a major project this year. The Committee hopes that members will find the new format easier to read and understand.

2. Charities Act 1993 and The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 1995

New regulations affecting the annual reports and accounts of charities came into force on 1st March 1996 and apply to accounts covering periods commencing after that date. Thus, for churches with a 31st December year-end the first accounts affected will be those for the year 1997 but churches with a different year-end may be affected earlier.

The regulations are concerned with both the form of accounts and their audit or 'independent examination'. They will undoubtedly increase the burden on church treasurers and make it more difficult to find volunteers to carry out these duties. The Committee is planning to issue guidance for treasurers on the implementation of these regulations by the autumn of 1996.

3. Remit of the Committee

The remit of the Finance Committee, as shown above, has been the subject of debate within the Committee and at Mission Council. Changes in personnel have meant that this matter has not been brought to a conclusion this year. The Committee is content that the existing remit broadly covers the scope of its responsibilities but discussions continue with the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and United Reformed Church Trust.

4. Church Buildings Fund

The responsibility for the management of the Church Buildings Fund has been passed to the Finance Committee during 1995. The Committee has continued to assist churches with building works, mainly through loans; grants for feasibility studies may also be made in certain circumstances.

5. United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

The Committee has been asked to consider a request from the pension fund trustees that the URC make a one-off payment to the pension fund of at least £2 million by the end of 1996. It is hoped that, following consultations with the trustees and the actuary, the Committee will be able to report the outcome of its deliberations to General Assembly in July 1996.

6. Personnel

The Committee welcomed Graham Stacy, FCA, as its convener following his appointment as Treasurer of the Church in October 1995.

The Committee is grateful to all the staff in the Finance Office for their commitment and hard work over the past year. It has been aware for some time of the very heavy burden carried by the chief accountant, Clem Frank, and is therefore pleased to be able to report that Chris Langham, ACA, joined the department as assistant accountant in January 1996.

RESOLUTIONS

Finance

32 Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31st December 1995.

33 Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 1995 to the Ministry & Mission Fund.

Ministries

Convener: The Revd Keith Forecast
Secretary: The Revd Christopher Baker

The Committee is responsible for the ministry of word and sacrament, church-related community workers and lay preachers. It is concerned with central care and conditions of service, chaplaincies in industry, higher and further education and in the armed forces and 'special category' ministry. It has concern for the pastoral support of ministers, church-related community workers and lay preachers, including supervision, appraisal, self evaluation and counselling. It is assisted by four sub-committees:

- (i) **ACCREDITATION SUB-COMMITTEE**
 Maintaining the Roll of Ministers, this sub-committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training or coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment and it oversees the work of the National Assessment Board, whose convener is an ex-officio member of the committee.
- (ii) **CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORK MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**
 It is responsible for managing the Church-Related Community Work programme under the terms agreed in the Church-Related Community Work Covenant.
- (iii) **MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY**
 Advises on the level of stipend and minister's conditions of service through the Plan for Partnership. It is also concerned for pensions through its associated Pensions Sub-Committee.
- (iv) **RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING**
 Works in association with the URC Retired Minister's Housing Society Ltd.

1. APPRAISAL

The Working Party on appraisal for ministers has monitored the existing scheme in the West Midlands Province and a report was given to the Mission Council. However, the Ministries Committee has not yet had an opportunity to discuss it. It will do so at its meeting in September and a report will come to Assembly next year.

2. PATTERNS OF MINISTRY REMITS

Five resolutions arising from the report of the Patterns of Ministry Working Party were remitted to the Ministries Committee last year. Although the Committee has begun work on these there has been insufficient time to bring matters to completion on all of them.

The question of expenses and benefits for non-stipendiary ministers was referred to the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee and the Ministries Committee will report to Assembly on this matter next year.

In connection with the 'Interim Minister' concept, the Thames North Province appointed an Interim Minister for an experimental period. It has closely monitored this ministry and its report was considered by the Ministries Committee. While commending the province for undertaking this piece of work, the Committee felt unable to propose a general recognition of Interim Ministers because the circumstances of each province vary considerably. It is aware, however, that provision exists within the Plan for Partnership for provinces to include within their deployment quotas 'Ministers... holding a special appointment with a province'. (The Plan for Partnership 5.1.1)

MINISTRIES

Regarding the networking of those ministering in similar situations, the Committee has this under consideration.

The matter of maintaining relevant records on a database is now well advanced. A database of all ministers and lay preachers has been established and is being regularly updated.

3. EVANGELISTS

There was concern expressed at Assembly 1995 that we give consideration to the possibility of inaugurating a special ministry of Evangelists, to work alongside local churches in presenting the challenge of Christian commitment to those on the fringes of our fellowship and beyond. Following this through, the Committee was grateful for a paper prepared by The Revd Paul Snell (Plymouth) and at its January meeting met with The Revd Peter Southcombe (Evangelism enabler for the Southern Province) and The Revd Dr Jack McKelvey (former Moderator of General Assembly) to explore the need and how we might most appropriately meet it. We are not yet in a position to bring proposals and our thinking is continuing. What seems to be most urgent is to enable our congregations to become more effective agents in the proclamation of the Gospel and to make available to them people with appropriate skills to assist this process. We shall continue working on this matter and hope to have something more definite to propose to Assembly next year.

4. CHURCHES MINISTERIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Committee has been involved in co-operation with the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the Free Church Federal Council in the establishment of a professional counselling serving for ministers and their immediate families. It is an entirely confidential service with no-one within denominational structures having knowledge of those opting to use it. It will provide professional counselling support to work through personal, family and work related issues by counsellors trained to the standards of the British Association of Counsellors. Those using this service will be asked to contribute a proportion of the fees according to their ability to pay with the person's denomination picking up the balance. The service will be launched officially in September. Details will be circulated to those who are entitled to use it.

5. HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Details of the Student Linkup Scheme have again been circulated to all churches through the Information Service. This is to encourage churches to refer young people leaving home to study at colleges, universities and nursing schools in England, Wales and Scotland to refer their names directly to the chaplain of the institution they are attending. Alternatively, if the names and relevant details are sent to the Secretary for Ministries, the office will undertake the referral.

6. INDUSTRIAL MISSION

Following the demise of the Churches' Consortium on Industrial Mission in 1994, a new group is in the process of being established entitled 'The Churches Co-ordinating Group for Mission to Industry and the Economy'. The main purpose of the group is to encourage the churches and other appropriate bodies through Industrial Mission and the World of Work to develop their appreciation and criticism of industry, commerce and economic life. Membership is open to member churches of Churches Together in England and it will have links with the Industrial and Economic Affairs Network of CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales) and the Justice and Peace Commission of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) and other bodies within Great Britain and Ireland having similar concerns.

7. PRE-RETIREMENT COURSES FOR MINISTERS AND SPOUSES

The Pre-Retirement courses for ministers and spouses continue to be much appreciated. This year approximately 70 will attend the four courses held in May and November for those due to retire in two years time.

8. 'SPECIAL CATEGORY' MINISTRIES

The Committee has agreed new procedures for dealing with applications and reviews of the 30 'Special Category' Ministry posts. These were formerly dealt with by the Support Committee. Under the new committee structure and with the demise of the Support Committee, the responsibility now rests directly with the Ministries Committee. It is not possible, however, for this Committee, with its wide ranging agenda, to undertake the detailed work required.

The following procedure has therefore been agreed:

1. A small 'Special Category' Ministry Sub-Committee has been set up consisting of six people including the Secretary for Ministries and the (voluntary) Administrator for 'Special Category' Ministries.
2. All applications for new posts and for renewal of existing posts should come in the first place to the Administrator.
3. Preliminary work on applications will be put in place by the Administrator, in consultation with the Secretary for Ministries. This will include assessing whether the application falls within approved guidelines, arranging visits to the Applicant Group to discuss the application and preparing a report and recommendations.
4. Consultation will take place with those who represent a particular area of work, eg. Ecumenical, Higher and Further Education, Industrial Mission.
5. This report, with its recommendations plus other relevant papers, should then go to at least two of the members of the Sub-Committee for a decision. This decision will subsequently be reported to the next meeting of the Ministries Committee.
6. If there are any major problems to be resolved in regard to new applications or disagreement among any of the parties involved they will be dealt with by the Ministries Committee with input from the visitors to the applicant group.

9. LAY PREACHING

The Committee called for a paper on Lay Preaching in order to review how best this important ministry can be affirmed and supported by the Church. The matter was referred to the Mission Council for discussion and a report will come to Assembly next year. In the meantime, the Committee recognises the major contribution made by Lay Preachers to worship in our churches and places on record its gratitude for the unstinting service of those who exercise this ministry.

10. THE REVD MICHAEL DIFFEY

This Assembly sees the close of the ten year term of service the Revd Michael Diffey has given to the work of Ministries. The period of his tenure of office has been one characterised by change in the work of the Church, not least in the area for which he has been responsible. He has served with remarkable efficiency, pastoral care and good humour. The Committee and its sub-committees have benefited greatly from his guidance and his capacity for hard work. The whole Church stands in his debt. Here we wish to express warm gratitude and the best of good wishes as he moves to a new sphere of ministry at St John's Church New Barnet.

11. **ACCREDITATION SUB-COMMITTEE**

Convener: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
Secretary: The Revd Hazel Martell

1. The Sub-Committee has met twice since the last Assembly, on November 8th 1995 and February 21st 1996. It plans also to meet on June 6th 1996. Close contact has been maintained with the Ministries Committee by means of the two Conveners attending both meetings wherever possible.

2. The Sub-Committee has received detailed reports at every stage on the work done by the National Assessment Board on **Criteria for Assessment**, and warmly commends to Assembly its recommendations. Similarly, we have kept in touch with the progress of the work being done, initially by Mr Peter Bunker and now by a Working Party convened by him, concerning the **National Assessment of Ordinands**.

3. **LAY PREACHING**

3.1 Arrangements were made by the former Lay Preaching Sub-Committee for the names of Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers to appear in the Year Book. A procedure is being put in place to ensure that the list is updated.

3.2 The Sub-Committee agreed that the names of those newly accredited should be reported to Assembly each year.

3.3 The Training Committee has been asked to seek to ensure that appropriate in-service training and refresher courses for Lay Preachers are available.

3.4 Following a request from the Ministries Committee, consideration has been given to the proper assessment of candidates for training as Lay Preachers.

4. The Sub-Committee is investigating the possibility of providing **Induction Training** for Ministers who transfer to the United Reformed Church. This would include an introduction to life in Britain (particularly for those coming from overseas) and an introduction to the United Reformed Church.

5. Following the appointment of the special Task Group to propose a new **Disciplinary Process**, the Accreditation Sub-Committee has been assessing the other issues covered by the present Guidelines Concerning Suspension and Resignation from Ministry and Deletion (Pastoral Measure) which are outside the Disciplinary Process, and will bring proposals for the appropriate handling of these to the General Assembly in 1997.

6. **ROLL OF CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS**

6.1 **Admissions to the Roll** (from 31st January 1995 to 21st February 1996)

6.1.1 **By Commissioning:** Diane Benson, Malcolm Breeze, David Twine.

7. **ROLL OF MINISTERS**

7.1 **Admissions to the Roll** (from 31st January 1995 to 21st February 1996)

7.1.1 **By Ordination - stipendiary:** Dawn Baiden, Pauline Barnes, Vernon Bloomfield-Payne, Michael Burrell, David Cassidy, Barrie Cheetham, David Coleman, David Coote, John Danso, Nigel Douglas, Philip Hanson, Simon Helme, Barry Hutchinson, Trevor Jamison, Carolyn Lanham, Janet Lees, Alexander Mabbs, Alan Morris, Peter Phillips, Shelagh Pollard, Ivor Smith, Pamela Smith, Margaret Thomas, Duncan Tuck, Elizabeth J Weedon.

7.1.2 **By Ordination - non-stipendiary:** Maureen Buxton, Alan Clarredge, Margaret Collins, Charles Gaskell, Suzanne Hamnett, Nancy Haslam, David Ireland, Ann Jeffers, Colin Meynell, Steven Orange, John Orme, Anne Sardeson, David Thomas, Jean West, Hilma Wilkinson, Maureen Wilson.

7.1.3 **By Transfer from Other Churches:** Rebecca Dudley (Presbyterian Church USA), Kenneth Martin (United Church in Jamaica and Cayman Islands), Gordon Smith (Presbyterian Church USA), Janet Tollington (Baptist Union of Great Britain).

7.1.4 **By Reinstatement:**

7.2 **Deletions from the Roll** (from 31st January 1995 to 21st February 1996)

7.2.1 **By Resignation:** Ian Duncan, David Geddes Elwyn John.

7.2.2 **By Resignation and/or Transfer to Other Churches:** Charles Durke (UWI), Donald Howell (Church of England), Bengt Storbacka (Sweden), Charlotta Storbacka (Sweden).

7.2.3 **By Recommendation:**

7.3 **Changes within Roll**

7.3.1 **Non-stipendiary to Stipendiary:** Barbara Flood-Page, Derek Hopkins, David R Lee.

8. **NEWLY ACCREDITED LAY PREACHERS**

Jung Berryman, Terence Blake, Eric Brown, Joan Cornwell, Pam Daniell, Kenneth Dilley, Alan Fox, Gwendonline Grant, Diana Greesley, Martin Holmes, Barbara Leighton, Malcolm McFarlane, Gwen Morrison, David Rogers, David Sebley, Robert Sharpe, Ann Simcock, Jonathan Salter, Stephen Smith, Derek Spiers, Jean Stolton, Cynthia Teale, David Walton, Catherine White, Jill Wilson.

9. **TRANSFERS FROM ONE FORM OF MINISTRY TO ANOTHER**

A clarification of the procedure, which has not itself been changed, has been prepared and will be included in the next issue of the Manual.

10. **COLLEGE LEAVING OR COMPLETION OF COURSE CERTIFICATES**

The Accreditation Sub-Committee has been concerned for the care of those who, though in receipt of a Certificate, do not receive (or, for whatever reason, do not accept) a call to Ministry immediately. The matter is being looked at in consultation with the Working Party on the National Assessment of Ordinands.

11. **RECRUITMENT**

11.1 Two Enquirers' Conferences have been arranged for this year:
27th April 1996 in Huddersfield organised by Yorkshire Province
14th September 1996 in Cardiff organised by Wales Province.

11.2 Worship material for Vocations Sunday was prepared and distributed to Churches for use.

11.3 The Sub-Committee has felt it right to adjust its recruitment focus to include young people in particular, and to this end has had contacts with FURY with the aim of providing information on the challenge to Ministry at events attended by young people.

11.4 The Sub-Committee has prepared a new introductory leaflet which will be available at Assembly.

12. **CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORK MANAGEMENT
SUB-COMMITTEE**

Convener: The Revd Vaughan Jones

Secretary: Mr John Boddy

Over the past year the Church-Related Community Work ministry has seen consolidation and growth with 10 CRCWs now in post, including the Development Worker, more than ever before. In September Diane Benson was commissioned to work with the Bloomsbury Church Centre in Nechells, Birmingham to continue and extend the work started by Kate Breeze. The following week, Malcolm Breeze was commissioned to work in a new post with the St Barnabas Community Church in the Ortons, Peterborough. Both Diane and Malcolm had earlier completed the CRCW Course in Community Work and Theology the Salford Urban Mission. All the vacant CRCW posts have now been filled.

MINISTRIES

The CRCWs in local posts continue to work alongside churches and communities, in most cases in areas of social and economic need where unemployment, poor housing, family breakdown, poverty and alienation, particularly amongst young people are widespread. Although the CRCW Management Committee will consider all applications on their merits, recent discussions have reaffirmed the committee's and the church's commitment to the inner cities and to the gospel option for the poor. Consequently, most new posts will continue to be in the most deprived communities where the church still have an important roll to play.

At the Strategy Conference in October involving workers, local and central management committee members and representatives of the wider church, a number of key issues were identified which the CRCW Management Committee is addressing:

- ◆ The small number of candidates for this ministry, which has led to proposals for the recognition and training of "non-stipendiary" CRCWs and the accreditation of CRCWs from other denominations.
- ◆ The need for more flexible forms of training including distance learning and courses for local activists.
- ◆ The development of an "equal opportunities" strategy and action plan from the existing policy statement.
- ◆ The importance of developing links with other URC Community Work Projects and Workers, and with Community Work Projects sponsored by other denominations.
- ◆ The need for discussions on the recognition of diaconal ministries within the URC, of which Church-Related Community Work is but one form of service.
- ◆ The expansion of the CRCW Development Worker post to help develop the community work ministry of the whole church, particularly in the inner cities.

13.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Raymond Clarke
Secretary: The Revd Michael Diffey

The Board has continued to work on establishing the Criteria for Assessment and its report and resolutions are presented below.

During 1995 there were 3 National Assessment Conferences and 2 Re-Assessment Panels. The Board met 46 candidates, of which 36 were accepted for training by the Provinces.

Lesley Charlton, Jean Forster and Janet Sowerbutts completed their terms of service as members of the Board; Fiona Liddell and Catherine Middleton have found it necessary to resign because of appointments to other posts. We are grateful to them for their invaluable contributions. Graham Cook, Shirley Moss and Betty Scopes have joined the Board and we look forward to their contributions.

14.

MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY SUB-COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr Michael Harrison
Secretary: The Revd Peter Grimshaw

Personalia

The day-to-day work of the Sub-Committee being in the hands of its Officers, we have been greatly aided by the growing contributions of Mr Graham Stacy and the Revd Peter Grimshaw as they have felt their way into office. It has also been encouraging to have the active involvement of General Assembly Moderators.

By the time that this report is presented to General Assembly the Revd Michael Diffey will have ceased his work as Secretary for Ministries. His understanding acceptance and support of this financial cuckoo in the ministerial nest have been much appreciated. The Revd Bill Gathercole is also completing his service on the Sub-Committee which has benefited greatly from his advice.

Stipends

We have continued to operate two basic policies in recommending the level of stipend:

1. that there should be one common, basic rate for an stipendiary ministers, the payment of supplements being discouraged;
2. that the basic rate of stipend should increase in line with the Retail Price Index.

Because of the considerable amount of time needed to prepare and implement budgets this means that the RPI figures for November 1995 are reflected in the stipend level with effect from 1 January 1997.

As stipends account for some 85% of centrally controlled expenditure the actual level of stipend to be paid from 1 January 1997 has to be confirmed/set by Mission Council in October 1996, on the acceptance of the 1997 budget by the 1996 General Assembly.

The Sub-Committee will monitor these policies and practices; it welcomes comments on them. Any major change will need to be by decision of General Assembly.

Church House Staff

Whenever a minister wishes to raise a matter to do with the payment of stipend or allowance or grant or loan or pension, nearly always the first contact is with a member of the Finance Staff in Church House. New employment/tax legislation has increased the already heavy burden carried by these committed servants of the Church; they give in time, effort and expertise far more than can reasonably be expected of them. Those who have had occasion to seek the help of staff in the URC office will join in paying tribute to both the efficiency of their service and the sympathetic care that invariably accompanies it.

15.

PENSIONS EXECUTIVE

Convener: Mr Victor Hughff
Secretary: The Revd Peter Grimshaw

The body, formerly known as the Pensions Sub-Committee, has been given the title of 'Pensions Executive' reflecting its dual responsibility to both the MoM Sub-Committee and to the Pensions Trust and a reminder of the nature of much of its work.

A three-year valuation of the Pension Fund will be made at the end of 1996. The legislation of the 1995 Pensions Act will come into force in April 1997.

Much of the Pensions Executive time is taken up with consideration of the particular circumstances of individual ministers and their families, especially in cases of possible retirement on grounds of ill health.

16.

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Convener: The Revd David Hannen
Secretary: Mr. Clive Willis

1. During the year 1995 there was an unusually high number of ministers retiring from active service and the need for assistance with retirement housing was also high. Assistance was provided by the Committee to 25 ministers and to 3 widows whose husbands died in service; in addition 4 tenants were re-housed into properties more suitable to their needs.

MINISTRIES

Number of Properties

As at 1st January 1995	286
Purchased in 1995	32
Received as legacies or gifts	<u>NIL</u>
	318
LESS number of properties sold	<u>13</u>
Number of properties as at 31st December 1995	<u>305</u>
Of which:	
Unoccupied	1
For Sale	9
Occupied by:	
retired ministers	183
ministers' widows	101
non-URC Tenants	<u>11</u>
	<u>305</u>

All the properties sold and those for sale at the year end were in localities in which no known applicant wished to reside.

2. At the year end two properties were in the process of purchase and three applicants were seeking properties.
3. Properties are purchased in the name of either United Reformed Church Trust or The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited. In either case they are managed by the officers of the Housing Society. Where a tenant has a financial stake in the property this is recognised by means of a Declaration of Trust.
4. The maximum contributions made by the Society or the Trust are determined annually on a county-by-county basis by reference to average prices for semi-detached houses during the preceding year. More detailed information about these maximum amounts is available from the Secretary. It should be noted that:
 - i. Where applicants have the financial resources to do so, they may put in their own funds so as to permit the county maximum amounts to be exceeded by up to 50%. This is known as the joint ceiling figure.
 - ii. Applicants wishing to have a retirement property costing in excess of the joint ceiling figure should consult with the Secretary.
 - iii. These figures relate to total purchase cost, which includes not only the agreed purchase price, but also the cost of any repairs or improvements identified as being necessary at the time when the property is surveyed.
 - iv. The maximum amount of contribution is not provided as of right to each applicant; the determining factor in deciding the amount is how much capital is owned by the applicant and spouse.
5. In 1995 the standard rent was £56 per calendar month. This sum is the rent payable by those who are provided with the maximum contribution when acquiring their property. If less than the maximum contribution is provided, the rent payable is reduced proportionately.

For 1996 the standard rent has been set at £58 per calendar month.

6. Rental income for 1995 was £172,000 (as compared with £152,000 for 1994). This sum was credited to Property Management Account, from which all costs relating to maintenance, repair, insurance and administration are taken. Expenditure for 1995 amounted to £172,000 thus giving a surplus/deficit for the year of £2,000.
7. The Committee is most grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year. These amounted to £308,000.

8. During 1995 the Convener and Secretaries made visits to approximately 35 applicants, tenants or other properties. An information stand was also provided for the Wessex Province Day, and a talk on the work of the Committee and the Society was given to Guildford District Council.
9. It is anticipated that during 1996 assistance will be required for 18 retiring ministers. After allowing for possible need for widows or for re-housing it would be prudent to expect up to 25 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to £1¼ million.
10. We continue to rely heavily upon, and be grateful for, the commitment of those members of local congregations who generously give oversight to our retirement properties and who assist those who live in them. We would like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to volunteer their assistance in this respect.
11. Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre under the auspices of Ministries. One course was held in May 1995 and two more in November. These sessions are designed to be of benefit to all, regardless of whether or not financial assistance with housing will be needed. In addition private discussions on individual needs are provided.

RESOLUTIONS

Ministries

- 34** Assembly, recognising the need for more vocations to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church-Related Community Work, urges church members, local Churches, District Councils and Synods to take every opportunity of presenting its claims to those who are perceived to have the gifts required.

1. RECRUITMENT

Two years ago, seeing that the Church had more ministers on its payroll than could be paid by the funds then promised for the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund, Assembly imposed a moratorium on applications from ministers of other Churches at home and abroad to transfer to our ministry. In the light of mechanisms agreed last year, designed to prevent such a situation occurring again, this moratorium was lifted. We now realise that we are moving back towards a very different situation. Statistics show that by the end of 2000, 140 of our presently serving stipendiary minister will have reached retirement age. In addition it is possible, if previous experience is anything to go by, that approximately 10 each year will have left the payroll for other reasons, eg. resignation, transfer to other denominations, deletion, death in service. On the other hand, we also know that only approximately 86 will have entered the ministry through ordination. While the last figure will doubtless be increased in the light of the number of candidates being accepted for training in 1996 and 1997, and while we shall receive a few ministers upon transfer from other Churches, it becomes obvious that the number of our stipendiary ministers is reducing significantly. There is an urgent need for more candidates, both young people who will make the ministry their lifetime commitment and older people who will come to it as a "second career". FURY Assembly has already made space on its agenda for this matter, the Resources Centre at Yardley Hastings has included it within its programme and youth events are beginning to draw attention to the opportunity for Christian service which the Ministry affords. At the same time we are seeking to place the claims of Church-Related Community Work before suitable applicants. We urge local churches and District Councils to keep this ongoing need on their agendas and church members everywhere to identify potential candidate and place the challenge before them. We believe there is no substitute for personal commendation.

PROPOSALS REGARDING THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM AGES OF ENTRY TO THE NON-STIPENDIARY AND STIPENDIARY MINISTRIES.

- 35 Assembly agrees that:
- a) no one shall commence training for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments before the date of their 21st birthday;
 - b) formal application for training for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments must be received by the Province before the date of the applicant's 50th birthday.
 - c) this shall apply to any applications received by the province after this Assembly.

