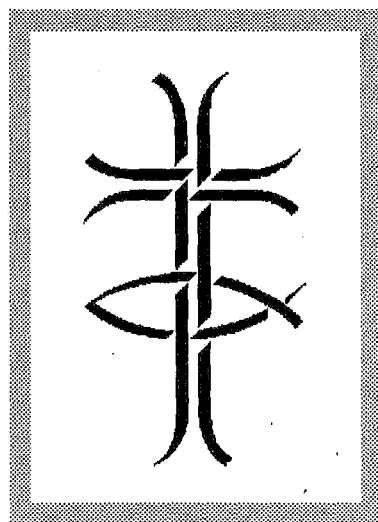


The United Reformed Church

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1997



July 7th - 11th Portsmouth

***Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers***

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Synods



General Assembly 1997

Northern Province

Sharing seems to be the theme of our report this year.

1 Assembly Moderator

We are pleased and proud to be able to share David Jenkins with the wider Church as he embarks on his year as Assembly Moderator and have consequently worked out how to share among ministers and others in the Province some of the tasks David would usually have been doing - including some of those he should never have been doing in the first place.

2 Silvercraft

We look forward to sharing our celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Church with an Arts and Craft Festival travelling through the Province in the course of the early autumn.

In each of a number of locations there will be an event - music, drama, flower festival or the like - held in a public place to enable the wider community to discover something about the United Reformed Church and join in our celebration.

There will be a core of display material that will be on view in every venue, supplemented by locally gathered exhibits.

3 Sharing our story

Following numerous enquiries from schools asking for information about the United Reformed Church, a group of teachers were gathered to put together a resource pack in response to this need. It turned out to be a bigger project than expected, and the finished product is to be launched at this Assembly.

Let's explore the United Reformed Church offers notes as a basis for lesson plans for Primary, Secondary and Adult levels on twenty themes. Although we hope schools will find this resource attractive and helpful, the potential use for groups and individuals in our churches and also in ecumenical situations is far reaching.

4 Councils and things

Anxiety about the size and strength of some of our District Councils has led to discussion about adjusting the shape of some of those which have served unchanged since 1972 when the number of churches and members was very different from today. As part of this exercise, the Cumberland District is exploring patterns of sharing and mutual support with the Congregational Churches of the Solway Area Council of the Scottish Congregational Church, just north of the border.

5 Scotland offers a lead

We have, of course, a particular interest in things in Scotland. The Province is pleased to see progress in the talks with the Scottish Congregational Church as fulfilling not just the hopes of 1988 but also the developing relationships and shared work which have characterised our dealings with them through the last nine years. We also watch with excitement the Scottish Church Initiative for Union (SCIFU) which engages our two Churches along with the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church - not least because it might offer markers in a different context for tackling the issues of episcopacy and establishment.

6 Training matters

Two areas of training have figured in our life together this year. The profile and contribution of the United Reformed Church in the North East Ordination Course has been raised with increased time commitment of Rhona Jones who acts as Director of Studies; the Province now nominates two members of the NEOC Council, one of whom serves as chair of the Board of Studies.

We have also been delighted with the initial take-up of eleven students on *Training for Learning and Serving*.

North Western Province

1 We believe in life after death!

1.1 Once again, we would like to share good news of new churches within the Province.

1.1.1 For the third consecutive year, we were able to present to Assembly in 1996 representatives of a new Local Church: that at **the Hoskers, Westhoughton**, in the North West Manchester District. Here, Anglicans, Methodists and members of the United Reformed Church worship together in Hart Common School in a new residential development for two thousand people. The average congregation is forty plus thirty children and is growing. The first ecumenical Confirmation service has taken place. The United Reformed Church provides a non-stipendiary minister as a member of the ministerial team.

1.1.2 At **Dalton-in-Furness** the "Wellspring Christian Centre" is the most recently developed ecumenical project in the Province, sponsored once again by local Methodist, Anglican and United Reformed Churches. The inaugural service took place in January 1997. Over forty people attend weekly worship in a school on a new housing estate. The vision for the next century is to build a church.

1.2 Meanwhile, older churches have new premises and, with them, new vigour.

1.2.1 Ten years ago the United Reformed Church in **Haslingden**, Rossendale, disposed of its building and some within the District predicted that the congregation would soon cease to exist. It continued to worship, however, in the building of the New Jerusalem Church. When that church also faced closure, the United Reformed Church took the opportunity to purchase a shop in the main street which had belonged to a funeral director. Now, tastefully refurbished, a chapel seating sixty people has been dedicated. Most seats are taken each Sunday and the church is thriving.

1.2.2 In **Burnage**, in south east Manchester, a church building was also declared unsafe. The church lives in partnership with two other United Reformed Churches, corporately known as Christ Church, South Manchester. After much careful thought, the partnership, supported by the District

Council, decided to redevelop the site with the co-operation of a Housing Association. The new house of worship was dedicated in April and the life of the church is moving forward.

1.2.3 In 1991 the United Reformed Church in **Bramhall**, a suburb of Stockport, began an ambitious six-year redevelopment programme. First the church building itself was demolished, the congregation worshipping in the Anglican church meanwhile. In 1992 the new house of worship was opened, ancillary rooms being added in 1994. Then in 1996 a new church hall completed the programme of rebuilding. The whole scheme cost over £660k - every penny having been raised by the congregation and local people. The congregation has gone from strength to strength during this rebuilding programme. It is interesting to note that Bramhall Church is part of a Local Ecumenical Partnership and that a Roman Catholic Mass is celebrated in the building every Sunday morning between the 8.00 and 11.00 URC services.

2 Ecumenical Social Responsibility

A significant development has taken place recently in Cumbria. "Churches Together" in that county has set up a **Social Responsibility Forum**, designed to enable the Churches to address issues of common concern unitedly. Some denominations there, including our own, no longer have their own committees for this aspect of Christian witness, and those who retain them nevertheless give priority to the ecumenical opportunity. This is working well already and shows every sign of developing.

3 Ministerial Renewal

In September 1996 The large and attractive manse at Ravenstonedale, high in the Pennines, following complete refurbishment by the Province, was opened as a home for the minister and as a place where ministers (and others) who may be needing space for reflection and renewal may stay for a time. Counselling is available if required. There can be few places of greater beauty or tranquillity than this delightful village with its historic United Reformed Church. The facility is widely available: those who wish for further details of High Chapel House should apply, in the first instance, to the Revd Mary Cock whose address is in the Year Book.

4 Training and Resources

4.1 At the Synod in March 1997 a new **Training and Development Team** was commissioned to work within the Province. The Team includes our full-time Director of Training and Youth and Children's Work Trainer, and also a number of people who work voluntarily: the Children's Work Officer, the Lay Preachers' Commissioner, the Minister of Music, the person responsible for editing and promoting our training material "Growbags", and an Organising Secretary. We hope that by forming this team, those responsible for training will support each other, co-ordinate their work, and offer a wide range of expertise to the Province and its Local Churches.

4.2 It is frequently said that Elders, Junior Church Leaders and others working in the churches find it difficult to lay their hands on appropriate resources for their work. Usually the resources are available but people do not know they exist! In an attempt to solve this problem, the Training and Development Team has organised three "**Resources Road Shows**" in different parts of the Province at which a wide range of resources was on display, together with advice from those whose task it is to promote them. These have proved helpful and more are planned.

5 Mission Action Statement

Our new Committee structure, inaugurated eighteen months ago, is proving to be beneficial. Matters related to the Mission of the Church are overseen and developed by the Mission Action Committee. This Committee brought to Synod in March an outline "**Mission Statement**" to encourage Local Churches to ask searching questions about their worship and witness, to work out a vision for the future, and to offer a framework within which to formulate their own Statement for future use. It is hoped that this will be widely used.

6 Guidelines and Procedures

Over the years the United Reformed Church nationally has developed agreed procedures covering a wide range of activity. Provinces also have provided their own guidelines to amplify these and to address further matters of practice. The North Western Province has collected these and published them in a loose-leaf Handbook, together with the annual Year Book. The Guidelines include sections on Ministry, Vacancy Procedures, Property, Pastoral and Ecumenical matters and Provincial Structures. They are updated and added to annually, as need arises. Other Provinces are welcome to share this resource.

7 Provincial Relationships

Like all Provinces, the North Western Province comprises a wide range of local churches, opportunities, theological understandings, styles of worship and mission priorities. Those who come new to the Province, as well as those who have been here for many years, comment positively on the way this variety is held together with remarkable mutual acceptance and good will. Synod meetings are characterised by a relaxed sense of purpose and good humour and differences of opinion are usually shared with tolerance and openness. In turn, this is frequently reflected in relationships between the churches, despite the lingering vestiges of Lancashire independency! We note this and give thanks for it, praying that it may grow.

Mersey Province

There is no let up in the wide range of concerns clamouring for attention in the life and work of the Mersey Province. Much time and hard work has been injected in a number of ways, some of which we have chosen to do and others have been "thrust" upon us!

1 Celebration

was the keynote of the gathering of churches at St. Joseph's, Upholland, last July and it turned out to be a splendid setting for a host of activities, displays and worship with acres of space outside and inside. Members of the Assembly Mission Council don't know what they are missing! This was one of the best attended Celebration Days in the history of the Province and there is an idea around for a return to mark the Millennium.

2 Local Church Leadership

Many of us will remember the long hard debate at Assembly in 1995 about Patterns of Ministry and what appeared to be the rejection of the main proposals. However Assembly did pass a resolution which the Mersey Province picked up with a sense of urgency - encouraging district councils in consultation with synods and local churches *"a) to explore the development of all ministry, especially Stipendiary Ministers, and the development of a variety of styles of ministry in ways which will stimulate the life the church, be ecumenically responsible and enable more effective missionary engagement."*

Last November Synod approved a plan **"Developing Lay Ministry in the Mersey Province"** and large gatherings of ministers and elders have been held in the four Districts to hear about and ask questions of the proposals. Everywhere people recognise the need to develop new patterns of ministry by releasing and developing the skills of our members in leadership. It's challenging and exciting as we embark upon a new phase in church life. Part of the spur to action is the other side of the coin, which has to do with the national URC shortage of Ordained Ministers, and we hear that the Enquirers Conference in May being held in Cheshire has an

encouraging number of bookings from around the country. As in other Provinces, Mersey wrestles with the demands the **Deployment Policy** is making and Districts are looking at ways to form new groupings. Our plans for lay leadership go hand in hand with deployment but with faith and determination rather than forlorn resignation.

3 Personnel

Undoubtedly one of the good things in the Province this last year has been the enterprise and efforts of our full-time Training and Youth/Children's Officers. What a difference this has made already. Our Youth/Children's Officer has, in just over a year made direct contact with most of the churches in the Province. He has some good stories to tell of young people's work at Haydock and Huyton. Our Training Officer has been instrumental in thinking through many of the issues involved in developing lay leadership, and she has helped to guide Synod through the difficult and delicate debate on Human Sexuality.

We have supplemented our personnel in the appointment of a part-time Communications Officer as we emphasise the importance of spreading news to church members about the plans and topics which concern us all. In February an appointment was made of a new Chaplain (Special Ministry) to Higher Education in the two Universities in Liverpool as part of an ecumenical team.

Mersey continues its strong ecumenical bias. During the year we have welcomed the new Roman Catholic Archbishop, Patrick Kelly, and the Bishop of Chester, Peter Forster. We have been involved in ecumenical consultations for the successor to the Bishop of Liverpool, David Sheppard, who retires this year. Last Autumn the ecumenical Youth Pilgrimage in the company of the Church leaders went to Malta. A quote from one young person - "You've helped to change lives - mine for sure." A timely reminder to our churches in Mersey that Christ is in the business of changing our lives so that we are like *salt, yeast and light* for the world.

Yorkshire Province

1 Moderator

The ministry, and especially the coming retirement, on 31 August 1997, of Donald Hilton, our Provincial Moderator for the last ten years, has caused us to think very seriously about the nature of leadership in a conciliar church - a process much helped by the Provincial Moderators' Report to General Assembly in 1996. Donald has been at pains to achieve "a sensitive balance between individual and corporate leadership". He has been careful not to trespass on the territory of the District Council; but, at the same time, he has used the leadership opportunities that have come to him as Moderator to encourage us to think very deeply about our faith - notably, for example, in the always stimulating, and often provocative, reports that he has presented to Synod, reports that have been, perhaps, the most eagerly awaited items on our Synod agenda. We shall miss him and Ann very much indeed.

2 Training and Development

One leader we have failed to find this year. Having decided in 1995 against the employment of a Youth and Children's Work Trainer, Synod decided this year in favour of the appointment of a Development Officer and Youth Leadership Trainer. Sadly, after advertising the post widely both in the spring and in the autumn, we failed to make such an appointment. We have to recognise that we are looking for an extraordinary range of talent and expertise. Once again, we are being forced to re-examine the nature of the provision that we should be making for training and development. This is part of a continuing review of our provincial structures. Are we too bureaucratic? Have we too many committees? Is it reasonable to ask individuals to take responsibility for the co-ordination of aspects of our provincial work without the support of a committee?

3 Mission

Meanwhile, there have been some encouraging responses by our District Councils to the challenge to each of them, from our Provincial Ecumenical and Deployment Committee, to draw up its own strategy for mission. In particular, there has been some interesting re-thinking on the deployment of our human resources. Churches have re-grouped in East Yorkshire, and possibilities of doing so are being examined in South Yorkshire, with the aim of ensuring that ministry is available to the numerically weaker as well as to stronger churches - and the value of lay support is being recognised, too, notably through the South Yorkshire "interlink" scheme, whereby Elders are seconded for three months from one local church to another.

Something of the same spirit underlay the FURY Easter challenge, whereby about 50 of our young people lived and worked for four days in one of our smaller fellowships, newly formed by a local union and then drawn into a stronger group, in the Huddersfield and Halifax District. The Leeds District rejoices in a steady influx of candidates for the ministry, three of them within 18 months from the same relatively small fellowship. More and more local churches are beginning to recognise that the District can itself be a resource, and not just an administrative necessity. We all hope to draw inspiration from the event to be organised this autumn by our Mission at Home and Overseas Committee, which will remind us that "Mission is Possible"

East Midlands Province

1 Province policy

Province policy is to share in God's mission to all people and so we are delighted to have links with so many Christians world-wide. We develop our links with Croatia by continuing to support the Reformed Churches there; the Yardley Hastings Church sent a lorry of goods and the Moderator visited in March. Revd Tony Bradshaw represented the United Reformed Church at the induction of Bishop Bölcskei of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Debrecen and we continue to benefit from the presence of Johnson Jesudoss at the Peace and Justice Centre in Milton Keynes. We are exploring the possibility of a CWM placement in the province.

2 The Training Team

The Training Team headed by Revd Elizabeth Nash as Training Officer and John Quilter as YCWT also includes seven other accredited trainers who provide a valuable resource for us all. Several churches have benefited in more ways than one from TRIO or ALPHA courses and other such initiatives.

3 Ecumenical Training

Ecumenical Training such as the East Midlands Ministry Training Course is well established but needs continuing input and it is pleasing that others are being developed: CONTRAST is specifically for black and white Christians in Nottingham and in Milton Keynes four denominations have together trained 18 people as new preachers.

4 Provincial and District Mission Strategies

Provincial and District Mission Strategies are under constant discussion to identify opportunities for new work, develop existing work and to identify small churches with potential. Brackley and Boston (80 miles apart) for example are both exploring ways forward with help from wider afield. The ecumenical option is always kept open for more effective mission, although the temptation is to cut corners and rely on goodwill alone rather than on formal commitment expressed in written covenants and constitutions.

5 Community Outreach

Community Outreach is often ecumenical and we have a number of youth projects at places like Groby, Marlpool and Eastwood where churches work together to support paid youth work in schools, clubs and churches. St Andrews with Castle Gate, Nottingham pioneered Access and Child Contact Centres now run by churches of many denominations and the church continues to provide the national co-ordination for this work. At Friary, West Bridgford the Drop In Centre for unemployed or homeless people now runs as a separate charity with paid work and an ecumenical base. Wolverton has recently agreed to provide a home for the Milton Keynes Christian Foundation.

6 Population Growth

Population Growth continues in the south of the province. Church developments to meet this are taking place in Peterborough (The Ortons and Hampton), Northampton and Milton Keynes as well as in smaller centres, such as Paulerspury, Creaton, Kettering (Brambleside) and Gamston (Notts). In northern Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire whole communities are still blighted by the pit closures and, although we have very few churches in the areas directly affected, we are involved in new initiatives such as a new church and community building at Carr Vale, Bolsover. In Nottingham (Boulevard) and Northampton (Doddridge Memorial) old run-down buildings are being redeveloped for new forms of urban ministry. We are grateful for long term support from national funds and the inter-provincial resource sharing that is now developing as well as the allocation of Special Category Ministers which has proved its worth and continues to be a much valued resource.

West Midlands Province

Viewed from the Provincial Office, the last year has been a busy one.

1 The Moderator

On 13 April the Province rejoiced in the induction of the Revd Elizabeth Welch as Moderator at a splendid service well attended by many from across the West Midlands, including a wide representation from our sister denominations. Elizabeth's arrival coincided with changes to the leadership of the three main Free Churches in the area, with a new Baptist Area Superintendent and Birmingham Methodist District Chairman.

Elizabeth spent much of her early months in office exploring the region, and her two to three day visits to each District were much appreciated, and are being repeated at a slower pace over the next year or so.

2 District developments

In the period of twelve months, Staffordshire will have received three newly ordained ministers to a total of seven local churches; village churches in Shropshire are caught up in responding to rural communities under pressure from the BSE crisis; Worcester and Hereford is considering the grouping of churches to address problems of a shortage of ordained leadership in the north of the District; in Gloucestershire ecumenism is taking a higher profile through joint action on social responsibility, and the County Ecumenical Officer now attends District Pastoral Committee meetings; Birmingham is reviewing its mission strategy, particularly in the inner city areas; and Coventry and Warwickshire is looking forward the appointment of a Special Category Minister in North Warwickshire where the aim of this ministry is to establish a United Area with the Methodist Church.

3 Structural changes

The group reviewing the staffing and organisation of the Provincial Office completed its work, helped by the responses to a questionnaire sent to each local church and District. Additional secretarial help is being recruited as is a Trust and Property Officer, who will take over some the previous Administrative Officer's duties when he retires from full-time work in April. Ron Webb has given

remarkable service to the Province and the wider URC over the last 15 years and will be sorely missed. We are glad that we can call on his advice for a little longer, and hope that he enjoys his well-earned retirement.

We have also been looking at the way a number of our committees operate, and decided that some should be replaced by a Provincial Liaison person acting as a contact point and enabler. This is already happening in the Church and Society area, and proving a better use of resources than a formal committee.

Increasingly, the need for a proper training strategy for the whole people of God in the Province is seen as a vital stage in our development, particularly as the West Midlands has been the only Province without a Training or Development Officer. It is intended to use some of our capital funds for this and possibly to link a part-time appointment to that of a part-time URC Tutor post at Queen's Foundation (formerly Queen's College). Links with Queen's continue to be strong, and we especially value its contribution to the training of our non-stipendiary ministers.

4 Synod

In a continuing concern to make our Synod meetings more worthwhile, we have concentrated on one main topic for each meeting. In October most of the day was spent on the question of Human Sexuality, while in March prominence was given to the "Called to be One" process. Comments indicate that people appreciate having the greater time to spend considering one subject.

A particular concern is the development of a vision and priorities for the Province. This is often in the context of a declining situation - and we record with sadness the closure of Radford church in Coventry - but we also value the strengths of local churches of all sizes and support their many initiatives. There is no shortage of new ideas and enthusiasm in the West Midlands to bring the word of God to people in a way relevant to the new millennium.