1. In response to a question from the floor of Assembly in 1995, the Convener of the Ministries Committee gave assurances that the minimum and maximum ages of entry to the stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries would be reviewed. This matter has been considered by the Accreditation Sub-Committee.
2. Reasons for review:
 1. to clarify the present requirements which are unclear;
 2. because of concern expressed about the increase in the average age of those entering the ministry;
 3. because of the escalating costs of training coupled with the much shorter periods of potential service especially for full-time stipendiary ministers;
 4. because of growing perceptions of the ministry as a second career for older men and women.
3. The present requirements.
- 3.1 The present regulations are unclear. They state, for the stipendiary ministry, 'Normally...not younger than 21 and not older than 55....', and for the non-stipendiary, 'Normally...not less than 30 and not more than 55....' (see Manual, Fourth Edition, 1995, page J7). It is unclear if these apply to the point at which application is made or to the commencement of training. There is also some discrepancy between the documentation. Therefore it would be wise to clarify the requirements.
4. Age of those entering the ministry:
 - 4.1 Concern has been expressed about the increase in the average age of those entering ministry with the growing perception that ministry is a second career for older people.
 - 4.2 The Patterns of Ministry Statistical Supplement indicates that the average age of those ordained to the stipendiary ministry has risen steadily since the fifties from 27 years between 1954-58 to 40 years between 1989-93.
 - 4.3 In 1994 the average age of those in college, training for the stipendiary ministry, was 41 years.
 - 4.4 According to the information available for the last five years there is no indication that the trend is being reversed. During this period, 1990 - 1994, the average age of those ordained to the stipendiary ministry was 41 years. Taking one year, 1994, it was 44 years.
 - 4.5 According to the Patterns of Ministry Statistical Supplement (1994) the age of ordination to the non-stipendiary ministry between 1982 and 93 has fluctuated between 43 years and 57 years.
 - 4.6 The statistics indicate that the trend is still upwards.
 - 4.7 A snapshot of the current age profile of active ministers indicates that 59.3% of stipendiary ministers, and 73.3% of non-stipendiary ministers, are over the age of fifty. Taking all active ministers, stipendiary and non-stipendiary together, then 62.3% are over the age of fifty.
5. The costs of training.
 - 5.1. Concern has also been expressed about the cost of training for the ministry. The escalating costs inevitably raise the question of cost-effectiveness.
 - 5.2 The average cost of training someone for the stipendiary ministry ranges between £7,000 and £8,000 pa. With the average length of training running at 3-4 years, this means that the cost of training a stipendiary minister is between £21,000 and £32,000.. Given the very high cost it would be irresponsible not to consider what is a reasonable period of service the church might expect for this investment.

6. Minimum age.
- 6.1 There can be no doubt that the ordained ministry is enriched by people of a more advanced age who bring with them considerable experience of life and of living out the faith. However, there are also advantages in younger people, who are not so far advanced in their pilgrimage, developing through training and ministry. For this reason it is suggested that there now needs to be a concerted effort to reverse the trend of the increasingly higher average age of those ordained by reducing the age at which people can apply for training.
- 6.2 With the agreement that there should be no distinction made between stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries, it is suggested that the minimum age should be the same for both. At present it is, for the stipendiary, 'normally' 21 years and, for the non-stipendiary, 'normally' 30 years. Although it is suggested that the minimum age should apply to the point at which training commences it would be in order for applications to be received prior to an applicant's 21st birthday.
7. Maximum age.
- 7.1 The Sub-Committee is aware of the shortage of candidates entering training, especially for the full-time stipendiary ministry. To reduce the maximum age of entry to the ministry too drastically, without the compensation of an increase in the number of younger candidates, could have the knock-on effect of putting in jeopardy the courses on which ministers are trained.
- 7.2 The Sub-Committee suggests that it would be reasonable to expect a minimum of ten years ministry from those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Consequently, with the length of training running at between three and four years, and a compulsory retirement age of 65 from the full-time stipendiary ministry, it would be wise to agree a cut-off point at the age of 50. This is interpreted to mean that formal applications for training should be submitted to the Province on the official Application Form prior to the date of the applicant's 51st birthday.
- 7.3 Any variation to these requirements will need the agreement of the Accreditation Sub-Committee.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

In 1992 the National Assessment Board decided to review the way the assessment process operates. This decision was subsequently endorsed by the Mission Council and the Ministries Committee.

36 Assembly approves the Criteria for Assessment as set out in the paragraphs below.

The object of assessment of those offering for the ministry of word and sacraments is to ensure that those who enter training possess, or have the potential to acquire, the competencies and qualities necessary to exercise such ministry. This presented the Board with three questions:

1. Is it possible to reach agreement on the competencies and qualities necessary for a minister?
2. What is the most appropriate way of determining the competencies and qualities to be looked for in those offering for the ministry?
3. How does the assessment process best assist the Church in reaching this objective?

The Board was aware of the difficulties inherent in such a process. The answers to these questions would inevitably vary enormously making agreement difficult to achieve. There was also the danger of coming up with a formulation which would deny the Church that breadth and diversity in its ministers which enhances its life and mission. The Board was aware of the potential injustice of leaving those involved in the assessment of candidates to operate their own individual, and sometimes unacknowledged, criteria.

In addition it seemed to the Board important not only to reduce any areas of disagreement regarding the suitability of candidates, few though they may be, but to eliminate, as far as possible, mistakes made.

These can be so costly in terms of the pain experienced by the individuals and churches concerned. While recognising that no assessment process is infallible, anything that can be done to reduce the mistakes is worthwhile.

But is it possible to identify and agree a range of basic competencies and qualities which are broad enough to permit the kind of flexibility required by the church without imposing a straight-jacket on the church's ministry and deny the freedom of the Spirit?

The Board agreed that the appropriate way to address the way candidates are assessed should involve as much consultation as practical with a broad spectrum of the Church. This has taken place over a period of almost three years.

The process adopted was that suggested by Mr G M (Mac) Bolton, Assistant Director of Roffey Park Management Institute, an Anglican Lay Reader who had advised the Church Missionaries Society on assessment. It involved training a small number of hand-picked interviewers to consult a sample cross-section of the United Reformed Church in order to identify the perceived competencies and qualities deemed necessary in a minister of the word and sacraments. The method used is known as the Personal Construct Theory and is a process of seeking information without allowing any bias of the interviewer to get in the way. The information obtained was collated, clustered through a process of 'rank ordering', referred back to those consulted and then refined to become the basis from which the criteria are identified and the assessment process organised. In addition the Board agreed to submit, for further comment, a consultative document to provincial moderators, provincial ministries committees, trainers, the Equal Opportunities Committee, other Churches and a sample of districts, ministers who had recently been through the existing assessment process, and students in training.

The responses to this further consultation have been extremely encouraging. As a consequence this revised paper has been prepared. Its sections, noted below, concern **The Criteria for Assessment** and **The Stages in the Assessment Process**. (The complete paper including the Background, The Process of Assessment will be made available in due course).

Inevitably the task of identifying criteria for assessment is an ongoing task required of the church as it seeks to be faithful to its historic calling and to respond constructively, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the changing contexts of mission. The Board is aware of a number of matters which require more work, such as:

- ◆ changes to the assessment process arising from the Criteria;
- ◆ pre-assessment procedures;
- ◆ information sought in the formal application (application form, references etc.);
- ◆ educational qualifications;
- ◆ psychological element of assessment;
- ◆ guidelines for local churches, districts and synods;
- ◆ the role of the Training Board

The Board is aware of the consideration being given to the final assessment of ordinands by the Working Party established by the Ministries and Training Committees and maintains close touch with this process.

THE CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

These categories represent the basic qualities and resources required for ministry and provide a focus for the process of assessment at each stage. They are also indicators which should guide an individual's future ministerial development. While we may have these areas of competence in mind it is difficult to identify the candidate's potential to acquire them. This is because at present so much of the material received contains subjective judgements. Why should the candidate's view of her/his vocation be subordinated to that of the assessors? Assessors may be just as subjective as the candidate. This is one aspect of what the National Assessment Board has been exploring in examining its own competence in selection. We believe it is essential to consider additional ways of acquiring more reliable and carefully compiled information to serve the needs of assessment. We seek the commitment of the whole church to this process. This should be made evident in all aspects of assessment which precede or follow the National Assessment Conference. All who contribute to the whole process need to know not only what is required but why, and at what stage.

All prospective candidates must know which criteria have to be met before the councils of the Church can begin the formal process of assessment which starts with the recommendation of the Church Meeting. These are as follows:

Pre-Assessment Criteria

The prospective candidate must:

1. have been in membership of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating;
2. conform to age criteria set by the General Assembly;
3. have had a report written, on at least one service conducted and one sermon preached, by an assessor appointed by District Council;
4. understand, accept and be committed to Schedule C and the Basis of Union;
5. have attended District Council and Provincial Synod;
6. supply a reflective account of Church Meetings, District Councils and Provincial Synods attended;
7. satisfy the required medical examination indicating fitness for training and ordained ministry;
8. complete the form relating to disclosure of criminal convictions and court orders.

The Province should be responsible for checking and confirming that these requirements have been satisfied.

Comment on initial criteria

These criteria have been identified as a means by which the potential candidate can be offered a variety of ways of testing her or his sense of vocation in relation to the practice of ministry. In this process candidates will find opportunities for meeting the criteria in a context that allows for co-operative working. The existing requirement of five GCSE passes is an inadequate measure of learning potential. The criteria proposed are to be more than an indicator of intellectual ability: they should also help to alert candidates, at an early stage, to the demands of preparation for ministry. A growing awareness of the demands of ministry itself can be encouraged by Districts giving opportunities to prospective candidates to "shadow" one or more ministers. This pre-assessment phase must be undertaken carefully and unhurriedly.

Areas to be addressed during the assessment

The following requirements may seem considerable but they represent a considered judgement of the areas which should be addressed in the assessment process. Throughout this the emphasis should be on self-awareness and potential. These criteria should be kept in mind by everyone involved in the assessment process, but they should be explored in depth by the District, National Assessment Board and Province. It may often be helpful for the District and Province to act co-operatively in the stages of assessment which precede attendance at a National Assessment Conference.

During the whole assessment process the following areas will be explored with candidates:

1. **Personal Development and Character**
 - 1.1 how they reflect on the implications of ministry in the context of all their significant relationships;
 - 1.2 their personal history and their ability to reflect on the way their experiences have influenced them;
 - 1.3 their concern for creation and all people, their sense of the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, and their experience of the Spirit's enabling and sanctifying power.
 - 1.4 their ability and willingness to respond positively to ministerial education and training;
 - 1.5 their response to any situation in which they have faced risk or difficulty;
 - 1.6 their potential to become competent in written and spoken communication;
 - 1.7 their level of self-awareness, desire to grow towards human wholeness and their ability to learn from their own and others' beliefs, culture and experience;
 - 1.8 how they value people, including those from whom they perceive they are different;
 - 1.9 how they handle conflict;
 - 1.10 their awareness of their own training needs;
 - 1.11 how they organise and prioritise their present work and leisure time and their ability to relax;
 - 1.12 their understanding of appropriate styles of leadership required for the management of change.
2. **Faith**
 - 2.1 their Christian journey;
 - 2.2 their sense of call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments;
 - 2.3 how their understanding of the Bible and the Christian Faith is developing;
 - 2.4 their awareness of their own doctrinal position;

MINISTRIES RESOLUTIONS

- 2.5 the diversity of positions held within the United Reformed Church;
- 2.6 their devotional life.

- 3. **The Community of the Church**
 - 3.1 their understanding of the ministry and mission of the whole people of God, with particular reference to their present church community;
 - 3.2 their reflective account of meetings they have attended at local, district and provincial level;
 - 3.3 their understanding and knowledge of the wider Reformed tradition;
 - 3.4 their own church's relationship with other churches; regional/national ecumenical initiatives.

- 4. **The Church in the World**
 - 4.1 their understanding of the mission of the Church and how their ministry could contribute to it;
 - 4.2 their understanding of issues in society and how the Church might respond to them in specific ways;
 - 4.3 their ideas of ways in which the Church might engage in service in the community as an expression of mission;
 - 4.4 their understanding of the relationship between Church, local and wider, within its societal setting.

- 5. **Ministry**
 - 5.1 their sense of the importance of worship, including all-age worship, the preaching and the sacraments;
 - 5.2 their understanding of ministry and the promises made at ordination;
 - 5.3 their awareness of the variety of ministerial situations and their willingness and openness to serve in any of these;
 - 5.4 the expectations placed on ministers and how they think they would respond to those expectations;
 - 5.5 their awareness of the attitudes and skills needed in pastoral care;

Character and Relationships

Issues to do with personal development and character are of high priority but are hard to evaluate objectively. This is especially significant with regard to marriage: the effect of ordained ministry on personal relationships must not be underestimated. The candidate's ability to discuss this matter and to involve her or his partner, relatives and close friends may well be very indicative of deeper issues behind the application. It is important to confirm that the candidate is not seeking ordination in order to escape from personal difficulties or frustration.

Gathering Evidence

The areas identified are all ways of enabling the candidate to explore at depth the demands and rewards of ministry. Because these areas will be explored at different stages in the assessment process it will be possible for evidence gathered in earlier stages to be available to the candidate and to those assessing at later stages. Thus full documentation can be built up throughout the process and can show how the candidate is developing in insight at each stage. It will also be possible to identify any point at which the process should stop, without the candidate suffering unnecessary feelings of rejection. Pastoral support can then be provided, on the basis of the evidence, as the individual seeks to discern the next possible direction of discipleship. It should not be assumed that the evidence gathered will be purely oral: all involved should seek to find additional ways of gathering the relevant evidence. From Stage 4 (below) onwards all involved should be looking for hard evidence to substantiate decisions or opinions reached at an earlier stage.

Open reporting

The National Assessment Board is very sensitive and sympathetic to those in the church who have suggested that we should move towards open reporting. It is prepared to review the current practice but is aware that the impact of open reporting would require changes in procedures which could have considerable implication for costs, both human and financial, and in the style of reports. If there are any areas of uncertainty about the candidate's vocation which do not warrant asking the candidate to think about withdrawing, these should be communicated to the candidate. They should also be included in the material passed on to the next stage, to enable further investigation.

THE PROPOSED ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A Note on Documentation

At present the documentation assembled consists of:

- ◆ Application form
- ◆ Personal Statements by the candidate
- ◆ A Sermon and Order of Service, if the candidate has led worship
- ◆ Commendations by:
 - the candidate's Minister
 - the candidate's Church Meeting
 - the candidate's District Council
- ◆ References from two individuals chosen by the candidate
- ◆ Confidential Medical Report
- ◆ Training Recommendation
- ◆ Form relating to Disclosure of Criminal Record and Judgement(s) / Order(s) of a Civil Court
- ◆ National Assessment Board General Assessment
- ◆ Provincial Decision

Stage 1: Reflection by the Candidate

- 1.1 The candidate examines her or his own thoughts on ministry and their implications for the future. Thoughts about vocation will be the result of reflection on the influence of significant life experiences on spiritual development.
- 1.2 Experience of the Church must have an important bearing on how the candidate is able to consider what is involved in ordained ministry and on how ordained ministry is valued by the candidate and by the Church.

Stage 2: Informal Discussions

- 2.1 The candidate needs to use these to clarify and test her or his initial attraction to her or his vocation.
- 2.2 Through informal discussions the candidate will gain more precise information about the nature of her or his vocation and about the preparation required.
- 2.3 It is important that those involved in these discussions should not offer unreflective judgement about her or his vocation. Such judgements, once implanted, can be very difficult to remove.

Stage 3: Discussion with the Provincial Moderator or other Provincial Nominee

- 3.1 At this point the candidate must decide whether to make the search more open and formal.
- 3.2 It is wise for all enquirers to attend a National Vocational Conference so that exploration can take place in a wider forum.
- 3.3 Before any further step is taken the candidate needs to begin to satisfy the pre-assessment criteria.
- 3.4 When the criteria have been met, the application and medical forms will need to be completed, either at this point or following Stage 4.

Stage 4: The Local Church

- 4.1 It is difficult for local churches to be objective in their commendation since they clearly will want to support a member who wishes to candidate for ministry: this means that local churches rarely contemplate the possibility of non-selection.
- 4.2 The experience of the local church is a significant factor contributing to a sense of vocation. It is vital that the local church commendation is enhanced by the inclusion of specific details of work the candidate has done in addition to an opinion about the candidate's suitability for ordained ministry.

Stage 5: The Provision of References

- 5.1 This is the responsibility of the Province and the candidate.
- 5.2 Referees should be carefully chosen; they need to be articulate, to know the candidate well, and to be able to give clear evidence to back up perceptions about the candidate's gifts, abilities and potential.

Stage 6: The District Council

- 6.1 The District Council needs to make a careful check to ensure that all the pre-assessment criteria have been met.

- 6.2 Those who interview the candidate will need to have the complete list of criteria before them in order to engage in assessment of her or his gifts and potential for ministry in depth and detail.
- 6.3 Recognising the variable strengths of Districts, it may be helpful if the Province is also able to contribute at this stage.
- 6.4 Areas requiring further attention should be carefully signalled for the attention of the National Assessment Board.

Stage 7: The National Assessment Board

- 7.1 This is the central stage in assessment, at which all the evidence is collected and the full range of criteria examined.
- 7.2 The assessors will explore the candidate's self-presentation in the light of the documentation, to test how the criteria are being met.
- 7.3 The aim is to check the adequacy of the evidence presented so far and to identify any significant areas needing special attention.
- 7.4 No candidate should meet with an assessor who has prior knowledge of her or him.
- 7.5 The candidate will be considered within the context of the whole URC, not just the local situations which have shaped her or his Christian journey so far.
- 7.6 At this point the insights of psychological assessment can help to confirm aspects of personality questioned in the reports or by assessors which may reveal aspects which may have been unsuspected by the candidate.
- 7.7 The needs of the church may change as time progresses. Psychological assessment can help the Church to identify those candidates who have the qualities to enable change and development to take place.

Stage 8: The Training Board

- 8.1 It is vital that all candidates, including those who have been considerably involved in leading worship, in pastoral care, or in running church activities, should be able to appreciate the value of and the necessity for ministerial education and training.
- 8.2 Those involved in the candidating process need to encourage potential ordinands to see the connections between study and training and the practice of ministry and to ensure that candidates have the educational foundation which will enable them to make the most of their period of preparation for ministry.
- 8.3 A candidate should not come to the Training Board if there is serious doubt about her or his capacity to sustain a course of training and to be equipped for ministerial service.
- 8.4 The Training Board's responsibility is to explore, with the candidate, suitable courses, including their content and location, and to make a training recommendation.
- 8.5 At present the Training Board meets candidates in the course of the Assessment Conference, but a clearer separation between the assessment process and the training recommendation might be desirable.

Stage 9: The Provincial Decision

- 9.1 This stage ought to be one of confirming a positive assessment or a final test of the validity of the reasons for refusing to accept a candidate for training.
- 9.2 When different conclusions have been reached the recent practice of ensuring a meeting between the Provincial Committee and the National Assessment Board is to be commended.
- 9.3 Where the suggested criteria are carefully followed there should be fewer points of difference because the whole process should be more widely understood and agreed.
- 9.4 It is a matter of concern that there is no consistency of practice between provinces at this stage. This can cause hurt to candidates and undermine candidates' confidence in the procedures and in those who administer them.
- 9.5 In order to assist consistent good practice it might be valuable to invite a representative from a neighbouring province to share in the Provincial Ministries Committee when candidates are being interviewed.
- 9.6 The reports prepared at every stage are to be read by all involved in subsequent stages before they interview the candidate.

Monitoring Ordinands' Progress

At present the National Assessment Board's involvement with a candidate ceases when she or he has been accepted for education and training for ministry. Yet it is vital that it should not be assumed that, once a candidate has begun training, she or he is assured of a call from a local pastorate at the end of the period of initial training. Careful monitoring by colleges, courses, provinces and all who have responsibilities towards the candidate should ensure that any difficulties are confronted and handled in a positive way and that development and growth are affirmed and encouraged.

If our proposals are accepted, radical changes will need to be made to the present documentation. Forms are presently too prescriptive and the layout seems to define how much should be written. References and commendations will become more adequate and informative if those responsible for them are supplied with an adequate summary of our criteria for assessment. Two additional documents which could prove valuable would be a positive and a negative reference written by the candidate herself or himself. This would also be a direct but discreet way of indicating the standards and expectations we require candidates to meet. Written and oral questions need to be open and the sense of shared exploration with the candidate should be evident at each stage.

The National Assessment Board is grateful to its own members for the time and effort put in to this process particularly to The Revd Dr Leslie Green and The Revd Dr Catherine Middleton who bore the brunt of writing up the criteria; to Dr Mary Ede, The Revd Alan Green, Mr Arnold Senior and The Revd Val Towler who submitted to specialist training and who travelled the country to consult with a cross section of people from the Church; and especially to Mr G M (Mac) Bolton for the invaluable help given in the early stages of the process.

Nominations

Convener: The Revd Jessie Clare
Secretary: The Revd Arnold Harrison

This committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of URC representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for provincial moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

The following appointment and review groups have been convened:

- 1 Appointment Group for the Moderator of the West Midlands Province
Convened by Revd Philip Morgan
- 2 Appointment Group for the Moderator of the Eastern Province
Convened by Mrs Wilma Frew
- 3 Review Group for the Moderator of the Wales Province
Convened by Revd Dr Jack McKelvey
- 4 Appointment Group for the Moderator of the Yorkshire Province
Convened by Revd Dr. Jack McKelvey
- 5 Appointment Group for the Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge
Convened by Mr Raymond Clarke
- 6 Appointment Group for Westminster College Staff, Director of Pastoral Studies and Director of Systematic Theology.
Convened by Mr Raymond Clarke
- 7 On the Instructions of Mission Council a Task Group on Oversight Ministries has been set up under the Convenership of Revd John Slow.
- 8 Appointment Group for the Secretary to Ministries
Convened by Revd David Jenkins
- 9 Appointment Group for the Secretary for International Church Relations
Convened by Revd Mia Hillborn
- 10 Review Group for the Chaplain to Yardley Hastings
Convened by Mr Simon Rowntree
- 11 Assembly is invited to Appoint
A Board of Governors for Westminster College Cambridge
Convener Dr David Thompson
Clerk Revd Margaret McKay
Mr Don Taylor, Revd Leslie Husselbee,
Mrs Valerie Burnham, Revd Sandra Lloydlangston,
plus two other members to be advised

plus

The Principal, A Member of the Teaching Staff, A Student Member of the College, The Chair of the Cheshunt Foundation Governors, A Representative of the Cambridge Theological Federation and the Anglia Polytechnic University.

- 12 National Assessment Board - the Board has requested that we present names a year in advance in order that those nominated may have a time of training and preparation before they are required to serve as Board members. Names of those nominated to be active Board members from General Assembly 1997 will be included in the Nominations Supplementary Report.
- 13 Clerk to the Assembly. The Revd Principal Martin Cressey will complete his term as Clerk to the Assembly at the close of Assembly 1997. It is therefore important that his successor should have time to sit alongside him prior to the hand over. With that in mind the Nominations Committee brings the name of Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith as the Clerk to Assembly from 1997. (See Resolution 2.)
- 14 Following consultation with Mission Council the Nominations Committee will work to the Guidelines as printed in Appendix 1 of the Report of Nominations in respect of Senior Posts and Church Affiliations. (See Resolution 3.)
- 15 The Nominations Committee warmly recommends to the General Assembly Mr Graham Stacy as Honorary Treasurer and express its gratitude to him in accepting the nomination. (See Resolution 1.)

COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

- 1 The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members ex officios of every Standing Committee.
- 2 Officers and members appointed since Assembly 1995 are indicated by one asterisk, two asterisks denotes those whom Assembly 1996 is invited to appoint for the first time.
- 3 The date in brackets following the names indicates date of retirement, assuming a full term.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Convener: Prof. Malcolm Johnson [1998]
 Deputy Convener: Mrs Val Morrison [1998]
 Secretary: Revd Peter Brain
 Mr Mike Healey [2000]** Revd Michael Powell [1999] Revd Hazel Barkham [1999]
 Ms Janine Lawley [1998] Mr David Wrighton [1997]
 Mr Paul Franklin representing the Youth & Children's Committee

COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL

Convener: Mr Chris Wright [1999]
 Secretary: Mrs Carol Rogers
 Mrs Pat Stannard [2000]** *To be advised [2000]*** *To be advised [2000]***
 Revd Miles Parkinson [1999] Revd Graham Spicer [1997] Mrs Sue Brooks [1997] Mr
 Doug Fletcher [1997]

DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell [1999]
 Secretary: Revd Roger Whitehead [1998]
 Revd Bob Day [2000]** Revd David Tatem [1999] Revd Jean Forster [1998]
 Mr Jim Wilkinson [1998] Dr John Stocks [1997]
 Revd Eileen Sanderson representing the Youth & Children's Committee

WINDERMERE - Policy and Planning

Convener: Revd David Jenkins [1999]
 Secretary: The Director of Windermere
 Representatives of Finance, Revd Wynn Young, Revd Bill Mahood, Revd Dr. Stephen Orchard, with the Administrator, the Convener of Programmes Committee, the Convener and Treasurer of the Management Committee, the Convener and Secretary of Discipleship and Witness, and a representative of Carver URC, Windermere.