Eastern Province

1 The church in the Province has had many causes for celebration during the last year. Two particular occasions concerned our retiring, and our new, Provincial Moderators. At the autumn synod a large gathering was able to express our great thanks to Bill Gathercole as he retired after some twelve arduous years as our Moderator. The presentation of gifts to both Bill and Betty enabled us to acknowledge the contribution which Betty too had played in her own right, and as a support for Bill during this and previous ministries. Then on the first day of February a large congregation filled Christ Church Chelmsford to participate in, and celebrate, the induction of the Revd Elizabeth Caswell as our new Moderator. The energy and liveliness of the singing uplifted our hearts, while the sermon from Duncan Wilson moved mind and spirit. The breadth and depth of the participation was marked by the warmth of the greetings from our ecumenical partners in the area - and by the presidency at the service, of Dr David Thompson as Moderator of General Assembly, who is also an elder and member of a local church in the Eastern Province.

2 Leadership of the local church has been an issue that has received much attention within our region. This has been prompted by the twin needs of the necessity to establish a sustainable deployment policy for stipendiary ministers, and the desire to follow up aspects of the report "Patterns of Ministry". In Chelmsford District, careful consideration has been given to devise a plan for providing ministry to a number of smaller churches who have worked alongside one larger church, where all of them have overlapping catchment and interest areas. Lay local leaders have been called and inducted to serve some of the smaller churches, with oversight being given by one full-time stipendiary minister. In addition, this district has adopted a Mission Statement and challenged local churches to seek to enrich their worship and witness. Norwich District already has a District Minister, with his strategy group, challenging and stimulating the churches to greater co-operation and action.

3 Extensions to existing churches and the establishment of new churches also mark activity in many places. The union with the Methodists to form Dovercourt Central Church has resulted in growth and signs of great hope for the future;

however, provision of ministry in those united situations is not always without its difficulties. The work continuing through the West Essex United Area illustrates many of these, but we are delighted to bring the proposal to adopt Church Langley as a Mission Project within this United Area. We are pleased too, that Cloverfield Community Church in Thetford has been established as a joint initiative between ourselves and the Anglican Diocese of Norwich.

4 Ecumenical sharing is a feature of the life of Westminster College too, as part of the Cambridge Theological Federation. Once again we are pleased to acknowledge the substantial contribution which the staff and students of the College make to the life of the local churches in our Province; (for example, virtually every member of staff has recently been interim-moderator of a local church)! Dr David Cornick was appointed as Principal of the College following Martin Cressey's retirement. We wish Martin and Pamela a happy and active retirement from that particular phase of their lives - we know that they are already busy again.

5 We look forward to an exciting period in the life of the church in our Province. We have a new Moderator, a new office from which our team works, and new initiatives to follow-up. Above all we have people with ability, energy and enthusiasm, to put into practice the vision that God gives us.

South Western Province

1 Opening the 50th Synod of the South Western Province, the Moderator quoted a piece of graffiti on the wall of a South African township: **"The road to the future is always under construction"**. The 25th year of the United Reformed Church gives us the opportunity to celebrate and review our progress.

2 Celebration

Some Districts have plans well in hand for this anniversary: Taunton District, predominantly made up of rural churches, has booked a steam train to transport over 160 people from Bishop's Lydeard to Minehead for a District Day. Bristol District, with the largest number of URCs in the Province, will be host to the October 1997 Synod, providing overnight hospitality to its representatives. A Service of Thanksgiving for the United Reformed Church is planned to be both a celebration of Reformed worship (with John Bell from the Iona Community as preacher) and a celebration of our ecumenical partnerships in the South West.

3 Review

Reformed worship and Reformed spirituality (the theme of the ministers' annual silent retreat at Glastonbury) have arisen in this 25th year of the URC as part of an attempt to define our identity. The Moderator of General Assembly, Dr David Thompson, when visiting the autumn Synod said that denominational affiliation and boundaries were less important in the heyday of non-conformity than we sometimes believe. Yet in a Province where 31 out of 142 churches are united congregations, questions of identity are frequently on our agenda. We are committed to the fact that that "the road to the future" will be an ecumenical one, but we often wonder what are the building tools and materials we bring to its construction. Some of these questions have arisen as local Christians Together and County Ecumenical Bodies have discussed *"Called to be One"*. As a Province (for the reasons already stated) we continue to look with interest and a little anxiety, to the progress made in the Anglican-Methodist talks.

4 Under Construction

4.1 Districts have responded to the smaller number of stipendiary ministers available to the church by re-examining their deployment of ministry. All Districts are being encouraged to share resources with other denominations where possible.

4.2 Responding to a need to improve communication with our ecumenical partners, the Province has planned an event to explain the ethos and ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church to ministers from other traditions working in united churches.

4.3 The March Synod accepted the Provincial Strategy Group's plan to review District and United Area Councils over the next year. Visiting teams will help Districts and Areas assess their effectiveness, and see if the Province can provide more appropriate training, resources and support.

5 Old friends and new

5.1 Eleven young people and three leaders took part in an exchange with friends from the Wisconsin Synod of the United Church of Christ over the Christmas and Easter holidays. This was co-ordinated by Ivan Andrews (YCWT) and the Provincial Youth Forum. A regular annual exchange of ministers has taken place between the Province and Wisconsin for 15 years. The Revd Margaret McClymont spent the month of March in the Province, sampling local church life, participating in the Ministers' Spring School, and the Synod. The Revd Chris Searle (Tiverton Group) spent last October in Wisconsin.

5.2 Four people from the Province joined representatives of the Ecumenical Committee in a visit to the Protestant Church in Lippe (Germany), with a view to forging a partnership link. The Revd Dr Richard Deutsch (formerly a missionary with the Basel Mission, now a member of Heavitree URC, Exeter) was a member of the group, having recently been appointed Provincial European Links Co-ordinator.

6 People

6.1 The Revd Roy Lowes was inducted as Director of Training at the October Synod. Initiatives are already under way to integrate his work with that of Ivan Andrews (Youth and Children's Work Trainer) and the Revd Helena McKinnon (Silence and Retreats), so that as a team, they can respond more effectively to the training needs identified by the review of District and Area Councils.

6.2 Mrs Rosemary Maskell has joined the office staff as Administrative Secretary, bringing ecumenical experience as Administrator of the South Western Ministerial Training Course.

6.3 We wish to express our thanks to the Revd Andrew Midian (a minister from the United Church of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) who has served as a Special Category Minister in Estover LEP, Plymouth, for the past three years. The wider Church has benefited greatly from Andrew's preaching ministry, pastoral care and musical gifts, as well as being enriched by his gentle yet perceptive "ministry of the stranger". We pray God's blessing on Andrew, Ruth, Nathan, Wesley, Mary and Sheila as they return to Papua New Guinea after a term at Selly Oak Colleges.

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 15 October 1996, it was agreed that Wells United Church (URC/Baptist) move from Bristol District to Taunton District.

Wessex Province

During the past year the work of the Province has taken a new direction under the leadership of the Revd Derek Wales, who has now been in office as Moderator of the Province for eighteen months. The Training Officer and Mission Enabler have continued to consolidate their work and with the reappointment of our Youth and Childrens' Work Trainer, Miss Ann Martin, the team is now complete and is beginning to work together in areas of mission within the Districts and within local churches. This is cause for thanksgiving.

One of the changes has been the adoption by the Synod of new structures which we hope will streamline some of the business and put a greater emphasis on the mission and purpose of the church. Included in the work of the new committees has been a review of what has taken place over the past ten years and, receiving encouragement from this, we are looking forward to greater outreach and commitment for the next five years.

A great deal of work continues to be done at the ecumenical level particularly with the Southampton District of the Methodist church whose boundaries cover 75% of the Wessex Province boundaries. Included in the work is our part in a new ecumenical initiative at Whiteley - a site near Fareham - and our joint responsibility with the Methodist Church for a pilot scheme preparing an Induction course for URC ministers serving in Methodist situations and Methodist ministers serving United Reformed Churches. This will have taken place in May of this year at Sarum College, Salisbury.

The Province has been very much involved, along with the Assembly Secretary for Training the Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, in the development of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme as a successor to the Southern Training Scheme based at Sarum College, Salisbury. The new scheme will provide for the training of ministers and lay people using both residential and distance learning methods. It will serve seven Anglican Dioceses as well as the Methodist and United Reformed Churches. The URC representative on the Board of Studies will be the Revd Dr John Sutcliffe. There is provision within the new Scheme for tutors from both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches and the Provincial Training Officer, the Revd Stephen Thornton, will

continue the excellent work that he has been doing as a tutor on the STS course during a period of disturbance and staff shortage, taking a considerable lead in the training of students - within the URC for non-stipendiary ministry, but wider for all kinds of ministry.

A recent day was held in Abingdon under the leadership of the Revd Flora Winfield on the subject of "**Called to be One**". Reflections from the discussion that day formed the basis of the Synod's response to the Churches Together in England initiative.

Over the past two or three years the Province has arranged for our church buildings to be inspected and, as a result of this, considerable improvements have taken place in making our buildings more appropriate as we move into the next millennium. Inspections of manses are in hand at the moment and before long there will probably be a further review so see what improvement has been made to the churches and halls etc. within the Province. With our buildings now very much improved for mission the present emphasis is on seeking to ensure that the worship offered in those buildings is of the highest quality and acceptable to God. Considerable work is taking place in this direction at the moment and encouragement is being given to worship leaders and lay preachers, along with ministers, to make sure that worship is relevant to today's world.

Churches in the Province are being encouraged to look very seriously at the **Good Practice** procedures necessary in our work with children and young people and the YCWT has led in this initiative. The Province has also looked very seriously at the whole question of Commitment for Life and has spent time looking at the Christian response to what goes on in some of our prisons. At the autumn Synod we expect to make a major presentation in connection with values in society. The Province has been particularly concerned with values at work and we hope that this will be of support for many people who are involved in this direction.

The Province is responsible for Trinity Hall, which is a hostel for foreign students in Reading. The present warden - Mrs Christine Robertson, who has served so well - is retiring and the Province, along with the Trinity Hall Management Committee, has

appointed a new warden. It is good to have an opportunity to be involved in this kind of outreach and such work ensures that the name of Trinity, Reading continues to be remembered, for we are conscious that we owe much to the past.

Another issue very much to the fore in the thinking of the Province concerns **Fair Shares of Ministry**. This is an issue that Assembly has asked us to take seriously and we are seeking to do so. We are also pleased to be working on the Mission Council priorities and our new committees have this very much in mind. Another issue to which we have given priority is that of **Resource Sharing** and we

are only too pleased that this matter is being dealt with at Assembly level. It is good to be able to share some of our resources with other Provinces less well provided for than we are within Wessex.

So it is in the spirit of thanksgiving that we present this report of General Assembly. It is good to welcome Assembly to Portsmouth within the Province again and we trust that the deliberations that will take place, especially the sensitive ones, will be dealt with in the same spirit of trust and understanding as has been evident within our own discussions over the past months.

Thames North Province

1 A day to remember

The highlight of the past year in the Province was the Provincial Day. This was not just another Provincial Day - it was a very special, if not unique, experience of Celebration of our life together in Christ. It was centred on the Royal Festival Hall. Some of the programme will be familiar to other Provinces: workshops on photography, Bible study, clowning, dancing, music making, puppets, drama; visits with a special London flavour to the back-stages of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and the Royal National Theatre, boat trips on three river launches on the Thames in glorious sunshine. The climax of the Celebration came with the production of *"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"* in the main Festival Hall. This brought together people from churches all over the Province and revealed the great resources of talent - musical, dramatic, dancing, organisational and other kinds of Christian ministry which exist in the churches. One main performance had been planned, but tickets for this went so quickly that the Dress Rehearsal became an extra performance with another great audience. Letters received about the performances contained words like *"wonderful"*, *"marvellous"*, *"thoroughly professional"*, *"inspirational"*. Such a description might, in some circumstances, be "over the top", but not on this occasion. Also, this was not just a case of the Church celebrating and enjoying itself; it was a time when a contribution, made possible by work in the churches over a period, could be made to help meet one of the greatest needs in London. A gift of almost £70,000 was made to CRISIS to help in its caring for the street homeless.

The Day has also made a difference not only to those who participated directly in it, but also to the churches from which they came. It was an inspiration to all to go on sharing in ministry and mission.

2 Change in the structure

One of the main purposes of a Provincial Synod is to encourage and enable the whole people of God in the churches in Mission and Ministry. In an endeavour to be more effective in this, Synod has made two changes in its Committees. The Pastoral Committee has become the **Mission Initiatives**

Group. The purpose of this Group is to equip and support the people of God for mission and to identify and initiate new mission opportunities. It seeks to place mission at the centre of every church's agenda. The Former Ministry Committee is now the **Leadership Development Group**. Its aim is to emphasise that ministry is to be exercised by all the people of God and to enable people to use their gifts for Christ as lay or ordained, stipendiary or non-stipendiary, in conventional or pioneering ways. Both these Groups have core members who will work with teams of people as needed to get things done.

3 Picture Painters Living with Change

Again, as part of this enabling people in mission and ministry, the "Painting a Picture of the Future" process described last year is progressing. It is now especially concerned to help churches in *"Living with Change"*. It involves seminars to help with the management of change and Market Place occasions to tell and hear the stories of churches as they have experienced change. The Moderator is also visiting churches intending to share ministry in "clusters", "teams" "focus groups" etc. She hopes this will help churches and Districts as they face the opportunities and problems of deployment. This account of the Province is not essentially about a particular structure of the Church with a life of its own. It is about churches and people and, in part, about helping them in changes which are necessary. One of these changes has happened in Ealing where the building of St Aidan's, West Ealing, is now closed and the fellowship has united with St Andrew's URC, Ealing to form a new and stronger congregation. The church wish its many friends to know this has happened and that the change in this case has proved beneficial.

4 Personnel

Two changes in personnel - one which has already happened, and one to come in 1998, inevitably have a considerable effect on the Synod and the churches. John Maitland stood down last August as Synod Clerk after a by-pass heart operation. John had made an invaluable contribution to the changes which have taken place in the Committee structure of the province.

Janet Sowerbutts has been re-appointed as Moderator for one year, the one year period being at her request, until August 1998. All who know Janet will appreciate she wishes to continue giving positive leadership in her remaining period of office. She is especially looking forward to a Provincial Celebration of the Gospel which it is

hoped will be central on a production of "**Godspell**", with churches participating again as with "*Joseph*", and again, with special encouragement to those on the periphery of our churches to come. It is also planned that this Celebration will be linked with the renewal of "**Commitment for Life**" and Christian Aid.

Southern Province

1 In 1996 Southern Province Provincial Council supported a proposal from the then Faith & Life Committee for the formation of a group concerned with issues relating to children and young people. This group would combine the gifts and experience of those working closely with children and young people in the Province and would, in fact, be made up of many of the existing F&L Committee. The emphasis, however, would be on new initiatives and support, rather than reporting. A major change would be that the new group would have three representatives on Provincial Council. This would mean that the Council would be able to better identify the needs of children and young people and those working with them would be able to contribute more to the work of the Province.

The group first met in early 1997 and comprises representatives of children's work, youth work, Pilots, Training and training strategy, along with those with a special interest and experience in worship, current legislation and education. The group also has the Provincial FURY Council representative and two members of FURY. The Provincial Youth and Children's Work Action Group (PYCWAG) will meet four times a year. It *aims* to promote dialogue between Provincial Council and local churches. It *seeks* to provide initiatives in the Province and to *meet the needs* of individual groups. A few examples which came to the first meeting:

1. Training and Resources for groups involved with the under 5s, such as Parents and Toddlers and Playgroups. The Action Group will gather together people with experience in this area and will provide these resources.
2. A particular problem with an open youth club. The Action Group will identify people within the Province with experience in this area and will provide help for this one youth club. The experience gained will be available to other groups in the Province.
3. Worship material. A twelve month project to provide resources relating to children and young people in worship. Resources for churches leading worship for children and young people; young people leading worship

in their own churches; worship for congregations of all ages and children celebrating Holy Communion.

All these and other areas will be discussed and answers sought.

The Provincial Council recognises that children and young people have their contribution to make to the work in the Province and hope that through the Action Group this contribution can be made. The Council also recognises the needs of leaders and young people to share experiences and resources and this, too, will be a function of the Group.

2 Two years ago Southern Province reported on the outcome of a one-day Consultation with people who have responsibility within our Provincial Committees and District Councils. Continuing the theme of previous Consultations we focused on some aspect of "growth" and on that occasion were led to the conclusion that, whilst building maintenance was important, our future depended less on spending on fabric and more on encouraging people to embark on mission projects.

The Provincial Finance and Property Administration Committee took these thoughts on board and in formulating their ideas were ably supported by numerous comments appearing in previous Assembly Reports, eg "the tasks of District Councils and Provincial Synods include having an overview of mission opportunities and the readiness to initiate new work". This in turn led to the formation in 1996 of the **New Growth Fund** set up to encourage local churches to embark upon mission projects designed to bring about spiritual and numerical growth, by providing financial support unavailable, or insufficient, from other sources.

Local church financial contribution is encouraged and District Council is expected to play a full and active role in supporting the local mission project. Initially and until such time as some experience of the take-up and success of the scheme has been gained it was deemed appropriate to place an upper limit of £3,000 on individual grants. Applications were slow at first but with a greater awareness of the availability of funds for mission projects we are beginning to see a stronger response and are optimistic that this will gather momentum.

Some examples of projects supported by the Fund are: (1) Assistance with cost of producing a free newsletter to 2,500 homes on an estate which enjoys virtually no social amenities. After five months the local church has seen a significant increase in the number of infant baptisms, several enquiries into the Christian faith, and new members attracted to church related activities. (2) Help with the funding of two youth pastors to develop the local church's work with young people. A very positive report has come back after just six months and there is now a core group of 12 young people who regularly attend church services and a Sunday night youth Bible Study. A mid-week youth club attracts about 15-20 young people with some of this fringe group having started to attend church services and a recently formed Youth Alpha course. Further links have been established with local schools and an offer of help extended with regard

“to fulfilling the school's duty in law, especially where daily acts of worship are concerned etc, etc”. (3) A grant was approved to assist a small local church run a Jesus Video Project involving a visitation to 120 village homes in the immediate vicinity of the church. This will be followed up by an Alpha course using their video materials. (4) More recently we agreed to fund a project for the regeneration of a very small local church. The project is being led by three people from two neighbouring URC churches and commenced with a major leaflet drop/door knocking exercise leading on to a comprehensive programme for the month of December centring on the Celebration of Advent. The next stage of the project has still to be decided but the team's initial observation is that there is much need for Christian witness among children and young people in the area; younger married women at home during the day and families.

Wales Province

The 1996 General Assembly reaffirmed the URC's commitment to "take, wherever possible and with all possible speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people" Basis of Union, para 8)

The United Reformed Church in Wales is numerically small, consisting, for the main part of small congregations, the vast majority of whom were originally members of the Congregational Church. The purpose and seriousness with which the United Reformed Church pursues the goal of unity is recognised in Wales to be one of its most salient features and is partly seen in its commitment to support a half time Ecumenical Officer, the Revd David Fox.

The URC works actively as a member of Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales) and its Commissions. The Moderator Revd John Humphreys has just completed his term of office as sole president of Cytûn.

Representatives of the URC have been prominent in the developments of Cytûn's two recent documents *Wales - A Moral Society?* - an attempt by the churches in Wales to discern the cry of God in the world together; and *Tymhorau Gogoniant (Seasons of Glory)* a bilingual worship resource.

The URC Wales Province also represents the whole URC on the Commission of Covenanted Churches - Enfyys. The Church in Wales, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the URC and the Covenanted Baptist Churches have covenanted together to seek the visible unity of the church. Exciting developments this year have been the responses of the churches to questions of baptism and recognition of church membership, proposals for the setting up of an area of ecumenical oversight under an ecumenically recognised and appointed ecumenical bishop, and the conduct of exploratory talks about Union between the Church in Wales and the Methodist Church within the context of the Covenant and with participation of members of the other covenanting churches.

At the same time the URC has been involved in talks about forming one United Free Church in Wales, with the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church of Wales the Baptist Union of Wales and the Union of Welsh Independents. During the course of this year the churches will be considering a series of proposals for a first draft for a scheme of Union.

As well as such national level discussion the URC is actively involved in, and is promoting, Local Ecumenical Partnerships in Wales, and, in fact, participates in more such LEPs than any other of the churches within Wales

Living with such a quantity and such variety of ecumenical commitment (especially for such a small church) can and does raise very real questions of our self identity. How do we recognise value and hold in creative tension our "free Church heritage" and our commitment to wider unity, especially through the covenant? How do we pace ourselves in our commitment to the various national councils on which we represent the whole URC? How do we hold together our Welsh heritage and our commitment to be part of a church in three nations?

In trying to answer these questions and in responding to the General Assembly's resolution last year the URC in Wales is at present engaged in an exercise to try and develop an ecumenical policy that will give priorities for the years ahead and ensure that the energy we have for ecumenical commitment will be used in ways that will bring "with all possible speed the unity of all God's people."

RESOLUTION 1**Church Records**

General Assembly instructs :

- (i) each Province, District and local church to deposit its significant records (including those of predecessor constituent denominations), when no longer required for current administrative purposes, in the appropriate local records repository on a permanent loan basis,**
- (ii) The United Reformed Church Historical Society to release the local records it holds at Tavistock Place (or elsewhere) of mainly Presbyterian churches, Presbyteries etc.,**
- (iii) The General Secretary, in conjunction with (a) The United Reformed Church Historical Society and (b) representatives of the archives profession, if available, to provide guidelines on retention, location, disposal etc. for the records of the United Reformed Church at all levels, local, national, provincial, district, local church, ecumenical etc.**

*Proposer: Peter Poulter
Seconder: James Breslin*

Church records frequently represent not just the story of the local church but significant elements of the history of its locality. Therefore they warrant appropriate skilled care so that they are kept in the best possible conditions, close to the places where most call is going to be made on them and catalogued so that they are readily accessible for all who wish to consult them.

Other traditions have already recognised the advisability of professional care of old records. Anglican parishes and Methodist circuits are required by their own Church legislation to deposit their historic documents.

RESOLUTION 2**Good Practice**

General Assembly resolves to ensure that the aims of the document “Good Practice” are implemented and monitored in the life of the local churches of the United Reformed Church through the work of the Youth and Children’s Work Committee.

*Proposer: Revd Graham Cook
 Seconder: Revd Angus Duncan*

“GOOD PRACTICE” has been the United Reformed Church’s response to the Home Office guidelines to help with safeguarding the welfare of children in voluntary organisations. It is important that this should not be seen as a threat to existing work but rather a way of making even more effective the care and love which inspires both the work and the workers.

Many thousands of children and young people come on to church premises each week, to take part in worship and other kinds of activities. For the overwhelming majority of children and young people these are good experiences. Unfortunately this is not true of all. On very rare occasions a child or young person is hurt or abused by another young person, by a member of the church community, by

a stranger, by a junior church or Sunday school worker, by someone involved in leadership of a youth group.

Although most abuse happens at home, churches have a Christian responsibility to care in love for all the children and young people with whom we work, and to amend their practice accordingly.

The “Good Practice” document provides guidelines for implementing a child protection policy in our churches and it is essential that they are followed and monitored for the protection of the children and of our volunteer workers. This resolution is a reminder of our responsibility to implement and monitor our commitment to the policy and it should be a requirement of every church with children’s and young people’s work.

RESOLUTION 3**Media Standards**

General Assembly resolves that all branches of the media be made aware of the offence which is given to many people when the names of Jesus Christ and God are used in a profane and irrereligious context.

*Proposer: Revd Trevor Jamison
 Seconder: Revd Ian Ring*

This resolution is brought in recognition that the misuse of the names of God and Jesus causes offence and distress to a significant proportion of the population. This is not true only of Christians but of members of other world faiths. Although the media may be seen only to reflect the attitudes of wider society it also has a role in influencing and moulding those views.

In bringing this resolution we must remember that members of the URC are also influenced by wider society and the media in their use of God’s name as well as the way in which their faith leads them to perceive God. We would also wish to remind those who work in the media of the full significance of

what they do when they employ God’s name in the course of their work.

Since the media are owned and controlled mostly at regional and national level then Provinces and General Assembly seem to be the most appropriate forums in which to begin the debate which might lead to action on this issue.

The resolution is not prescriptive concerning the action to be taken. Identification of the most appropriate persons or groups to take forward such an initiative can be undertaken by Assembly Mission Council. Such persons or groups can then decide upon the most imaginative ways in which to tackle the task.

RESOLUTION 4**Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma)**

General Assembly expresses its concern at the injustice and oppression of the people of Burma by the present military regime (S.L.O.R.C.) and urges the British Government urgently to review its policy of trading with Myanmar (Burma) until its illegal government allows the democratic process fully and completely to take place. The General Assembly also urges the British Government to use its influence to assist aid reaching the displaced people on the border of Myanmar and Thailand.

Proposer: Revd Chris Searle

Seconder: Revd Craig Bowman

For the last four years teams from Uffculme United Reformed Church in Mid-Devon working with Asian Tribal Ministries, an indigenous Karen Mission Group, have been visiting the Karen Tribe on the border of Myanmar and Thailand to encourage church leaders, advance the gospel and take aid to refugee camps scattered in dense jungle along the border.

Since 1995 the situation has worsened for the Karen and other border tribes immeasurably. Thousands have fled across the border into the relative safety of Thailand, after their villages were razed to the ground by the Myanmar Army. Many stories were heard of rape, torture, terror and execution of defenceless villagers. We heard stories from children of being made to run across minefields to clear a way for Myanmar troops, and of Christian Karen being ordered at gunpoint to convert to Buddhism or be shot in front of their families. Last January Uffculme URC saw for themselves the depredations of the Myanmar Army after they had burned down the Christian sector of a refugee camp, leaving 8000 homeless. Every night armed gangs of Myanmar troops threatened forced repatriation which would lead to manacled slave labour on Myanmar's roads. The refugee camps being burned and raided are well inside the Thailand border, with little defence from the Thai army, which has been noticeably absent since the new pro-Myanmar government took over last year.

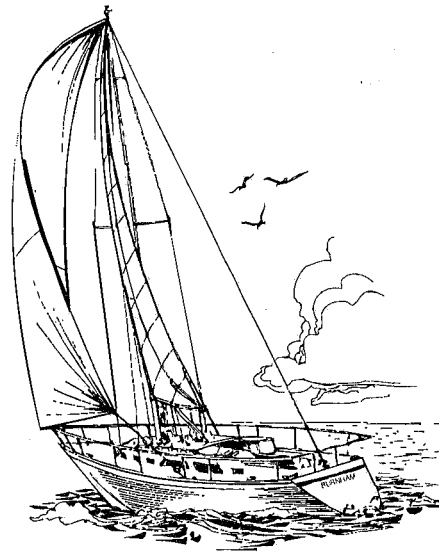
Myanmar has been a one-party state since 1962 under the oppressive military dictatorship of General Ne Win, since replaced by S.L.O.R.C. (State Law and Order Restoration Council). Under both regimes there has been repression of free speech, imprisonment without trial, torture and death for those who have dared to speak out.

In 1988 S.L.O.R.C. closed all schools and universities in response to mass anti-government uprisings. As the movement spread throughout the country, millions of people joined the call for an end to military rule and the establishment of a multi-party democratic system. The people's hopes, however, ended abruptly on September 18th when the military launched a brutal crackdown in which thousands of innocent, unarmed people were shot.

International concern forced the democratic elections of 1990. The National League for Democracy under Aung San Suu Kyi gained a landslide victory with over 80% of the vote. However, S.L.O.R.C. refused to hand over power and Su Kyi was placed under house arrest, where she remained for six years.

Whether Myanmar can ever attain to a western-style democracy remains to be seen. However, unless the democratically elected N.L.D. is given the chance it is entitled to, democracy remains an impossible dream. Some national governments (i.e. the USA) have taken steps to reduce trade with Myanmar and condemn companies that continue to trade. Our British Government has taken no such steps and reputedly has one of the largest national trade delegations in Rangoon. It is in this light that we ask Assembly to encourage the British Government to review its policy of trade with Myanmar, reducing trade options until the properly elected N.L.D. has been allowed to take power.

***Church - Changes
and Provincial
Moderators' Report***



General Assembly 1997

Churches - Changes

Closure of Local Churches

RESOLUTION 5

Churches - Changes

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.

Radford URC

West Midlands

The Congregational Church at Radford was established in 1825 by young men from West Orchard Church, which continued to support Radford for over a hundred years. At first, meetings were in cottages, but in 1864 premises were built on the corner of Beake Avenue and used as a Sunday School and Day School.

The Radford area developed considerably in the 1920s, and new buildings were opened in 1929, the Sunday School then numbering several hundred. The Church called its first minister in 1933. Its congregation, activities and premises suffered during the 1939-1945 War.

In the 1950s and 1960s there was rapid expansion under the ministry of the Revd W E Ballard, and substantial extensions were opened in 1956 and 1970. Since the mid-1970s, the congregation has been declining and ageing, and attempts to redevelop the site with a smaller sanctuary and social housing initially failed to find funding. When a viable scheme emerged, the Church Meeting in July 1996 decided not to proceed with these plans. The site has been sold to local doctors for the development of a medical centre and pharmacy.

The current congregation of about 20 faithfully continue the worship and witness of the Church, and most are likely to join one of the other two congregations making up the North West Coventry Group. The closing service on 12 April acknowledged the loss, giving thanks for all that has been achieved, and looked forward to giving and receiving as part of the wider Church.

Haslemere United Reformed Church *Wessex*

The Building at Haslemere in Surrey has reluctantly been closed for use as one of our churches. There have been anxieties about the state of the buildings for many years and the fact that the church is close to passing traffic, with no vehicular access, has aggravated the problems. It celebrated its centenary in 1981 but the site has been used as a place of worship since 1792. There had been a long battle against dry rot inside the buildings and the access particularly for elderly members has been extremely difficult. The members felt that the building, having outlived its usefulness, it would be better for church members to worship in future with their sister churches in Hindhead. The then Chairman of the Guildford District Council, the Revd Alasdair Pratt, led a final Thanksgiving Service for the life of the church in September 1995. It is interesting to know that parts of the building would be serving God in new ways in other places. The pulpit and organ had gone to a church in Lithuania; the members of the church were dispersed to other Christian fellowships and churches and although there came the time when the doors were closed, the Revd Richard Cox, in preaching the sermon at the Thanksgiving Service, said "other doors are opening and other hands stretched out in welcome".

Frilford

Wessex

Frilford Church in the Reading & Oxford Council closed for worship in the autumn of 1996. The chapel had been built over 100 years ago for the scattered population and farm labourers and people in service in the big houses in Marcham, Frilford

and the surrounding areas. It was the only place of worship in Frilford, but it was a place where one would find a simple but profound sense of worship. There was a gift of eldership, not in the sense of an office, but in the sense of people with knowledge and experience and gifts of wisdom to be shared and there was a gift of warmth, hospitality and humour. Apparently there was no path to the chapel. When people reached the end of the lane they simply walked across the grass. From the 1950's Frilford was a part of the Longworth Group. Sadly the scattered community is no more, but those who preached from the District and from Mansfield College believe the members are now very much a part of the Kingdom of God. The District Council has given thanks to God for the life of this church.

Putney URC

Southern

The Church Meeting decided that Putney URC should close as from 30 April 1996 and that the buildings be sold.

This sad, but brave, decision was upheld by District and Synod.

St Andrew's URC, Tatsfield

Southern

The Church building was sold in 1993 at the request of the small congregation. URC services were then held monthly in St Mary's Anglican

Church, Tatsfield. In 1996 the two remaining URC members decided "that St Andrew's URC, Tatsfield was no longer viable and should be dissolved as a separate congregation of the URC".

District and Synod upheld the decision.

Williams Memorial URC, Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil

Wales

In 1901 the first steps were taken towards establishing an English-speaking Congregational cause in the industrial district of Penydarren. A Sunday School was started in 1902 in a local school, and in 1903 a church with 32 members was formed, worshipping in the school until a church building was completed in 1906. It was named in the memory of Alderman Thomas Williams, a staunch Congregationalist and supporter of the new congregation, who had obtained a 999-year lease on a building plot at a nominal rental, but who died before the construction work began. Throughout almost a century of exceptional industrial and social changes, the church itself has experienced many vicissitudes. After the end of the Second World War membership declined, at first gradually and then more steeply. In recent years a Baptist congregation has worshipped jointly with the URC congregation, but this has not proved sufficient and in 1997, with the URC membership standing at 7, the painful decision was taken to close the church.

New Churches and Mission Projects

RESOLUTION 6

Churches - Changes

Assembly receives the churches and mission projects listed below as local churches and mission projects of the United Reformed Church.

New Churches

The Airfield Church, Woodley, Reading

Wessex

This is a new church plant on the housing estate known as Woodley Airfield, which has upwards of 1500 homes, mainly occupied by families with young children. The church does not have its own building, but meets for worship on Sunday mornings in the local Church of England School. They have applied to be a member church of the United Reformed

Church, a request supported enthusiastically by the Reading and Oxford District Council. The Revd Pam Richardson, a non stipendiary minister, was appointed to serve that church, but also was called by the Church Meeting to be its minister along with a Church of England minister and a Methodist Lay Worker. Within the Church Council the concept of Eldership is being introduced.

Cloverfield Community Church, Thetford,
Norwich district *Eastern Province*

Cloverfield is a new housing estate on the outskirts of Thetford. In 1994, after two years pioneering work, the church was recognised as a local Ecumenical Partnership by the Diocese of Norwich and Norfolk Churches Together. At first Cloverfield community Church functioned under an agreement to which the local Anglican Parish and Earls Street URC were party; this has now been developed into the present full agreed relationship.

The Team Vicar is Minister of the church, but a collaborative approach with laity is adopted to leadership. There are four Pastoral Leaders who have been trained under the Diocesan Pastoral

Foundation course, and two administrative leaders. Those six people meet regularly with the Minister when, amongst other matters, the agenda for church meeting is prepared. Church meetings follow the URC pattern of being open to all church members; it is here that major decisions are taken.

Cloverfield has been self-financing from the start. A site for a church building is being negotiated with the builders of the estate and Breckland Council. This site will be in a central position on the new estate. Meeting in a nursery for the time being, the average attendance on Sunday is about 40 people. This is a community with great potential; much hard and productive work is already underway.

New Mission Projects

**Montfort URC Mission Project, Benedict
Close, Romsey** *Wessex*

Having been ordained as a non-stipendiary minister, the Revd Emily Browne was not able to do work envisaged within the Southampton District due to failing eyesight. The District Pastoral Committee, supported by the Revd Nelson Bainbridge, suggested that Emily be asked to explore a church planting ministry on the estate on which she lives. This she has done enthusiastically and as a result the church plant is doing considerable work in that area of Romsey. It is an initiative supported largely by the Southampton District Council and the Council and the Synod are only too happy to support the work that continues.

**Church Langley Mission Project, Harlow, West
Essex United Area** *Eastern Province*

Church Langley is a new "village" on the outskirts of Harlow. It will be home to 10,000 people by the time of its completion early in the next century. For ten years the local churches have been working together to ensure that there is a Christian Church at the heart of this new community.

Since Pentecost 1994, a weekly Sunday congregation has been meeting - and growing - at first in a temporary building which acted as the Community Centre. Now a new multi-purpose Church and Community Centre building has been opened.

Set within the West Essex United Area (Methodist & URC), the Baptist Union, the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church are also directly involved in this Mission Project. The Revd Allan Smith is the URC Minister directly involved in this work.

Provincial Moderators' Report

Passionate people?

1 A PASSIONATE TRADITION

1.1 As members of the United Reformed Church, we inherit a passionate tradition. What was it but passion that led the Pilgrim Fathers to set out on a dangerous and uncertain voyage? What dream inspired Cromwell to seek to create a godly society? What depths of conviction drove 2,000 ministers to resist the Act of Uniformity in 1662, abandoning stipend and security? What passions drove people like Raikes to campaign for the teaching of neglected children, Williams to cross the world for all the hazards of the South Seas, Mary Slessor to give her life for Africa? Looking back over our history, 'passionate' does not seem too strong a word to use of much of the witness of our forebears.

1.2 There have been battles too, some of which seem strange to us now in more ecumenical and tolerant days, but they were real and costly to our ancestors. Even being peaceable and deeply Christian has sometimes led to imprisonment and worse. We stand in a great tradition of courageous witness and costly service, with our own list of heroes, martyrs and saints.

1.3 At the turn of this century we inherited a particularly striking passion for social justice. While this is still echoed in the life of the church today, its character has clearly changed and our direct impact on the world and on contemporary politics seems almost to have disappeared. There used to be a strong Free Church voice for such things as education and welfare. This seems very much more muted now, though there is a practical concern for the developing world through agencies such as Christian Aid and our own Commitment for Life programme. It is also true to say that much of our work is now done ecumenically, for instance through the Churches' Housing Coalition, the CYTUN report "Wales: A Moral Society?" and most recently through "The Churches' Enquiry into Unemployment and the Future of Work". Many of our local churches and members are deeply committed to mission and a wide variety of social issues.

1.4 Nevertheless, it is valid to ask why our influence has diminished. Are the causes external to us or has our own fire cooled? Is it more difficult to speak persuasively to our complex, contemporary society, or are our passions still as deep as ever but expressed in different ways?

2 Too much or too little passion?

As Moderators a lot of our work is taken up with meetings with congregations and ministers and in councils and committees. We gladly respond to that call to work with the people of God in their varied ministry. But we are sometimes compelled to ask ourselves in what ways this meeting, that event, that service, or this congregation is serving the cause of Christ or echoing the passion of his love for the world. Often there are clear signs of hope and vitality in deep and sacrificial commitment to the work of the Lord. But we are also aware of dangerous passions, of emotional tensions, and equally of passionless situations that lack life and sparkle.

3 REACTIONS

As a denomination, we sometimes give the impression that we are suspicious of passion. We have been influenced partly no doubt by a tradition of controlled upper lips and by a reaction against the over-emotional. We have focussed on the words rather than the drama of worship. But the incarnation has taught us that it is in the nature of God to enter into the pain and the joy of human existence.

"Not throned afar, remotely high,
untouched, unmoved by human pains,
but daily in the midst of life,
our Saviour in the Godhead reigns."

Those words of Brian Wren's ("Christ is alive," R&S 260) speak of the suffering of Christ carried into and expressed in the very heart of God. God was so moved he sent his Son. In that sense God has the deepest of all passions, so that it is entirely appropriate that Jesus' suffering and death should be described as his "passion" - a word that links both senses of longing and suffering.

4 BIBLICAL PASSIONS

4.1 There are plenty of good, as well as bad, instances of passion, in the pages of the Bible. Cain, David, Moses and Saul all got into disastrous trouble because of uncontrolled passions. But Moses and David also became heroes of passionate faith, men with a deep longing for the welfare of God's people and a depth of obedience that led them to risk and sacrifice.

4.2 The prophets of the Old Testament too were hardly men in grey suits. They risked the wrath of kings, went out of their way to demonstrate and deliver the word of the Lord, and challenged the accepted wisdom and prevailing standards with all the strength they could muster. Their words still ring.

4.3 Our Lord himself would never have been crucified if he had spoken easy words or backed down under pressure. He offended many, including the church leaders and the political powers. He was angry, gentle, compassionate and demanding. His teaching is spiced with an intensity that we still find difficult to cope with.