NOMINATIONS

DOCTRINE, PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Convener: Dr David Thompson [1997]

Secretary: *To be advised [2000]***

Revd Jean Black [2000]** Revd Fleur Houston [1999] Revd Stephen Brown [1999] Revd Donald Norwood [1999] Mr Tony Cheer [1998] Miss Fiona Gow [1998] Revd Wendy Baskett [1998] Revd Alan Sell [1997] Prof. Graham Stanton [1997]

Revd Derek Gardiner representing the Youth & Children's Committee

ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Murdoch Mackenzie [1997]

Secretary: Revd Elizabeth Welch [extended to 1998]

*To be advised [2000]*** Revd Peter Arthur [1999]

Revd David Fox [1998] Revd Philip Woods [1998] Mr Desmond Curry [1997]

ECUMENICAL - Sub-Committee - OVERSEAS EXCHANGE

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes [1999]

Secretary: Revd Ken Graham [1999]

Revd David Helyar [1998] Revd Mia Hilborn [1998] Mrs Muriel Sleigh [1998]

Revd Bernie Collins [1997]

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand [1999]

Secretary: Revd Simon Walkling [1999]

Mrs Lucille King [2000]** *To be advised [2000]*** Revd John McCauley [1998]

Mrs Daphne Beale [1998] Mr Doug Thacker [1997] Revd Elaine Dunn [1997]

FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Mr Bill Grieve [2000]** Mrs Elizabeth Reeve [1999] Revd Richard Wiggins [1999]

Mrs Edwina Rockey [1999] Revd Paul Bedford [1997] Convener of the URC Trust

MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Keith Forecast [1997]

Secretary: Chris Baker [1998]

*To be advised [2000]*** *To be advised [2000]*** Mr John Ellis [1999]

Ms Geraldine Swaine [1999] Revd Sandra Lloydlangston [1999]

Mrs Doreen Courtney [1997]

Convener of National Assessment Board

MINISTRIES - Sub-Committee - ACCREDITATION

Convener: Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith [1997]

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell [1998]

Mr Bert Worrall [1999] Revd John Humphreys [1999] Revd Dean Tapley [1997]

Mrs Ruth Clarke [1997]

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Raymond Clarke [1997]

Retiring 2000**

Retiring 1999

Retiring 1998

Retiring 1997

Mrs J. Barraclough

Mrs Shirley Moss

Mrs Pat Peirce

Revd John Humphreys

Revd Ivor Rees

Revd Elizabeth Scopes

Mrs Marva Ward

Revd Christine Craven

Mrs Darryl Sinclair

Revd Graham Cook

Revd Cecil White

To be advised

Revd Barbara Plenderleith

To be advised

Mr Brian Evans

Revd Leonard Bhagwandin

The appointments for 1997 are -

A Provincial Moderator and one other member - both to 2001 - *names to be advised*

NOMINATIONS

TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Sutcliffe [1999]
Secretary: Revd Dr Catherine Middleton [1998]
*To be advised [2000]** To be advised [2000]***
Mrs Carol Dixon [1999] Revd Chris Warner [1999] Revd John Proctor [1997]
Revd Elizabeth Nash [1997]

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Stephen Thornton [1998]
Secretary: Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn [1997]
*To be advised [2000]*** Miss Kathryn Swift [1999] Revd Ron Forster [1999] Revd Brenda Plenderleith [1999] Mrs Jean Antcliffe [1999] Mrs Elizabeth Crocker [1998] Ms Catherine Rook [1997] Ms Shirley Dale [1997]
FURY Chair FURY Council Member

MISSION COUNCIL

Moderator, Moderator-Elect, immediate past Moderator, General Secretary, Clerk, Legal Adviser, Deputy General Secretary, conveners of standing committees (except the Pastoral Committee), conveners for the following task groups: Advocacy and Stewardship, Mission and Other Faiths, and Health and Healing, two representatives of FURY, and four representatives of each synod including the provincial moderator.

The provincial representatives, other than the moderators are:

Northern	Revd Peter Poulter, Miss Sheila Fairbairn, Revd. Ann Jackson
North Western	Mrs Delyth Rees, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Revd. David Yule
Mersey	Revd Jean Forster, Mr Wesley Woodside, Revd. Peter Roche
Yorkshire	Mr Brian Evans, Revd Duncan Wilson, Mrs Angela Hughes
East Midlands	Mr Geoff Prentice, Revd. Graham Maskery, Revd Margaret Taylor
West Midlands	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Jennifer Shaffery, Revd Patricia Nimmo
Eastern	Mr William McVey, Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Revd Margaret McKay
South Western	Revd Sandra Lloydlangston, Mr Ivan Andrews, Mr Geoff Lunt
Wessex	Revd Bernie Collins, Mr David Butler, Mrs Christine Robertson
Thames North	Revd Geoffrey Bending, Miss Marian Crack, Revd. John Edwards
Southern	Mrs Christine Meekison, Mrs Grace Ntiamoah, Revd Lesley Charlton
Wales	Revd Nanette Head, Mr Denis Earp, Mr Peter Devaney

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD - BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Revd Dr. Arthur Chadwick
Secretary: Mr Geoff Lunt

Members of the URC:	Mrs Gwen Hall	Mr Desmond Davies
	Mr Tom Swan	Mr Geoffrey Lunt
Members of the Fund:	Revd Pam Ward	Revd Tony Spring
	Revd Raymond Royston-Bishop	Revd Dr. Arthur Chadwick

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Mr Desmond Davies
Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Mr Clive Willis	Revd Dennis Clague	Revd Tony Burnham
Mr Clem Frank	Mr Robert Hardie	Mr Graham Stacy
Mr Harold Kempton	Mr Ron Masser	Mr William McVey
Revd Richard Wiggins		

TASK GROUPS

OVERSIGHT MINISTRIES - (To report to Mission Council by the end of 1996)

Convener: Revd John Slow
Secretary: Revd Roberta Rominger
Revd Bill Gathercole, Mr Geoffrey Lawrence Revd Gethin Abraham-Williams

ADVOCACY AND STEWARDSHIP - (To continue until 1st April 1999)

Convener: Revd Julian Macro

Secretary: Revd Bill Wright

Provincial Representatives

*Three names to be advised***

Revd Stephen Thornton Miss Janet Turner

Mr Keith Webster Revd David Netherwood

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH ON OTHER BODIES**1 OTHER ASSEMBLIES**

Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1996

General Synod of Church of England

Methodist Conference

Baptist Union of Scotland

Church of Scotland

Scottish Congregational Church

Presbyterian Church of Wales

Union of Welsh Independents

Congregational Federation

World Alliance of Reformed

Churches General Council 1997

WCC Assembly 1998

Second European Ecumenical

Assembly 1997

Eleventh Assembly of the Conf.of

European Churches

Revd John Reardon, Revd Jim Brown

Revd Christine Craven

Revd Sheila Maxey

Dr Peter Arthur

Rev John Reardon, Revd Elizabeth Welch

Revd Tony Burnham

Revd John Reardon

Mr John Rhys

Revd John Waller

Revd Elizabeth Nash, Revd John Humphreys

Revd Pat Nimmo *Two names to follow*

Revd Tony Burnham, Mrs Wilma Frew

Revd Michael Hubbard, Revd John Waller

Mrs Sheila Brain

Revd Michael Hubbard, Revd John Waller

FURY representative

2 CHURCH BODIES

The Report of Nominations includes those who are United Reformed Church Representatives on Ecumenical Assemblies, Forums, Councils and Executives and are nominated directly through the Nominations Committee. A list of all other representatives to ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, many of which are made directly by the Ecumenical Committee, are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

Churches Together in England - Forum

The General Secretary, Convener Ecumenical Committee,

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, A Provincial Moderator

Mr John Bradbury Revd Rudolph Dixon Miss Betty Vickerton Revd Mark Fisher

Mr Graham Ghaleb Revd Donald Norwood Miss Charlotte Atkinson

Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Churches Together in England - Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - Assembly 1996

General Secretary Convener of the Ecumenical Comm.

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

plus

Revd Peter Brain

Mrs Eileen McIlveen

Mrs Ruth Clarke

Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow Revd Elizabeth Welch

Mr John Bradbury

Ms Melanie Smith

Revd David Taylor

Revd Donald Norwood

Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - Church Representatives Meeting

General Secretary

Mrs Ruth Clarke

Action of Churches Together in Scotland - Central Council

Revd David Taylor

Mrs Kathleen Ziffo

NOMINATIONS

CYTUN

Assembly The Provincial Moderator (Wales) Provincial Ecumenical Officer
Revd Simon Copley* Miss Alys Thomas* Revd David Wilkinson*

Council The Provincial Moderator (Wales) Mr John Rhys (Synod Clerk)
Ms Jackie Yeomans

Steering Committee Provincial Ecumenical Officer

Council for Wales Consultation on Forming a United Free Church in Wales

Revd John Humphreys* Revd David Fox* Mr John Rhys* Revd James Breslin*

FREE CHURCH FEDERAL COUNCIL

Council General Secretary Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow Revd Peter Beaman
Revd Eric Wollaston Mr Desmond Curry

Executive General Secretary

Chaplaincy Board Revd Peter Beaman, Revd. Brian Holroyd, Revd Daphne Williams

Education Committee Mrs Mary Ede, Mr Graham Handscombe*
Co-options - Dr Stephen Orchard and Revd John Sutcliffe

Women's Council Mrs Janet Lees

METHODIST/URC LIAISON COMMITTEE

Revd Susan Henderson Revd Michael Hubbard
Revd Joe Clemson Miss Betty Vickerton
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

SCOTTISH UNION TALKS

Revd Peter Arthur,* Revd James Breslin,* Revd Sheila Maxey*

OTHER COMMITTEES AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund Mr Ken Meekison, Revd Geoffrey Satchell, Mr Laurence Macro (Hon. Treasurer)

Cambridge Federation Examination in
Theology Committee of Management Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee
Christian Education Movement Council National Youth & Children's Work Training Officer
Churches Commission for Racial Justice Mrs Sandra Ackroyd
Churches Community Work Alliance Revd Tony Addy (Trustee)

Churches Main Committee Revd Vaughan Jones (Management Committee)
Mr Clem Frank, Mr Hartley Oldham
Mr Tegid Peregrine

Congregational Fund Board Revd Cyril Grant*, Revd Dorothy Havergal-Shaw*
Revd Aubrey Lewis, Revd Eric Allen*

Joint Liturgical Group Revd Fleur Houston*, Revd Nigel Uden*
Methodist Faith & Order Committee Revd Kim Fabricus
National Christian Education Council Revd Keith Forecast, Mrs Rosemary Johnston
National Council of Voluntary Organisations Revd Peter Brain

National Ecumenical Agency for
Further Education Secretary for Ministries, Revd Kevin Swaine
Scottish World Day of Prayer Mrs Molly Glen

Society for the Ministry of Women in
the Church Revd Florence Frost-Mee
United Navy, Army and Airforce Board Secretary for Ministries, Revd Dennis Friend
Revd John Paull, Revd Hamish MacLagan*
Revd Tony Burnham

United Reformed Church History Society	Mrs Mary Davies, Revd Peter Jupp Mrs Carol Rogers, Revd Eric Wollaston (Dr David Thompson also serves)
Wharton Trust	Mrs Betty Taylor
Widows Fund of the Three Denominations	Mr Ken Meekison, Revd Geoffrey Satchell Mr Laurence Macro
Women's World Day of Prayer	Mrs Josie Pinner*

4. COLLEGE AND SCHOOL GOVERNORS AND COUNCILS

Aberystwyth (Memorial College)	Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris, Mr Leslie Jones
Bishops Stortford College	Revd Margaret McKay
Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges	Convener & Secretary Training Committee
Caterham School, Board of Governors	Revd David Helyar*
Cheshunt Foundation	Mr Desmond Davies, Revd Michael Dunford
Eltham College/Walthamstow Hall	Mrs Jean Garwood
Homerton College Trustees	Mr John Chaplin*, Revd Bill Gathercole, Revd Margaret McKay*, Mrs Elisabeth Jupp* Mrs Mary Cornick, Dr David Thompson*
Mansfield College Ministerial Training Committee	Revd Julian Macro, Revd Noel Shepherd Revd Colin Thompson
Milton Mount Foundation, Governors	Miss Margaret Canning*, Mrs Gwen Hall, Revd Peter Grimshaw, Revd George Thomas* Revd Erica Beglin*, Revd Dr. Catherine Middleton
Northern College Governors	Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee, Revd Brian O'Neill Revd John Marsh, <i>One name to be advised*</i>
Queen's College, Birmingham	Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
St. Andrew's Hall Selly Oak	Revd Gwen Collins*, Mrs Haro Horsfield* Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee*, Revd Tony Coates
Silcoates School, Governor	Dr Clyde Binfield
Taunton School	Revd Ray Adams
Tettenhall College Governors	Dr William Blakeley, Mr Roddy McKenzie Mr Ron Whild Mrs Doris Margetts
Wentworth Milton Mount, Governor	To be advised*
Westhill College Foundation Governor	Dr Richard Jurd
Westhill College Foundation Trustees	Mr J.E. Payne, Prof. Robert Steel Revd Eric Lord

5. COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Revd Tony Burnham	Ms Bethan Galliers	Revd Mia Hilborn	Mr Wallie Warmington
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6. CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Mr Clive Willis*	Mrs Christine Meekison	Revd Maurice Husselbee	Mrs Mary Stacy*
Mr Robert Hardie	Revd Geoffrey Satchell	Mr Graham Stacy*	Mr Arthur Smith
Revd David Hannen	Mr Hartley Oldham	Revd Peter Grimshaw	Revd John Taylor

7. NEW COLLEGE LONDON FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

Mr John Smethers	Revd Robert Latham	Revd John Pugh
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REPRESENTATIVES APPOINTED BY COMMITTEES

Other Committees and National Organisations

Churches' Commission on Overseas Students	Revd Kevin Swaine
Churches' Consortium on Industrial Mission	Revd Michael Diffey
Churches' Council for Health and Healing	Revd Robin Hine Revd Jim Hollyman*
	Mrs Connie Bunker
Churches' Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting	Mrs Carol Rogers
Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations	Revd Brenda Willis

**NOMINATIONS
RESOLUTIONS**

Council of URC Boy's Brigade Companies
Funerals, Cremations and Crematoria
Guides' Religious Advisory Panel
International Bible Reading Association
Media Awareness Project
National Funeral College
Scout & Guide Fellowship (URC)
Scouts' Religious Advisory Group

Revd Michael Rees
Mr Paul Franklin
Revd Peter Jupp
Revd Gillian Bobbett
vacant
Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd Sally Thomas
Mr Paul Franklin
Mr D. Marshall-Jones

RESOLUTIONS

Nominations

37 The Assembly appoints Mr Graham Stacy as Honorary Treasurer of the United Reformed Church, for a period of four years, to Assembly 2000.

38 The Assembly appoints Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith as Clerk to the Assembly for a period of five years from the close of Assembly 1997 until the close of Assembly 2002.

39 **Eastern Province Moderator**
Assembly appoints the Revd Elizabeth June Caswell as Moderator of the Eastern Province from 1 February 1997 to 31 January 2004.

An Appointment Group was established following the usual procedure and it reported to the March Mission Council its wish to bring the nomination of Mrs Caswell to the General Assembly.

40 The Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 143 - 150 of the Book of Reports subject to the additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report before Assembly.

ANNEX

Senior Posts and Church Affiliation

1. This paper is a revision of the one prepared for the Nominations Committee by Bernard Thorogood dated 5 March 1992. The need for the revision was because of a letter from the Board of Studies at Westminster asking if there are 'any academic staff posts at Westminster College which should be confined to those who are already members of the URC?' The letter went on to state that the Board believed that 'the Principal and the Director of Pastoral Studies ought to be members of the URC at the time of appointment'.

Present Policy

2. In 1992 the Executive decided that the Departmental Secretary of Ministries ought to be a member of the URC. There is also a similar restriction regarding the General Secretary. The subsequent paper recommended that the Departmental Secretaries of Ministries and Faith & Life ought to be restricted to members of the URC on the grounds that 'churchmanship is at the core of the activities of the department and the person with oversight needs to be within the tradition of the church.
3. In addition, another category was recommended where the position is open to members of the URC and members of those churches which are within the World Alliance of Reformed Churches or the Council for World Mission. These posts were listed as:

Departmental Secretary - World Church and Mission
Associate Secretary - Ministries
Principal, Westminster College
Director, Windermere
FURY Chaplain

All the other central staff appointments were to be open to persons of any church affiliation.

4. Finally, it was recommended that "this policy be accepted for five years, so that Assembly may then judge what the effect has been on the overall balance of staff, and the balance within each area of our central work. A review seems sensible now because the new committee structures have changed the titles and nature of several posts.
5. Since 1992 new people have joined the staff to fill the following posts: Director Windermere Centre, Secretary for Ecumenical Work, Children's Advocate, Editor of REFORM, Director of OT Studies at Westminster and Deputy General Secretary. In each case a member of the URC was appointed with the exception of the Westminster post. It is interesting to note that members of other churches were shortlisted for the Ecumenical Work and Children's Advocate posts.

Grounds for Restriction

6. The 1992 paper stated that "the URC is open to ecumenical partners in many ways at all levels of its life and therefore would be disinclined to restrict the selection of its central staff to URC people. There may be much to be gained from a wider basis of recruitment. The area of restricted posts should therefore be as small as possible. The grounds for restriction are that:
 - i. certain posts require an understanding of and a commitment to the churchmanship of the URC;
 - ii. the Assembly would not wish a large proportion of central posts to be held by persons from other churches, as this would alter the stance of the URC in public;
 - iii. we would expect most of the central staff to have a close link with a local URC, as the basis of their worship and fellowship.

7. In spite of the freedom, nominating groups have tended to appoint UR members. The importance of their UR knowledge and experience was probably a factor in their nomination. The only exception was in a specialised academic post.

Future Policy

8. It is clear that after four years, the less restrictive policy has not created any problems with regard to the overall balance or the balance within a particular area of work. However there may be some regret that the freedom has not been used to leaven the central team with the insights of other traditions. On the other hand, with only a small staff and every person having a particular role, there is a premium on the appointment of persons familiar with our culture. The only exception was at Westminster, where there is a small group of colleagues.
9. The Westminster Board of Studies suggested that 'the Principal and Director of Pastoral Studies ought to be members of the URC at the time of appointment'. The Training Committee has been consulted and the officers responded that 'at least' the holders of those two posts should be members of the URC. However it ought to be noted that the similar post responsible for Pastoral Studies at Northern is currently held by an Anglican. Moreover it would be in accord with present policy for such restricted posts also to be held by members of churches which belong to one or more of the three world bodies, WARC, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and CWM, who would become UR members on taking up their post.
10. Bearing these points in mind, it is suggested that the following recommendation both interprets the 1992 decision in the light of the new committee structures and confirms our experience since then.

Recommendation

Mission Council confirms the decision of the Nominations Committee that:

- i. the following posts be restricted to ministers of the URC:
General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
 - ii. the following posts be restricted to members of the URC:
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Secretary for Ministries
 - iii. the following posts be restricted to members of the URC and to members of those churches which belong to one or more of the three world bodies, WARC, Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council and CWM:
Secretary for International Church Relations
Principal, Westminster College
Director, Windermere
Chaplain, Yardley Hastings
 - iv. all other central staff appointments are open to persons of any church affiliation.
-

Pastoral

Convener: Revd John Johansen-Berg

Secretary: Revd John Waller

The committee will consider the cases of ministers which are referred to it by district councils or provincial synods their officers or committees. (See GA 1983 Reports, pp 5 and 6). By a Welfare sub-committee (2), it will also deal with all welfare and emergency matters including the use of welfare funds. Because of the nature of many of the cases, it is a confidential committee which will report, in general terms only, directly to the General Assembly.

1 The Committee has continued to carry out its responsibility in a number of situations where there is considerable hurt or difficulty. Its partnership with a number of other individuals or groups - including the Welfare Sub-Committee, the Provincial Moderators and the Westminster Pastoral Foundation - has again been a great encouragement and help. Although the work is confidential, it needs the continued prayers of the General Assembly.

2 A member of the Committee has undertaken some research into the cases that have come before the Committee since its inception in 1983. The total number is 120, although some of these have been on the agenda at several meetings. The Committee realises that this may only be the tip of an iceberg of ministerial difficulties, since many problems are not referred to it. With that in mind, the Committee has referred certain conclusions to the Ministries Committee - including the need for care in assessing candidates, the particular vulnerability of ministers in the early stages of ministry, and the need for ongoing care and appraisal. These are not new ideas but the particular pain of a few highlights the need of all.

3 There have been several changes in personnel since the last report. The Convener, Alasdair Walker resigned after a period of devoted pastoral service. Shirley Paton has replaced Ray Heritage as Convener of the Welfare Sub-Committee and Tony Burnham has relinquished the post of Secretary while remaining a member of the Committee.

Welfare and Emergency Sub-Committee

4 This is a sub-committee of the Assembly Pastoral Committee and as such has carried out its duties as laid down in the recent reorganisation.

5 The welfare work of the Church has continued in a satisfactory manner and the committee has been able to give assistance to ministers and their families, especially to those who fall outside other areas of the Church's care.

6 During 1995 the sub-committee disbursed the sum of £31,100 from Welfare Funds, of which £13,530 was given to help in 71 different cases. The balance of £17,570 will be made available to the bursary funds of the six schools towards the fees of children of URC ministers and missionaries. In addition, Christmas gifts were made available to 562 widow/ers at a total cost of £33,900.

7 The work of the sub-committee is considerably helped by the guidance of the Provincial Moderators and this is greatly appreciated.

Training

Convener: The Revd Dr John Sutcliffe
Secretary: The Revd Dr Catherine Middleton

The Committee will encourage and enable the integration of the training of the whole people of God and to this end will seek to influence the philosophy and methodology of learning; the core content of courses; and the deployment of resources. It gives direct support to, and acts in partnership with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship; Discipleship and Witness; Church and Society, and Youth and Children's Work Committees, and synods and districts, as they respond to the needs of local churches in training matters. It collaborates with the Ministries Committee in the training of ministers of word and sacraments, CRCWs and Lay Preachers. It also supports all other committees and task groups, in particular the Ecumenical Committee and the Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group. It also gives oversight to the YLTO and YCWT programmes.

1. Training Review

During the year the greater part of the Committee's time has been given to the Review of Training. This survey of lay and ministerial training has involved several extra meetings and consultations conducted by correspondence and visits. It quickly became clear that the issues were complex and proposals for their solution not easy to find within a restrained budget. We commend the Training Review to the Assembly.

2. Recognition of Courses

Because of the pressure of other work the Committee has not been able to review every Course on which ministerial candidates are currently placed in the light of the resolution about criteria accepted by the Assembly in 1995. This task will be treated as a priority in 1996-97. The East Midlands Ministerial Training Course was reviewed and has been accepted as suitable for URC candidates. The West Midlands Course will be dealt with in the normal quinquennial review process.

3. Training for Learning and Serving

3.1 The Committee has been very encouraged that 25 people joined the Course in its first year and that they represented a wide geographical spread. They have shown much enthusiasm for the Course and have spoken highly of the experience of Course Weekends. The Rev David A L Jenkins of the Thames North Province has been appointed national co-ordinator for the Course.

3.2 It should be noted that with this Assembly recruitment to the Exploring the Faith Course ceases. Candidates on the Course have until the Assembly in the year 2000 to complete. There will be no facilities for completing the Course after that date.

4. Developing Discipleship

The Committee welcomes the launch of the post-membership training course, "Developing Discipleship". This course has been tested in a variety of churches and having been adopted by the Methodist Church, is now published as an ecumenical venture.

5. Youth and Children's Work Training Team

5.1 Relationships in Provinces between all training officers have developed quickly over the last year. There has been a move towards integrated training teams with much more emphasis on co-operation and collaboration. This has been facilitated by the increasing size of the team allowing almost every Province to have its own officer. Three new team members have been appointed since September: John Brown in Mersey Province, Leo Roberts in North Western Province and Henry Playle in Eastern Province. In January, Janet Turner moved into her new post in Northern Province.

5.2 Key features of the work have been developing action in relation to the Good Practice Pack; working to formulate local church strategies; seeking new ways of developing effective networks within Districts and Provinces. Kaleidoscope courses for children's workers have been part of this process as have Spectrum programmes for youth workers. The newly re-written Spectrum was published in May this year to which the officers of the training team and the National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer have made a significant contribution. An increasing emphasis in the need to develop the volunteer tutor network has broadened the possibilities for training locally and team members are to be thanked for their work in this. The newly formed URC/Methodist Training Diploma is also now in its first year and is seeking accreditation during its first run from the Open University.

6. Shortage of Ordinands

We register concern at the diminishing number of ordinands offering themselves for training for the URC ministry and urge further efforts to recruit ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers.

7. Course and College Inspections

7.1 The inspection of the Southern Diocesan Ministerial Training Course has been completed and the recommendations of the inspectors are being discussed by the participating churches: Anglican, Methodist and URC. It was agreed that the East Midlands Ministerial Training Course should be validated for ordination training for URC ordinands, and that the Salford Urban Mission Course working in conjunction with the Manchester "Faith in Living Course" be validated for Church Related Community Worker training.

7.2 This year ecumenical inspections will be made of the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course and the Thames North Ministerial Training Course. The Training Committee will be represented respectively by the Rev Drs Lesley Husselbee and John Sutcliffe.

7.3 Ecumenical Inspections are currently organised by the Church of England. The organisers have asked the URC to provide them with a list of people who may be called on to take part in this very key aspect of ecumenical partnership. The Training Committee will welcome recommendations of suitable people from District and Provincial Committees.

8. URC Scholarship

The availability of a scholarship of £30,000 over three years from September 1996, was advertised in the December 1995 issue of Reform. We are delighted to report that the Revd Julian Tempeton has been appointed.

RESOLUTIONS

Training

- 41** Assembly agrees that:
- a) the URC should become a member of the proposed Ecumenical Strategy Group, and
 - b) the URC should be represented on the Group by the Secretary for Training and a member of the Training Committee.

Ecumenical Strategy Group

Over the past few years it has become clear that until the churches could plan in partnership, no satisfactory solution would be found to some of the problems raised by the part-time courses, colleges and changing patterns of ministerial education. In last year's Report we mentioned these issues and the need

for the ecumenical validation of Courses. Further, it became clear during the Review of Training that there was no common view within the Church about how the URC should deal with the over-provision of places in Colleges belonging to or historically associated with the Church. All our Colleges teach ecumenically, two are integral parts of active Federations and also are strongly related to part-time Courses. It would be vastly unreasonable to make proposals which affected the URC Colleges which did not take into account their ecumenical partners. The issues which concern us are also alive in other churches. The Ecumenical Strategy Group will bring together representatives of the Churches precisely to study and make recommendations about some of the issues which we have felt most needed to be tackled ecumenically. This new Group will provide a forum for much needed partnership and the Committee welcomes is warmly.

42 Assembly agrees that:

the post of National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer should be extended until 31st December 1998.

Provincial Review - National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer

As is made clear in the Review of Training, we welcome the development of Provincial teams. These differ in size but variously include: the Moderator, Youth and Children's Work Officer, Missioners, Evangelists, Training Officers and other full-time, part-time and voluntary officers. We believe that the closer such teams can work in partnership and to an agreed strategy, the greater will be their efficiency and impact in the Province.

As part of the Review of Training an informal but thorough review has been conducted of the work of the National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer. It is recognised that the demands of this post will change as patterns of working within Provinces change. But there will remain the central task of managing the team of Provincial Children and Youth Work Trainers some of whom are not members of the URC and many of whom will want, after a relatively short time, to move on to other professional employment. It is important that these workers are not disadvantaged because of being employed by the church and that they remain at the forefront of professional development. We conclude that no one else in the church is able to provide for the professional development of these workers other than the National Officer. The post is currently secure until December 1996. The Mission Council meeting in March 1996, agreed that more work needs to be undertaken on the matter and is proposing that, to enable this to happen, the post should be extended until 31st December 1998.