4.4 The apostolic band took up the message with fervour. It led them into trouble and martyrdom; they didn't always get it right; but their energetic travelling and preaching brought the gospel to the world. Paul often wrote and spoke more in the language of the market place than the study. He recounts the astonishment at his conversion - "The man who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy!" (*Galatians 1:23*). Here was a dramatic change of passions!

5 PRESENT PASSIONS

In the light of all this we need to examine our own priorities and attitudes. How do passions and emotions work in the life of the church today? 'Passion' is perhaps not an easy word since it is used in such a wide variety of ways -

- ▶ it can be used of an enthusiasm - a passion for something;
- ▶ it can indicate strong feelings, emotions or anger - a passion about something;
- ▶ it can describe an intensity of attraction - a passion for someone;
- ▶ it can be used of Christ's sufferings on the cross or things related to it - the Passion of Christ.

Which passions most accurately reflect a passion for the gospel? What are our passions now?

6 FALSE PASSIONS

There is, for instance, the passion for "the way we've always done it". Some things must rightly be held on to, but not as symbols of a false security or without testing their validity in God's perspective. There is a perfectionism which wants every detail to be correct, and is passionate about seeing to it. Jesus called it "straining at gnats". The danger in the detail is the neglect of the big picture - failing "to obey the really important things of the Law, such as justice, mercy and honesty" (*Matthew 23:23*).

7 BLINDING PASSIONS

There can all too easily and dangerously be a pharisaical passion for things we see as being important. These then become the limited agenda for our thinking, which in turn block our ability to listen to others and make it difficult for others to listen to us. Jesus had much to say on this theme. It could be significant and worrying that almost whenever religious leaders appear in the Bible they are cast in a bad light. Bishop Gore said: "To be the inheritors of a great tradition gives men heroism, and it gives them blindness of heart".

8 ABSENT PASSIONS

Equally dangerous is the absence of any warmth or feeling, the passionless and boring meeting that might have been better not taking place. It is difficult to get excited, of course, over the routine bread and butter meetings that are vital in order to keep the church and its work running. We should not expect too much passion there and should watch out for the unbalanced passion which can sometimes spark too much debate or heat over secondary things. However, there is a coolness which can infect not just church and elders' meetings, but worship and preaching as well. Perhaps there really is, sadly, a lack of feeling, or perhaps more subtly there is a reluctance to express emotion, to be open and vulnerable. Or perhaps nothing has been touched of real meaning and significance. Someone said of a recent meeting - did Jesus go to the cross for *this*? That question might well be applied as a searching test of all kinds of meetings, services, projects.

9 OBSESSIONAL PASSIONS

Obsession is another word that comes to mind in this context. When a passion becomes an obsession we tend to feel that a conviction has become in some sense destructive and unhelpful. Yet some of the greatest leaders seem to have been driven in a

way that could almost be described as obsessional and yet have achieved results which have made them great. No doubt many people criticised William Wilberforce for his "obsessive" commitment to the abolition of slavery, but there can be little doubt that the intensity of his passion was justified.

10 TOO MUCH PASSION?

On the other hand, too much passion can become very wearing. No one can live on a high of emotion all the time. We readily sense how quickly an overly emotional approach can become manipulative - as in some appeals for help in the developing world or for personal salvation. We are right to question emotional arguments, to test whether the passionate speaker is offering us more heat than light. In contrast there is a right place for the quietly reasoned, the calm, balanced, peaceful, measured reflection, and for secret prayer. But that approach, which probably most of us prefer, has a passion of its own - a passion for truth - which can be powerful and effective in its own way. The driving force is the same, only the manner of expression different.

11 DIFFICULT PASSIONS

Passions, by their nature, are not comfortable. They can make disturbing companions. The quiet life is temptingly attractive. Some people of conviction, from St Paul to the latest campaigning church member, can be difficult to live with, often producing irritation, frustration and opposition. Some of them too have been lonely, self-questioning people, who like Jeremiah suffered their own anguish of doubt and real physical and emotional pain. Can the church of today cope with all these elements of discomfort?

12 DANGEROUS PASSIONS

One of the dangers of our time is the growth of passionate fundamentalism of many kinds and in many countries. There seems to be a rising and dangerous tide of ethnic and religious passion and intolerance. Such extremes can threaten the fabric of order and freedom, and the harmony of nations and communities. They can feed self-righteousness and aggressiveness; they can lead to a desire to dominate and to the kind of intolerance that is all too familiar in Ireland and in the Balkans. We fear the rise of intolerance even within our own tradition, especially as we remember the conflicts of the past, the freedom for which some of our ancestors fought, or fled, or died. It is this

ingrained anxiety that has led many people to a deep fear of emotionalism. But the answer to such passions is not a lack of passion, but an equal passion for reconciliation, for understanding, for compassion.

13 THE ROOTS OF PASSION

13.1 Concern for the world seems at times in history to have been driven by a powerful fear of hell and a passion to rescue the lost. In our contrasting emphasis on the love of God have we lost the fire of conviction along with the fire of hell? Are we really driven by love for God or more by a sense of duty, by the need to survive (seeking members rather than inspiring faith), or simply by the routine of the institution?

13.2 Passion needs to be nourished if it is to be maintained. Its roots for us must be in our vision of God, in our relationship with Christ, in the work of the Spirit and in the Bible. Churches should be places where passion is tested, nurtured, channelled, encouraged and expressed.

14 PASSIONATE - FOR WHAT?

14.1 It might tell us something about the United Reformed Church if we asked - what are we really passionate about? There are plenty of things on our current agenda - questions about eldership and ministry, training and unity, inclusive language and sexuality. These things all need sensitive and deep consideration, but they should not be all consuming. They are much more inward than outward looking. Our overall focus needs to be on the message of the gospel, and on living and telling it in ways that will touch a new world. We may say, 'of course that is our goal', but what actually do our meetings, our statements, our agendas, our actions really suggest we are passionate about?

14.2 Our passion for the gospel should relate both to our own lives, including such things as penitence, mutual understanding, holiness and spiritual renewal, and also to mission, including evangelism, release from debt, racism, concern for children, refugees and the homeless.

15 PASSIONATE WITNESSES

The question put to ministers at ordination and induction can be asked of all of us - "Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?" Our generation, in this country, has not been asked to prove the greater part of that promise.

But throughout the world very many have. Not having been tried in these ways leaves us with a painful question - would we stand in the day of testing? Or more immediately, when the world passes by in indifference, when the church is seen as blandly irrelevant, are we such passionate witnesses, living lives that reflect at least something of the holiness of the Lord, that the message is clear to be heard and seen?

16 PASSIONATE MINISTERS?

As Moderators we are very often deeply impressed by the devotion and commitment of those called to the ministry of Word and Sacraments in our church. They and their families, alongside hard working church members, give generously and sacrificially to the life of the church. It is nevertheless fair to ask from time to time the question about the underlying motivation for all such service, whether it is in fact inspired by "Zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world." The danger, of course, is that our passions can all too easily become self-concerned, self-feeding - they need constant checking against the wisdom of others and against that question which includes the phrase: "so far as you know your own heart." Some ministers - and lay people too - work so hard, of course, that one of the tasks of the Moderators is to slow them down and encourage them to take time off with a good conscience. But the issue is not how hard or what hours we work, but the attitude of the heart, the relationships we develop and the offering of a whole life.

17 CHRISTIAN PASSION

17.1 Christianity is a passionate faith. The Passion of Christ is about the deepest possible concern for the suffering, for those under the hand of evil, for the vulnerable and for the victim, for those who have lost their way and got their values mixed up, for the poor and also for the rich. It is about compassion, about suffering with and suffering for; and it is about turning feelings into actions. Such passion always has to be willing to suffer, but not for suffering's sake, only for the

object of concern. It may at times therefore require a calm but decisive act of will to accept that road, just as our Lord chose the road to the cross.

17.2 Both those elements are there in the Gospel narratives as they describe the things that Jesus did and said (actively) as well as the things he received and suffered (passively). In echoing the Passion, there is a place for the campaigning church and for the suffering church, for speech and silence, for action and stillness.

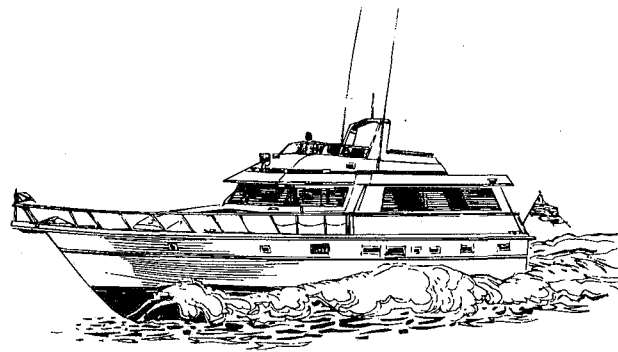
17.3 Christian passion springs from contact with the risen Christ, like the experience of the two disciples who walked the road to Emmaus, who could only say across the table, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (*Luke 24:32*). It is that sense of conviction, that burning with the fire of the Holy Spirit, that energising of the will, that passionate love which cries out on behalf of others, which under the controlling and tempering hand of God should drive us beyond ourselves in his cause.

17.4 Some things are worth living and dying for. There are some things which are really not so significant. We need to know the difference so that we live with deep convictions as well as disciplined emotions in the vitality of the Holy Spirit and with a passion for the gospel of Christ.

18 PERSONALIA

This year we lose the benefits of twenty-two years accumulated experience with the retirement in February of Bill Gathercole after twelve years service in the Eastern Province and with Donald Hilton's retirement shortly after Assembly following ten years in the Yorkshire Province, in the course of which he also served as Moderator of General Assembly 1993/4. We shall miss their participation and fellowship greatly, and wish Bill and Betty and Donald and Ann much blessing in long retirement. We rejoice to welcome their successors, Elizabeth Caswell and Arnold Harrison, and look forward to their distinctive contributions to our work together.

Mission Council



General Assembly 1997

Mission Council

1 Our Meetings

1.1 During the year Mission Council has met at High Leigh, Hoddesdon; the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh; and Ushaw College, Durham.

1.2 The Moderator has made a major contribution to the meetings through his thoughtful bible studies based on St Matthew's Gospel, his quick and clear understanding of the issues before the meeting, and his theological perceptiveness. His chaplain, Fleur Houston, has led worship throughout the year with great sensitivity. The Council has welcomed as theological reflectors at its residential meetings, the Revd Flora Winfield from the Church of England and the Revd Duncan McClements from the Church of Scotland.

1.3 At its October meeting the Council sought to gain an overview of the current mission of the General Assembly by looking at the work of all its committees and relating them to the mission objectives. It also looked beyond immediate and pressing matters by sending a letter to Jerusalem church leaders concerning the future of the Holy City. In turn it received a letter of support and encouragement from the Durham District Council at the time of the meeting at Ushaw College.

2 Responding to the Assembly

2.1 The Revd Christine Craven. The Assembly having appointed Mrs Craven as Secretary for Ministries with effect from 1st October 1996, Mission Council inducted her to her office.

2.2 Oversight ministries. Following the request of the 1995 Assembly for a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight (Resolution 50, Record p.47), a task group was set up as reported last year. However, the Revd John Slow subsequently resigned as convener due to health problems which are now resolved. His place was taken by the Revd Rhona Jones. The task group presented a report to the Mission Council in March. It was concluded that more work should be done on the report, in association with another report on Authority in the United Reformed Church, before a response is ready for Assembly.

2.3 Local leadership. The Assembly of 1995 also asked Mission Council to explore possible new

forms of congregational leadership and to bring proposals to a future Assembly (substitute resolution for 41 and 42, Record p45). A great deal of work was done on this by the Discipleship and Witness Committee, which brought proposals to the Mission Council in March. The Council was evenly divided on the question of whether they were ready to be brought to Assembly and therefore further work will be done with a view to reporting in 1998.

3 Actions on behalf of the Assembly

3.1 Remit of the Finance Committee. A revised form was agreed and it now appears at the head of that Committee's report.

3.2 The appointment of directors of the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Trust Limited. The following resolution was passed by Mission Council: "Mission Council, having noted that objections were received from three members of the Pension Fund (0.2% of the total) confirms that the statutory consultation procedure laid down in Section 19 of the Pensions Act 1995 has been appropriately implemented, and therefore that the existing arrangements as to the appointment of member directors of the United Reformed Church Pension Trust Limited shall continue". The existing arrangements are that these directors are appointed by the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee. If the resolution had not been passed, meetings of members of the Pension Fund would have had to be held to elect member directors.

3.3 Transfer of certain properties in Thailand. The following resolution was agreed: "Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, wishes to bring about the transfer of certain properties in Thailand to the Church of Christ in Thailand, and to this end authorises the Moderator and Clerk to sign a Power of Attorney and to take any further action necessary to facilitate this". This resolution enabled a decision first made in 1974 but subsequently overlooked, to be put into effect.

3.4 Moderator of the Yorkshire Provincial Synod. The Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appointed the Revd Arnold Harrison as Moderator of the Yorkshire Provincial Synod for a period of seven years from 1st September 1997 to 31st August 2004.

3.5 Moderator of Thames North Provincial Synod. Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council extended the term of office of the Revd Janet Sowerbutts from 1st September 1997 to 31st August 1998.

3.6 Appeal to General Assembly. The Revd Anne Stokes appealed to Assembly against the decision of the Thames North Provincial Synod not to allow her to transfer from the non-stipendiary to the stipendiary ministry. Both parties agreed that the appeal could be heard by a commission. The Commission was set up consisting of: Revd Alasdair Walker (Moderator), Miss Margaret Compton, Mr Alex Mackie, Revd Denise Megson and Mrs Alison Morgan. The hearing took place in February and a full report of the work of the Commission and its decision will be printed in the Record of this Assembly.

3.7 The New Community Church, Halstead. The Eastern Provincial Synod asked Mission Council to act for the General Assembly and admit the New Community Church, Halstead, into the United Reformed Church. Since in the past new churches have only been received at meetings of the General Assembly, Mission Council looked closely at the property and legal reasons which had led the Synod to make this request. The new church is an offshoot of Halstead United Reformed Church, which has subsequently closed and left its building. After considerable debate, Mission Council resolved to admit the New Community Church, Halstead, into the United Reformed Church.

4 Other Actions

4.1 Staff Posts. Mission Council accepted the advice of its Staffing Advisory Group in agreeing to continue the following posts:

- CRCW Development Officer - for one year,
pending review of the programme (see 4.6)
- Master Pilot
- Secretary for Church and Society
- Secretary for Youth Work

and it agreed to create a new post of Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness from 1st September 1997, on the understanding that the present post of Secretary for Advocacy would be discontinued whenever the present postholder left office, which will be no later than 31 March 1999.

4.2 Personnel. A number of decisions concerning people were made by Mission Council:

- ◆ Following the need to find new officers for the Resource Planning Advisory Group, the Revd Duncan Wilson was appointed as Convener and Mr Dai Hayward as Secretary.

- ◆ On the advice of the review group, it was decided not to extend the appointment of Mr Paul Franklin as Youth Secretary beyond its present term, which ends on 31st December 1997. This advice was given on the basis that a time of significant change in youth work was the right time for a change in staff appointment. Warm tribute was paid to Mr Franklin's work in Church House over a period of almost 10 years.

- ◆ Council heard that 11 applications for the post of multi-racial, multi-cultural development worker had come from people from churches in virtually every region of CWM. Three were short-listed and interviewed. The degree of interest shown and the quality of the applicants was most encouraging. Mission Council agreed to appoint the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper, of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, to this post for a period of approximately 3 years ending on 31st July 2000. Mrs Lewis-Cooper is at present General Secretary of the Jamaican Council of Churches. She will be received and inducted at General Assembly.

- ◆ On the advice of the review group, it was agreed to appoint the Revd Peter Brain to serve a second term as Secretary for Church and Society, from 1st September 1997 to 31st August 2002. Tribute was paid to the work done by Mr Brain.

4.3 Youth and Children's Work Trainers. The Council has spent a considerable amount of time considering the most appropriate form of management for this team of professional trainers, each of whom works in a Province but who all share some national responsibilities. It was decided to consider moving to Provincial management and a small group was appointed to investigate the feasibility of this. The group consisted of the Revd John Waller (Convener), Mr David Butler, the Revd Lesley Charlton, the Revd Elizabeth Nash and Mr Wesley Woodside. In January the Council accepted the advice of this group that a change to Provincial management should be made over a 12-month period, with professional standards and national consistency being safeguarded by maintaining the Staff Development Policy. Subsequently Mrs Helen Brown, of Southport, was appointed to supervise this change. The post of National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer has been discontinued.

4.4 CWM Hong Kong money. CWM has made a grant of over £80,000 to each member church as a "gift of grace" from the money it received from Hong Kong. Council decided to allocate our grant to the three Provinces with the least financial resources, as defined by the Resource Sharing Task Group. These were identified as Mersey, East Midlands and Wales. Each of these Provinces has been asked to identify a mission project for which its share of the grant will be used, on the understanding that these will not be projects that would otherwise have been funded out of their own resources.

4.5 Stipend level 1997. Mission Council agreed to set the basic ministerial stipend for 1997 at £14,232. In accepting this wording the Council affirmed that it did not indicate any departure from the strong advice of the General Assembly that supplements to stipends are no longer justified.

4.6 Ministries matters.

- ◆ It was agreed to request the Ministries Committee to set up a review team to look at the CRCW programme.
- ◆ On advice from the Ministries Committee it was agreed that the process for considering CRCW candidates should be the same as for ministerial candidates.
- ◆ There was discussion of proposals from the Ministries Committee regarding lay preaching. These involved the appointment of a national Lay Preaching Commissioner and the creation of a sub-committee to co-ordinate lay preaching concerns. The proposals were accepted in principle.

4.7 Affirmations by Assembly-appointed lay staff. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee was asked to advise on what might be appropriate affirmations. The Committee's advice was accepted by the Council, namely that the affirmations for elders in Schedule B to the Basis of Union should be used, with any necessary amendment to the fourth question.

4.8 Partners in Learning. A question was asked at the 1996 General Assembly as to which committee was responsible for the United Reformed Church's interest in Partners in Learning. A consultation of committee officers was held as a result of which it was agreed that Discipleship and Witness would be the lead committee but that it would need to consult both as Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee and the Youth and Children's Work committee from time to time.

4.9 AIDS special ministry. This special ministry has been authorised by the General Assembly for a 10 year period, which comes to an end in 1997. During that time the post has been held successively by the Revds Martin Hazell, Hazel Addy and Justine Wyatt. In order to secure the continued involvement of the United Reformed Church in this area of ministry Mission Council passed a resolution which was brought to it by the Church and Society Committee:

Mission Council

- 1) acknowledges with appreciation the distinctive contributions made by the three full-time postholders as National AIDS Adviser over ten years;
- 2) encourages Church and Society to establish a continuing group on AIDS to serve the whole church and requests a report for its October 1997 meeting;
- 3) agrees to include in the Central Grants budget an annual grant of £2,000pa for the London Ecumenical AIDS Trust, payable from 1998, index-linked and reviewed in 2001.

4.10 Theological groupings within the Church. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee brought a 'concern' to the Mission Council in January in regard to the dangers that could be inherent in theological groupings being established in the Church. Without wishing to imply that it saw any danger in the current situation, the Council encouraged the Convener of the committee to endeavour to publish his comments in Reform. This was duly done. The Council does not believe that there is any need to take this particular discussion forward in a formal way.

4.11 Overspends. A question was asked in Mission Council as to the procedure to be adopted if an Assembly committee wished to spend more than the amount agreed in the budget approved by Assembly. This does not happen often but, because the budget is fixed six months before a year begins (and negotiated more than six months before that), occasionally it becomes clear that unanticipated new work ought to be instigated. Mission Council gave formal approval to the present informal practice: that requests for overspends are made to the Treasurer, who may consult the General Secretary and Convener of the Resource Planning Advisory Group. Significant overspends would be referred to the relevant committees and to Mission Council.

4.12 Resource Sharing Task Group.

As a result of its full report to the meeting of Mission Council in the autumn of 1995, the Task Group was asked to focus its future work on the inter-provincial sharing of financial resources. Mission Council expressed the view that:

- ◆ consultation between the Provinces was the way forward
- ◆ openness and trust were key ingredients
- ◆ standardisation of accounting and sharing of financial information between Provinces should be explored
- ◆ we need to share a vision of what could be achieved
- ◆ the preferred mechanism for sharing was based on the CWM approach of every Province contributing according to its resources and every Province agreeing how the overall contributions should be allocated

- ◆ the suggestion of the Task Group should be developed of using contributions to ensure that 'essential activities/facilities' in each Province are adequately funded

A very constructive consultation between representatives of all the Provinces took place in May 1996, as a result of which a great deal of information has been shared about the availability and deployment of Provincial resources. A further consultation in October provided the opportunity for comparisons to be made and explored. The Task Group is very satisfied with the progress of the consultative process and is pleased to report that the principle of inter-provincial sharing of financial resources has been established. It has not, so far, been possible to develop a basis for sharing, but as an interim measure, all Synods are being asked to agree to contribute a minimum of 2% of 1996 investment income for re-distribution inversely in proportion to investment income. A further consultation will have taken place in April to consider further a number of suggestions which have arisen in the discussions to date.

Millennium Task Group Committee Members

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Secretary: Revd Roger Whitehead

Staff Members: Mrs Muriel Garrow, Revd Peter Brain

Membership: one from each national committee, plus one each from Wales, mid-Scotland District and Greenwich.

RESOLUTION 7

The Millennium

Assembly

accepts that "the task of the churches in the Millennium is to forge a link between the year 2000, the name of Jesus Christ and the possibility of personal meaning and public hope" and encourages local churches to become involved;

adopts the idea of 1999 being a year of commitment to Jesus Christ and urges Synods, District Councils and local churches to participate;

agrees that the United Reformed Church should participate along with other churches if there is an appeal for funds approved by the Churches Together in England Millennium Co-ordinating Group or by similar groups within ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) and CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales).

The millennium will affect everyone whether we like it or not. The Task Group has met three times. It affirms the essentially ecumenical approach to the church's celebration of the millennium, and welcomes the approach and principles outlined in the booklet 'A Chance to Start Again'. The United Reformed Church is represented in the millennium planning group of the English, Scottish and Welsh ecumenical bodies (CTE, ACTS and CYTUN), and receives regular reports. We encourage the relevant Provinces to support and promote the national proposals. Firm proposals for Wales and Scotland are not yet available, but will be shared as soon as possible. The work of the Churches Together in England Millennium Co-ordinating Group has been greatly helped by the appointment of a full-time staff person, Revd. Stephen Lynas, and the URC is helping to fund this post. The programme is developing all the time, and members can be aware of developments by reading 'Millennium News' or visiting the web site (www.2000ad.ord).

Local and National Activities

1 The booklet 'A Chance to Start Again' outlines different ways in which Christians may share their own celebration of Jesus Christ without distancing themselves from their local communities. It is suggested that churches may wish to hold special services on:

Friday 31st December 1999 at 8.00pm, and
Saturday 1st January 2000 at 12.00 noon - 12.15pm,
at which time there might be a nation-wide peal of bells.

Christians are also encouraged, wherever people are, to mark the turn of the year on

Friday 31st December at 11.58pm,
by having a short period of silence when candles are lit (special candles will be available), and by joining in a simple four-line prayer just before midnight.

2 Worship materials for 1999, for Advent 1999 to Epiphany 2000, and for the year 2002, will be published at least a year in advance. These will include all-age material produced in liaison with 'Partners in Learning' and Scripture Union.

3 The churches are committed to participating imaginatively in the exhibition at Greenwich to a standard commensurate with the others who participate, and the URC is seeking to support the local churches of Greenwich in their work related to the exhibition site.

4 Nationwide Christian celebrations are being planned for Pentecost 2000, focused on June 11th.

5 The CTE Millennium Group is working on an agreed logo to encourage a unified approach to this variety of events.

Year for Renewal

6 'The Millennium finds its true meaning and rationale in the historic event of Jesus Christ'. The Task Group invites the Assembly to make 1999 a year of renewal of commitment to Jesus Christ throughout the United Reformed Church by increasing our knowledge about His life and the Church's teaching about Him, and by deepening personal faith.

7 We therefore commend two study periods during 1999. We hope that each Province will set aside time at their Synods in March and October to introduce themes which would be followed up in local churches with study periods between Easter and Pentecost and in the weeks leading up to Advent.

8 Material, prepared by a team of URC writers, will be provided.

Funding

9 Some of the projects associated with the ecumenical celebration of the Millennium will require considerable funding. These include the development of programmes, planning for the Pentecost 2000 events, the production of worship materials, and the cost of church participation in the Greenwich exhibition and possible regional events.

10 At the time of writing the combined budget is not known, we therefore seek Assembly's permission to participate with our ecumenical partners in seeking necessary funding.

RESOLUTION 8

Jubilee 2000

Assembly

endorses and commends the 'Jubilee 2000' programme of action to every local church as a model for a workable and acceptable solution to the problem of poor country debt;

urges church members and adherents to sign - and to secure at least one additional signature for - the supporting petition being distributed in the Information Service;

notes the link already made with Jubilee 2000 through Commitment for Life;

commends the British Government for their proposals on debt relief in recent years and urges them to press with more vigour for the adoption of such proposals within the International Monetary Fund and G7 nations, especially in relation to sub-Saharan Africa.

1 Jubilee 2000 is fully ecumenical. The CofE General Synod has already endorsed this as has the Methodist Council. Baptist Union will probably do so. Jubilee 2000 is to be a central plank in the millennium plans of CTE (Churches Together in England) and in Scotland and Wales the mainstream churches are about to endorse or have done so. The Pope and other religious leaders have emphasised this call for jubilee.

2 Jubilee 2000 is a rallying call for remission of unpayable debts of the poorest countries by December 2000 - time for a fresh start.

It proposes that countries eligible for debt relief should be those with a national income of less than \$2,000 per head of population per year and which also meet at least two of the following criteria:

- ◆ the value of total external debt is over 50 % of Gross National Product. (This is an indication that the total debt burden is unpayable).
- ◆ the value of total external debt is at least 200 % of exports of goods and services, not of imports of food and fuel. (This is an indication of a country's ability to meet debt repayments)

Resolution 9

- ◆ the value of public and publicly guaranteed external debt is at least 200% of total government revenues. (This is an indication of a country's inability to meet debt repayments without cutting public spending to harmful levels).

The record of debtor countries on issues such as human rights, social policies and economic management should also be taken into account. Also, debt remission should be made conditional upon governments using financial resources that become available for investment in basic human needs such as primary health care, basic education, water and sanitation.

3 There is a clear analogy between the present debt bondage and the system of slavery which existed throughout the world in the past and which was only abolished in British territories in 1833, thanks in part to the work of William

Wilberforce and other Christians. Current debt bondage is tantamount to economic slavery of poor commodity producers within our global market, which forces them to work for falling wages which cannot sustain their families, in conditions which can be degrading, unhealthy or dangerous.

4 The book *'The Debt Cutter's Handbook'* is an excellent production full of practical suggestions for getting the message across in local congregations. There will be a number of people available to introduce the topic in District Councils and autumn Synods. Most (though not all) will be the Commitment for Life advocates in the Provinces. But Jubilee 2000 should not be limited by this as though it were only for CforL supporting churches.

5 To have each church member signing and securing at least one other signature by Easter 1998 would get the campaign off to an impressive start; politicians do heed such numbers.

RESOLUTION 9

Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

Assembly agrees to create a Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee, with a Stewardship Sub-Committee, in place of the present Discipleship and Witness Committee and Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group.

Consideration of the future of the post of Secretary for Discipleship and Witness, whose currency comes to an end this year, led the Mission Council to recognise areas of overlap both between committees and in staff responsibilities. There was also an awareness that the present Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group and the staff post attached to it was scheduled to come to an end in April 1999.

The General Secretary convened a series of meetings to consider all these matters. One result has been some clarification of responsibilities and the transfer of some matters to different committees. The major change proposed in this resolution is intended to secure the future of the work of Advocacy and Stewardship within the committee structure and to ensure that its concerns will be included in the brief of a staff secretary whose job description will be more in line with that of other staff at Church House.

It is intended that a revised staff post of Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness will be created from 1 September 1997 and that the person

appointed to this post will work with the present Secretary for Advocacy and Stewardship until not later than the end of the latter's contract in March 1999.

The remit of the new Committee would be:

- ◆ To enable the local church to capture a vision of God's mission for itself and to plan its life accordingly
- ◆ To encourage growth in faith among people of all ages
- ◆ To support the work of elders and the work of the district council in its oversight of the local church
- ◆ To encourage the local church to share the gospel and to participate ecumenically in evangelism
- ◆ To challenge members in their stewardship and witness
- ◆ To stimulate district councils and synods in the development of their own strategies for mission
- ◆ To support the work of the Windermere Centre and the Rural Consultant

RESOLUTION 10**Increases in size of committees**

Assembly agrees to increase the size of both the Communications and Editorial Committee and the Training Committee by two members.

1 The re-structuring of Assembly committees in 1994 also involved a reduction in their size. The two committees named in the resolution have found that this has impaired their work. The reason is that the range of concerns given to them requires skills and experience which cannot sufficiently be found in the present number of

members. The addition of two people in each case is seen as enabling people with different skills to be added to the present membership.

2 If this resolution is passed the Nominations Committee will have names to propose for the vacancies thus created.

RESOLUTION 11**Changes in Rules of Procedure**

Assembly agrees to amend paragraph 1(4) of the rules of procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church so that District Councils are required to send the names and addresses of their representatives to Assembly so as to reach the General Secretary not later than 14 weeks before the meeting of the Assembly.

1 The present requirement is 10 weeks before the meeting. There are occasions when initial papers have to be sent out before then, hence the proposed amendment. It would still remain the

case that District Councils can make changes to the list of their representatives up to four weeks before the meeting of the Assembly.

RESOLUTION 12**Presidency at the Sacraments in an Emergency**

Assembly resolves to add the following words as a footnote to paragraph 24 of the Basis of Union:

“The provisions of paragraph 24 are intended to establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church. The provisions do not prevent the congregation assembled for a baptismal or communion service from themselves appointing, as a church meeting, a suitable person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament in a case of emergency, for example if the expected president is taken ill or held up in travel. The provisions do not require such an action rather than a postponement of the baptismal or communion service if that seems preferable.”

1 This resolution arises from the discussion of the Patterns of Ministry report at the General Assembly of 1995. The Assembly accepted the statement on Presidency at the Sacraments contained in that report but then passed the following resolution which was moved from the floor:

“Assembly requests Mission Council to consider the desirability of a constitutional amendment to ensure that in an emergency the assembled congregation may appoint a person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament.”

2 Advice was given by both the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Assembly Clerk. It became clear that the simplest way to meet the request in the resolution was by means of a footnote to paragraph 24 of the Basis of Union. This would be a constitutional amendment, requiring reference to Synods and a second vote in 1998, but the effect would be to get the words printed in all future editions of the Manual and so equally accessible to those who made reference to paragraph 24.

3 The words of the footnote are intended to hold together two principles: that the worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as the local church and that in the kind of emergency described a congregation is entitled to constitute itself as a church meeting and make whatever arrangement for presidency it believes are appropriate for the particular circumstances.

RESOLUTION 13**Budget for 1998**

Assembly adopts the budget for 1998 (as set out on pages 18 and 19 of the Accounts Appendix 4 of the Book of Reports)

1.1 The Resource Planning Advisory Group took the opportunity of the arrival of some new members in autumn 1996, to consider its overall remit to produce a robust and credible five year plan. It viewed its business in both the short-term and long-term. The omission from this report of supporting text and long-term numerical forecasts is intentional as there is not yet enough reliable information to satisfy the requirements for an update to the plan presented to General Assembly in 1996. In coming to this conclusion the Group pays tribute to the spadework undertaken by the previous Convener and Secretary.

1.2 Short term

The Resource Planning Advisory Group has, firstly, sought to discharge its duties in relation to the budget for 1998. This has been prepared by the Finance Committee with the full support of the Group. The assumptions underlying the 1998 Budget relating to the two most significant items are noted below.

Ministerial numbers; This has been a major source of inaccuracy over the last two years and of gross (7%) variation of actual expenditure against budgetary expectations in 1996.

The evaluation for 1998 is based on rational analysis together with an equal measure of past experience. It is assumed that there will be 645 full-time equivalent stipendiary ministers being paid in December 1998 compared with 665 at the end of 1996. This projection is the best forecast available at the moment.

Ministerial stipends; the Resource Planning Advisory Group has accepted the recommendation of the Maintenance of the Ministry sub-committee for an increase of 4.17% (being Retail Price Index + 1.5%) for 1998. In arriving at this conclusion account was taken of the observations and outcomes of the last full-scale review of ministerial stipends which resulted in the substantial increases introduced in 1992 and 1993. Note was also taken of the concern expressed by two provinces that increases of this level called for a greater increase in giving of individual church members due to falling numbers of members. The MoM sub-committee is to undertake a full review of stipends with a view to bringing forward recommendations in due course.

Work will be done with provinces to shorten the timetable for budgeting with a view to an increase in timeliness and accuracy.

1.3 Long-term

The second task for the Group was to try to use the existing five year plan as the departure point for deriving an updated plan. The autumnal consultations about ministry and finance made it very clear that the way the church addresses the individual elements of its life was increasingly unsatisfactory. Simply to update the financial elements of the five year plan would be an equally unsatisfactory way forward. The Group has begun to try to draw together some of the different strands of a complex debate in an attempt to understand linkages between declared policies and the effects of those policies throughout the church.

Issues under consideration include the strategic consequences of keeping churches open in the face of declining membership; individual and collective expectations about what ministry is for; how the appropriate form of ministry is resourced, trained and delivered; how the denomination can use its available funds to best effect. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive, but it is hoped that the Group will help the Church to address all the relevant issues.

An example of the difficulties can be found in the attempt to gaze into the crystal ball five years forward to understand the potential demand for ministers. No two provinces are alike in the way they have responded. There is a need to spend considerable time working with provinces to ensure that the data gathered is meaningful and comparable. This is a major limitation towards progress because our information systems are partial. And this is before we are able to assess whether the numbers can be justified and afforded!

The Group will be devoting more of its time to the development of an understanding of the links between activities and the consequences of these interrelations. In order to do so it will offer discussion and propose solutions that will be designed to challenge and explore the boundaries of expectations and possibilities.

We look forward to engaging the church's thinking and even to thinking the previously unthinkable.

RESOLUTION 14	Constitutional Change - Representation
<p>Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1996 to add to the composition of the membership of Assembly in Section 2 of the Structure of the United Reformed Church as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2(5) (j) A representative of the Council for World Mission.</p>	

1 This resolution, which involves a constitutional change, was passed by the 1996 Assembly by the necessary two thirds majority. It was then referred to Synods. No objections were received by the date set, 31 January 1997. It is

therefore brought back to Assembly for a second time under paragraph 3(1) (f) of the structure of the United Reformed Church. To be effective, it must be passed by a simple majority of the members present and voting.

RESOLUTION 15 **Constitutional Change - Alternative Statement of Faith**

Assembly, acting under paragraph 18 of the Basis of Union, exercises its right to make a new statement of its faith and ratifies its decision made in July 1996 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.**

1.1 The alternative statement of faith in inclusive language was debated at length in the Assembly of 1996 and the resolution set out above was passed by the necessary two thirds majority. The matter was referred to Synods and it was agreed that objections had to be received by the General Secretary by 24 March 1997. The Synods of the West Midlands, Wessex, Thames North and Southern Provinces registered objections by that date.

1.2 As more than one third of provincial synods have not objected, the resolution is brought back to the Assembly under paragraph 3(1) (f) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church. It requires a simple majority of the members present and voting in order to be passed.

RESOLUTION 16

Negotiations with the Scottish Congregational Church

Assembly confirms the decision of Mission Council to agree to the request of the Scottish Congregational Church to re-open negotiations with a view to effecting the union of our two denominations as soon as possible.

1.1 Proposals for unification of the then Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church were given first approval by the General Assembly in 1988 (474 votes for, 2 against, 3 abstentions). However the majority in favour in the CUS Assembly was 64.6%, when a 75% majority was required to proceed. The negotiations therefore came to an end.

1.2 Subsequently constitutional changes were agreed in Scotland whereby the Congregational Union of Scotland became the Scottish Congregational Church. This led to about 30 local congregations deciding not to be part of the new Church. Most of them have joined the Congregational Federation.

1.3 This new approach was made by the Scottish Congregational Church in September 1996.

Given the overwhelming support for union in 1988, Mission Council felt confident that it could agree to respond positively without waiting to take the matter to General Assembly. It also felt that the unification proposals of 1988 could form the basis of the discussions and that therefore there was no need to spend time on lengthy negotiations. However it was agreed that the Assembly be invited to confirm this response.

Mission Council appointed the following to represent the United Reformed Church in the Negotiating Group:

- Revd Stephen Orhard (Co-Convener),
- Revd Mary Barr,
- Revd James Breslin,
- Miss Felicity Harris,
- Revd Tony Burnham (Co-Secretary).

Task Group on Human Sexuality

1 1994-95

1.1 Mission Council in October 1994 established a Task Group "to work out a process whereby the United Reformed Church can be enabled to hold an informed debate on the matter of human sexuality and come to a decision on the implications for ministry within the church." Those appointed to serve were Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow (convener), Dr David Thompson (secretary), the Revd's Donald Hilton, Roberta Rominger and Peter Brain.

1.2 The Task Group met six times between November 1994 and June 1995, after which the material it had prepared was circulated by post to every local church in July 1995 according to the resolution agreed in Eastbourne, viz.:

"Assembly

- a) invites the Mission Council Task Group on Human Sexuality to circulate material to enable the Church in all its councils to discuss the matter of human sexuality and its implications for ministry within the church;
- b) requests that this discussion takes place in Provincial Synods, District Councils and local churches, leading to a further discussion in Synods in the autumn of 1996;
- c) requests Provincial Synods, District Councils and local churches to send their responses to the General Secretary by December 1, 1996, in order to allow Mission Council to bring any further resolutions to General Assembly in 1997."

1.3 This material comprised

- ◆ the relevant section of the Mission Council report to General Assembly ('How we got to this point'),
- ◆ a major background paper from the Task Group,
- ◆ some resources for worship,
- ◆ notes for guidance for those chairing meetings,
- ◆ some questions as discussion starters,
- ◆ a description of the process of ministerial candidating and call,

plus an order form introducing other available material.

2 1995-96

2.1 Mission Council in October 1995 noted progress and resolved "that the Task Group be thanked for their work so far and be invited to continue, keeping a watch on the process and then collating replies due to be received by the General Secretary and suggesting resolutions to be offered to General Assembly by Mission Council."

2.2 The Task Group met again in March 1996 and agreed that the convener and secretary should be available on a specified day for short meetings with individuals or groups. This was advertised in *Reform* and one group met with them. They also agreed to commission an independent consultant to examine the responses received from local churches. In the autumn of 1996 Dr Sally Winter (out of a group of five names considered) was asked to do this work; she is a college lecturer and experienced in handling survey work and research and is also married to an Anglican clergyman. In the event, the work was much more arduous than anticipated; the Task Group members wish to record their warmest appreciation for the contribution Dr Winter has made to this whole process, including sharing with the Group in person during their residential meeting; Mission Council endorsed these thanks.

2.3 The responses from the 12 Synods were read in full by Task Group members as were almost all the responses received from 43 District Councils. Some District Councils, however, sent extended transcripts (in two instances tape-recordings) of presentations and reports of group discussions or merely forwarded copies of local church responses; the Task Group found it difficult to assess these submissions.