43 Assembly adopts the maintenance grant structure for ordinands as outlined in the Training Review Report.

Proposed New Ways of Financing Ordinands

The Training Review argues that only if more of the Training budget is spent on training will it be possible to develop the Church's training programme. The Review Group proposes that as from September 1997, maintenance grants for newly accepted ordinands should be limited to a sum which in other context is more in keeping with a sponsorship grant. The proposed maximum grant will be significantly more realistic than an LEA grant, but will not alone be sufficient for the maintenance of dependants.

44 Assembly adopts the proposals outlined in the Training Review Report.

TRAINING REVIEW

The Background

1. The Remit of the Training Review

1.1 In September 1993, Mission Council requested that there should be a review of training. A small group was appointed to outline the remit of such a group. Concerns had been raised about Assembly's scheme for Youth and Children work training. It had become clear that the four colleges used by the URC for the training of ordinands were finding it increasingly difficult to gather viable numbers for courses. There was concern that while money was available for the training of ordinands, there was very little money specifically set aside for lay training. Many Provinces were beginning to appoint Training Officers, but this had been done in an ad hoc way which gave little national cohesion. Resources for training varied widely depending on the financial abilities and priorities of each Province.

1.2 In Spring 1995, the newly formed Training Committee volunteered to conduct this review and to report, if possible, to the 1996 General Assembly. We hope it will help the Committee that when, in this Report, we are referring to the Training Committee in its 'review mode' we write of it as 'the Review Group'.

2. Method of Working

2.1 The Review Group has met on three occasions. This includes two intensive residential meetings. Between meetings work was allocated to members of the Group.

The following research has been undertaken:

- a) a postal survey of Provinces to discover who is engaging in training;
- b) a detailed study of the Youth and Children's Work Training Programme;
- c) visits by the Convener or Secretary to Mansfield College, Oxford; Northern College, Manchester; The Queen's College, Birmingham and Westminster College, Cambridge;
- d) visit by the Convener to the URC College Staff Training meeting, July 1995;
- e) an enquiry into the training commitments of all Assembly Committees;
- f) a review of the work of the National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer.

2.2 In September 1995, the Review group sought the views of members of the Mission Council, the Ecumenical Committee, Principals of Colleges and Courses, Provincial Training Officers, Youth and Children's Work trainers and Ministerial Training representatives from other denominations. A central question concerned proposals about the use to be made of the four denominational Colleges. Members of the Review Group visited various Colleges and groups to talk about the proposals.

2.3 Responses were received from 77 sources, several of which represented groups of people. Opinions were significantly divided on the matter of the Colleges. Other denominations responded with interest. They were at one in urging that issues concerning the future of ordination training should be considered ecumenically.

3. Main Directions

3.1 The Mission Council discussed the Review Group's first detailed draft report in March 1996 and asked the Group to present to the Assembly a descriptive outline of the main directions in which it would like to see the church move.

3.2 Within the context of the Training Budget how can the Church be better equipped to do the work to which, it believes, it is called by God? This meant looking at youth and children's work training, elders training, lay and leadership training generally, and ministerial education. **It quickly became clear that if we have a genuine concern about the whole church more resources will have to be given to lay training.**

3.3 At the same time the Review Group wished to take seriously some of the criticisms it received about education for ministry, for example, that some ordinands knew little about the history and traditions of the URC, that they were not adequately equipped by some of the three year part-time courses and that, in the matter of training, we were not in line with our partners. For instance, all Methodist candidates must be accredited lay preachers before they can be accepted as ordinands; they also undertake probationary studies. **As evidence was gathered, the Review Group grew in the conviction that at certain points there need to be no distinction between the learning of lay people and of ordinands and that learning together would be a mutual benefit.**

3.4 This Report points up certain directions in which the Review Group would like to see development. The word 'outlined' is used deliberately in the resolution. A brief descriptive Report can be only an outline. The review Group recognises that the implementation of the Report will involve consultation with other Assembly Committees, a detailed reworking of some working procedures of the Church and that in certain areas much work remains to be done. **The question is, does the Assembly wish to go in the directions the Review Group is proposing?**

4.1 **The Review Group believes that a National Policy is needed in order to use all the resources of the Church most effectively and to make available to the whole Church the most appropriate range of opportunities for learning and training.** The presuppositions of such a policy are that the Church is committed to encouraging its members and ministers alike to be as well equipped as possible and that the pursuit of the highest possible standards is part of its offering of service to God. **The main elements in this policy will be:-**

- a) **collaboration at all levels of church life.**
- b) **an emphasis on lay people which recognises the context of learning and training**
- c) **the development of new patterns of education for ministry.**

4.2 **The Review Group believes that the National Policy outlined below can be implemented within the current training budget provided there is a significant reallocation of spending.**

5. Collaboration at all levels of church life

5.1 **The Provinces have a key role in organising and delivering education and training with the framework of a national policy.** During the last year several Provinces have begun to develop their own training teams. The teams are varied in size and aim. A Provincial team may include the Moderator, Youth and Children's Work Trainer, the Training Officer, the Missioner and other voluntary officers concerned with ministry, adult education, stewardship and work with children and young people. (Different titles in the Provinces for the various officers). Some teams are concerned wholly with training, some have development added to their brief. **The Review Group welcomes the creation of such teams** and notes that all the recently appointed Youth and Children's Work Training Officers have been appointed to both a national and provincial team.

5.2 This is a first step. **The Review Group would like to see this model of partnership extended between Provinces.** We see great potential benefit in the trainers in three or four neighbouring Provinces meeting to share ideas, insights, material and other training resources. **Colleges and Course staff in the region and, where appropriate, national officers of the Church should be drawn into such consultations.**

5.3 A closer partnership between Provincial, Colleges and Course staff could lead both to the greater use of Colleges buildings by the Church and of College and Course staff both on and off College campuses. Similarly, creative partnerships should be developed, where it does not already exist, between the Provinces, St Andrews Hall, The Windermere Centre and Yardley Hastings.

5.4 Once a year a three day meeting is held for the various people involved in training. The membership of this 'national trainers network' is self selected and ad hoc. **The Review Group believes that the 'network' is a useful resource for increasing partnership and that more attempt needs to be made to extend the range of those involved.**

6. An emphasis on lay people which recognises the context of learning and training

6.1 It is evident, from most of the reports the Review Group received, that the churches are becoming increasingly dependent on lay leadership and lay partnerships in leadership. This positive development finds expression in a variety of ways. Sometimes it is centred on the work of elders. In some places teams are being established composed variously of stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers, lay preachers, youth workers, leaders of worker's groups, workers in the community, workers associated with industrial chaplaincies, musicians, specialists in the care of buildings... Other teams are concerned with only one aspect of church life: worship, pastoral care, children's work, world development. Some churches rely almost exclusively on lay leadership.

6.2 The local church or District Council is one aspect of the context of learning; of even more significance is the social context. Learning and training must take seriously particular social contexts; unemployment, stress at work, at variety of expressions of family life, people of other faiths, the need for care in the community, varying expressions of youth culture, poverty, interest in and suspicion of the EEC, the lessening of interdependence and so on.

6.3 **The Review Group believes that the Church should both feel encouraged that this involvement of lay people is taking place and that it should be committed to giving its lay people the maximum possible amount of support and appropriate training. This will require considerable flexibility in the style and content of training available and adaptability about the place of delivery. This commitment will also have financial implications.**

6.4 We note some opportunities for study, at a variety of levels, which are currently available: *Members Together, Developing Discipleship, Kaleidoscope, Spectrum, the Trainer's Diploma, Training for Learning and Serving* and training opportunities available through the *Open Learning Centre, Manchester Christian Institute* and the ordination Courses and Theological Colleges which welcome lay participation. In addition, there are many courses offered by Provinces and Assembly Committees.

6.5 Many of our churches depend on the services of Lay Preachers. Currently, there are some 600 nationally accredited Lay Preachers in the URC and others recognised locally. Many of these have reached or are approaching retirement and there are relatively few new recruits, especially young lay preachers. **The Review Group would like to see more young people training to be lay preachers, the creation of more worship leadership teams which include people of all ages and the adoption of a system like the 'On Note' system of the Methodist Church which provides for a trainee lay preacher or worship leader to work alongside a senior lay preacher as a team.**

6.6 The training of Lay Preachers has been the subject of debate in the Church and led to the introduction of the *'Training for Learning and Serving'* course. The Review Group notes that other avenues of training include, or might include, courses at the first year (or Level 1) of ordination training and local ecumenical courses which are recognised by the Training Committee. Representatives of the URC are discussing other options with our ecumenical partners, including the creation of distance learning material. We welcome the attention being given to Lay Preachers by the Ministries Committee.

6.7 A review of the work of the Youth Leadership and Youth and Children's Work Trainer Programme was conducted which showed the range and depth of work undertaken. Co-operation with other trainers in Provinces, with ecumenical partners and with a variety of national projects and events was also highlighted. It is clear from what has been written above about the development in some Provinces of teams, that context and therefore the work of some YLTO/YCWTs is changing. Gradually the agreement made in September 1994, 'to develop the Assembly/Province partnership and give greater ownership and accountability within Provinces' is being implemented. **The Review Group believes that a highly skilled, flexible and integrated team of YLTOs/YCWTs is a vital part of the lay training network.**

6.8 **A responsible commitment to support lay people and provide a range of opportunities for learning and training will involve a significant reallocation of spending within the training budget of the Church.**

7. **The development of new patterns of education for ministry**

7.1 The Review Group believes that Church Related Community Workers should continue to be trained by the Salford Urban Mission and the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry partnership. The last review of Church Related Community Worker training indicated that the possibility of offering part-time training should be explored. The Review group is glad that this is receiving attention.

7.2 Throughout the rest of this section, unless it is specifically stated otherwise, ministry/ministers refers to those being trained to serve both as Non-Stipendiary and Stipendiary ministers.

7.3 In 1995 URC General Assembly agreed criteria by which the Training Committee will be guided in validating part-time ecumenical Courses. This was a first step in ensuring the quality of education for ministry. The Training Committee will be vigilant in studying Course submissions and in encouraging Provincial representatives on governing bodies of Courses to take an active, critical and creative part in ensuring the highest possible standards are achieved and that the actual demands of ministry are addressed by the Courses. **The Review Group believes that the minimum theological qualification for ordination should be the Undergraduate Diploma in Theology or its equivalent.** (In the terms adopted by most Universities offering modularised courses, this is Levels 1 and 2 of a first degree or 240 credit points.)

7.4 **Currently, the URC, like some of our partner denominations, has too many college places and too few ordinands.** It has become impossible to create worthwhile year groups of URC students in the Westminster, Mansfield, Northern and The Queen's Colleges. As was mentioned in 2 above, the Review Group sought the views of a wide range of people about the number of Colleges in which the Church should place students. **Like our partner denominations, the URC is also spending a disproportionate amount of its training budget on ministerial education.** The use of the phrase 'partner denominations' is significant. All 'our' colleges are to a greater or lesser degree involved with and dependent on working in partnership with other denominations. All our ministers are ecumenically trained. Because of this it would be very difficult for the URC to make unilateral decisions about the use of colleges and, in any case, the Review Group's enquiries showed there was no emerging common mind about the matter.

7.5 It was, therefore, especially welcome that during the course of the Review Group's deliberations, work on the proposal to establish an Ecumenical Strategy Group for Theological Training came to fruition. This has been developed in an informal meeting of church officers concerned with ministerial training from denominations which already conduct much of their ordination training jointly. In order that there can be a comprehensive assessment of the joint needs of the churches, **the Review Group recommends that the URC should become an active member of the Ecumenical Strategy Group.** But the Review Group feels the URC should make it clear that it needs recommendations from the Ecumenical Strategy Group in time for them to be presented to the 1998 meeting of the General Assembly with a view to their implementation in the year 2000 or 2001, and that if the Strategy Group cannot work to this timetable the URC will be obliged to work independently.

7.6 This ecumenical planning is only one part of the development of a new pattern of education for ministry. **The second part is that emphasis should be moved away from initial training to lifelong education in ministry.** Lifelong learning, part-time learning, in-service training, flexibility about emphases in work, distance learning, are all common in other fields; the Church can learn positive and negative lessons from the experience of others. The Review Group have also observed the policy of the Church of England in the use of Course and mixed-mode training (a mixture of part-time, full-time residential and distance learning training), and is aware of a debate on the same subject in the Methodist Church. Members of the URC have expressed the hope that there can be continuity in the training process within the Church. Thus, beginning with childhood, they see each new stage of learning not as a new beginning but as part of a continuous process: learning in childhood and youth, confirmation preparation, post confirmation training, learning for particular tasks or circumstances, lay preacher training, ministerial or Church Related Community Worker training, advanced studies in a particular field and regular in-service training should form complimentary parts of a whole.

7.7 The Review Group has listened also to the complaints of students about the level of maintenance grants given to them and their families. These grants are as generous as possible, nonetheless, some families are left in serious difficulties and financial hardship is the cause of strain in some relationships. While the Review Group believes that, as long as they are paid, maintenance grants should be realistically adequate, **it is strongly of the view` that too much of the training budget is not spent on training but is spent on maintenance.**

7.8 The Review Group has been told by many people that more young people should be urged to respond to the call to ministry (SM and NSM) and that the Church needs many more Non-Stipendiary ministers. **The call for more younger ministers is based on the danger that the current age profile of the ministry will give the impression that ministry belongs only to people of a certain age, the cost of training in relation to the average length of service offered and the probable shortage of ministers by the year 2000.** The ministry of the Church should reflect the energy and diversity of younger and older adults. **The call for more NSMs reflects the changing context of local church life, financial reality and the enrichment which has been experienced where stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers and lay people have worked together creatively as a team.**

7.9 The Review Group would like to see developed a pattern of lifelong education in ministry based on: **a) pre-entry courses, b) learning in college and/or on a Course with internship and/or placement work, c) post ordination training and regular in-service training.**

7.9.1 *Pre-entry courses.* The pre-entry expectations for Methodist Church ordinands have been noted already. It seems to the Review Group not unreasonable to expect that a person offering him or herself for ministry or to become a Church Related Community Worker should be enthusiastic enough about the faith and the church to have taken at least part of one of the recognised post-confirmation training courses, e.g. *Training for Learning and Serving*, or *Developing Discipleship*. There is no age barrier to either of these courses; people in their mid-teens would benefit from taking either. **All candidates should be expected to attend the pre-entry course provided by the Training Committee on the History and Traditions of the URC.**

7.9.2 Learning in College and/or on a Course.

Route One

A four year full-time course in one of the recognised Colleges, with a one year internship or placements throughout. Ordinands taking this route will be subject to a major review after two years.

Route Two

- a) A four year part-time course which includes placement work, or
- b) a three year part-time course, plus a pre-ordination year in placement. During this year a course of study worked out between the Province and the ordinand will be followed under the oversight of one of the church's colleges.

Ordinands taking Route Two will be subject to a major review after two years.

Route Three

The Review Group notes with interest the trialing of mixed-mode training programmes (a mixture of part-time, distance learning and full-time training) in the Church of England. This route is not currently an option for URC ordinands but may be included in the proposals about the future of training from the Ecumenical Strategy Group.

7.9.3 **Wherever possible, candidates for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry, lay preachers and lay people should be trained together.**

8. **Post Ordination and regular in-service training**

8.1 **The Review Group expects ministers and Church Related Community Workers to engage in continuing education to develop their knowledge, skills and spirituality in their early years and continue this throughout their ministries.**

8.2 In-service training costs money and time. **The Review Group believes that time should be negotiated between the Ordinand, his/her first church, the receiving District Council and the receiving/sending Province about an appropriate pattern of three years' post-ordination training. This will form part of the first settlement agreement. The review Group believes that time for in-service training should be a part of every subsequent settlement agreement.** Provincial In-service Training Officers are in the best position to keep a record of training undertaken by ministers and to review this at least every five, but preferably three, years. A minister who will not take seriously his/her own development ought not to expect to be taken seriously by those s/he leads.

8.3 In other walks of life, in-service training is closely linked to appraisal. The Review Group hopes that ministerial appraisal will become a creative and supportive aspect of church life and that it will play an important part in helping to determine educational needs and in setting goals at all stages of ministry.

8.4 **The Provinces, Colleges, Courses and Training Committee should collaborate in producing proposals for an initial post-ordination training structure and programme.**

9. Finance

9.1 The Review Group is aware of the urgent need to rebalance the use of the training budget. At present, considerable resources are available for ordination and CRCW training and the in-service training of ministers. **The view has been expressed that too much of this is spent on maintenance and not on training.** In contrast, very few resources are available for all forms of lay training.

9.2 To begin the process of making it possible to develop a new training programme, **the Training Review proposes that for new ordinands on a full-time course, the maximum amount of maintenance grant offered per ordinand will be limited from Autumn 1997 to about the sum which, in other context would be thought of as a sponsorship.** This and the re-allocation of the budget has been discussed with the Ministerial Training Fund Committee and will need to be monitored by that Committee in the light of the discussions of the Ecumenical Strategy Group on Ministerial Education. Where a candidate has not previously received an LEA grant, s/he will be expected to apply for one.

9.3 **This proposal will mean that the number of candidates taking a full-time college course will be reduced significantly.** The Review Group is not claiming that part-time training is in every respect the equivalent of full-time training; **we are looking at a quite different mode of lifelong education in ministry which, for many, will begin with a part-time course.**

9.4 If this proposal is accepted by the Assembly there will be a period between 1997 and the implementation of the Ecumenical Strategy Group proposal when the financial impact on Northern, Mansfield and possibly Westminster colleges could cause difficulties. The Review Group hopes that some new funding will go to the Colleges in recompense for their involvement in in-service and lay training. It may be necessary, in addition to this, and for only a very limited time, for there to be negotiation with the Colleges resulting in the payment of grants in lieu of students. The precedent for this is to be found in the grant paid by the Church to St. Andrew's Hall.

10. Further Work

10.1 The Training Review Group knows that whether or not the Assembly accepts the direction of development outlined in this Report, it has far from completed this round of work. Before further work is begun, the Group needs to know if the Assembly accepts the major emphases: collaboration, lay training, the development of new patterns of education in ministry and a reallocation of the training budget.

10.2 It is clear to the Review Group that in looking to the future, the Church cannot both plan to equip the whole church and continue with its present largely ad hoc patterns; more than that, the present patterns of ministerial education based predominantly in four denominational institutions are no longer viable.

Youth and Children's Work

Convener: The Revd Stephen Thornton
Secretary: The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn

This Committee supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people, including the policy for the YLTO and YCWT programme, giving oversight to Pilots, the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings, and relates to FURY Council. It also ensures that its concerns are fully taken into account in Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, Church and Society and Discipleship and Witness committees facilitating the involvement of young people in all the councils of the church.

1 VISION & PRACTICE

'The United Reformed Church is great on vision, but is short on putting vision into practice,' is a comment of visitors from the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, after a visit to our church in March this year.

2

2.1 **Unfinished Business** is the title of the latest report of the Consultative Group on Ministry among Children (CGMC), which looks at children and young people in our society. It examines carefully the influences on our young people; their place in the life of the Church; what is happening in school and education generally, and it looks forward to the future. We commend it again as a vital resource for our work. A fully-booked Windermere weekend, exploring the issues raised in a practical way, was led by the Children's Advocate. Other meetings have been held in Provinces.

2.2 The Church As Child

One of the chapters of *Unfinished Business* which has proved most useful this year is number 5, which looks at different models of the Church. The most striking is that of *'The Church as a Child'*, and we believe it has in it a stimulus for growth and revitalising of our Churches.

3

3.1 'Children Challenge & Youth Search '96'

The Committee has a deep concern, not only for the children and young people already within the life of the Church, but also for the far greater number as yet untouched by the Church's faith and life.

3.2 'Children Challenge' seeks to help our congregations think seriously about children, over a period of time, and discover how we can serve them, and 'Youth Search '96' seeks to find out more about the young people we have contact with, and how they can be better informed about the opportunities the Church provides.

It is our hope that all our Churches will share fully in both enterprises.

4

4.1 Pilots Diamond Jubilee

Pilots this year celebrates 60 years of service with children and young people, and many in today's Church testify to the big influence which Pilots has had on them.

4.2 On October 26th there is to be a Diamond Jubilee Celebration in Sutton in Ashfield, and we encourage all Pilot Companies to attend.

4.3 The Committee is convinced of the continued importance of Pilots, as our non uniformed organisation for boys and girls, committed to building people into the life of the church. However, we are not complacent, and are engaged in a major review of Pilots, helped by a splendid document called '*sea-change*', produced by our partners, The Congregational Federation.

4.4 One of the felt needs is for a Development Officer who has the time and skills to develop Pilots in our Churches. This would continue the sterling work of the Revd Derek Gardiner who ceases his work as Master Pilot in the Autumn.

5 BIG BLUE PLANET

We rejoice in the publishing of this new ecumenically-produced resource of hymns for young children to sing with adults. It is good that Mrs June Baker, a member of the URC, wrote the tune and the words of the hymn that gives the book its title, and the tune 'For Micro Chips', which has drawn so much publicity. Do use it.

6 SPECTRUM

Spectrum has been the training resource which has been used by many in the church who work with young people over the years. It has now been rewritten and relaunched and should be a splendid ecumenical resource for youth workers into the next century. With its twin, Kaleidoscope, for workers with children, we have excellent material for our training programmes.

7 FURY COUNCIL

7.1 FURY Assembly

48 Districts were represented at the Annual Assembly of FURY held in January 1996. This was an exciting occasion, with debates on issues such as French Nuclear Testing and concern about the effect of the national lottery on young people.

One of the many highlights this year was the input of 'Roly Bain' - a highly respected Christian Clown, who was Chaplain to the Assembly. Motions passed at the Assembly will be the basis for much of the work of FURY Council.

7.2 FURY Council

FURY Council, now into its 4th year, and the representative body for young people in the church, is beginning to be very effective in its work. In continuing to follow up motions from last year's Assembly, it is working on possible prayer resources, planning 'What Do You Think?' (Pre-General Assembly event), promoting the issue about Fair Trade, involvement in Ecumenical Youth events, this amongst continuing to network in the URC structures at all levels. The 12 Provincial representatives relate to the appropriate structures in their Province, and we believe there is now a two-way process of views and comments.

7.3 Friends of FURY

Friends of FURY is an opportunity for over 25's to offer practical support and encouragement to FURY.

7.4 There is now an opportunity for a church to become a corporate member - for £50 your church will receive a welcome pack, 3 special FURY Information Service' 3 times a year and a membership certificate and regular Friends of FURY newsletters. It also helps the FURY FUND, which enables young people without money to attend youth events. Application forms will be available at the Assembly.

8 YOUTH WORK

8.1 Connect '95

Connect 95 was very well organised and thoroughly appreciated by the 600 young people representing all Provinces. Those who couldn't get to Newcastle missed a treat. Unfortunately, due to a less than hoped for attendance, the event made a monetary loss, to place alongside a major 'spiritual gain'.

Our Committee is committed to see something similar continue and believes that an event every year instead of every two will carry more momentum.

8.2 25 Years of FURY 1972-1997

Next year it is planned to have a National Gathering at Yardley Hastings to mark the 25 years of FURY. It is envisaged that this will be very much a celebration and we are looking towards an attendance of 1,250 on the weekend of 2/3/4 May 1997. You will be hearing much more of this event - look out for the publicity - coming out soon!

8.3 Networking

In May 1996 we held the first joint PYS/DYS-PCW/DCW Secretaries Consultation in Welwyn Garden City which was successful - we are very grateful for the work carried out in Districts and Provinces by this very dedicated group of volunteers, to enable the work amongst children and young people to go forward.

8.4 Good Practice

The use of this pack is being monitored. It is hoped in the future to offer an insurance package to churches regarding insurance for youth work which would offer personal accident. We also hope to offer comprehensive information on insurance issues affecting youth and children's work in the local church.

8.5 Volunteer Opportunities

The overseas volunteer programme co-ordinated by the Ecumenical Committee is being transferred to the Scottish Churches Exchange Programme. In the autumn we hope to produce information available to local churches detailing volunteer opportunities available to young people in the URC which will include: Time for God, Council for World Mission, including Training in Mission (TIM) and the Community Team programme at Yardley Hastings.

8.6 Ethiopia

The Secretary for Youth Work had the opportunity in the autumn of '95 to go with a youth workers visit to Ethiopia, organised by Christian Aid. An experience which has enabled him to inform young people and youth workers about what is really happening regarding development issues in countries such as Ethiopia. He is available to share these experiences in Districts and local churches with a presentation involving audio/visual and a short act of worship.

8.7 Ecumenical Opportunities

There are two exciting projects we have been involved in:

National Youth Prayer Day '96 - for youth workers, held on June 8th in Birmingham. An imaginative initiative involving over 20 youth organisations, to help youth workers experience different modes of prayer that will encourage and inspire youth workers to share these in their local situation.

National Youth Sunday - November 24th supported by the major denominations, resource material is available for use by local churches, to enable young people to take part in worship. This has been a successful project in recent years.

9 YARDLEY HASTINGS

The Yardley Hastings Centre continues to play a key role in our Churches life. Since its opening over 6,000 young people and almost 1,000 adults have stayed at the Centre, with many more day visitors.

One of the many successes have been the Pick 'n Mix weekends, which allow local church youth clubs to choose from a wide range of workshops, run by the Chaplain and Community Team. These weekends encourage young people's skills and gifts and allow their leaders time to 'be' without the responsibility of running the event.

All this work and expansion done to the highest possible standard, has put great strain on the staff, and we are grateful to Mission Council for help to ease the load.