3 1997

3.1 The Task Group met residentially during January and prepared for Mission Council:

- a) a report containing drafts of possible resolutions, plus
- b) 4 annexes containing some of the information received by the Task Group:
 - 1) a summary version of the tables prepared by Dr Winter;

- 2) a summary of the points being made in the responses from local churches as identified by Dr Winter, with a cross-section of illustrative extracts from the submissions;
- 3) an outline summary of District Council responses;
- 4) copies of the principal pages of Provincial Synod responses.

Mission Council agreed that these annexes should be submitted to General Assembly with the report as amended. (*Appendix I, page 140*)

3.2 Mission Council agreed with the Task Group that the use of quotations from the submissions is essential because, although the proportion of churches responding was low (under 30%) and therefore statistically unreliable as a quantitative survey, there is no reason to believe that the sample does not contain the full range of views held by people throughout the church.

3.3 The second reason for emphasising the use of quotations from the letters and reported discussions is to remind General Assembly that, whilst we are necessarily giving most attention to one aspect of the matter, this is within the broader context of comment and concern over a wide range of topics covered by the heading 'human sexuality', some of which will inevitably engage the closer attention of the Church in the future.

3.4 The Task Group asked Peter Brain to prepare for sale a set of the full survey reports on responses from local churches, District Councils and Synods, in a form that will not breach the confidentiality of local church responses. This extensive report can be ordered from the URC Bookshop (*'What was said'* £6.95 inc. p&p); a flier has been circulated in the Information Service.

4 Legal issues

The Task Group consulted the Legal Adviser on certain matters and the following points were agreed with him.

4.1 Homosexuality in itself is not illegal, although there are specific circumstances defined by law in which homosexual acts constitute the offence of gross indecency.

4.2 An active homosexual relationship might be defined as "a relationship involving sexual contact with a person of the same sex". This is the sense in which the term 'homosexual relationship' is used in this report and in the resolutions. Of course, it is possible for a person of homosexual orientation to have a relationship with another person not involving sexual activity.

4.3 It is not illegal to discriminate against a person on the grounds of his or her sexuality in itself. Section 19 of the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) specifically excludes employment for the purposes of organised religion. But in any case the Church is not subject to secular employment law since it has been ruled in recently decided cases that the service of Ministers of Religion does not constitute 'employment'. It has, however, been noted that this point has been challenged.

4.4 A minister who ceased to serve the United Reformed Church without receiving an early retirement pension or other benefit (see Rule 41 of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund) would have his or her pension rights preserved whether he or she had voluntarily resigned from the ministry or had had his or her name removed from the Roll after disciplinary proceedings.

4.5 A congregation of the United Reformed Church which wished to secede as a result of any decision taken by General Assembly on this or on any other matter could only do so with the consent of General Assembly.

5 Our unity in Christ

5.1 The strongest note in the evidence received is that this issue, though important, should not - and need not - divide the church. Mission Council agreed to submit the following resolution, which acknowledges the range of views expressed, to General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 17**Human Sexuality and Unity**

Assembly recognises

- a) the seriousness of the issues of human sexuality and their implications for acceptable behaviour and lifestyles among Christians; and
- b) the lack of agreement in the responses submitted to General Assembly by local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods concerning aspects of the contemporary debate on human sexuality and the teaching and application of scripture;

and therefore

- 1 believes that these disagreements, though serious, must not be allowed to injure the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church;
- 2 encourages local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods to apply with wisdom and sensitivity the pastoral practice and discipline set out in the Basis of Union and Structure of the United Reformed Church, in a way which respects the rights of personal conviction and which does not override conscientious decisions in these matters nor use such decisions as a reason for breaking the fellowship of the United Reformed Church;
- 3 calls on those who exercise pastoral care of members, elders and ministers in the Church to seek ways of ensuring that all those who experience rejection because of their convictions in these matters are sustained within the fellowship of the Church held together by Jesus Christ.

6 Ways forward

6.1 The Task Group noted that various churches in continental Europe and North America have been exercised by this matter in the past ten to twenty years, including some in our Reformed family. As yet no consensus has emerged. The Group's view which was accepted by Mission

Council is that the whole Church is on a journey of faith and has not yet clearly discerned the mind of Christ for us today on this matter. Therefore, some recommendations for further work, derived from the priorities in the responses from the churches, were developed by Mission Council into a second resolution.

RESOLUTION 18**Human Sexuality and further work**

Assembly,

noting the requests made in a number of responses from local churches, District Councils and Provincial Synods for further time and space to reflect on these matters, asks Mission Council to arrange for further work to be done, ecumenically where appropriate and possible, on

- a) the nature of Biblical authority for the life of the church;
- b) the relationship between the authority of General Assembly and the other Councils of the Church;
- c) the matter of ordination and human sexuality;

and also to consider ways in which the Church may be assisted in reflection on the wider issues of human sexuality.

6.2 On (a), Mission Council strongly agreed with the Task Group that time is needed for further study on the nature of Biblical authority for the life of the church, as was urged by several responses. This point has been central to the various published documents in recent years. The need for continuing work is accepted by everyone.

6.3 On (b), Mission Council is conscious that this issue has raised in a potentially damaging form the matter of the relationship between the decision-making of the various councils of the church, including the nature of the authority of General Assembly itself. For example, a local church issues the call to a minister but a District Council needs to

concur in that call; General Assembly committees and Provincial Synods each have different responsibilities in decisions over candidacy for the ministry. In 1996 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada had to decide on an appeal from a minority of members of a Presbytery who dissented from the Presbytery's decision to concur in the call of a homosexual minister by a congregation. That situation might occur in the United Reformed Church. In the view of the Task Group accepted by Mission Council, the existing appeals procedure of the church is intended to ensure that a policy is fairly applied and is not the appropriate means for determining policy; hence there is need for a third resolution (below) setting out the present policy.

6.4 On (c), Mission Council recognised the call in several responses for some more work to be done on the 'role model' aspect of leadership by ordained ministers and elders in the light of the statement on 'holy living' included in the report to Assembly of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee.

6.5 In general, there is evidence that some people in the United Reformed Church have been changed by the experience of these discussions and that some appreciated the opportunity afforded by the process, though many found it difficult or painful. Many churches (around 70 %) did not hold a meeting - or at least did not send in a response to the General Secretary - and some of the meetings that were held were poorly attended. In this, as in all issues, it is clear that encounter and experience, alongside rigorous discussion rather than confrontational debate, can change minds and hearts. Mission Council therefore encourages those local churches which wish to undertake further reflection to do so, noting that many will not. It also invites Assembly committees to continue the task of reflection and discussion within the United Reformed Church and with other churches.

7 A qualified decision

7.1 The discussion which has taken place in the church arose from different understandings of the present position of the United Reformed Church. In view of the proposal for further work set out in the previous resolution, Mission Council agreed that a further resolution should be submitted to this General Assembly in order to remove the current doubts over the present position.

7.2 The Task Group had advised against either a simple resolution
"that the United Reformed Church should never knowingly ordain someone who is in a homosexual relationship" or conversely
"that the United Reformed Church should be prepared knowingly to ordain ...(such a person)".
Mission Council accepted this advice.

7.3 To pass the former resolution implies certain foreseeable consequences:

1. existing ministers in a homosexual relationship would be obliged either to leave their posts or to abandon their partner;
2. everyone in ministry and leadership, possibly including all members or would-be members, would be subject to explicit questioning on their sexual relationships;
3. some people (including some ministers) might leave the United Reformed Church;
4. some local churches might seek to secede.

7.4 To pass the latter resolution also implies certain foreseeable consequences:

1. some people (including some ministers) might leave the United Reformed Church;
2. some local churches might seek to secede;
3. there might be pressure on local churches to accept such a candidate;
4. there might be an influx of such persons into the United Reformed Church.

7.5 Mission Council believes that it would be inappropriate for General Assembly to pass either of these two unqualified resolutions. In the light of the range and strength of the views expressed in the responses received we believe that to pass either would aggravate continuing dispute and bitterness.

7.6 After considerable discussion and amendment, Mission Council offers a resolution which recognises the complexities of the current situation and gives some provisional guidance as to what can now be done within the Church.

7.7 Because the procedure concerning the induction of non-stipendiary ministers is more complicated, the resolution includes a clause instructing the appropriate General Assembly committee to interpret the decision and apply it to the situation of NSMs.

RESOLUTION 19**Human Sexuality and the call to Ministry****Assembly**

- a) recognises
1. that no candidate admitted for training can be assured of ordination until a call is issued and accepted with the concurrence of a District Council;
 2. that all decisions on candidature and on the calling of a particular minister involve seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the weighing of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate.
- b) declares concerning persons in a homosexual relationship that, during the process of further reflection and discussion set out in the previous resolution:
1. no local church or pastorate is to be constrained to consider or accept such a person as their minister nor any District Council constrained to concur with such a call;
 2. Assembly will uphold a call to such an ordinand or minister duly issued by a local church with the concurrence of the relevant District Council(s) leading to ordination and / or induction;
 3. Assembly will also uphold the refusal of a local church to call as their minister a person who is in a homosexual relationship;
 4. in view of these options, the fact of a homosexual relationship shall not be the ground for rejecting a candidate for ministry during the process of selection, assessment, entry to a college or course and ministerial training.
- c) resolves that in the case of a disagreement wherein a local church still wishes to call such a person when a District Council has refused concurrence, the relevant Synod, through an appropriate committee or commission, shall seek to secure agreement, failing which agreement the appeals procedure can be applied.
- d) instructs the Ministries Committee to produce guidelines for the application of this decision in the cases of non-stipendiary ministers.

7.8 This resolution seeks to remove any pressure or sense of misgiving from a local church or council of the church that might be faced with the possibility of receiving a minister in a homosexual relationship. It does imply an understanding of the present situation that there may be among potential ordinands, as among our ministers already, persons with gifts and experiences that would enable them to live and

work effectively and authentically as ordained ministers in an appropriate situation in the church, though they are in a homosexual relationship. It will be for the local church, with the concurrence of the District Council(s), to decide whether to issue a call to such a person. As always in such matters it is essential to consider someone as a person rather than as a representative of a category of persons.

Ministerial Discipline Working Party

Working Party Members

Convener: The Revd Keith Forecast (Convener, Ministries Committee)
 Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (Convener, Accreditation Sub-Committee),
 The Revd Martin Cressey (Clerk to Assembly), The Revd Tony Burnham (General Secretary),
 Mr Hartley Oldham (Legal adviser), who did most of the drafting,
 The Revd Michael Diffey (to June 1996) and
 The Revd Christine Craven (from October 1996) who acted as secretary.

1 Ministers of the United Reformed Church are asked, at their Ordination and at each subsequent Induction, "*Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the Gospel?*"; "*Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully?*" and "*Do you promise, as a minister of the United Reformed Church, to seek its well-being, purity and peace?*" By these standards the life and behaviour of ministers are judged.

2 From time to time, sadly, ministers are alleged to have committed acts which contradict these promises and betray the trust which the Church has placed in them. When this happens, the Church requires adequate procedures to deal with the situation. In these days when moral offences of many kinds hit the headlines, the Church dare not be seen to be using procedures which are less just than those employed elsewhere.

Though justice must always be tempered with mercy, nevertheless a procedure must be set in place which is transparently fair and in accordance with principles of natural justice.

3 Assembly in 1996 was reminded that we have discovered, through experience, that our existing procedures do not meet these criteria. To remedy this, the Working Party set up by Mission Council to look into this matter brought proposals which were designed to separate disciplinary procedures, as far as is possible, from the pastoral needs of ministers, their families and churches who find themselves in situations where offences have been alleged. The basic proposal was to set up an Assembly Commission and an Appeals Commission to which the Councils of the Church might refer such matters, allowing those Councils and their officers to exercise their pastoral role.

RESOLUTION 20

Ministerial Discipline - Constitutional Change

The Assembly ratifies its decision made in July 1996 to amend the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church in accordance with the resolutions agreed by the necessary two thirds majority numbered 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 with Part I of the Annex as printed in Appendix 2 of the Assembly Reports 1997.

Note: For the avoidance of all doubt the Officers of the General Assembly confirm that the variations in the formula used in the Minutes of the 1996 Assembly to record the passing of Resolutions 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 with Part I of the Annex are all to be understood as recording the passing of those resolutions in the manner prescribed by para 3(1) of the URC's Structure, in particular the Officers confirm that Resolution 13 received the necessary two-thirds majority vote.

4 This basic proposal was set out in **Part I** of what was called "*The Section O Process*" (called thus because it is intended that the whole disciplinary procedure will be set out in a new Section O of the Manual of the United Reformed Church). This Part I was accepted by Assembly in 1996, together with its attendant resolutions (*Resolutions 13-19, 1996*). However, this involved certain changes to the Basis

of Union and was therefore required to be made available to the Provincial Synods for their consideration. This process has now been carried out with no objections from the Synods. The text of Part I is now, therefore, placed before the Assembly for a second time (*See Appendix 2, page 156*) and the resolutions are before the Assembly for final decision as Resolution 20.

RESOLUTION 21

Ministerial Discipline - Rules of Procedure

Assembly adopts, for the carrying out of the Section O Process defined in Resolution 14 (1996), the Rules of Procedure set out in Part II of the Annex to this report to Assembly.

5 The proposed "Section O Process" also requires, however, detailed **Rules of Procedure**. The first draft of these proposed rules was presented at Assembly in 1996 as **Part II** of the "Section O Process" and was then publicised throughout the Church, comments being requested by the end of November 1996. Many comments were received, and we express our gratitude to those who considered the matter so deeply and responded so helpfully. Every letter was carefully considered by the Working Party. As a result, the Rules have been amended and refined with painstaking care. They appear in their amended form as *the Annex to this report (page 52)* and, with their attendant resolution, are before the Assembly for decision.

6 In our concern to present procedures which would stand the test of legal rigour, not only have they been drafted in detail by our legal adviser but they have also been reviewed by Counsel specialising in employment law, who has made a number of useful suggestions which have been incorporated into the final draft Rules. He has also given us very helpful advice on matters raised in the consultation process.

7 There is one important change between the 1996 draft Rules and those presented now. Under the 1996 draft, a minister had a choice between an Informal Investigation (*Section D*) and a Formal Hearing (*Section E*). In drawing the Rules in this way, the Working Party was attempting to reconcile two different points of view which were being expressed within the Church. On the one hand, there were those who considered that an Informal Investigation would be less confrontational than a Formal Hearing and that the District Council should be relieved of its role of pursuing the case against the minister. On the other hand, there were others who considered that the minister should always have the right to a Formal Hearing. The Working Party has now, however, been led to the conclusion (supported by Counsel) that, to be able to demonstrate that the process has been scrupulously fair to the minister, there has to be a Formal Hearing in every case. The two elements have therefore both been included as consecutive stages in the complete Process.

8 Where does this leave the District Council? Its primary responsibility under Function 2(3) (i) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church (*Manual page B.5*) is the oversight of the ministry. Therefore it has to carry out the initial enquiry and, if the case is referred into the Disciplinary Process, it must be the party which presents the case. At first sight, this seems to conflict with the view that the District Council should be relieved of its disciplinary responsibilities so that it can concentrate on its pastoral role. The Working Party believes that the solution to this apparent contradiction (also approved by Counsel) lies in the appointment of Provincial Panels from which each District Council will appoint a standing Mandated Group to carry out the initial enquiry and then, if the matter is referred into the Disciplinary Process, to proceed with the detailed investigation and finally to present its case before the Assembly Commission at the Formal Hearing. This will have the advantages of (i) freeing the Provincial Moderator and the members of the District Council from any involvement in the conduct of the case, thus enabling them to fulfil their pastoral roles and (ii) ensuring that the Assembly Commission does not have to carry out the conflicting tasks of both investigating the matter and making the final decision. This change has led to Section B of the Rules of Procedure being amplified to provide for the Provincial Panels to be set up and for the special Mandated Groups to conduct the initial enquiry and subsequent investigation, and to present the case before the Assembly Commission.

9 The other major change which is now put forward is that the minister should be allowed legal representation at the Hearing. This possibility was raised by many correspondents. We do not believe that the case for this is conclusively proven, nor that the matter is so simple as some correspondents suggested. We have, however, after much consultation and deliberation, and on the advice of Counsel, amended the Rules so that there is no longer any restriction against it (*See para E.10*). There are three points to be made by way of clarification: (i) the fact that legal representation is permitted does not mean that it is obligatory; (ii) if the minister is to be entitled to legal representation, so also should the mandated group bringing the case; (iii) the Draft Rules do not make provision as to payment of legal costs.

10 One aspect of our proposals concerns the possible, even probable, effect of Suspension on a minister accused of an offence. In the eyes of many, suspension seems to imply guilt, however loudly we may protest that it carries no pejorative overtones and will not prejudice the case. We see no way round this. In our view, it is impossible to investigate an allegation properly or fairly if the accused minister remains in post while that investigation is carried out. We therefore have retained this requirement as an essential part of the procedures. It will be noted (*Para B.7*) that suspension does not affect either stipend or pension arrangements.

11 Counsel's opinion stresses that "a minister is not legally an employee of the Church but an office-holder called to serve both individually by God and collectively by the members of the wider Church who have asked him/her to take up office". This is confirmed by a case brought to the House of Lords in connection with the Presbyterian Church of Wales in 1986 and affirmed by the Employment

Appeal Tribunal in respect of an Anglican curate in 1996. The rules governing employer/employee relationship do not therefore apply. Nevertheless, "since the minister has agreed to be governed by the rules and structure of the Church, the Church is entitled, having consulted and deliberated fully, to establish a fuller disciplinary code".

12 Some have indicated to the Working Party that the procedures we are proposing appear to be extremely severe and seem to imply that, as soon as any offence, however minor, is alleged, ministers will be suspended and the Section O Process will be invoked. Where there are allegations of criminal offences of a serious kind, and where there is clearly a case for investigation, this will, of course, be so. In the great majority of cases, however, there will be informal pastoral counselling and advice available through the usual channels. We envisage that the Section O Process will be set in motion only when it is deemed to be appropriate and as a final resort.

Annex on Ministerial Discipline

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

PART II - Rules of Procedure

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

A. INTRODUCTION

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| <p>A.1 These are the Rules of Procedure referred to in Paragraph 3.2 of Part I.</p> <p>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 :-</p> <p>A.2.1 "Council" shall mean the council of the church which issued the Referral Notice.</p> <p>A.2.2 "The Parties" shall mean the Council and the Minister.</p> <p>A.2.3 "Mandated Group" shall mean the group mandated to act on behalf of a District Council under Section B of these Rules and in any case where the Referral Notice has been issued by a council other than the District Council the expression "Mandated Group" shall where the context so permits be construed as a reference to the member or members (not exceeding three) of any corresponding group of such other council.</p> | <p>A.2.4 "The Appointers" shall mean the persons responsible under Paragraph 6 of Part I for the appointment of the Assembly Commission.</p> <p>A.2.5 "The Investigation" shall mean the process of investigation carried out by the Mandated Group as set out in Section D of these Rules.</p> <p>A.2.6 "The Hearing" shall mean the Hearing conducted by the Assembly Commission under Section E of these Rules.</p> <p>A.2.7 "Provincial Panel" shall mean the Panel to be set up by each Province from which the Mandated Group shall be appointed as set out in Section B of these Rules.</p> <p>A.2.8 "Notice of Reference back" shall mean a Notice from the Appeals Commission of any reference back for re-hearing by the Assembly Commission under Paragraph 14.7 of Part I.</p> |
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- 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)(xxiii) 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 decide the questions whether the Minister has committed a breach of discipline and whether on that account his/her name should be deleted from the Roll of Ministers or alternatively whether a written warning should be issued to him/her.
- 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 the proper conduct of the procedures. 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 Section O Process once begun should not be aborted, delayed or hindered by an unduly narrow or restrictive application of the time limits or indeed of any other aspects 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 limit imposed upon 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 the Section O Process and attach whatever weight it believes appropriate in the circumstances to such failure to comply, or to any delay in compliance.
- 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 act through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act on behalf of the District Council in every matter requiring consideration under that Function.
- B.2 To facilitate the appointment of the Mandated Group, each Provincial Synod shall appoint and maintain a Provincial Panel consisting of at least twice the number of persons as there are District Councils in that Province. There shall be normally at least one person, and preferably two, from each District Council within the Province.
- B.3 Each District Council shall appoint from the Provincial Panel a Standing Mandated Group of three persons which shall, wherever possible, include at least one but not more than two persons from that District Council.
- B.4 If any member of the Provincial Panel is a member of a local church connected with a case or has any pastoral or personal involvement in a case or is the subject of a disciplinary complaint, that person shall not form part of the Mandated Group for that case.
- B.5 If any member of the Standing Mandated Group is disqualified under Paragraph B.4 or is for any other reason unable to act in a particular case, the Provincial Moderator or his/her duly appointed deputy shall appoint another member of the Provincial Panel to serve as a member of the Mandated Group for that case. The Mandated Group for all matters relating to that case shall be the remaining member(s) of the Standing Mandated Group together with the person(s) appointed under this Paragraph. Until any such further appointment is made, the Mandate shall continue to be held by the remainder of the Standing Mandated Group.
- B.6 The functions of the Mandated Group are twofold :-
- B.6.1 To carry out the initial enquiry in consultation with the Provincial Moderator to ascertain whether the Section O Process should be initiated and
- B.6.2 If it is so initiated, to conduct the investigation in accordance with Section D of these Rules and to present the case against the Minister at the Hearing under Section E of these Rules.
- B.7 B.7.1 Whenever the Mandated Group, having become aware of any information concerning a Minister under the oversight of the District Council which might require disciplinary investigation, concludes that this is indeed so, it shall forthwith in the name of the District

Council suspend the Minister and initiate the Section O Process in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Part I. Suspension shall take effect when the Minister receives Notice thereof from the Mandated Group either orally or in writing. Suspension given orally shall be immediately confirmed in writing.

- B.7.2 Suspension does not imply any view about the correctness or otherwise of any allegations made concerning the Minister, nor does it affect the Minister's stipend nor the Minister's pension arrangements under the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Scheme.
- B.8 In the event that the Mandated Group declines, after enquiry, to initiate the Section O Process, the District Council may, if it considers that the matter should be so pursued, terminate the authority of that Mandated Group in that case and appoint a different Mandated Group consisting of members of the District Council who are neither members of a local church connected with the case nor involved pastorally or personally with the matter. Such Mandated Group so appointed may, after enquiry and if it considers it appropriate, initiate the Section O Process, whereupon it shall proceed to conduct the investigation and present the case (see Paragraph B.6).
- B.9 B.9.1 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 Paragraph B.7 and the procedure set out therein and must act in accordance with them.
- B.9.2 In the event that in any particular case the Provincial Synod issues a Referral Notice, the Provincial Moderator and the Synod Clerk (or their duly appointed deputies) shall on behalf of the Provincial Synod appoint from the Provincial Panel for that Province a Mandated Group for that case.
- B.9.3 In the event that in any particular case the General Assembly issues a Referral Notice, Mission Council shall on behalf of General Assembly appoint a Mandated Group from the Members of the Provincial Panels of Provinces other than that out of which the case arises.
- B.10 To initiate the Section O Process pursuant to Paragraph B.7.1, the Council shall take the following steps :-
- B.10.1 Serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a duly completed Referral Notice containing a statement of the reasons for the action taken and
- B.10.2 Serve on the Minister notice of his/her suspension and of the issue of the Referral Notice.

C. REFERENCE to and CONSTITUTION of THE ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

- C.1 On receipt of either a Referral Notice or a Notice of Reference back, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith take the following steps :-
- C.1.1 Acknowledge receipt of such Notice.
- C.1.2 In the case of a Referral Notice, serve on the Minister a copy of the Referral Notice and a Notice which shall invite the Minister's preliminary response.
- C.1.3 In the case of a Notice of Reference back, invite any preliminary response from the Minister and the Council to the Notice and accompanying statement received by them from the General Secretary in accordance with Paragraph G.9.2.
- C.1.4 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 or the Notice of Reference back and pass to such person or persons copies thereof and of any other papers which accompany such Notice.
- C.2 The Appointers shall, within 7 days of compliance by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission with Paragraph C.1.4 (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, together with a copy of the Referral Notice and of any response from the Minister. Such Notice 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 7 days of receipt of such Notice serve on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission a Notice 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 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 14 days of the service of the Notice given under this Paragraph.
- C.4.2 Any such Notice of Objection 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.
- 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 the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.4.1 was served.
- C.4.7 In the event of any objection being upheld, the procedure outlined in 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 be unable to carry out his/her duties 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 in the terms of Paragraph C.6.1 the Assembly Commission shall be reduced to less than three members at any time after it has taken any steps under Section E the Assembly Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Assembly Commission shall be appointed under this Section C.
- C.6.3 Once the Assembly Commission has been duly constituted and has taken any steps under Section E no person shall subsequently be appointed to serve on that Assembly Commission.
- C.6.4 If the Convener of the Assembly Commission is unable to continue to serve for the reasons stated in Paragraph C.6.1, the remaining members shall, following consultation with the Appointers, appoint one of their number to be the Convener in his/her place.
- D. INVESTIGATION BY THE MANDATED GROUP**
- D.1 It shall be the role of the Mandated Group to investigate the matters which are the subject of the Referral Notice with a view to presenting the case on behalf of the Council at the Hearing.
- D.2 In the course of the Investigation, it shall normally interview the person or persons lodging the initial complaint (if any) and the Minister concerned and shall make all other investigations which it considers necessary.
- D.3 Any person being interviewed in accordance with Paragraph D.2 may, if he/she so wishes, have a friend present with him/her at such interview.
- E. FORMAL PROCEDURES UP TO AND INCLUDING THE HEARING**
- E.1 The Assembly Commission's sole purpose in conducting the Hearing under this Section E is to establish whether or not there has been a breach of ministerial discipline, having regard to Paragraph 9 of Part I.
- E.2 The object of Paragraphs E.3, E.4 and E.5.1 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 Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall, as soon as the Assembly Commission has been appointed under Section C of these Rules, serve on the Minister and the Council a Notice which shall :-
- E.3.1 Notify the date, time and place of the Hearing.
- E.3.2 Notify the parties that the Referral Notice and any statement from the Minister lodged in response to the Notice referred to in Paragraph C.1.2 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 will be made available to the other party).

- E.3.4 Invite the parties to state :-
- E.3.4.1 The names of persons whom they propose to invite to attend the Hearing and, briefly, the purpose of their attendance and
- E.3.4.2 The approximate length of time which each of the parties will require at the Hearing.
- E.3.5 Invite the Council to nominate a spokesperson (who need not be a member of the Mandated Group or the Council) to act on its behalf in the questioning of witnesses and in the general presentation of the case for the Council, and indicate the name and status of such person.
- E.3.6 Invite the Minister to state whether he/she wishes to have a person present with him/her at the Hearing pursuant to Paragraph E.10.1 of these Rules, and if so indicate the name and status of such person.
- E.4 E.4.1 Within 14 days of the service of the Notice under Paragraph E.3 of these Rules, the parties shall comply with Paragraphs E.3.3 and E.3.4 by serving on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission the documents, statements and information requested.
- E.4.2 As soon as possible after the expiration of such period of 14 days referred to in Paragraph E.4.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall provide each party with copies of the documents, statements and information delivered by the other party under Paragraph E.4.1.
- E.4.3 The parties shall respond to the respective invitations contained in Paragraphs E.3.5 and E.3.6 no later than 14 days prior to the date set for the Hearing.
- E.5 E.5.1 It shall be for the Assembly Commission to decide on all procedural and evidential matters, both before and during the Hearing. It may make such directions as it deems appropriate regarding such matters and fix a time for compliance with such directions, if necessary postponing or adjourning the Hearing to enable such compliance to be made. Such matters shall include the following :-
- E.5.1.1 All matters relating to the form of the written material lodged by the parties in accordance with Paragraph E.4.1 and the extent to which the same may be later amended or supplemented, and to which further written material may be introduced and disclosed.
- E.5.1.2 The extent to which written statements, videos and other recordings and transcripts shall in exceptional circumstances be admitted as evidence at the Hearing.
- E.5.2 The Assembly Commission may itself appoint persons with expert or specialist knowledge in any particular field to advise it on any aspect of the case and may issue any requests and directions which it considers reasonable and appropriate with a view to obtaining such advice.
- E.6 E.6.1 Either party may at any time request an advancement or postponement or adjournment of the Hearing, setting out his/her/its reasons for such request.
- E.6.2 The Assembly Commission may at any time advance, postpone or adjourn the Hearing as it considers it appropriate, whether of its own accord or at the request of either party, but always having regard to the need to conclude the Section O Process as expeditiously as possible. Notice of the amended hearing date, time and place shall be served on the parties by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission.
- E.6.3 Any advancement of the hearing date shall normally require the consent of both parties.
- E.7 E.7.1 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 E.7.2 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 E.9 apply) postpone or adjourn its own proceedings pending the final decision of the criminal courts (whether or not on appeal) 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) .
- E.7.2 The categories of criminal offence relevant to adjournment under Paragraph E.7.1 are :-
- E.7.2.1 Unlawful killing, or deliberate or reckless, actual or threatened, infliction of physical injury to the person or damage to the property of another.
- E.7.2.2 Rape, sexual abuse or any other offence of a sexual nature.
- E.7.2.3 Fraud, blackmail, theft or burglary.
- E.7.3. In the event of the Minister being so found guilty of any of such offence(s), the Assembly Commission shall for the purposes of the Section O Process regard the commission of such offence(s) as proved.
- E.8 Any of the following, that is to say :-
- E.8.1 Any obstruction or unreasonable delay on the part of either of the parties in complying with the procedural steps prior to the Hearing and/or

- E.8.2 Any obstruction caused by either of the parties to the Assembly Commission in the conduct of the Hearing itself
- may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I.
- E.9 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 written warning under Paragraph 10 of Part I. In such circumstances the Assembly Commission can, if it considers it appropriate so to do and having informed the Minister of the consequences of such admission, convene, conduct and conclude the Hearing and on the basis of that admission reach its decision in accordance with Paragraph F.1.
- E.10 E.10.1 The Minister may invite one person to accompany him/her at the Hearing ("the accompanying person"), in which case either of the following shall apply:-
- E.10.1.1 If the Minister elects to present his/her own case, the accompanying person may give him/her support and advice but shall not address the Assembly Commission nor question the Minister or any of the witnesses nor present the Minister's case nor take any active part in the Hearing.
- E.10.1.2 If the Minister elects to invite the accompanying person to present the Minister's case, the Minister will not be permitted in the interests of the good ordering of the procedures at the Hearing to question the witnesses nor present the case himself/herself.
- E.10.2 Neither the spokesperson nominated by the Council in accordance with Paragraph E.3.5 nor the accompanying person if he/she is presenting the Minister's case under Paragraph E.10.1.2 shall be permitted to give evidence at the Hearing.
- E.11 All members of the Assembly Commission or, if Paragraph C.6 shall apply, those persons, not less than three, who are acting as the Assembly Commission shall attend the Hearing, which may only proceed provided that the Assembly Commission remains quorate throughout the Hearing. No member of the Assembly Commission who does not attend the whole of the Hearing shall play any part in the making of the decision reached under Paragraph F.1.
- E.12 E.12.1 The Hearing must be conducted in private and only the following persons shall be permitted to attend :-
- The Members of the Assembly Commission
- The Secretary of the Assembly Commission or a duly appointed Deputy (see Paragraph E.12.3)
- The Minister
- The accompanying person defined in Paragraph E.10.1
- The members of the Mandated Group
- The Spokesperson for the Council (if not already a member of the Mandated Group)
- Any witnesses (but only while giving evidence, unless the Assembly Commission otherwise directs)
- The representative of the Church's legal advisers (if invited by the Assembly Commission to be present) (see Paragraph E.14.3)
- Any other person by the direction of the Assembly Commission and with prior notification to the parties.
- E.12.2 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall (unless excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph 7.1 of Part I) attend the Hearing for the purpose of giving such procedural advice to the Assembly Commission as may be appropriate and of keeping a formal record of the Hearing.
- E.12.3 In the event that the Secretary of the Assembly Commission cannot for any reason 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, ascertaining beforehand that such person is not excluded for reasons specified in Paragraph 7.1 of Part I.
- E.13 E.13.1 The conduct of the Hearing is in the hands of the Assembly Commission and, subject to the Assembly Commission's overriding discretion, the order of procedure shall be as follows.
- E.13.2 The Council through its spokesperson shall be given the opportunity to make an opening submission and then to present its evidence and question its witnesses. Persons called to give evidence on behalf of the Council are open to questioning by the Minister or his/her spokesperson as the case may be.
- E.13.3 If the Minister is presenting his/her own case, he/she shall then be given the opportunity to present his/her evidence in person, following which he/she is then open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Council.

- E.13.4 If a spokesperson is appearing for the Minister, that spokesperson shall be given the opportunity of questioning the Minister, who shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Council.
- E.13.5 The Minister may if he/she wishes remain silent and furthermore cannot be compelled to attend the Hearing of the Assembly Commission and it is a matter for the Assembly Commission in considering its decision as to what weight should be attached to the Minister's silence or non-attendance.
- E.13.6 The Minister or his/her spokesperson shall then have the opportunity of questioning any further witnesses whom he/she wishes to call and when each one has given his/her evidence that witness shall then be open to questioning by the spokesperson for the Council.
- E.14 E.14.1 The members of the Assembly Commission shall be entitled to ask questions and also to interject during the examination of witnesses if they consider the questioning to be oppressive or immaterial to the matter in hand or if for any other reason they consider it appropriate so to do.
- E.14.2 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.14.3 A representative of the Church's legal advisers may, at the invitation of the Assembly Commission, be present at the Hearing to advise the Assembly Commission on matters referred to in Paragraph 18 of Part I, but shall not take any part in the decision reached by the Assembly Commission.
- E.15 E.15.1 The Assembly Commission may invite any person referred to in Paragraph E.5.2 to attend and address the Hearing, having in such case informed the parties beforehand of such invitation and the purpose of that person's attendance.
- E.15.2 At the Hearing the parties shall be given reasonable opportunity to question such person and to comment on any information, opinion or advice offered by him/her.
- E.16 E.16.1 In considering the evidence before it, the Assembly Commission shall apply the civil standard of proof, which requires that decisions on disputed allegations shall be reached on the balance of probability.
- E.16.2 The Assembly Commission cannot take cognisance of any matter which has already been considered in the course of any previous referral into the Section O Process in respect of

the Minister unless (i) the decision taken as a result of such previous referral (whether or not on appeal) fell within Paragraph 10.2 of Part I and (ii) such matter in the opinion of the Assembly Commission falls within the scope of the conduct, statement, act or omission in respect of which the written warning referred to in that Paragraph was issued.

- E.16.3 The Assembly Commission may at its discretion have regard to information concerning any matter which, although not referred to specifically in the Referral Notice (including any such occurring after the inception of the Section O Process), is in its opinion germane to the issue(s) specified in the Referral Notice provided that (i) it believes it right and proper to do so and (ii) it affords to the Minister and the Council a proper opportunity of considering and refuting or challenging any such information.

- E.17 No person appearing in any capacity before the Assembly Commission at the Hearing shall make any record of any part of the proceedings at the Hearing by means of any tape recording system or other mechanical or electronic recording device or system.

- E.18 When the process of presenting and examining the evidence at the Hearing has been concluded, the spokesperson for the Council and the Minister or the accompanying person as appropriate (in that order) shall be given the opportunity to address the Assembly Commission, following which the Assembly Commission shall conclude the Hearing.

F. THE DECISION of the ASSEMBLY COMMISSION

- F.1 F.1.1 Following the conclusion of the Hearing, the Assembly Commission shall, all meeting together but in the absence of the parties, consider the evidence presented to it, in order first to determine whether the allegations (or any of them) made against the Minister have been proved to its satisfaction and, if so, whether they are sufficiently serious as to amount to a breach of discipline by the Minister.

- F.1.2 If the Assembly Commission concludes that a breach of discipline has so arisen, it must then consider whether it should direct the name of the Minister to be deleted from the Roll or whether in the circumstances the issue of a written warning would be sufficient. In this context the Assembly Commission may take into account, in addition to the seriousness of the allegations, such factors as the degree of remorse shown by the Minister and his/her preparedness to change or to undergo counselling or training.

- F.1.3 Having completed the process set out in Paragraphs F.1.1 and F.1.2, the Assembly Commission shall reach its decision (either

unanimously or by majority vote) in accordance with Paragraphs 9 and 10 of Part I.

F.1.4 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 within 7 days 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. 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 and on the General Secretary copies of such warning.

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 G.1.1 Any Notice of Appeal against the decision of the Assembly Commission given under Paragraph 11 of Part I must be served on the Secretary of the Assembly Commission 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 (save only in the situation referred to in Paragraph G.1.3), and such Notice shall state the grounds of the appeal (which may be in detail or in summary form as the appellant chooses).

G.1.2 The Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith pass over to the General Secretary the Notice of Appeal and the General Secretary shall thereupon act in a secretarial capacity in all matters relating to the Appeal.

G.1.3 The only situation in which an appeal against a decision of the Assembly Commission can be permitted out of time is where there is significant new evidence not available to the original Assembly Commission, which might lead to a conclusion that a miscarriage of justice has occurred in which case the Convener of the Commission Panel (or in his/her absence the Deputy Convener of the Commission Panel) may at his/her discretion authorise the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to accept a Notice of

Appeal out of time. The fact that the decision of the Assembly Commission may already have been the subject of an appeal will not prevent a newly constituted Appeals Commission from considering a further appeal under this Paragraph G.1.3.

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 Acknowledge receipt of the Notice of Appeal.

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, 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 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, 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 Minister to submit within 21 days from the date of service of the Notice under this Paragraph a counter-statement 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 in this case.

G.3 The Officers of the General Assembly shall within 14 days 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 together with copies of the following :-

G.4.1.1 Notice of the Assembly Commission's decision.

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 received under Paragraph G.2.2 or Paragraph G.2.3.
- G.4.2 The Notice of Invitation to serve 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 7 days of receipt of the Notice of Invitation serve on the General Secretary a Notice 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, 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 14 days of the service of the notice given under this Paragraph.
- G.5.2 Any such Notice of Objection 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 General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector.
- G.5.6 If they uphold the objection, the General Secretary shall serve notice thereof on the objector, the person to whom the objection was taken and the other party on whom the Notice specified in Paragraph G.5.1 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 unable to carry out his/her duties 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 at any time after the Appeals Commission has taken any steps in connection with the Appeal, the Appeals Commission so appointed shall stand down and be discharged and a new Appeals Commission shall be appointed in accordance with Paragraph 12 of Part I to hear the Appeal.
- G.7.3 Once the Appeals Commission has been validly constituted and has taken any steps in accordance with this Section G, no person shall be subsequently appointed to serve on that Appeals Commission.
- G.7.4 If the Moderator of the General Assembly is unable to serve, 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.7.5 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 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 breach of the rules of natural justice or serious misunderstanding of the information before it by the Assembly Commission.
- G.8.2 G.8.2.1 Before reaching its decision on the Appeal, the Appeals Commission shall constitute a Hearing at which the parties shall attend before the Appeals Commission.
- G.8.2.2 The General Secretary shall serve a Notice upon the parties informing them of the date and place for the Hearing and notifying them of the arrangements for the Hearing.