RESOLUTION

Youth and Children's Work

- 45** Assembly rejoices in 60 years of Pilots and urges churches to use the development of Pilots as one of the means of growth for their work with children and young people.
-

Advocacy and Stewardship

Task Group

Convenor: The Revd Julian Macro
Secretary: The Revd Bill Wright

- (i) To communicate a vision of the work and the needs of the wider church to the local church.
 - (ii) To enable the local church to capture a vision of God's mission for itself, to plan its life, to challenge its members about their financial and other responsibilities and to communicate local visions and needs to the Mission Council.
 - (iii) To help the church at all levels to exercise real stewardship of the gifts entrusted to it.
-

1 Introduction

1.1 Our work in the last year has focused on *enabling* local churches to capture a vision of what God wants them to be and to help them release the resources to make it possible. To that end we have encouraged them to ask three questions:-

- Where are we?
- Where do we want to be?
- What resources do we need to get there?

2 Vision Workshops

2.1 The Workshops have been the means of enabling churches to capture a vision and we reported last year that the demand from local churches to hold workshops exceeded the time available to run them. In the last twelve months the demand has grown so we produced a set of leaders notes to enable others to lead the Workshops and thanks to co-operation from Provincial Evangelists, Training Officers, Development Officers etc. we have been able to meet all the requests. It is still very early in the process to report the difference the workshops have had on churches but it is interesting to note how many churches share the same concerns and desires.

- Increase in membership especially among younger families
- Livelier, more relevant worship with greater congregational participation
- Greater commitment from all members
- More involvement in the community
- The need to make evangelism an important part of the church programme
- Young people in the church
- Giving of the congregation to exceed expenditure.

2.2 Churches have now begun the process of producing their plans and we look forward to reporting that they have taken the necessary action to turn them into reality.

2.3 Co-operation with the Discipleship and Witness Committee and those in Provincial enabling roles has been most useful and currently we are in the process of developing the workshop material for use in District Councils to help produce a District Mission Strategy.

3 TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours)

3.1 TRIO continues to have a dramatic impact on local church finances, the average overall increase in direct giving in those churches where it has been some time since the congregation were challenged remains at 80% with money recovered from the Inland Revenue increasing by 100%. **One church achieved a spectacular overall increase of 120%.** The picture remains much the same in churches which have an annual challenge with increases in direct giving averaging 35% and money recovered from the Inland Revenue increasing by 50%.

3.2 Since our last report a further 160 copies of TRIO have been sold, of which 57 were copies of TRIO for small churches, bringing the total number of copies sold to over 600. The demand for the small churches version, after the publication of an article about TRIO in Reform, is so great that production is only just managing to keep ahead of orders. However, we still have a considerable way to go to achieve the Mission Council objective, that every church uses TRIO (or a similar programme) by the year 2000.

3.3 It has been particularly gratifying that a growing number of churches are acknowledging the need to prepare a budget and challenge the congregation annually. The TRIO Follow Up programme has been in great demand to facilitate this.

4 Stewardship

4.1 '*Our Response*' is a resource for ministers and elders which has been revised and is now available in book form has also been used to present a financial challenge but more usually it has been in conjunction with a broad based Stewardship programme.

4.2 *GEM (Giving to Enable Mission)* is the working title of a successor to TRIO which has been broadened to challenge people to give proportionately of their time and abilities as well as their money, and is being produced ecumenically. Whilst this is desirable it does mean that the pace is somewhat slower than if we were producing it alone. At the time of compiling this report we hope it might be published towards the end of the year.

5 Treasurer's Pack

5.1 We are grateful for the co-operation of Provincial offices in enabling us to distribute this pack at Autumn Synods. The pack contained samples of all the literature available to Church treasurers from Tavistock Place, as well as literature from the Charities Aid Foundation and information about assistance with covenants. Reports indicate that church treasurers have found this helpful. Has this pack been used in your church?

6 'Giving to the Church'

6.1 This leaflet, which was distributed to all local churches at Autumn Synods, outlined in broad terms how the money which is given to the church is used, and indicated the different ways in which individual people can contribute to the church. Indications are that it was well received and put to good use. Demand was such that an additional 10,000 leaflets had to be printed.

6.2 The leaflet provided an opportunity to correct what was obviously a misunderstanding about the contributions local churches are asked to make to the Ministry and Mission Fund. The amount local churches are asked for is a contribution and churches are free to engage in dialogue to increase or decrease the amount the Province or District suggests they should contribute, but having agreed a figure it is expected that it will be the amount contributed.

Churches expect their members to give proportionately and generously and to ask 'how much should I give' rather than 'how little can I get away with'. Yet, there are many churches which take the latter view with regard to their contribution to the Ministry and Mission Fund.

7 Legacies

7.1 In response to requests from local churches, the Retired Ministers Housing Society and the Resource Planning Advisory Committee we are currently preparing a leaflet which is designed to encourage members to remember the work of the church when they make their will.

7.2 Many of our churches have buildings which require, or will require, capital sums to be spent on major renovation if they are to be suitable for the twenty first century and legacies could provide a rich source of revenue for this work. Equally the Retired Ministers Housing Society is continually in need of houses, or the funds to purchase them for retired ministers. It is helpful if legacies are left in general terms so that decisions can be taken in the light of needs when the money is received, alternately preferences can be stated. It is these lines of thought that will shape our thinking as we produce the leaflet.

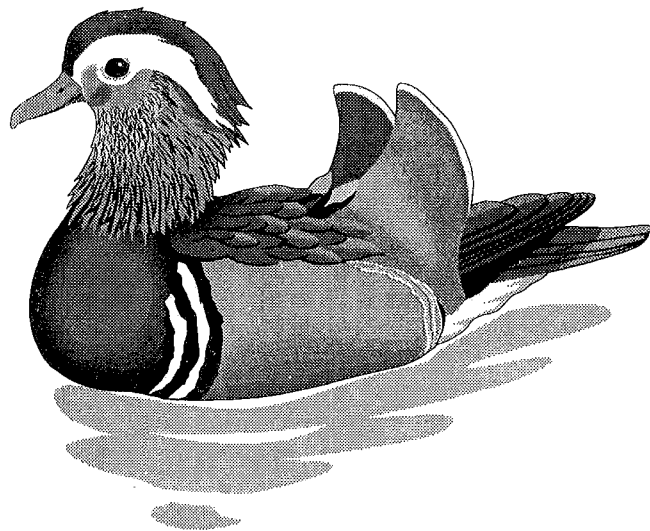
8 **Our Thanks**

8.1 Three of the Committee, Dr Claire Shephard, Mr Stanley Griffiths and the Revd Bob Maitland, retire this year. All have been members since the start of our work in 1989 and have made an invaluable contribution. We are grateful for all they have done and wish them well as they continue to serve the church in other ways.

9 **And Finally**

9.1 We have welcomed all the comments we have had about our work and encourage individuals and local churches, as well as Districts and Synods, to let us know if there are any needs which we can help to meet.

APPENDICES



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996**

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

General Secretary: The Dr D Preman Niles

1. Last July, the CWM family gathered in London to celebrate the Bicentenary of the London Missionary Society/Council for World Mission at Union Chapel and the City Temple. There was worship, serious discussion, entertainment and an opportunity for old friends to meet again. We also received into membership our thirty-first partner church - the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa - and welcomed a group of young people from the Church of Bangladesh who were taking part in an exchange visit with the URC sponsored by CWM.
2. As a spin-off, the profile of CWM has been greatly heightened in local congregations, especially in the UK, and I trust that the URC will take advantage of this to keep up the momentum by ensuring that knowledge of CWM reaches the grassroots of the denomination. While we gave thanks for the LMS and its achievements, we were careful to stress that CWM is a very different animal, directed by the partner churches and not by staff at 'headquarters' in Livingstone House!
3. However, we can provide materials and other resources which can help the churches to do this. There is now an excellent CWM hymn book (with supporting tape), *Drawn to the Wonder*, and a well-received resource book, *Dare to Dream*, as well as factual information about partner churches and CWM programmes including some very good videos. In addition, we will continue to prepare worship material for those churches who wish to mark *CWM Sunday* and to hold the annual service to give thanks for past and present missionaries. This year, we are also hoping to host a series of public lectures on mission.
4. During the celebrations, the Pacific Region gave a video presentation showing the effects of earlier testing of nuclear weapons by the French Government which was then threatening to resume testing at Moruroa Atoll. By the end of that day, several hundred signatures had been collected on a petition addressed to the French President calling for the tests not to take place. This was followed by the CWM Council which, at its meeting the next week, passed a resolution calling for a boycott of French goods and services by the members of all partner churches. Subsequently letters were sent to both President Chirac and also to the British Prime Minister who had made statements supporting the French 'right' to test its nuclear weapons in the Pacific. Sadly, despite world-wide condemnation, the tests went ahead - though there is some indication that they were not as extensive as originally planned. The Deputy Moderator of CWM, the Revd Nove Vailau of Western Samoa, has expressed gratitude for the solidarity shown to the churches of the Pacific and has spoken of the sense of unity which they have experienced through their protests, prayer vigils and fasts.
5. In the week before Assembly, the CWM Council will hold an extraordinary meeting to decide the issues arising from the acquisition of new resources from the sale of land in Hong Kong. The editorial and article in *Reform* (March 1996) are excellent commentaries on the implications of this new financial resource for CWM Churches and the work of CWM as a whole.
6. We are calling upon all partner churches to pray for the church in Hong Kong in the run-up to 1997 and have prepared an information pack to help local congregations consider the issues. Last year, I had the opportunity to visit the People's Republic of China for a meeting with Dr Han Wenzao of the Church of Christ in China and we hope to continue the dialogue started then with a visit from some of the CWM Executive Committee following their meeting in Hong Kong in November 1996. At the time of writing, however, our major concern in the East Asia Region is for the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan as the island is threatened by the aggressive attitude of the Chinese Government.
7. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the Revd Roderick Hewitt, who will be completing his term as Secretary for Education in Mission at the end of August, and returning to Jamaica. The connection will not be lost, however, as he will be resourcing a Training of Trainers School for CWM church leaders in October/November in Kingston. This new programme, which Roderick is

largely responsible for initiating, is aimed at equipping church leaders in strategies for renewing and restructuring churches in mission. We wish Roderick and his family well as they continue their ministry.

APPENDIX II

ST ANDREW'S HALL

Principal: The Revd David Grainger

We were delighted to receive a new tutor, Revd Fei Taijle'ale'ausumai from the Presbyterian Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Although born in New Zealand, she is from a Samoan family. In addition we have Revd Hong Jung Lee and his family, from Korea, He is teaching in the School of Mission and World Christianity (formerly Department of Mission.) at Selly Oak and at the University of Birmingham. He will be coordinating the Centre for the Study of Christianity in North East Asia.

The College continues to receive a wide range of participants, including scholarship holders from the URC. Last year these included folk from Germany, the Czech Republic, Korea, Ghana, Hungary and we also had Martin and Taara Vickerman, on leave from Kiribati and in preparation for work in Samoa. In addition we had the CWM Training in Mission Group in the Autumn term. That was the last group to leave us to move on to Jamaica. In the current year the group has gone to Madurai in India.

The Selly Oak Colleges is undertaking the construction of a major Learning Resources Centre with the help of grants from the Edward Cadbury Trust and the Higher Education Funding Council. It will entail the joining of the Central and Westhill College libraries and includes the electronic linking of all our colleges, centres and teaching departments. This will enable us all to make significant use of Information Technology in our educational and administrative work. The grants made include provision of the campus-wide fibre optic cabling and network to each college.

We are cooperating in two processes of review for the IJRC and will be completing our own major review and setting of objectives in the course of the current year.

APPENDIX III

REPORTS FROM COLLEGES

MANSFIELD COLLEGE, OXFORD

1 In college ministerial education we have 21 ordinands from the URC, one from the Congregational Federation, one Presbyterian Church of Ireland, one Dutch Reformed, one Swiss Reformed, and one from the United Church of Japan. This year we have started the new Oxford M.Th. for which have 6 students - representing Wales, England Scotland, Korea, Botswana and Jamaica. There are others studying theology in the college for B.A., M. Stud., and D. Phil all of whom add up to 47 in all, making theology about 25% of college student numbers. It is a flourishing community. Oxford continues to have three Anglican colleges, four Roman Catholic colleges, one Methodist, one Baptist, and one Unitarian as well as Catholic lay training college. There are 100 faculty of theology members (some part-time) and about 500 studying theology in some form or another.

2 The M.Th. is recommended for further theological study. It can be full time - one year in college and dissertation finished at home within 2 years. Or it can be part-time on Fridays for 2 years, dissertation

to follow. It specialises in Applied Theology including contextual elements. Do write to the college if you are interested.

3 Plans are being completed for the new Institute of American Studies for which the University is raising \$20 million. This will partly be on Mansfield land shared with Rhodes House and promises to be an exciting venture, the largest outside the United States. Mansfield has already received an historian on its staff who is working there, and we shall be making inputs of various kinds. It is to be an integrated think tank with history, politics and religion as constituent parts. It will be a centre for interdisciplinary study, for seminars, papers and international gatherings. President Clinton and other from Rhodes House are supporting it strongly. We are pleased to keep up the connection with the American Reformed traditions who have been the most influential of all the denominations in the American founding and continuing way of life.

4 Mansfield's Oxford Centre for Environment, Ethics and Society is going well with about a dozen on the staff. It is making itself felt in international gatherings. Expansion of the group meant we had to find new premises. We will bring the Centre back on site once we have found the money to build new buildings. The Japanese have been very good so far with helping us in that, having raised about a half-million pounds already.

5 We have had seven fine years with Dennis Trevelyan as Principal. He retires at the end of the academic year to live in Oxford. We have appointed Prof. David Marquand as our new Principal, starting in September. David is a political historian, currently director of an academic unit at Sheffield University, and has also been an M.P.

6 Also we are losing the Revd Tony Tucker as Associate Director of Ministerial Education who retires this year but is staying in Oxford. Tony has been associated with the College for over 40 years in one way or another, first as an ordinand, and then in various helpful capacities. For the past 7 years he has been full time with us, and much loved. He will be greatly missed as co-director but we have persuaded him to continue to teach Pastoral Theology.

7 His replacement is the Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, a former Mansfield ordinand, minister in Wolverhampton, Loughborough and Barden Park URCS, and currently Director of Training for the South West Province. Catherine has much to offer, and we look forward to a fruitful association.

8 We are blessed with a talented and hard-working staff. Donald Sykes looks after early church history, Peggy Morgan handles world religions, Flora Winfield specialises in ecclesiology, John Muddiman has large attendances for his New Testament lectures which keeps Mansfield's reputation going in the Cadman, Dodd, Marsh & Caird tradition; Elaine Kaye helps in the history of the churches from the 17th century (and having completed the history of the college is now turning her attention to writing the history of Northern College and its various parents), Carolyn Brock teaches hymnody, Chris Sudgen helps in mission, David Cook in ethics, Charles Brock teaches liturgy, psychology of religion, and theology. We continue to use a variety of people from the faculty of theology and the staff of the other theological colleges for courses such as Old Testament and Reformation as well as help in certain specialist areas. The University organises a full set of lectures and seminars in most theological topics, and receives many visiting speakers during the year. The course in Spirituality this year included Robin Pagan and Janet Loveitt who also help every week with the Intern Year programme. David Coleman shared reflections on Celtic spirituality with us as well. Colin Thompson, Fellow in Spanish at St Catherine's, teaches for the university and specially for us in studies of mysticism. We are considering how to help with lay training for the URC. We believe that we have much to gain from each other and look to Catherine Middleton and Stephen Thornton, Training Officer for Wessex, for a way forward in this area.

9 Charles Brock was invited to Japan in September to give lectures in the Puritan traditions of liberty. The churches and Christian colleges there are concerned that democracy should continue and wanted to know more about the positive relationship of the reformed traditions and government.

10 Another centre beginning in Oxford is the International Inter-faith Centre, and Charles Brock is co-chair of the Advisory Committee. A new building is planned at the Westminster, Oxford site but will include not only the University of Oxford but will be a centre of study, discussion and interaction for the whole world of religions.

11 This endeavour is crucial for our churches today, here and abroad. We live in a multi-cultural society and need to understand each other. Most important is that we learn how to work together with common causes, not only to save the world from some horrible war of the faiths but to help the poor and oppressed in every country. We have much in common. It is now time to learn how we can use our faiths together for the glory of God and the liberation of humankind.

Charles Brock

NORTHERN COLLEGE, MANCHESTER

1 There are twenty-three students on our roll, with two offering themselves for ordination in the URC this summer and one taking up the stipendiary ministry following previous service as an NSM.

2 We welcomed the Revd John M Parry BA, BD as a full-time member of staff at the start of this session. His expertise in the areas of missiology and world faiths, coupled with his missionary experience, has already enriched work in the College and the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry of which we are a part.

3 We are pleased to announce that the Revd Dr John Samuel Ponnusamy will be coming to the College in September to work as an Overseas Theological Educator in the Federation and also in the churches of the North of England. He will be with us for three years on Secondment from Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, India. John's area of expertise is the Old Testament.

4 The Revd Bob Day of St Mark's Wythenshawe has been appointed the next Mona Powell Fellow and he will start his three years of work on exploring issues of community ministry and theology in September. We are pleased that Susan Durber has been awarded a PhD. by the University of Manchester for work she undertook when she had tenure of the Fellowship.

5 Our new Diploma/BA course got off to a good start last session, with our External Examiners describing it 'as a model of good practice' from which others 'if they are wise will learn'. From September we envisage that the Federation will be teaching two new MA degrees in Contextual Missiology and Contextual Ministry, as well as using our validation by the University of Manchester of certain members of staff to supervise research leading to the degrees of MPhil. and PhD. These provisions will be very useful for the church's post-ordination and in-service training needs.

6 We continue to benefit from our overseas students. The Revd Laurant Ramambason returned to theological education in the United Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar in December having completed his Ph.D at the University of Birmingham. Meanwhile, this session we have welcomed Ibolya Polus from the Reformed Church of Hungary.

7 Advocacy visits have been made to many District Councils in the northern part of the URC. It has been useful to explain recent developments at the College and to receive many helpful suggestions concerning the work of preparing people for their ministries.

8 The speaker at the College lunch at Assembly this year will be the Revd Dr John Sutcliffe, the Director of the Manchester Christian Institute. We will offer reflection on theological education in the light of his recent visits to India.

David R. Peel

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

1 Study

1.1 This has been a year of documents, especially in the Michaelmas Term, 1995. The Cambridge Theological Federation is preparing a joint statement on its resources and policy and the Westminster College portion had to be handed over to our Federation Executive Officer, the URC's own Chris Wright. The Principals of URC - related colleges have been among those invited to submit their comments to the General Assembly's Training Committee as it prepared its review of all URC training. And, unexpectedly, the Senatus has to prepare for the Mission Council's Staffing Advisory Group its case for retaining a teaching staff of five as a vacancy came in sight with Bill Mahood's move to be minister of St Ive's Free Church. His colleagues fully supported his readiness to answer a pressing call and we have found a ready

understanding of the college's needs in the next five years - but the actual time for debating and writing a submission for Mission Council came out of the usual crowded programme of an academic year's first term.

1.2 Not that the Principal is complaining; planning for the future is a stimulating activity for a final year as Principal and look back over the year is encouraging in itself.

2 Kitchen

As well as the change in Director of Pastoral Studies (Bill moved at Easter but continued supervising the internship programme until June) we have had considerable recruitment to undertake on the domestic front. We were sad to say good-bye to Val Sinclair, who had to give up her work as Bursar on medical advice and to Viv Anderson, our Cook/Housekeeper, Mary Welham, Wyn Harvey and Lil Baker who left on retirement or in Mary's case marriage. It is good to have been able to fill the posts in a revised staff structure of Bursar: Mrs Patricia Shuler: Senior Cook/Domestic Manager: Mr John Watts: with Caryn McCarthy continuing with us as Cook and Elizabeth Phillips newly arrived in the kitchen. Janet Shanks also continues on the domestic side and we have the help of excellent contract cleaners from the firm 'Total Care'. In a small college every person in the team has a vital role.

3 Exits and Entrances

3.1 Other farewells were to the year's leavers: Dawn Baiden to Burnham-on-Crouch and Southminster; Brian Bolt to Kentish Town Congregational Church in Congregational Federation; Patrick Branon (1994 leaver sponsored by the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion) to an independent church in Ely; Vernon Broomfield-Payne to the Kettering Group; Michael Burrell to the Maldon Group; David Coote to Christ Church with Trinity, Hull; John Danso to the Leyton/Leytonstone Team; Barry Hutchinson to Garstang; Carolyn Lanham to Hardres Street United Church, Ramsgate and (after an additional term because of some research on Christian/Jewish relations) Nigel Douglas to Newport URC and Community House Presbyterian Church of Wales.

3.2 Newcomers for 1994/5 had brought the number of students to thirty-two, including one each from Australia, China, German and Slovakia and two from the United States through our exchange scheme with Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia; for 1995/6 the number has been thirty-seven. Also from Decatur we had with us for the calendar year 1995 Professor Walter Brueggemann writing a book and his wife Mary most helpful being our chaplain for the Lent and Easter terms. In July the Rev. Rodney Wood has inducted to a pastorate of Victoria Road URC (in the church shared with an Anglican parish) and the College chaplaincy; it is good to welcome Rodney and Margaret back - they were neighbours to the Cressey family when they arrived in the Bounds in 1973.

4 Registry

4.1 The College Office is as busy as ever, 'Job-shared' by Janet Brown and Marilyn Russell. The notion of a 'corporate memory' takes new significance as Principal, Bursar and College Secretaries strive for instant recall of names for those who approach us in person or by telephone from places as far away as Korea, New Zealand and the USA, not mention Church House and the URC Cambridge District.

4.2 Next year's report will include a full description of the new degrees that can be sought by Westminster students, the M.A. in Pastoral Theology of Anglia Polytechnic University and the Bachelor of Theology for Ministry now being introduced by the University of Cambridge.

5 Library

Also for that report we shall write up considerable developments in the Library. At this point it is enough to pay tribute to Janet Tollington's leadership in that area and prepare you to observe change when you next visit the College. We record now one loss/gain, namely that the two Egyptian mummy cases which have often featured in bardic odes and student concerts were found by experts to be deteriorating and we had to choose between expensive conservation or sale; sale in fact raised £5,000 (to our surprise) and we feel sure that Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson would be pleased that this sum has paid for new library furniture. The 'Giblew' archives are being surveyed with a view to making them more widely known in connection with the 1999 centenary of the College buildings.

6 Future Prospect

6.1 On January 20th, the URC Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appointed the Rev. Dr David Cornick as Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, from 1st September 1996 until 21st August 2001.

6.2 Mission Council also agreed the appointments, for which nominations are to be made, for five years from 1st September 1996, of a Director of Studies in Systematic Theology and Director of Pastoral Studies.

Martin Cressey

THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM

1 Students

In the academic year 1994-5 the number of full time students (70) was again slightly lower than the previous year. The ratio of Methodist (34), Anglican (26) and URC (9) was much as before. Again we were happy to have a Lutheran student of theology from Berlin for the year. The gender balance was very nearly equal. The College welcomed a proposal from the Methodist Division of Ministries to use 'spare' places in the training system for the empowerment and affirmation of black Christians. Consequently seven black lay Methodist candidates undertook one-year programmes of study this year. They enhanced our common life in many ways and we now expect the 'Access for Black Theology Students' programme to be a settled and significant feature of our life and work.

2 Administration and Catering

2.1 The year saw the entrance of a new and welcome stability in our administrative staffing. Mr George Hollis was appointed Bursar with effect from 31st October 1994 and began immediately to get a grip on the many and complex tasks of his office.

2.2 The main recommendations of the Report on College catering commissioned by the Finance and General Purposes Committee were acted upon the early part of the year. The main change in the delivery of meals was the introduction of a servery and of cafeteria (self-service) meals as the daily norm. It was agreed that we should retain two or three meals a week served at table, as an expression of our life as a community. The changes have brought about a clear improvement in the quality of meals and the ambience in which they are eaten.

3 Academic Staff

3.1 The academic staff as a whole deserve a warm tribute for service beyond the call of (normal) duty; later items in this Report will make clear how weighty was the additional load to be carried. John Wilkinson kindly agreed to an extension to his (nine year) contractual period of service; in due course he left to take up his appointment as Priest in Charge of All Saints Kings' Heath in May 1995. At the end of the academic year, Stuart Weeks moved to a University lecturing post at Durham.

3.2 While continuing as College Tutor, Christina Le Moignan served throughout this year as Principal of the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course on a half-time basis. This dual post involved particular responsibility for the complex and delicate planning required to bring about a convergence of Course and College. The far-reaching decisions needed to form a close and equal partnership of the two were agreed by our Governing bodies in May and June. It gave Course and College members great delight when Christina's nomination to Chair the Birmingham District of the Methodist Church was announced: this will take effect in September 1996. The appointment of Dr Paul Smith (Moravian) as O.T. Tutor and The Revd Paul Quilter (URC) as Research Fellow, significantly widened the ecumenical range of our senior members.

4 Scrutiny

4.1 The College Inspection took place in the Autumn Term, the ecumenical team of Inspectors being led by Canon Ian Bennett. The URC Inspector was the Revd Dr Jack McKelvey. Meanwhile, a team of documentary filmmakers from the BBC, began a year's close study of the community in preparation for a

series of films, broadcast on BBC 2 (May 1996) under the title 'The Calling'. The combination of these two searching forms of scrutiny took us some way beyond the point at which attention is flattering.

4.2 When the Inspection Report emerged it was judged to be fair and constructive. In many ways it gave encouragement to trends and developments already gathering momentum. As to the outcome of the documentary filming, this remains to be seen.

5 **Worship**

A major review of the College pattern of worship was undertaken in the latter part of the year. This broadly endorsed the existing structure, with its provision for two corporate services each week day, but recommended that a free form of morning worship should, from time to time, replace the morning office, and that an early (7.30 am) celebration of the Eucharist should be added on Mondays and Wednesdays.

6 **College Meetings**

Meetings of the College, inclusive of those partners and other members of the wider community who wish to attend, have formed a part of the life of Queen's since 1970. There had not, however, been any normal occasion for a meeting of the students and staff of the College chaired by the Principal. After careful discussion, such a meeting was introduced on a periodic basis from early in this academic year. Later it was agreed that there should also be occasional meetings of the student body.

7 **Revised Curriculum**

The College was called on to submit a quinquennial revision of its official curriculum document to the appropriate bodies in our sponsoring churches. Two factors led to this being a fundamental revision. One was the decision (recommended by the Hereford Commission) that this be a joint submission by College and Course. The other was the need to reformulate our certificate and degree programmes in accordance with the new modular requirements of the University of Birmingham. By dint of energetic application and rigorous thought and debate, this task was completed during the course of the year.

8 **International Links**

8.1 Our relationship with Tamilnadu Theological Seminary was further cemented by a three-month visit from Dr Mohanraj Peter, a member of the Seminary teaching staff. He is himself blind, and his work here focused on the provision of the Churches in England for the visually impaired. At the end of the year under report my wife and I paid a brief visit to South India, staying a week at TTS. This visit, partly funded by a generous grant from the Council for World Mission, was immensely informative and helped to clarify and solidify the relationship of our two colleges.

8.2 The Leipzig and TTS links were both successfully continued by the customary exchanges of students.

9 **Strategy**

In response to a request of the Council, a strategic proposal for our future was drawn up by the Principals of College and Course. Great assistance was given in this process by members of the Council and the Course Committee. The proposal, adopted in principal at the June Council meeting, recommends the establishing of The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. The Foundation comprise of the Course (part-time training) the College (full-time training) and a Research Centre for applied theology.

Peter Fisher

NON-STIPENDIARY MINISTRY TRAINING

1 Certificates of Completed Studies were issued for 14 Non-Stipendiary Ministry students during 1995, including one for a student ordained under special arrangements in 1994.

2 The flow of candidates for training for the non-stipendiary ministry showed a further decline from 1994. Only 9 students commenced their studies, two of them being required only to undertake a short course and therefore also included in the number for whom Certificates of Completed Studies were issued.

3 At the end of the year, 37 students were under training, 16 expecting to complete during 1996. Only 3 students were following the full URC Course as their main basis of training, each of whom are expected to complete in 1996.

Barry Wakefield

CHURCH-RELATED COMMUNITY WORKER TRAINING: SALFORD URBAN MISSION

1 One participant completed the three-year Training Programme this year, and received theological accreditation and a Certificate in Youth and Community Work. Malcolm Breeze began as an accredited CRCW in a new post with the URC at the Ortons, Peterborough, in September 1995.

2 This year has seen the implementation of SUM's new course for CRCWs, in conjunction with the 'Faith in Living' course being run by the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry. One URC student has begun a three year programme leading to a Diploma in Theology and nationally recognised qualifications in Community Work. Also in full-time training this year are a Catholic CRCW candidate and a final year participant preparing for ministry in the Swedenborgian Church. Forty-five participants have joined them over the last twelve months on our short courses lasting from 4-10 weeks, and covering subjects from Urban Mission to Effective Working Structures, Community Work Skills to Group Work, Local Area profiles to Anti-Oppressive Practice, Art and Spirituality.

3 Our Training Officer, Mr Craig Russell, left to start a full-time degree course at Manchester in September (although continuing to teach one course and supervise one participant). Uncertainties over our future funding meant that we were unable to interview for a Director of Training to replace him until January, but we look forward to Mrs Margaret Westbrook joining our staff at the beginning of May, to head up the future development of the Training Programme. The courses have continued to run smoothly in the intervening nine months, in the hands of Rev Keith Argyle (also serving as Staff Co-ordinator) and Ms Jean Raymond (Training Administrator).

4 Our main funding now comes from the Single Regeneration Budget and European Social Fund. Increasingly we shall be preparing local people in our inner city areas for National Vocational Qualifications in community work, integrating this with our local contracts and work in inner city churches and communities. This will complement the CRCW training.

Keith J Argyle

APPENDIX IV STUDENTS IN TRAINING 1995-1996

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Kay Alberg (Northern) Tony Hawes (Northern and NEOC) Alistair Smeaton (Northern), Margaret Robb (Northern), Christopher Parker (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Raymond Anglesea (NEOC)

NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Jane Barron (Northern), Janet Calderley (Westminster), Robert Heathcote (Northern), Craig Muir (Northern), Ronald Wilson (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Mark Houghton (MCI), Barbara Exley (MCI), Brenda Moore (MCI), Christopher Tonge (MCI)

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Linda Elliot (Mansfield), Keith Hulse (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Graham Mercer (MCI), Alan Poolton (MCI)

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Pauline Parkin (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Sandra Griffiths (MCI), Angela Hughes (MCI), Tjarda Murray de Boom (MCI), Peter Sharp (MCI)

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Philip Gray (Westminster), Revd. Geoffrey Townsend (Westminster), Jeffrey Tunningley (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Mair Bradley (EMMTC), Barry Drake (EMMTC), John Hayton (EMMTC), Susan Litchfield (EMMTC), Patricia Lloyd (EMMTC), Jay Phelps (EMMTC), Sally Phelps (EMMTC), Rosemary Smith (St Albans and Oxford MC), Elaine Sutherland (EMMTC)

WEST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Marilyn Allen (Mansfield), Richard Becher (Westminster), Barbara Bennett (Queens), Mary Burgess (Queens), Edward Cox (Northern), Jean Spragg (Queens)

Non-Stipendiary

Marion Thomas (WMMTC), William Young (WMMTC)

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

James Dalgleish (Westminster), Steven Faber (Westminster), Simon Franklin (Westminster), Geoffrey Haigh (Westminster), Timothy Lowe (Northern), Donald Macalister (Queens), David Sebley (Westminster), Karen Stratton (Westminster), Kathryn Taylor (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Deborah McVey (EAMTC), Geoffrey Wright (EAMTC)

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Tim Clarke (Mansfield), Kathy Wilson (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Kenneth Coles (SWMTC), Ivan Fowler (Extended Study)

WESSEX PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Philip Burroughs (Mansfield), Patricia Clamp (Mansfield), Christopher Coe (Mansfield), John Du Bois (Mansfield), Barry Griffin (Queens), Owiny Laber (Northern), Monica Mills (Queens/Mansfield), Michael Shrubsole (Westminster), Raymond Stanyon (Northern), Alan Wickens (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Thomas Grant (STS), Brian Hesketh (SDS), Heather Morgan (STS), David Parkin (STS), Rosemary Pullen (STS)

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Samuel Ansa-Addo (Westminster), Wilfred Bahadur (Westminster), Sue Chapman (Northern), David Dones (Westminster), Mark Elvin (Westminster), Anthony Howells (Westminster), Alistair Jones (Westminster), Iain MacDonald (Mansfield), David Miller (Westminster), Philip Nicholas (Mansfield)
Nigel Watson (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Robert Calderan (URC), David Simpson (URC), Fiona Thomas (SEITE)

SOUTHERN PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Delia Bond (Westminster/SEITE), Andrew Camper (Mansfield), Clare Downing (Westminster/SEITE), David Downing (Westminster), Carole Ellefsen (Westminster), David Featonby (Westminster), John Gordon (Northern), Michael Meachin (Mansfield), Michael Perrott (Northern), Robert Pickering (Westminster), Robert Street (Mansfield), James Thorneycroft (Mansfield), Jane Wade (Mansfield), Michael Whitfield (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary**PROVINCE OF WALES****Stipendiary**

Sarah Bevan (Northern), Diana Cullum (Queens), Jackie Gavin (Northern) Ian Kirby (Mansfield), Jennifer Mountford-Davies (Mansfield), Richard Pope (Mansfield), Kathryn Price (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Martyn Evans (URC)

APPENDIX V

TRAINING STATISTICS

	Students in Training	Students in Training	Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	February 1995	February 1996	1996	1997	1998	1999+
Stipendiary						
Mansfield	25	19	7	3	3	3
Northern	27	21	3	4	11	3
Queens	10	6	3	1	2	-
Westminster	29	27	8	8	4	7
Total	91	73	21	16	20	13
Non Stipendiary						
Courses	44	42	16	11	10	5
Church Related Community Workers						
Selly Oak	1					
Salford	1	1			1	
Total	137	116	37	27	31	18

APPENDIX VI

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1995

These accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church nationally under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of provinces, districts or local churches.

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For readers unfamiliar with financial statements there is an explanatory note at the foot of each page describing the content in simple terms.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**NEW LOOK ACCOUNTS FOR 1995**

This year's accounts look very different from those of last year. Why is this? One answer could be that there are new accounting requirements for charities which come into force next year and we are anticipating those requirements. But in fact we do more than just comply with regulations; we have taken the opportunity to take a fundamental look at the way the URC's finances are presented with a view to making them more easily understood. If we can achieve this then we may be able to contribute to a greater feeling of shared responsibility for the whole of the URC's activities.

Our hope is that more people will take the time to read the accounts. To help those who are not familiar with financial statements there are explanatory notes at the foot of most pages to help you focus on what the page is about.

So what's different?

To start with the accounts are shorter - only eight pages with figures compared to seventeen last year. In fact, the most important information is contained on two pages - the Balance Sheet on page 5 and the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6. (The Statement of Financial Activities is a new statement in charity accounts very similar to the more familiar income and expenditure account.) The remaining pages give additional information in notes, or analyse the main figures into their constituent parts.

The accounts are shorter because they focus on the overall financial position of the URC and do not therefore show detailed accounts for individual funds. There is summary information about these funds on pages 10 and 11 but anyone who wants more information should write to the Finance Office at Church House.

For the first time, the accounts of the Retired Ministers Housing Society (RMHS) are included within the URC's accounts. The General Assembly has made a commitment to provide housing for retired ministers and the RMHS is the principal way by which this is achieved; so it is appropriate to include the accounts of the RMHS in order to see the overall picture of the URC's finances.

Another change is that investments (stocks and shares) are shown in the accounts at their current market value rather than at their original purchase cost which may date back many years and bear no relationship to present day values. This gives a far more realistic view of our financial position. As changes in the value of investments are somewhat different from regular income and expenditure they are shown separately at the end of the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6. This change of treatment for investments is one which all charities will soon be expected to introduce into their accounts.

Finally, to enable comparisons to be made, the analysis of income and expenditure has been changed to come into line with the headings in the revised budget format presented to the 1995 General Assembly, and the 1994 comparative figures shown in this year's accounts have been revised to reflect all the changes described above.

Unrestricted and restricted income funds?

A very important feature of the new look accounts is the way that our total funds are divided into categories according to the freedom or otherwise we have to spend them. Unrestricted income funds are funds we can use freely for any URC activity. Restricted income funds can only be used for specific purposes according to the terms on which they were first received, for example legacies for retired ministers housing or donations for Yardley Hastings. Additionally, there are capital funds which are permanent endowments the capital of which cannot be spent; however, the income from these may be added to restricted or unrestricted income funds for use according to the terms of the original endowment.

The Balance Sheet on page 5 shows that we had total funds at 31st December 1995 totalling some £35 million. It is important to recognise that unrestricted income funds represent less than one third of this amount.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE continued**HOW DID WE FARE IN 1995?**

The Statement of Financial Activities, on page 6, shows how we fared in 1995. In summary the situation was as follows:

1994		1995			
Total funds		Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Capital funds
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
18,973	Total income	19,358	17,807	1,541	10
17,913	Total expenditure	18,000	17,273	727	
1,060	Net surplus	1,358	534	814	10

The net surplus is described in the Statement of Financial Activities as "net incoming resources" because it excludes gains and losses on investments. This is a technical distinction which we are required to make.

A net surplus of £1,358,000 appears enormous and will come as a surprise to many. However, this is where the distinction between unrestricted and restricted funds becomes important. The surplus on unrestricted funds was £534,000; the remainder was in funds whose use is restricted in various ways.

The annual budget which is approved by the General Assembly deals only with unrestricted funds. It is easier to start by considering these funds separately. The revised budget for 1995 included in the Annual Reports to General Assembly 1995 showed a deficit of £291,000. So the actual out-turn of a £534,000 surplus for 1995 was £825,000 better than budget. The greatest part of this difference is in the cost of ministry which was some £371,000 down on budget largely due to the fact that the number of ministers being paid was around 2% lower than the number assumed when drawing up the budget. Other differences include a saving against budget of £90,000 in training, an increase in interest and dividends of £112,000, the profit of £128,000 on disposal of three houses and legacies of £63,000.

Our budgets have to be prepared in the Spring of the preceding year in order that they can be presented to the General Assembly in July. It is inevitable that, working so far ahead, the number of ministers and the actual amounts of income and expenditure may turn out to be different from budget. The Finance Committee noted that although the variance from budget in 1995 is larger than we have experienced in recent years, it was still less than 5% of total budgeted expenditure. The aim of the Resource Planning Advisory Committee will of course be to keep these differences to a minimum.

£16,149,000, 91% of the total income in unrestricted funds, came from Ministry and Mission Fund contributions. This was 3½% up on the previous year and is a significant achievement by members of congregations, especially after meeting the challenge of recent substantial stipend increases.

The surplus of income over expenditure in restricted funds as shown above was £814,000. Of this, £567,000, arose in the Retired Ministers Housing Society and Retired Ministers Housing Fund. During 1995 we spent over £1 million buying houses so all of this surplus has been invested in the financing of these purchases. The need to buy more retirement houses will continue for the foreseeable future so, unless we borrow to finance these purchases, we will need to maintain the flow of legacies and donations for retired ministers' housing to meet this demand.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows, in a separate section, realised and unrealised gains on investments totalling £2,462,000. This is slightly less than the loss in value experienced in 1994 but over the years our investments have appreciated in value and the dividends we receive have increased accordingly.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE continued

HOW DID WE STAND AT THE END OF 1995?

Our Balance Sheet, on page 5 opposite, shows total net assets of over £35 million. A brief review of where these assets are may help to put this large figure into context.

For more detail, turn to page 11 where the assets shown in the Balance Sheet are analysed over the main URC funds. The column headed property shows that out of total properties of £15,435,000, nearly £11 million is invested in houses by the Retired Ministers Housing Society and Fund. The other major asset is investments which, as page 11 shows, are owned for many funds; these investments produce dividends which are a valuable source of income to help meet expenditure in these various funds.

As with income and expenditure, it is important to recognise that over two thirds of our assets are in funds whose use is restricted. Furthermore, the so-called unrestricted funds are to a large extent invested in assets that we require for the maintenance of our activities and so are not, in fact, freely available. Nevertheless, we are fortunate in having a relatively healthy Balance Sheet thanks largely to our predecessors who have passed on to us the benefits of their generosity and prudence. We must aim to maintain this inheritance.

There is one very important aspect of our financial situation which is not apparent from our Balance Sheet. This is our obligation to pay pensions to retired ministers. This is described in note 9 on page 15 of the accounts. The last actuarial valuation of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund was carried out at the beginning of 1994 and showed a deficit of some £11 million. This deficit is currently being reduced over a period of twelve years by annual payments which increase each year by 10%; the payment in 1995 was £998,000. The 10% increase in the amount of this payment represents a very significant increase in costs each year which has to be recovered through Ministry and Mission Fund contributions. Consideration is being given to possible ways of reducing this burden, including the possibility of making a lump sum payment to the Pension Fund out of our accumulated unrestricted funds. This is a complex matter which is the subject of continuing discussion between the Finance Committee, the Resource Planning Advisory Committee and the Pension Fund trustees.

We hope that this report and the new look accounts which follow will help to achieve our aim of making the annual accounts easier to understand.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee.

Graham Stacy
Convener

4th April 1996

BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December 1995

1994 £'000		Note	1995 £'000
	FIXED ASSETS		
	Tangible assets	3	
9,321	Houses for retired ministers		10,811
2,824	Houses for serving ministers		2,854
1,725	Other properties		1,770
13,870	Total properties		15,435
200	Cars and equipment		239
14,070			15,674
16,141	Long term investments	4	18,180
1,003	Loans and advances	5	805
31,214			34,659
	NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	Current assets		
54	Stock		52
2,917	Short term investment	4	3,120
730	Debtors		986
2,292	Bank balances and money market deposits	6	1,732
5,993			5,890
5,522	Less: Current liabilities	7	5,044
471	Net current assets		846
31,685	TOTAL NET ASSETS		35,505
	Representing:		
9,155	Unrestricted income funds		10,677
18,925	Restricted income funds		20,876
3,605	Capital funds		3,952
31,685	TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 10 & 11)		35,505

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered for the benefit of the URC nationally. It includes, for the first time this year, the assets and liabilities of the Retired Ministers Housing Society.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
Income and expenditure for the year ended 31st December 1995

1994 Total funds £'000		1995 Total funds £'000	---- Income Unrestricted £'000	funds ---- Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
INCOME					
15,598	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,149	16,149		
1,266	Investment income	1,392	576	816	
827	Grants received	840	770	70	
656	Legacies	306	63	243	
458	Sundry income	306	121	175	10
168	Profit on sale of properties	365	128	237	
18,973	Total income (see page 8)	19,358	17,807	1,541	10
EXPENDITURE					
14,074	Ministry	14,195	13,603	592	
1,451	Training	1,366	1,322	44	
437	Assembly appointed staff	474	474		
1,112	Mission	1,180	1,117	63	
161	Communication and editorial	161	161		
678	Administration	624	596	28	
17,913	Total expenditure (see page 9)	18,000	17,273	727	0
1,060	Net incoming resources	1,358	534	814	10
Gains and losses on investments					
288	Realised gains	426	334	92	
(2,864)	Unrealised (losses)/gains	2,036	654	1,045	337
(2,576)	Total (losses)/gains on investments	2,462	988	1,137	337
(1,516)	Net (decrease)/increase in funds in the year	3,820	1,522	1,951	347
33,201	Balances brought forward at 1st January	31,685	9,155	18,925	3,605
31,685	Balances carried forward at 31st December	35,505	10,677	20,876	3,952

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered on behalf of the URC nationally. The total for 1995 is then divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which can be used for any purpose, "Restricted income funds" which can be spent for specific purposes only, and "Capital funds" which have to be invested to provide future income.

CONSOLIDATED CASHFLOW STATEMENT
for the year ended 31st December 1995

1994 £'000		1995 £'000
	Reconciliation of net incoming resources shown in the Statement of Financial Activities to the actual cash inflow from general activities	
1,060	Net incoming resources (see page 6)	1,358
1	Decrease in stock	2
47	Decrease/(increase) in debtors	(256)
462	Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(206)
(744)	Decrease in sums held for provinces and congregations	(272)
(168)	Profits on property sales	(365)
96	Depreciation	85
47	Amortisation of gilts	76
(44)	Interest added to loans	(41)
757	Net cash inflow from general activities	381
	Statement showing the sources and applications of cash resources in the year	
757	Net cash inflow from general activities (above)	381
	Net amount of cash applied in investing activities	
845	Fixed assets sales	772
(1,777)	purchases	(2,096)
2,403	Long term investments sales	1,337
(2,408)	purchases	(1,193)
(3,091)	Short term investments purchases	(1,180)
(4,028)		
	Cash (applied)/received in a net (increase)/decrease in loans and advances to congregations and ministers	
(471)	Loans made	(175)
366	Loans repaid	414
(105)		239
(3,376)	Decrease in cash balances	(560)
5,668	Cash balances at beginning of year	2,292
2,292	Cash balances at end of year	1,732

This is a somewhat "technical" statement which some may prefer to pass over quickly. Not all income or expenditure results in an immediate cash receipt or payment. This page shows the difference between net incoming resources (some cash and some not cash) and actual cashflow. It then shows how cash has been spent or invested during the year so as to reduce our cash balances by £560,000.

ANALYSIS OF INCOME

1994 Total funds £'000		1995 Total funds £'000	---- Income Unrestricted £'000	funds ---- Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS					
Provinces					
1,005	Northern	1,043	1,043		
1,480	North Western	1,540	1,540		
1,060	Mersey	1,090	1,090		
1,004	Yorkshire	1,050	1,050		
987	East Midlands	1,032	1,032		
1,140	West Midlands	1,200	1,200		
1,437	Eastern	1,437	1,437		
955	South Western	1,040	1,040		
1,778	Wessex	1,831	1,831		
1,850	Thames North	1,905	1,905		
2,337	Southern	2,400	2,400		
560	Wales	580	580		
15,593		16,148	16,148	0	0
5	Non-provincial contributions	1	1		
15,598		16,149	16,149	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME					
914	Dividends	1,012	370	642	
352	Interest	380	206	174	
1,266		1,392	576	816	0
GRANTS RECEIVED					
490	Memorial Hall Trust	518	448	70	
239	New College London Trust	220	220		
42	URC Insurance Company Ltd	62	62		
56	Department for Education	40	40		
827		840	770	70	0
LEGACIES					
For					
60	Ministry and Mission Fund	63	63		
	Westminster College	21		21	
516	Housing Retired Ministers	204		204	
46	Retired Ministers Funds	2		2	
34	Other	16		16	
656		306	63	243	0
SUNDRY INCOME					
79	Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	103	103		
107	Donations	136	18	108	10
272	Other	67		67	
458		306	121	175	10
168	PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	365	128	237	
18,973	TOTAL INCOME	19,358	17,807	1,541	10

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

1994 Total funds £'000		1995 Total funds £'000	---- Income Unrestricted £'000	funds ---- Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
MINISTRY					
11,779	Stipends - local and special ministries	11,766	11,766		
110	Stipends - CRCWs	121	121		
554	Pension grants	579		579	
370	Resettlement and other grants	377	364	13	
340	Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	354	354		
921	Pension Fund additional contribution	998	998		
14,074		14,195	13,603	592	0
TRAINING					
802	College training for stipendiary ministry	716	676	40	
62	Other training for stipendiary ministry	75	71	4	
67	Training for non-stipendiary ministry	72	72		
300	YLTO/YCWT programme	297	297		
66	Support for Westminster College	53	53		
51	Support for Windermere Centre	42	42		
27	Support for Yardley Hastings	28	28		
7	Lay training	7	7		
69	St Andrew's Hall grant	76	76		
1,451		1,366	1,322	44	0
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF					
199	Salaries/stipends - executive staff	220	220		
158	Salaries/stipends - support staff	170	170		
80	Housing and expenses	84	84		
437		474	474	0	0
MISSION					
598	Council for World Mission	535	535		
84	Missionaries	139	139		
194	Grants for national and local mission	252	191	61	
99	Ecumenical councils	102	102		
65	General Assembly	67	67		
58	Assembly committees/conferences	58	56	2	
14	Mission Council committees/conferences	27	27		
1,112		1,180	1,117	63	0
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL					
123	Salaries	131	131		
38	Other costs	30	30		
161		161	161	0	0
ADMINISTRATION					
258	Personnel and finance - salaries	222	219	3	
50	- other costs	26	18	8	
131	Premises costs	143	146	(3)	
58	Professional fees	72	65	7	
181	Miscellaneous expenses	161	148	13	
678		624	596	28	0
17,913	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	18,000	17,273	727	0

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of expenditure shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6.

MOVEMENT ON FUNDS
Year ended 31st December 1995

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance 1st Jan 1995	Income	Expenditure	Investment value change	Balance 31st Dec 1995
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	310 6,126		16,926 (16,305)	904	310 7,651
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	435 0	2 116	(116)	66	503 0
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	101 1,036	308	(403)	16 84	117 1,025
Memorial Hall Trust Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	0 1,993	457	(449)		0 2,001
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	796 802	82	(40)	69 72	865 916
Church Buildings Funds	Capital Restricted	184 2,570	179	(28)	99	184 2,820
Retired Ministers Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	355 1,156	102			355 1,258
Retired Ministers Housing Society	Capital Restricted	0 6,278	494	(29)		0 6,743
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	88 221	29	(19)	13 25	101 256
Retired Ministers Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	118 541	49	(46)	18 75	136 619
Retired Ministers Fund	Capital Restricted	0 3,208	234	(420)	472	0 3,494
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	178 912	41	(10)	23 130	201 1,073
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	0 332	12			0 344
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	0 544	6			0 550
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	1,040 2,361	8 313	(135)	132 264	1,180 2,803
Totals (see page 6)		31,685	19,358	(18,000)	2,462	35,505
Comprising:	Capital	3,605	10	0	337	3,952
	Restricted	18,925	1,541	(727)	1,137	20,876
	Unrestricted	9,155	17,807	(17,273)	988	10,677

* Certain restricted funds are shown here as unrestricted - see note 1(ii) on page 12

This page and the following page 11 are intended to be used as reference sources rather than to be read through at one go. This page shows the breakdown of the main totals in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6 by major fund or group of funds.

DISPOSITION OF FUNDS
as at 31st December 1995

Balance 31st Dec 1995	Property	Cars and equipment	Investments	Loans	Net Current assets	Inter-fund balances	Fund
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
310	310						Ministry and Mission Fund
7,651	2,165	91	5,102	120	1,357	(1,184)	
503			503				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
117			117				Ministerial Training Fund
1,025			731			294	
0							Memorial Hall Trust Fund
2,001						2,001	
865	698		167				Westminster College Funds
916		5	952			(41)	
184			184				Church Buildings Funds
2,820	613		1,500	649		58	
355	355						Retired Ministers Housing Funds
1,258	1,198					60	
0							Retired Ministers Housing Society
6,743	9,258				(511)	(2,004)	
101			101				Welfare Fund
256			247			9	
136			136				Retired Ministers Aid Fund
619			605			14	
0							Retired Ministers Fund
3,494			3,431			63	
201			201				World Church and Mission Funds
1,073			997			76	
0							Windermere Centre Fund
344	304	20				20	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
550	483	65				2	
1,180			1,180				Other Funds
2,803	51	58	2,026	36		632	
35,505	15,435	239	18,180	805	846	0	Totals (see page 5)
3,952	1,363	0	2,589	0	0	0	Capital
20,876	11,907	148	9,758	685	(511)	(1,111)	Restricted
10,677	2,165	91	5,833	120	1,357	1,111	Unrestricted

This page shows the breakdown of the assets and liabilities in the Balance Sheet on page 5 by major fund or group of funds.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 - ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities". The particular accounting policies adopted are described below. The format of the accounts and certain accounting policies have been changed this year; these changes are explained in note 2 below.

(i) Scope

The accounts show the combined income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church nationally under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of provinces, districts or local churches.

(ii) Classification of funds

Capital funds are permanent endowments which are required to be retained but the income from these funds can be spent for the benefit of the URC subject in certain cases to specific restrictions contained in the original endowment.

Restricted income funds are funds whose use is restricted to specific purposes according to the terms on which the funds were received.

Unrestricted income funds may be spent generally for furthering the religious and charitable work of the URC. The main fund falling into this category is the Ministry and Mission Fund.

In order to present a meaningful report and to facilitate comparison with our budgets, the Maintenance of the Ministry fund, the Ministerial Training fund and the Memorial Hall Trust Grant fund, although technically restricted funds are treated as unrestricted funds in these accounts.

The main funds included in these accounts, and their classification, are listed on page 10.

(iii) Income

Income is brought into account as soon as it becomes receivable except for legacies which are not credited until received.

When a province remits more than its agreed contribution to the Ministry and Mission Fund in any year the excess is carried forward to the following year as a payment in advance.

(iv) Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are stated at original cost less depreciation calculated at the following percentages on cost:

Properties deemed to have a useful life of less than 40 years	2½%
Cars	30%
Computers	25%
Photocopiers	20%
Other furniture and equipment	10%

In addition, major repair works to Westminster College have been capitalised and are being depreciated over ten years.

(v) Investments

Listed securities and units in the URC Investment Pool are included at market value at the balance sheet date. Unlisted securities and investment properties are stated at cost or, in the case of gifts, market value at the date of receipt. For gilt-edged securities purchased within ten years of maturity at a cost in excess of redemption amount, the excess is amortised over the period to maturity and deducted from interest receivable.

(vi) Stock

Stock, which consists of books in the URC bookshop, is stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(vii) Westminster College

With the exception of certain improvements and additions since 1983, the buildings of Westminster College are not included in the Balance Sheet since the College was originally a gift to the Church, the value of which cannot readily be ascertained.

This page contains fairly "technical" information about the way the accounts have been prepared.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS continued

NOTE 2 - CHANGES IN ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Two changes in accounting policies have been made in this year's accounts:

(i) The accounts of The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers Housing Society Limited (RMHS) have been included within the URC accounts as the provision of housing for retired ministers is something to which the General Assembly has given a commitment, and RMHS is the principal means of fulfilling this commitment. The net income of RMHS included in the Statement of Financial Activities for the first time is £465,000 (1994 - £573,000).

(ii) Investments in listed securities and units in the URC Investment Pool are included at market value instead of at their original cost as this is considered to give a more realistic view of their worth to the URC.

The comparative figures for 1994 have been restated to reflect these two changes. The change to the amount of total funds shown in the 1994 accounts is as follows:

	£'000
Total funds at 31st December 1994 as shown in the 1994 accounts	21,376
RMHS net assets at 31st December 1994	6,278
Increase in investment values to market value	4,031
Restated amount of total funds at 31st December 1994	<u>31,685</u>

NOTE 3 - TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Houses for retired ministers £'000	Houses for serving ministers £'000	Other properties £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Total £'000
Cost					
As at 1st January 1995	9,321	2,824	1,909	635	14,689
Additions during year	1,701	214	65	116	2,096
Disposals during year	(211)	(184)		(120)	(515)
As at 31st December 1995	10,811	2,854	1,974	631	16,270
Depreciation					
As at 1st January 1995			184	435	619
Charged during year			20	65	85
Written back on disposal				(108)	(108)
As at 31st December 1995	0	0	204	392	596
Net book value					
At 31st December 1995	<u>10,811</u>	<u>2,854</u>	<u>1,770</u>	<u>239</u>	<u>15,674</u>
At 31st December 1994	<u>9,321</u>	<u>2,824</u>	<u>1,725</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>14,070</u>

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 1995 were £172,000 and maintenance costs were £146,000. All properties are considered to have a remaining useful life exceeding 40 years. Consequently, no depreciation has been provided other than on the major repairs at Westminster College.

At 31st December 1995 302 houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 25 houses for serving ministers. Other properties include United Reformed Church House, the Yardley Hastings and Windermere centres, and building costs capitalised at Westminster College since 1983.

This page and the following two pages set out additional information about various aspects of the URC's finances.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS continued

NOTE 4 - INVESTMENTS

	1995 £'000	1994 £'000
Long term investments		
Long term investments comprise the following:		
Units in the URC Investment Pool at market value	15,488	13,570
Other listed securities at market value	2,368	2,197
The URC Insurance Company Ltd shares at cost (see note 12)	73	73
Other unlisted securities at cost	24	74
Investment properties at cost	227	227
	<u>18,180</u>	<u>16,141</u>

All investments are in UK companies or properties.

	1995 £'000	1994 £'000
Short term investment		
The short term investment is £3 million 8.75% Treasury Stock 1997		
At cost less amortisation (see note 1(v))	3,047	3,076
Gain/(loss) in market value	73	(159)
Market value at 31st December 1995	<u>3,120</u>	<u>2,917</u>

The above holding represents the investment of surplus cash in order to maximise the income of the church. As the investment can be realised at any time to meet cash requirements it is treated as a current asset in the Balance Sheet on page 5.

NOTE 5 - LOANS AND ADVANCES

	1995 £'000	1994 £'000
Loans and advances comprise the following:		
To churches	675	883
To ministers	130	120
	<u>805</u>	<u>1,003</u>

Loans to ministers are generally interest free. Loans to churches bear interest at rates between 4¼% and 7%, except for certain loans which are interest free for an initial period of two years.

NOTE 6 - BANK BALANCES AND MONEY MARKET DEPOSITS

	1995 £'000	1994 £'000
Cash on call and short term deposit	1,570	2,052
Cash at bank and in hand	162	240
	<u>1,732</u>	<u>2,292</u>

NOTE 7 - CURRENT LIABILITIES

	1995 £'000	1994 £'000
Sums held for provinces and congregations	2,921	3,193
Advance contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	537	485
Other creditors	1,586	1,844
	<u>5,044</u>	<u>5,522</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS continued**NOTE 8 - ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS**

At 31st December 1995 United Reformed Church Trust held investments with an original cost of approximately £15 million (1994 - £14 million) on behalf of provinces, churches and trusts. The Trust also held property and other assets. All of these assets are held to the order of the provinces, churches and trusts concerned and are not shown in these URC accounts (see note 1(i)).

NOTE 9 - THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS PENSION FUND

Pensions for most URC ministers are provided by The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund. The Fund is a defined benefit pension scheme and the assets are invested and managed by independent trustees.

The URC currently contributes 10.65% of basic stipend in respect of members and makes further payments towards the actuarial deficit, as recommended by the Consultant Actuary.

The last triennial valuation of the Pension Fund was undertaken by the Actuary as at 1st January 1994. The valuation used the attained age method and assumed that the rate of return achieved by the Fund will exceed the rate of stipend increase by 3%. The report of the Actuary showed that the expected shortfall on the long term valuation basis will be in the region of £11.3 million. The Actuary has advised that, based upon the current actuarial assumptions, it will be necessary for the series of annual additional contributions, increasing by 10% per annum compound, to be continued until the year 2006. The amount of the additional contribution in 1995 was £998,000. The Maintenance of the Ministry Committee of the URC intends that these contributions shall be made.

The URC also operates a number of other defined benefit schemes for a relatively small number of office and other staff. All of these schemes show actuarial surpluses.

NOTE 10 - COMMITMENTS

At 31st December 1995 The URC Retired Ministers Housing Society Ltd had contractual liabilities for the purchase of properties amounting to £126,000 (1994 - £166,000) and commitments for the purchase of other properties amounting to £150,000 (1994 - £812,000).

NOTE 11 - INTERESTS IN TRUSTS

The URC receives income from a number of trusts. The most significant are described below.

Memorial Hall Trust - This trust owns a part interest in the former Memorial Hall building on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. In 1995 the URC received income of £518,000 (1994 - £490,000) from this trust. In addition, 29 properties owned by the trust are occupied by URC ministers or their dependants.

New College London Trust - This trust holds assets relating to the former New College London on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. The URC's interest amounts to approximately 82%. In 1995 the URC received income of £220,000 (1994 - £239,000) from this trust.

The Cheshunt Foundation supports Westminster College by paying the stipend and expenses of one of the lecturers, by contributing to the college budget, and by providing financial support for ministers taking post-ordination training, and lay training.

NOTE 12 - THE URC INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

The URC owns the whole of the share capital of The URC Insurance Company Limited ("URCIC"). The cost of this investment is £72,500 and is included in long term investments. 100% of the insurance placed with URCIC is re-insured by The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group who also provide management services. URCIC has entered into a deed of covenant to pay to the URC 95% of its pre-tax profits; in 1995, this amounted to £62,000. The accounts of URCIC are not included in the accounts of the URC on the grounds that its activities are not considered comparable with the main activities of the URC and are not material in the context of the URC accounts.

NOTE 13 - THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL

The United Reformed Church operates an Investment Pool under the authority of a Charity Commission order. The financial statement of the Pool is shown on page 16. Of the total investment valued at £32 million in the Pool, only £15.5 million is held for URC central funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 4).

THE INVESTMENT POOL
FINANCIAL STATEMENT for the year ended 31st December 1995

CAPITAL	1995		1994	
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 *Units	£'000
Units in issue at 1st January 1995	611,523	26,695	571,569	28,685
Units issued in the year	57,629	2,751	48,237	2,136
Units cancelled in the year	(28,057)	(1,392)	(8,283)	(370)
Management fees		(64)		(57)
Increase/(decrease) in value of investments during the year		4,117		(3,699)
Units in issue at 31st December 1995:				
to URC central funds	309,273	15,488	310,870	13,570
to other funds	331,822	16,619	300,653	13,125
	641,095	32,107	611,523	26,695

REPRESENTED BY

	Market value £'000	Market value £'000
Investments		
British Government Gilt-edged securities	9,544	5,999
Other British fixed interest stock	1,946	1,752
British equities	20,121	17,230
	31,611	24,981
Cash and short term deposits	630	1,203
Balance owing (to)/from the United Reformed Church	(134)	511
	<u>32,107</u>	<u>26,695</u>
Based on the underlying market value of investments and uninvested cash the value of each unit was:	<u>5.01 pence</u>	<u>4.37 pence</u>

During the year distributions were made in respect of all income received as follows:

3 months ended:	Rate per unit	£'000	Rate per unit	£'000
	pence		pence	
• 31st March	0.0410	251	0.0379	219
• 30th June	0.0640	397	0.0800	461
• 30th September	0.0744	472	0.0747	441
• 31st December	0.1423	915	0.0968	582
	<u>0.3217</u>	<u>2,035</u>	<u>0.2894</u>	<u>1,703</u>

*Note: The trustee decided that on January 1st 1995 all units should be divided into 100 new units. The comparative figures have been re-stated to take account of this change

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO THE ACCOUNTS

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that accounts are prepared for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church nationally under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church') as at the end of the year and of their income and expenditure for the year. In preparing those accounts, the Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that:

- suitable accounting policies are selected and applied consistently;
- judgements and estimates made are reasonable and prudent;
- applicable accounting standards are followed;
- the accounts are prepared on a going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to assume that the Church will continue its activities.

The Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that proper accounting records are maintained which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Church and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with generally accepted accounting practice. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Church and hence for taking steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS

We confirm, on behalf of the Finance Committee, our approval of the accounts as set out on pages 5 to 16.

A G Burnham
General Secretary

Graham Stacy
Treasurer

C M Frank
Chief Accountant and
Financial Secretary

4th April 1996

The above statements are formal statements which are included in the accounts of all companies and major charities.

REPORT OF THE AUDITORS TO THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

We have audited the accounts on pages 5 to 16 which have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out on page 12. These accounts deal with those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church nationally under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church').

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and the auditors

As described on page 17, the Finance Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounts. It is our responsibility to form an independent opinion, based on our audit, on those accounts and to report our opinion to you.

Basis of opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Auditing Standards issued by the Auditing Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the accounts. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgements made by the Finance Committee in the preparation of the accounts, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the circumstances of the Church, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the accounts are free from material mis-statement, whether caused by fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the accounts.

Opinion

In our opinion the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Church as at 31st December 1995, and of its financial activities for the year then ended.

186 City Road
London EC1V 2NU

ROBSON RHODES
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditor

4th April 1996

The audit report by Robson Rhodes set out above is in the standard form used by auditors when there is nothing exceptional which they wish to draw to the attention of readers.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

	1995		1994	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME				
Contributions from ministers and central funds	1,384		1,357	
Transfer values received	1	1,385	30	1,387
Investment income	1,468		1,286	
Underwriting commission	3	1,471	5	1,291
Allocation toward Actuarial Deficit	1,009		928	
Donations	53	1,062	3	931
		3,918		3,609
EXPENDITURE				
Benefits paid	2,907		2,695	
Transfer values paid			70	
	2,907		2,765	
Management expenses	108	3,015	113	2,878
NET NEW MONEY AVAILABLE FOR INVESTMENT				
		903		731
Realised profit on sale of investments		1,856		1,912
Increase/(decrease) in unrealised surplus on investment revaluation		3,594		(5,678)
TOTAL INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR				
		6,353		(3,035)
Balance of resources at 1st January		34,918		37,953
Balance of resources at 31st December		41,271		34,918
Represented by:				
Investments		40,924		33,533
Net Current assets		347		1,385
		41,271		34,918

This account which is a summarised account of the full accounts of the Pension Fund, should be read in conjunction with note 9 on page 15 of the audited accounts of the Church.

The full accounts of the Pension Fund have been audited by Robson Rhodes, who have given an unqualified audit opinion.

The audited accounts of the Pension Fund are available from the Central Office of the Church.

APPENDIX VII

THE EUROPE TASK GROUP

Provincial European Church Partnerships

The following information is based on responses from Synod Clerks and Provincial European Link Co-ordinators to the question of whether their Province has an official European link.

Province 1 - Northern

Have been trying to develop links with the United Protestant Church of Belgium and in 1994 signed a declaration of intent, to be reviewed after five years.

Province 2 - North Western

Have strong connections with the URC Waldensian Fellowship, but no formal link.

Province 3 - Mersey

Put their energy into their links with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Province 4 - Yorkshire

No official Provincial link, although the Women's Committee have a strong link with the Palatinate.

Province 5 - East Midlands

No formal link, but through the Moderator a link has developed with the Reformed Church in Croatia.

Province 6 - West Midlands

Have had exchange visits with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Province 7 - Eastern

Have a link with the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

Province 8 - South Western

Province 9 - Wessex

Have a link with the Nord-Normandie Synod of the French Reformed Church (in conjunction with Southern Province).

Province 10 - Thames North

Have a link with the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren.

Province 11 - Southern

Have a link with the Nord-Normandie Synod of the French Reformed Church (in conjunction with Wessex Province).

Province 12 - Wales

Have a link with the Reformed Church in Hungary.

Specialist European Ecumenical Agencies

In addition to the Conference of European Churches, the Leuenberg Fellowship and the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society, the United Reformed Church also relates to and works with the following European ecumenical agencies:

Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe
European Contact Group on Urban and Industrial Mission
Work and Economy Network
Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women
Ecumenical Association for Adult Education in Europe
European Conference on Christian Education
Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe

The report of the Europe Task Group envisages that partnership with these agencies and any other specialist European agencies which are deemed to be of value to the life and ministry of the URC should continue (see report para. 3.6).

Further information about these agencies, along with information about the full range of the URC's engagement with Europe, can be found in *The United Reformed Church: A European Church* available from the URC Bookshop.

APPENDIX VIII

BAPTIST/UNITED REFORMED CHURCH AGREED GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISMAL POLICY IN LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Where we are

1 We recognise that Local Ecumenical Partnerships bring Christians together from different traditions without having reached agreement on all the theological issues which have divided those traditions in the past. It is therefore important that the policies framed for such LEPs embody mutual respect for one another's convictions and a pastoral sensitivity to the consequences of those policies for all those involved locally. In relation to baptism and associated rites of Christian initiation we recognise the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the understandings and practice of baptism in Baptist and United Reformed churches and of building up the fellowship of the congregations of the sharing churches.

- 2 The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church (paragraph 14) requires:
- a) that baptism is the sacrament of entry into the Church and is therefore administered once only to any person;
 - b) that baptism may be administered in infancy or at an age of responsibility and that both forms of baptism shall be made available in the life of every worshipping congregation;
 - c) that baptism is always administered on profession of faith, either by the person being baptised or by his/her parent(s);
 - d) that the profession of faith made prior to baptism by a believer or at an age of responsibility by one baptised in infancy is a necessary part of the process of initiation and whenever possible it should be made at a celebration of the Lord's Supper;
 - e) that the convictions both of those who believe that baptism can only be appropriately administered to a believer and those who believe that infant baptism also is in harmony with the mind of Christ are honoured by the Church;
 - f) that baptism, whether of infants or believers, whether by pouring or immersion, should not be such to which conscientious objection is taken either by the person administering baptism, or by the person seeking it, or by the parent(s) requesting it for an infant.

- 3 The Declaration of Principle in the Constitution of the Baptist Union of Great Britain states that *'Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day.'*

Furthermore, in responding to the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission's Statement on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the Baptist Union commented that the affirmation in the document that 'any practice which might be interpreted as "re-baptism" must be avoided' was 'wholly unacceptable in its present form since, on some interpretations, nothing could pass through so restrictive a sieve. In cases of infant baptism which are neither accompanied nor followed by any of the significant features of the initiatory process to which the report amply draws attention, and where the individual involved is convinced out of an instructed conscience that Christian obedience requires believer's baptism, we cannot agree that an *a priori* universal bar should operate.'

4 Therefore, although the United Reformed Church and the Baptist Union agree in recognising those whose conviction it is that baptism can only be administered to believers, they disagree over the recognition of those whose conviction it is that infant baptism is also in harmony with the mind of Christ and over whether someone who has received infant baptism may also receive believers' baptism.

5 LEPs involving Baptist and United Reformed churches will make available both infant and believers' baptism, by immersion, pouring or sprinkling with water. They will also make available the services of thanksgiving, dedication and blessing (whether for the children of church members or of those not in church membership). These will normally take place within the congregation's regular services of worship.

One way forward

6 The simplest baptismal policy for such LEPs is that Baptist ministers and members will act in accordance with the Baptist Union's Declaration of Principle and United Reformed ministers and members will act in accordance with the URC's Basis of Union. A consequence of this is that it will be necessary to distinguish between those on the Baptist, United Reformed and Common membership rolls. Where such a congregation has only one minister, it will be necessary for such a minister to be especially sensitive to the possible conflict of convictions over baptism. If, therefore, someone who has been baptised as an infant requests believers' baptism, such a person would be regarded as wishing to become a Baptist. Any such service of believers' baptism should not be administered by a URC minister, and the person concerned would subsequently be entered upon the Baptist roll.

Another way forward

7.1 Some LEPs may decide to seek a pastoral policy which does not distinguish between members of different denominations within the local congregation. While separate rolls will still need to be maintained, it may be decided to follow a common policy for all members of the congregation. This would involve recognising the need to refrain from appealing to either the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle or the URC Basis of Union as an ultimate sanction either for or against a particular approach. Such a policy might take the following form.

7.2 Infant baptism would be available to children whose parent(s) or guardian(s) are able to make a confession of faith, are able to bring the children up in the faith, and are members or regular worshippers and part of the church fellowship. Believers' baptism would be available to those who are able to confess their faith and commit their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Before either infant or believers' baptism a course of preparation for parent(s) or candidate would precede the baptism. Believers' baptism would not be administered to those baptised as infants, except in the circumstances set out in paragraph 7(d) below.

7.3 Such a policy requires careful consideration of all requests for baptism. The minister and one more elders/deacon/church officers or appointed visitors should visit the individual concerned or the parents of the child:

- a) to ensure that those concerned have a sufficient understanding of the commitment involved;
 - b) to ascertain that baptism is an appropriate step;
- and
- c) if baptism is not considered appropriate, to explore alternative steps such as a service of thanksgiving, dedication and blessing in the case of a request for infant baptism, or the renewal of baptismal vows and/or a personal confession of faith in the case of a request for believers' baptism.

7.4 In **exceptional** cases when an individual who has been baptised as an infant maintains a conviction about wishing to be baptised as a believer, a pastoral consultation shall take place between the candidate and the minister(s) and church meeting(s). The possibility of meeting the individual's convictions by a service for the renewal of baptismal vows and/or a personal confession of faith should be thoroughly explored. If, however, that is not acceptable, the individual's request may be granted provided that the minister(s) and church meeting(s) are in agreement and that the person concerned is willing to have his/her membership entered on the Baptist roll. If there is disagreement, help and advice should be sought from the Intermediate Ecumenical Bodies and particularly from both the Baptist Union General Superintendent of the area and the United Reformed Church Provincial Moderator concerned.

APPENDIX IX

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Chairman of the Board of Directors: D Desmond Davies

Director and Secretary: CM Frank

1. The Trust continues its work as acting as Trustee for the URC centrally, and for the United Reformed Churches throughout the country.
2. During 1995 a start was made on the task of transferring the Trusteeship of many local United Reformed Churches to Provincial Trusts.
3. The Board continued its consideration of the report on the Operation of the Trust by Vernon Lane and has revised practices in accordance with this report.
4. At the AGM in May, Ian Neilson and Tony Lodde resigned as Joint Secretaries. The Board expressed their gratitude for the devoted service which extended over many years. The Board was glad that they were able to return to the office following serious illness in the latter part of 1994. Unfortunately the health respite granted to Tony Lodde was only temporary, and the Board noted his death in the early part of 1996 with great sadness.
5. During 1995 Alistair Black died and tribute was paid to his service as Treasurer of the Church at Assembly 1995. His loss is very great.
6. The Board is glad to welcome the new Treasurer of the United Reformed Church, Graham Stacy, as a Director.
7. The Board also noted with deep regret the death of a former Secretary, Fred Lodde in 1995.

APPENDIX X

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LIMITED

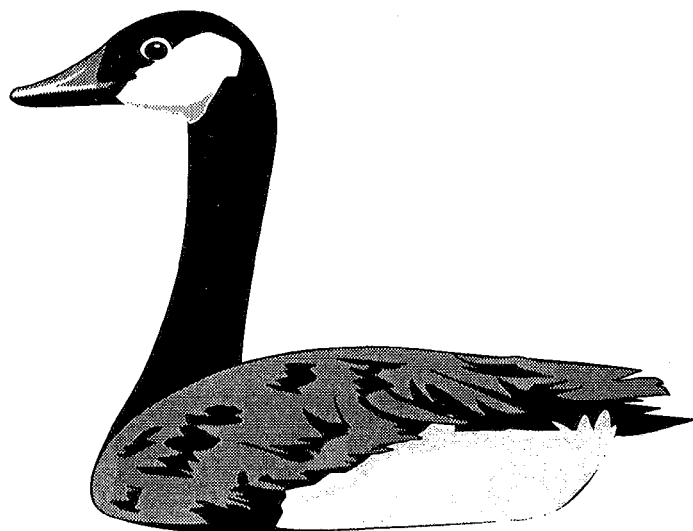
Chairman: The Revd Dr T A Chadwick

Secretary: Mr G Lunt

1. During the last year, the Company has continued work in a number of different spheres in pursuit of its responsibility for the management of the Pension Fund and its investments.
2. The Board of Directors has continued the practice of delegating the management of the investment portfolio to HSBC Asset Management Europe Limited. The Board established an Investment Sub-Committee, which has met regularly with the Investment Managers to review investment performance and strategy. A major achievement this year has been the creation of a new, formal Agreement with the Investment Managers which puts duties, responsibilities and procedures on a clear and proper footing.

3. Mindful always of its duty and objective to maximise the total return on the Fund, the Board has regularly reviewed its investment portfolio to ensure that its declared ethical investment policy is maintained; changes have been made in the light of variations in company structures and activities.
 4. In March 1995 the Board authorised the publication of a 'popular' Report in leaflet form to Members of the Pension Scheme, which sought to explain in fairly simple terms the nature of the Company, its responsibilities, Fund performance and major benefits. This initiative was well-received and the leaflet was considered helpful.
 5. The Board is currently engaged in a multi-faceted process in which it seeks to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Pensions Act 1995. As this process moves forward it may be necessary for resolutions to be brought before General Assembly. As ever, the Board is particularly grateful for the advice it receives from professional actuarial and legal advisers. Of particular concern to the Board is its wish to ensure that an appropriate level of funding is secured so that the Pension Fund deficit may be reduced and eliminated in as short a time as is possible. It is mindful of both legal requirements and the effect of subventions on the Church's Budget and, at the time of writing, is in discussion with the URC Finance Committee and the Resource Planning Advisory Committee on this issue.
 6. The Board once again places on record its appreciation of the work of the staff in the Finance Office of Church House, who handle day-to-day matters in connection with the Fund and its administration.
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INFORMATION



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996**

URC History Society

1 The Society met at Trinity URC, Bristol for its Study Day 23rd September 1995. The Annual Lecture was given by Dr Brian Stanley, and a further paper by Dr Stephen Orchard. A visit was made to the New Meeting, where the Society was welcomed by Revd John Newton. A Study Weekend is planned at Cromford on 20th - 22nd September 1996, to include the Annual Meeting and Lecture.

2 Our editor, Dr Clyde Binfield, continues to gather a range of articles of the first quality for our Journal. In addition to a special supplement on the history of the Congregational Fund Board, 1695-1995, subjects have included, Congregationalism in Norwich, Presbyterianism in Liverpool, Army Chaplains, The Taylor family of Southampton, Samuel Davidson and Lancashire Independent College, and Thomas Hardy.

3 There has been the usual constant stream of enquiries and visitors at the Library. We have been very grateful to the various volunteers who have helped during the year, especially Mrs Mary Davies, who attends every week. Additions of various kinds have been made over the year and we are most grateful for the gift of various published histories of local churches and we encourage congregations to go on writing and publishing these. The Council have continued to give serious consideration to the long-term future of this scholarly asset and hopes to advise the Church on its future, both in terms of conservation and access.

4 1995 was the centenary of the death of Revd Robert Dale; in addition to events organised at Carrs Lane and elsewhere the Society marked the event with a short meeting on 4th July, at lunchtime during the URC Assembly, which was addressed by Dr David Thompson. The Carrs Lane URC also provided a display at the Assembly.

5 After many years of service, including a time as Treasurer, Mrs Jean Armour retired from the Council at the 1995 Annual Meeting. She has been a dedicated and enthusiastic member of the Council and promoted the interests of the Society widely around the URC. We also learnt with regret of the death of our vice-president and former secretary, Mr Gordon Esslemont, in December last. He had been in poor health for some time but gave many years of energetic and devoted service to the Society in the 1970s and 1980s.

6 The subscription to the Society is currently £8.50 per annum and we would welcome more individual and congregational membership.

URC Musician's Guild

Alongside its formal Constitution the Guild has laid down a number of 'Aims'. These include giving members an opportunity to pool experience, foster discussion, receive training, enjoy fellowship with people of similar interests and seeking to improve the quality of music (of all styles) in Divine Worship. In practice we try to achieve these aims by articles in our magazine, by meetings in our Branches and by our annual Celebration Day. These three elements of our work have been continued and developed in the last year.

The magazine, Guild Review, which is published in January, May and December, has maintained the high standard which it has reached over the last few years under the able Editorship of John Mansfield. In addition to notices and reports of Branch events, interesting articles, correspondence and reviews of new music are included. The Guild can, we feel, be justly proud of this publication.

We are particularly pleased this year to report the forming of two new Branches - in the Yorkshire and South Western Provinces. The Guild now has Branches in all of the URC Provinces except Wales and Thames North (the latter being annexed at present to the Eastern Branch). The Guild is very grateful to the Secretaries and other officers of the Branches who so readily give of their time in organising events for members.

Our Celebration Day last year was held at Kensington URC where the Minister, Organist and members gave us an inspiring day of music, talk and worship. The Annual Business Meeting was of particular importance in that it marked the retirement of the Chairman, Revd Caryl Micklem - appropriately at Kensington where he was Minister for some 20 years. In recognition of his 11 years as Chairman of the Guild and many previous years as Chaplain, the Guild honoured him by appointing him President - a position that had been vacant since the death in 1982 of the first President, Revd Dr Erik Routley. Revd Arthur Jack Beeson (Minister of South Croydon United and Sanderstead Methodist Churches) was elected Chairman and Revd John Filsak of Bulwell URC, Nottingham, Guild Chaplain.

Other Guild activities have continued and particular mention should be made of the Organ Advisory Service. Advice has been given to 55 churches in the last two and a half years and we are grateful to our team of Advisors who give freely of their time in helping churches in this way. The Guild also holds and maintains a list of redundant pipe Organs and has had some success in re-locating instruments.

In spite of deaths and some resignations our numbers have increased slightly, being now about 450. Nevertheless we constantly hear of people in our churches who have not heard of the Guild! In December we issued a leaflet publicising our existence which should have reached all churches. We are sure that there are many more players, singers and people 'in the pew' who appreciate the part that music can contribute to our worship and who would find our fellowship of interest and help. We ask for your co-operation in bringing our organisation to the notice of any who might be interested, for your own support (perhaps by joining us yourself) and also by remembering us and our work in your prayers.

Membership of the Guild is £4 per annum for individual members and £10 per annum for Corporate (Church) membership. Membership forms and other information, Organ Survey forms (which if your Church has not completed one we are always pleased to receive) and details of the Organ Advisory Service are all available from the Honorary General Secretary, John L Harding, "Rainbow's End", 105 Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich IP4 3NU - 01473 725075.

Schools Linked with the URC

1 In 1995 Heads, Governors and members of the teaching staffs of the Six Schools met for their Annual Conference which was held at Silcoates School on 26th and 27th September. On this occasion they were joined by parents and pupils for some of the sessions. The theme was "Education 2000" and the sessions were led by members of the teaching staff with one particularly clear-eyed session, "Swimming against the Tide" (on drugs and drug-related issues), introduced by Chief Superintendent Moran of Wakefield.

2 Grants made by the United Reformed Church from its share of the Memorial Hall Trust and by the Milton Mount Foundation continue to allow the schools to exercise their responsibility to the wide Free Church community. These grants contribute particularly to the education of children of serving ministers and missionaries but they also contribute to the education of children of women and men preparing for ordination.

3 In acknowledging these grants (and their availability in the future cannot necessarily be assumed), acknowledgement is also made of the grant to the Six Schools, recently renewed, by the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust toward sixth-form scholarships. The Schools can provide details of the terms of these grants.

4 The Schools would draw attention to the range of bursaries and allowances which it is often possible for them to make to members of the URC. Enquiries are always welcomed, for each school seeks to share the continuing opportunity for Christian education with the churches which provided its foundation.

5 **Caterham School:** Three years will stand out as memorable when Caterham School enters the new millennium. The first is 1811 when the Congregational School was founded in Lewisham by the Revd John Townsend. The second is 1884 when the Congregational School removed from Lewisham to Caterham because of the vision and energy of the school's "second founder", the Revd Josiah Viney. The third is 1995 when Caterham School became fully co-educational through its merger with Eothen School (a local independent school for girls) because of the vision and energy of Stephen Smith, Caterham's Headmaster until 1995.

The merger is now well and truly accomplished. A fine new teaching block, aptly named the Eothen Building, stands as a permanent reminder of a constituent part of the school. Its foundation stone was laid by Stephen Smith in the summer of 1994 and it was formally opened by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Revd John Reardon, on the School's Founders' Day in October 1995. He was assisted by the Rt Revd Frank Sargent, Bishop of Lambeth.

John Reardon's presence at the opening of the Eothen Building and his role as the guest preacher at the Founders' Day service underlined Caterham's continuing association with the United Reformed Church. The school is now part of the Church Schools' Company which is predominantly Anglican. The Company has changed its articles to reflect a more ecumenical approach. It is hoped that a representative of the URC will be appointed to sit on its central council. Two URC representatives continue to sit on the school's local council.

Another URC visitor at an important school event was the Revd Ken Lynch, President of Croydon District Council of the URC. He was the guest preacher at our Upper Sixth Form Leavers' Service in June 1995. He helped to make the event one in which the sixth-formers were affirmed and challenged. Caterham will be sorry to lose Ken for he has been a frequent, welcome visitor to the school. He leaves Redhill URC in the summer to become minister of the Brighthelm Church in Brighton.

Ken Lynch is one of a number of URC ministers who freely give of their time to speak at school assemblies. Their ministry is much appreciated.

The school has a small chapel and this has been used together with other facilities by local churches for day conferences. The school is happy to welcome the use of its facilities in this way.

The last Speech Day of the old Caterham School was held in July 1995. The guest preacher was the President of the Methodist Conference, the Revd Leslie Griffiths. In a memorable address, which was at times uncomfortable to many in the audience, he reminded the assembled company of Christian community values which had got lost in the Britain of the mid-nineteen nineties.

Caterham continues to feature prominently in the league tables for advanced level GCE results. We were particularly heartened to see that we have now consistently been in the top one hundred British schools for a number of years.

In November the school received a visit from an OFSTED HMI. She spent a day in the school. Her report was most encouraging. Given that we had merged two schools two months previously she was most complimentary about what had been achieved. One thing which she said particularly heartened us. She felt that what the school was able to achieve with many pupils who are not particularly "high flying" was impressive. This is not reflected in league tables and it highlights an important deficiency in them.

There continue to be a number of children of ministers in the school. At present there are seven children of URC ministers and three Baptists.

Having merged with Eothen School the new Caterham School is not resting on its laurels. The new Sports Hall complex with a swimming pool should be available for use in the summer of 1996. And there is a vision that our facilities could be even better for our pupils. Rob Davey, Caterham's new Headmaster, together with Martin King, the school's Development Office, and Don Mear, the Chairman of Governors, are launching a Development Campaign in which it is hoped that funds will be raised to improve the school's facilities. There are impressive plans.

Caterham School is in good heart and confident for the future.

6 **Eltham College:** One of the most significant chapel assemblies during 1995 was held in February and focused on the word "surrender". Thus the school commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Eric Liddell's death. The emphasis was not on his Olympic glory but on his Christian bearing and example in the internment camp. This note of commemoration was carried into a study of Liddell in R S lessons, and Eric Liddell prizes were awarded for resulting essays.

On the same theme, the year saw the demolition of the old gymnasium and work begun on the magnificent new Sports Centre. The hall has just been brought into use, and the governors have decided to name it after Eric Liddell. Following extensive fund-raising from the school community, the final costs were covered by a grant of £570,000 from the National Lottery Fund. The official opening will be held in June 1996 with Sebastian Coe the guest of honour.

During the summer two expeditions set out from the College: the first, involving current pupils and staff, went to Estonia via Norway and Sweden; a second involved four young Old Elthamians who left the school in 1992, and was an ambitious project that delivered a year's supply of medicines and a Land Rover to a Christian clinic in Guinea-Bissau. This required an immense journey overland, overcoming various difficulties in the missionary tradition. The school had been joined in supporting this adventure by several local churches.

The life of the school was flourished against the backcloth of new building and traditional activities. The usual concerts and plays have been staged; the usual parties have been given as part of the continuing Community Service programme; and a standard of excellence has been maintained in the sporting tradition. Academic results continue to be excellent, and the school is in good heart.

Both the chaplain and the Headmaster represented the school at the service held to commemorate the bicentenary of Robert Moffat's birth, and the school continued to welcome local URC Ministers as speakers in Chapel and as contributors to the Lower Sixth Lifeskills course.

7 **Silcoates:** 1995-96 sees the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the school and the centenary of the Old Silcoatians' Association. Silcoates is fortunate in the loyalty and commitment of many former pupils, notably those who serve on the OSA Committee. On Old Silcoatians' Day in June, before a splendid dinner attended by over 200, the Chairman of the OSA and the Headmaster formally opened the Centenary Room, which houses a fascinating collection of Silcoates memorabilia.

INFORMATION

Mr Robert Wood is the new Head of the Junior School. He succeeds Mr Paul Bryan, who has left after five years to become Head of the Junior School at Hymers College, Hull.

We continue to send over 80% of our Sixth Form leavers to read for university degrees. Spanish is now offered at A level and PE at GCSE. We have acquired a third room of computers, 586s with Windows 95.

Over a quarter of the 600 pupils are now girls. Their sporting achievements are increasingly impressive, the U13 team for instance, being both Wakefield Schools' League and Tournament champions. The overall quality of music has improved to the extent that we now have two Michaelmas concerts. The highlight of the drama department's year was an intelligent and moving production of Miller's *All My Sons*. This year we have an unprecedented number of Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Awards.

In this its anniversary year, Silcoates is flourishing, as are the two other schools in the Foundation, Sunny Hill House and St Hilda's.

8 **Taunton School:** The demise of the comet Shoemaker-Levy IX has continued to reverberate in the School as the boys who recorded its collisions with Jupiter on a School radio-telescope have since won a series of scientific competitions and will represent Europe in the United States later in 1996.

The new Preparatory School opened in September 1994 rising phoenix-like from the ruins of the Boys' Prep with a co-educational population (as the Boys' and Girls' Preps combined) enjoying unmatched facilities, including an indoor, heated 25m pool that had been an ambition for many years.

As Taunton Preparatory School was launched so the old assembly room came under the builders' hammer (and excavator) to emerge remodelled as a first-class small courtyard theatre with a fine acoustic in September 1995. At last it has become possible to produce plays in conditions that are worthy of the quality of the actors.

9 **Walthamstow Hall:** It has been a year of outstanding successes. The Junior School was awarded the title "**Science School of the Year**" in the Department of Trade and Industry competition. They had already won the British Telecom "**Young Naturalist of the Year**" award for the second time running.

Sixth-formers won the county shield as **Young Enterprise Company of 1995**, the Kent Young Enterprise Public Speaking, and several gold medals in the national Mathematics Challenge. They also achieved excellent Advanced Level results.

The lacrosse team, having won the Kent Championship and reached the semi-finals of the All England Tournament, had a superb tour in America. This season they were again winners of the Kent Championship; twenty girls were selected for county squads, with three out of four of the senior Kent teams captained by Walthamstow Hall players.

There have been many concerts, in local churches as well as in school. The drama programme included a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* remarkable for the quality of its acting and its magical atmosphere, and workshop presentations of Durrenmatt's *The Visit* and Euripides' *Antigone*.

The fiftieth anniversary of V E Day was celebrated with a special assembly commemorating the sacrifices of those who had fought and won the war, followed by a "Street Party" lunch with wartime food and 'forties songs and staff and girls dressed as combatants, munitions workers, landgirls, evacuees, and even Winston Churchill. The school's underground air raid shelters were opened up and girls found them a poignant reminder of the predecessors' hardships.

Work is nearly complete on the new Sixth-Form Centre and the building of the new Library will begin in July.

The number of missionaries' and ministers' daughters in the school is three: one URC, one Anglican and one Wycliffe Bible Translators.

10 **Wentworth College:** Last September, at the beginning of this academic year, the Board of Governors simplified the school's name and devised a new image for our day-to-day operations. Nothing else has changed: the school's foundation, principles and management remain the same, and legally the school is still the registered charity called Wentworth Milton Mount.

In the summer of 1995, the thirty-five UVI students entered for 104 Advanced Level subjects and achieved an 85% pass rate. Especially high achievers included two ministers' daughters, one now reading Education and Psychology at Warwick University, and one now taking a year out before starting her Equine Studies degree course. Their contemporaries have moved on to follow courses in Veterinary Science, Law, French, Music, Medicine, Accountancy, Psychology, Food Science, Mathematics, English, Biochemistry, Clinical Sciences, Business Administration and Art. Two are spending their Gap Year with Project Trust, teaching English in China and Thailand. This is a challenging experience for them and an interesting one for us, as we learn of their adventures in the letters we regularly receive.

The fifty-two girls in form V entered for a total of 452 GCSE subjects in the summer. They gained grades A to C in 91.4% of these - a much better pass rate than the previous year's and certainly higher than the national average of 52.7%. We were especially pleased with the greater proportion of A* and A grades - between them representing 29.4% of all the fifth form's grades.

On many occasions during the year we were prompted to look back to that time fifty years ago when the Second World War was drawing to a close and Britain was rejoicing. Taken as the theme for our Creative Arts Evening, this was further developed for the old girls' annual reunion in May, when special emphasis was placed on the reminiscences of those who had spent the war years at the School's temporary home of Llantysilio Hall, near Llangollen. Miss Bourne was their Headmistress and, at the start of the 1945 summer term, she brought her girls back to Bournemouth. Half a century later, in October, the School paid their respects to Miss Bourne at the memorial service at Richmond Hill Church, which followed her funeral.

It is hard to do justice to the many and varied successes experienced by our 240 pupils during the past academic year - eight of whom were URC ministers' daughters. The staff find it highly satisfying to motivate and intellectually stimulate each of our girls - from the most able to those whose academic ability is less immediately obvious - *and* to help them develop a broad and useful portfolio of skills and experiences, as they work towards their realisable goals. Education, based on firm Christian principles, in a good school like ours will always be a preparation for life in its fullest sense.

Silence and Retreats Group

Convener: Revd Henry Gordon
Secretary: Revd Keith Green

We have been greatly encouraged over the past twelve months at the evidence of increasing interest in the Retreat Movement and the growing awareness of churches as to the value of Quiet Days and Retreats. It has also been encouraging to see our centre at Windermere giving even more time to retreats and contemplative weekends. The incoming warden, Revd Peter McIntosh has built further onto the foundations laid by Revd Graham Cook so the movement goes on apace. However, there is still much further to go in helping churches and individuals overcome their "Puritan suspicion" of such endeavours.

This year too we have lost the services of two founding members who have given so much toward establishing our work. Dr Joan Holliday has served as Secretary to the group for a number of years and her work has been much appreciated. She is replaced by Revd Keith Green. Revd Kate Compston too has retired from the core group and as editor of Windows. Again, we record our gratitude to her for her diligence and insights and for setting a very high standard with the magazine. She is replaced by Susan Cernohlavek.

Membership? - well we could always do with more and hope to grow further in the coming year. Annual subscription entitles receipt of the magazine "Windows" and a copy of the National Retreat Association publication "Vision" which carries an abundant source of retreat houses and courses throughout Britain as well as interesting articles. (We are, of course, affiliated to the National Retreat Association). Some 250-300 copies of Windows is circulated at each publication.

As more and more churches and individuals discover the value of contemplative prayer we hope that they will be encouraged to join us and help establish a fund of resources to help others.

Spin (Sharing People in Network)

Joint Co-ordinator: Mrs Lindsey Cole

1. During this last year time has been spent looking at the Network, the way it functions and the way it relates to women's and men's groups within the churches. The question asked was "Is SPIN fulfilling the aims of the WCC Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women?"
2. A need for SPIN was identified, not just as a response to the Decade but as an ongoing part of the life of the United Reformed Church. There exists a wide range of groups which support women and men in a variety of ways, but there are also many individuals who feel isolated and in need of support. SPIN sees its role as equipping, enriching, enabling and empowering these groups and individuals. At present the most powerful way of doing this is through a network. Present structures however are not enabling SPIN to fulfil its purposes, it does not seem to be sufficiently related to local churches and people.
3. In order to relate more closely to Provinces and the work with men and women in the local churches, the main planning of national activities will, in future, involve the Provincial Co-ordinators. The annual meeting will continue to move round the provinces but it is hoped to make the event more attractive to local people.
4. In addition to SPIN-OFF the network magazine, the mailing now contains MAGNET from the Methodist Women's Network and INSAKA the magazine of the Council for World Mission's Community of Women and Men in Mission. Churches as well as individuals are being encouraged to subscribe and benefit from the range of material in each mailing. Local church groups are also encouraged to use the bible studies and other material available in the SPIN-PACK (£1.50 plus p&p).

The 1995 annual gathering was held at Windermere in November and looked at experiences and knowledge of violence and abuse in the church. It was discovered that this included domestic violence by church members, the disclosure in the church of violence in other places and contexts, as well as violence in the church itself. It was recognised that women have difficulty in being heard when they try to tell of their experiences and how hard it is for church people to believe that it happens, especially in 'good christian homes'.

It was identified that the URC at all levels needs help in three areas:

- a) in raising awareness of the issues,
- b) in prevention, by providing sanctuary and making churches places of safety,
- c) in practical procedures to enable it to deal with such issues.

'Hands to End Violence', a resource for theological education adapted by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Britain from material produced by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada is recommended. The purpose of this material is to encourage the church to deal with violence against women in ways that are both pastoral and prophetic and churches, districts and synods are urged to consider it. SPIN hopes that the URC will find ways to give guidance and suggest practical procedures for local churches and for leaders and workers within the church.

In February eight representatives from the World Council of Churches visited the United Kingdom in connection with the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. It was a joy for the URC to receive four of the visitors and a representative group was able to meet with them. All present enjoyed the 'face to face' encounter and the opportunity for the exchange of information and ideas.

In particular the churches in the UK are being challenged to:

- a) take seriously the question of violence against women,
- b) to work towards increasing awareness about this problem,
- c) explore ways in which individuals and churches are better equipped to help those who are victims and protect those at risk.

SPIN intends to take that challenge seriously and urges the whole church to place the matter high on its agenda.

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

URC representative on the National Committee: The Revd Ruth Bowyer

1 The Women's World Day of Prayer was held on 1st March. Many services took place in hospitals, halls, chapels, churches and cathedrals. The theme "God Calls us to Respond" I'm sure touched and moved many hearts, as it was written by the Christian women in Haiti whose land and people have suffered immensely for years under harsh dictatorship. Now there is hope as they start to rebuild under new democratic leaders. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, so the cry for help was uttermost in the service, not only for the Haiti situation but many parts of the world today.

2 Thirty-five conferences have been held throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland since October 1995, where workers of all denominations met to share in learning about Haiti and its background. Being inspired and encouraged through Bible Study, prayer and praise, all in preparation for the Day of Prayer, because the motto of the Women's World Day of Prayer is "Informed Prayer Leading to Prayerful Action".

3 The National Committee, after great discussion and prayer, voted in November to keep the title "Women's Day of Prayer" always with a special invitation to men.

4 My nine years of service on the National Committee has ended and the United Reformed Church's representative Mrs Josie Owens will replace me in September.

5 Full reports and letter and stories from Haiti can be found in the annual "Together in Prayer" from the office, Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - SCOTLAND

URC Representative on the National Committee: Mrs Molly Glen

1 The service this year was prepared by Christian Women in Haiti on the theme "God calls us to respond". Year after year people point out the relevance of the World Day of Prayer theme to the time it is used and to the country from which it comes - and this year is no exception.

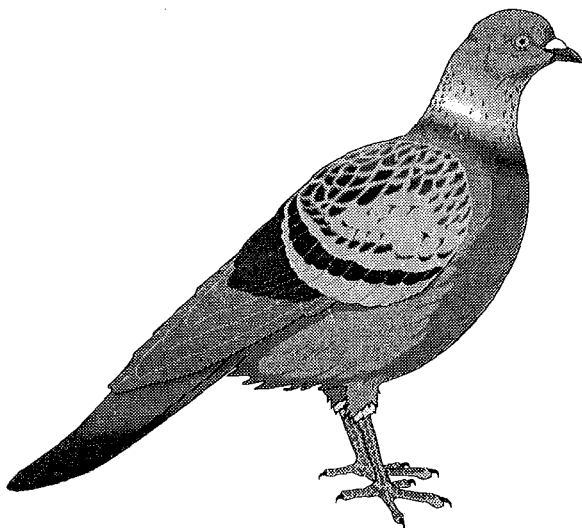
2 The service is always warmly received in retirement homes, hospitals and fellowships where they often use the specially written 'shortest version' of the service. It is also much appreciated by the housebound in tape-recorded form.

3 The Children's Service continues to increase in popularity, particularly in primary schools. We enjoy receiving the reports of the lively and imaginative uses of the service and thank those teachers who regularly send us examples of children's songs, posters, prayers and comments.

4 Once again, the Scottish Order of Service was used publicly and privately in many parts of the world. It is sent to all women from Scotland whose names have been given to us as being engaged in Christian work overseas, as well as to congregations in the Middle East, the Caribbean and Europe. This enables the circle of prayer to become even wider. Their reports and letters show how greatly they value this connection in the Great Movement of Prayer.

5 We all look forward every year to meeting once again women **and** men who over the years have become friends, feeling at home in their churches, and praying strenuously together.

STANDING ORDERS



**GENERAL ASSEMBLY
1996**

Standing Orders of the Assembly

1. THE AGENDA OF THE ASSEMBLY

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

The Mission Council, through its Assembly Arrangements Committee, shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a Draft Order of Business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

The motions arising from any report or section thereof shall be taken in the following order:

- (i) motions by the relevant Committee or Synod of which due notice has been given under rule 2a or 2b.
- (ii) motions of which due notice has been given under rule 2c, related to the report.
- (iii) duly seconded motions submitted by individual members of the Assembly under rule 2d or 3b, related to the report.

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

Motions under rules 2b, 2c and 2d which are not related to any report shall be taken at a point determined by the Assembly in considering the draft Order of Business, or on a motion from the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to amend their place in the Order of Business.

2. PRESENTATION OF BUSINESS

- 2a. All reports of Committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be annually determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 2b. A 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 shall 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 Convenor of the Assembly Arrangements 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 the Synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the Synod to comply with Standing Order 2b above. In the case of a local church the motion must be submitted to the Synod through the District Council.
- 2d. A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a Synod or a District Council through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly Arrangements Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

- 2e. Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a Committee of the General Assembly or a 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. MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 3a. A report presented to the Assembly by a Committee or Synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 2d of a motion to refer back to that Committee or Synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 3b. During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.
- 3c. No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, except that motions presented on behalf of a Committee, of which printed notice has been given, do not need to be seconded.
- 3d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 3e. It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:
- (i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
 - (ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
 - (iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
 - (iv) amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two annual meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter.
 - (v) is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 2d.

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

- 3f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion.
- 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.

STANDING ORDERS

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

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

4. TIMING OF SPEECHES AND OF OTHER BUSINESS.

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

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

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

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 to reply, but must strictly confine the reply 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.

4f. When the Order of Business includes the presentation of reports or sections of reports concerning past work of Committees or Synods which are to be open to question, comment or discussion but without introductory speeches, the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee shall propose at the beginning of such a presentation a maximum time for the consideration of the group of reports and of any particular report (e.g. 60 minutes for the group and not more than 15 minutes for any particular report). Such a motion from the Convener shall be open to amendment or to an extension of the timings by the Moderator.

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 motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

- 5b. In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as "the closure motion". If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.
- 5c. During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/ or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Annual Meeting of the General Assembly.
- 5d. The motions described in Standing Orders 5a, 5b and 5c above are exceptions to Standing Order 3c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote. Precedence as between motions under 5a, 5b and 5c is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other of them can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

6. VOTING

- 6a. Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.
- 6b. Other motions before the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except
- (a) If the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting
or
 - (b) if, the show of cards indicating a very close vote, the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees that a paper ballot be the method of voting.
- 6c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7. QUESTIONS

- 7a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 7b. A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- 7c. Questions asked under standing orders 7a. and 7b. shall be put and answered without discussion.

STANDING ORDERS

8. POINTS OF ORDER, PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS, DISSENT

- 8a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 8c. The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.
- 8d. The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

9. ADMISSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

10. CIRCULATION OF DOCUMENTS

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the 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 a manner as the Assembly Arrangements Committee may determine.
- 11b. The minutes of each day's proceedings, in duplicated form, shall be circulated on the following day and normally, after any necessary correction, approved at the opening of the afternoon session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 11c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 11d. As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod, district council and local church.

12. SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS

- 12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 12b. Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments to the Standing Orders, which shall be subject to decision by the Assembly.