- G.8.2.3 Except for those Rules which by their content are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure, the Rules set out in Section E shall also apply to Section G (with the necessary changes).
- G.8.2.4 At the Hearing, there shall be no further admission of evidence, save in cases falling within Paragraph 13 of Part I.
- G.8.2.5 The conduct of the Hearing of the Appeal is in the hands of the Appeals Commission whose Convener will at the outset of the Hearing read out the decision of the Assembly Commission.
- G.8.2.6 The Convener will then invite the parties (commencing with the appellant) to make oral representations to the Appeals Commission on the subject matter of the Appeal.
- G.8.2. The Hearing will then be concluded.
- G.9 G.9.1 The Appeals Commission shall at the conclusion of the Hearing and all together but in the absence of the parties consider and arrive at its decision (which may be taken unanimously or by a majority vote) in accordance with Paragraphs 9, 10 and 14 of Part I.
- G.9.2 The General Secretary shall thereupon serve on the Minister, the Council and the Secretary of the Assembly Commission Notice of the decision of the Appeals Commission and of the accompanying statement of reasons in accordance with Paragraph 16 of Part I.
- G.10 G.10.1 If the decision is taken 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.10.2 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 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.10.3 If the decision is taken in accordance with Paragraph 14.7 of Part I (reference back for re-hearing), the Assembly Commission constituted for such re-hearing shall not be given any information relating to the conduct of the previous Hearing but may have sight of the documents, statements and information delivered to the Assembly Commission under the provisions contained in Section E.
- G.11 The General Secretary shall report to the General Assembly the decision of the Appeals Commission.

H. FORMS, SERVICE OF DOCUMENTS and MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

- H.1 Model forms of Notice have been prepared to assist those concerned with the Section O Process. Copies of these 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. Use of the model forms is not compulsory and 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

Resolution 22

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.
- 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 the Appeals Commission or any other costs and expenses which the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission deem to have been reasonably and properly incurred in the course of such process (but excluding any costs of representation) shall be charged to the general funds of the Church, and the Report of each case to the General Assembly shall state the total cost incurred in that case.

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.

RESOLUTION 22

Ministerial Discipline - Indemnity

Assembly resolves that the United Reformed Church shall provide a full indemnity for those persons who act as members of any Panel, Commission or Group appointed in accordance with the Section O Process as defined in Resolution 14 (1996) in respect of all actions, proceedings, cost, claims and demands of any kind arising out of the Section O Process, so long as such persons have not acted maliciously or in blatant disregard of their responsibilities under the Section O Process.

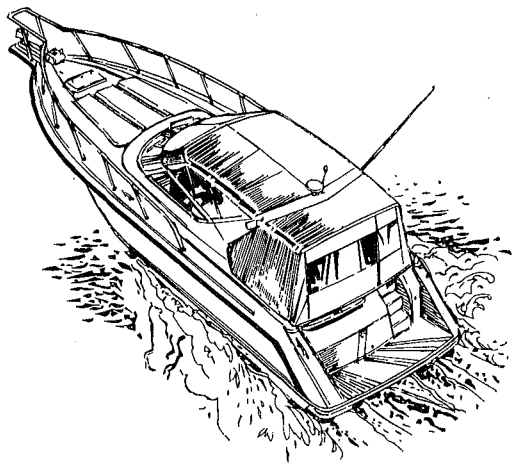
13 Those who are called upon to operate these procedures are accepting a considerable responsibility for the benefit of the Church. It is therefore only right that the Church should in turn stand behind them and protect them from any risk (however small) of personal liability which they might otherwise incur in carrying out their duties. The Working Party is therefore bringing a Resolution that the Church will provide them with an indemnity against any claims which might be made against them under the disciplinary process. This follows the precedent already set in the case of directors of the United Reformed Church Trust and the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Limited to whom indemnities were given by Assembly some years ago.

14 The Working Party also realises that those in the Councils of the Church handling these procedures, and those who will be called upon to operate them within the Assembly Commission,

will need some guidelines to assist them. If our present proposals are accepted, the Working Party will prepare a draft of such guidelines and hopes to have it ready for the October 1997 Mission Council.

15 It has been said by some that, in addressing this matter, the Church has been diverted into legalism and deflected from its fundamental task. Certainly the Working Party has not always felt as if it has been in the forefront of Christian Mission! It has, however, carried out its task to the best of its ability, partly because it was asked by the Church to do so, partly because, in these days, it sees it to be essential for the Church to have adequate procedures available which will enable it to deal with unfortunate allegations involving its ministers, and partly because it believes that the witness of the Church will be enhanced if, when situations of this kind occur, it can be seen to be able to deal with them legally, fairly and compassionately, in love for all concerned.

***Committees
and
Task Groups***



General Assembly 1997

Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly

Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Wilma Frew

Secretary: Mr Hilary Gunn

*Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly,
Convener of Local Arrangements Committee for the relevant year.*

1 The committee benefits each year from the energy and fresh insights of the new Moderator-elect and the Convener of the local arrangements committee. We are grateful for this, as we juggle the claims of several Assemblies simultaneously - the current year, with detailed planning and local arrangements, together with broad spectrum plans for the following Assembly and projections for some years ahead.

2 We are placing increasing demands on our chosen venues, in terms of technology and the size and nature of the accommodation needed to meet our growing list of requirements. (This year we have been looking at a new request for group accommodation for our under-25 year old representatives which is a grade higher than the

floor of a local church hall). As a result, we predict that there will be an increasing tendency to return to those venues which have already proved that they can meet our needs, and bookings have to be made well in advance. Currently we are under pressure to confirm bookings for 2002 and 2004.

3 As agreed by resolution at York in 1996 Assembly will meet in the East Midland Conference Centre, University of Nottingham, from Saturday 11 - Tuesday 14 July 1998.

4 Unfortunately, the exact date and venue for the 1999 Assembly had not been confirmed at the time of writing. The Convener will bring a resolution on this matter to Assembly in July.

Church and Society

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

Committee Members

Convener: Professor Malcolm Johnson **Deputy Convener:** Mrs Val Morrison **Secretary:** Revd Peter Brain
Revd Hazel Barkham, Mr Paul Franklin (Youth and Children's Work committee), Revd David Fraser,
Ms Janine Lawley, Revd Michael Powell, Mr David Wrighton,
with Revd Justine Wyatt (National AIDS Adviser), Ms Wendy Cooper (Administrative Assistant).

1 Introduction

1.1 A General Election is one of the rites of passage through which a democracy must go from time to time and thus it brings the passing of time to our collective attention. So, before the onset of millennium fever precludes any sensible discussion about time passing, this can be the theme of our report as Church and Society. Our work in dealing with a wide range of mundane matters does indeed appear temporary and is ultimately transient; yet time is full of meaning for those who believe that God was incarnate in Christ Jesus.

1.2 On the one hand, "there is nothing new under the sun". The search for justice and peace seems perennial. "*When comes the promised time?*" (R&S 638). But there is also a sense of expectation, not dependent on - but of course linked with - the possibility of a different government after May 1, 1997. Change is always relative, so that the same changes may appear as adjustment to some and catastrophe to others. Was it Mao who, when asked what he thought was the impact of the French Revolution, commented that "it is too soon to tell"! In God's good time, we say, the kingdom will come; but how can we tell? This is the point: both patience and impatience are Christian virtues. God's great gift for which we especially pray is to discern what Jesus called the signs of the times and to act appropriately. So believers will seek wisdom from past evidence of grace and press on towards the promise with greater or lesser urgency; this is true of Church and Society work too as we reflect on time's passing. "*Christ behind me, Christ before me*" (R&S 36) or, better, "*Christ is the path and Christ the prize*" (R&S 496).

1.3 Our theology is occasionally explicit but most often is implied, as we seek to work out the social or political implications within time of a concern for human well-being and the created environment which we believe is God's concern also, or seek with God to side with those whom the world counts as weak or foolish or unworthy or worthless. We are reporting on some topics which seem to recur and a few that are fresh. However, there are many new matters to consider as time passes and we confess that many of them are absent from our report, though we acknowledge with thanks that ecumenical partners are busy on some of these. You will read nothing here about Dolly and cloning, national identity and the UK constitution, abortion and euthanasia, beggars and homelessness, accountability and transnational corporations, the media and the world-wide web, any of which, it might be claimed, are more fundamental to the history of these years and the prospects for the new millennium than our actual agenda. But we have not wasted our time.

2 Update

2.1 Although Church and Society is very selective in attending to a small number at any one time out of the many issues and themes which would be appropriate for Christian concern, we do try to **sustain** an interest and involvement when Assembly expresses a view or adopts a policy in a resolution. Several concerns brought to General Assembly in recent years still reverberate round the church and round the world. The following matters have all been on the agenda of Church and Society during the past year.

2.2 Assembly's expressed concern for **Hong Kong** (1996 Record, p34) has been sustained with correspondence and other communications - e.g. the Hong Kong Christian Institute is a keen promulgator of the views of the democratic groups via the internet. Visitors to Hong Kong have included groups from CWM (including the URC General Secretary) and from CCBI (including former Moderator John Reardon) seeking to reassure our partners and friends of our continuing attention and awareness. This Christian solidarity must not, and will not, cease with British rule. We also keep in touch with Taiwanese colleagues.

2.3 Assembly's expressed concern for **Jerusalem** and the rights of **Palestinians** (1995 Record, p16) has been similarly sustained, albeit with fewer, less high-profile visits. The CCBI Church Representatives Meeting in November 1996 adopted an outline of principles "Towards Peace in the Holy Land" which is too long to reproduce here in full; this sets out "some of the key issues for consideration at the current time ... Prayer and penance as well as sympathetic and regular contact are called for".

The paper starts with some fundamental principles which echo the points made in our own Assembly resolution, including acceptance that "Jerusalem is a city for two peoples and three faiths" whose status "is defined by international law and long-standing agreements". It calls for "commitment to dialogue between Jews, Muslims and Christians on what constitutes peace with justice and guaranteed security for the Israeli and Palestinian communities". It then sets out what mutual recognition requires of both these communities in terms of mutual respect, human rights provisions and "the need to ensure that the Palestinian economy can function". It calls for "an end to the building and expansion of settlements and for implementation of agreements already made". It concludes with a call for wider support, including "support by the British and Irish governments, the European Union and the wider international community for the Palestinian economy".

At the time of writing work is about to start on the Har Homa settlement which will put particular pressure on the Palestinian Christian communities in that region; it would indeed be ironic if the coming millennium was marked by the near strangulation of the original Christian presence around Bethlehem!

During the year Church and Society affiliated to a new body, the UK Friends of 'Sabeel', the Palestinian Christian group founded by Canon Naim Ateek who spoke at Assembly in 1995; local churches wishing to affiliate can contact them through our office.

2.4 Assembly has expressed concern over **asylum seekers** and supported the call for amnesty for a few of those threatened with deportation (1994 Record, pp59/60 and 1996 p29). As to the latter, the government declined to negotiate and have refused to lift the pressure on such high-profile cases as the Okolo family in Manchester who have won support from North Western Province and the Ogunwobi family who have now been in 'sanctuary' in Hackney Downs Baptist Church for more than three years.

As to the former, during the year many representations were made to government over the plight of asylum seekers in deputations and in correspondence. At the time of writing, the Refugee Council knows of around 300 asylum-seekers actually in prison and a further 500+ in detention. 27,885 applications for asylum were made in 1996 (a drop of 37% on 1995) but over 20,000 appeals are outstanding and around 50,000 applications awaiting a decision on their claim; it can take years to resolve these claims. Among these are hundreds of unsupported asylum-seekers who visit day centres regularly for basic food and company, despite the High Court ruling that local authorities have a duty to feed them.

Of course there are so-called 'undeserving' applicants and many, not surprisingly, enter the country without proper documentation, including some who have been the victims of criminal schemes. But the vilification and criminalisation of the applicants themselves as a category of persons, very many of whom have fled their homes and homelands in fear, is an approach that as churches we must deplore. They are not guilty until proved innocent; scapegoating should have no place in law and order policy.

2.5 Assembly's expressed concern over **unjust promotion of baby milks** and the role of Nestlé (1992 Record, p35) has been revived by the publication 'Cracking the Code'. This independent research was funded through a coalition led by UNICEF and comprising 27 member organisations, including Church and Society but excluding both the companies and the baby milk action campaign. The report analysed survey-based findings to demonstrate that the major producers of baby milk and infant formula are still violating the World Health Assembly's 1981 code. This report was reviewed in the media and was featured in *Reform* in February 1997. Despite protestations from some companies, 'Cracking the Code' is **not** a campaigning document but a research report. All the sponsors of the research wish the matter would be resolved, and soon: "It is the persistent ongoing debate over materials plainly in contravention of the Code which is so time-consuming and fruitless" is the comment of UNICEF.

This new evidence, more objectively gathered than in the past, implies that organisations whose current stance includes a boycott of Nestlé, such as the URC, should not lift it until there is evidence of a change in attitude and practice on the part of the market leaders.

Ironically, some posted copies of this report arrived with Nestlé advertisements incorporated in the franking!

2.6 Assembly has often expressed concern over **threats to peace**, including most recently nuclear proliferation and the arms trade (*1995 Record, p19 and 1994 p59*). This year an Opinion was handed down by the World Court that the threat or use of nuclear weapons should be brought within the scope of international law and the agreed conventions on weapons of mass destruction, as in the case of biological and chemical weapons. Diplomatic efforts for a new Non-Proliferation Treaty to ban the testing of nuclear weapons continued. During the year, strong ecumenical representations were made to the British government who have supported this treaty; these will continue after the General Election.

During the year the CCBI promoted a programme of meeting local MPs around the issue of arms manufacturing and trading which was taken up by a number of URC members.

The World Development Movement alleged that British hardware (armoured personnel carriers, Hawk aircraft, etc.) has reportedly been used for internal suppression by the Indonesian government, including in East Timor. The courts may be asked by them for a judicial review on whether the published criteria for arms exports were breached.

2.7 Assembly's expressed concern over the **Lottery** (*1995 Record, p18*) led to further representations to and meetings with both Government ministers and the OFLOT regulator, Mr Peter Davies. These were ecumenical deputations, including Mr Aubrey Curry, then deputy convener of Church and Society committee. The monitoring and research on this is largely done by the Methodists whose work we acknowledge and support. Pressure is still needed from the churches and others to highlight the damaging aspects of the Lottery although it is here to stay. No government will forgo such an easy source of revenue; £626m went to the Treasury during 1996. £1,416m went to 'good causes' (including £283m allocated for charities) out of a turnover of £5,217m.

Several local churches have become involved in applications for Lottery funding. Church and Society was asked by some to interpret the Assembly resolution (or to give absolution!). Our provisional response has been that, where the application is more broadly based than from a single church and where it seeks funding for projects to benefit the whole community and not merely or primarily the church and its organisations, this does not breach the spirit of what Assembly determined.

2.8 As to the resolution inviting churches to participate in the **General Election** constituency meetings (*1996 Record, p29*) across the country, at the time of writing the CCBI materials were being mailed out and the election date had just been set. There may well be more to report in July!

3 Main programmes

3.1 Each January the Church and Society committee meets residentially to review what is being done in its name and to set some priorities. At those meetings we receive reports from some of the people who represent us ecumenically on various bodies. Eight of them were listed in the 1995 Book of Reports and most are still busy in their fields. In addition, the Secretary reports to the residential meeting on his outside involvements and on items not otherwise addressed on our agendas, including work with other URC committees and groups, such as the Ecumenical Committee and the Human Sexuality Task Group.

The two fairly high-profile programmes featured in this section of the report were also singled out for special treatment in the URC 25th anniversary book *'from Streams to Oceans'*

3.2 The most visible programme of Church and Society is, of course, *Commitment for Life*, which was relaunched at General Assembly in 1996 with a stirring contribution from Christian Aid Director Michael Taylor. Here there are good things to report.

3.2.1 **Advocacy.** A part-time national co-ordinator was appointed last summer: Mrs Anne Martin (telephone and fax: 01494 670410). Thanks in the main to her energy and planning, there are now almost 40 people in all the Provinces who are actively promoting the programme, making presentations in Church Meetings and District Councils, following up leads, renewing lapsed contacts, looking for new participant churches, etc. A presentation was made to every March Synod. All of those involved with *Commitment for Life* are

working hard to get the message across that concern for justice in the world (helping practically and politically) is not an optional extra for Christians in the late 20th century but an essential part of our calling to witness and service in this emerging 'one' world. To do nothing is, more than ever, to pass by on the other side.

3.2.2 Management. The 1996 relaunch called for the formation of a small subcommittee to manage the programme. This subcommittee meets quarterly to review progress, receive reports and agree strategy. It is chaired by Revd David Batchelor and includes two present Church and Society committee members and one former one, plus representatives of Christian Aid and World Development Movement, as well as the programme co-ordinator, the committee Secretary and also Ms Wendy Cooper of the Church and Society office who faithfully administers much of the logistical side of the programme, sending out ordered materials, receiving and receipting contributions, producing and mailing newsletters, etc.

3.2.3 Money. The contributions to *Commitment for Life* for 1996 through the 1% appeal totalled £284,965 (£267,926 in 1995) although as is frequently noted, a calendar year-end is most unsuitable for this particular programme as money may arrive before or after the break, depending on the circumstances of a local treasurer. The quoted total shows a 6% increase, which appears to be rising into 1997. Of this money, in line with the report agreed at Assembly last year, £28,494 (10%) went to World Development Movement and £218,230 to our overseas partners through Christian Aid (who deduct nothing for their administration of these funds). The remainder (£38,241) was divided between grants to other bodies and activities (£15,850, including £8,500 to One World Week), materials and nationwide advocacy both of which cost more because of the intensive relaunch. The administrative work done in the Church and Society office is not charged to *Commitment for Life*. Please ask for the detailed figures, which will be circulated in the summer Information Service as usual.

3.2.4 Partners. The intended mutuality of partnership within *Commitment for Life* is coming, but slowly. Two visits were made by representatives of the programme during the year, to the Palestinian and the Indian partners. Plans are in hand for a visit to Brazil in 1998 to include FURY members since the Brazilian partner works with young people and children. In addition there have been visits by staff from the partners in India,

Brazil and Zimbabwe, during which some contacts were made with URC people. None of this is enough. We have misunderstanding to tackle on both sides. Our assumption that "we have the answers for them" dies hard; their puzzlement that we would like to learn from them is also a barrier - and of course the partners are actually too busy to be forever attending to us! The linking of a particular campaign with each partner is a helpful way for local churches to focus. For example, the Zimbabwe partner ties in with campaigning around third world debt, with extra relevance in the run-up to the millennium and Jubilee 2000 (about which a separate resolution is coming to Assembly).

3.2.5 Materials. The 1996 basic materials included a poster, leaflet and prayer card, each based on one of the partners, plus the standard collecting envelope and treasurer's pack, the 1996 video and the 1992 pulpit fall kit. Most of these items will not be replaced in 1997. There is a steady supply of updates on the work of the partners and the linked campaigns keeping local churches informed and encouraged. There is also a poster featuring all four overseas partners which is suitable for non-participating churches since the choice of one partner is the normal point of entry to the programme for a local church. We are still hoping to recruit a further 50 churches into the programme during 1997. Also under the heading of 'materials' there is progress to report on the **Action Cards** which are selling well and which are still featured regularly in *Reform*; each month a suggested message and recipient is given and cards are sent from hundreds of households and churches.

3.2.6 Politics. This is the place to report that discussions have been held between the agencies involved (including the churches) and the Labour Party front bench team on overseas development with a view to reinstating a Development Education Fund, such as existed in the 1970s when several local centres and projects began. After the General Election, *Commitment for Life* will be promoting a petition calling for a reaffirmation of the UN 0.7% of GNP target for official overseas aid and for the reintroduction of a Development Education Fund. The United Reformed Church has always been to the fore in pressing the government on these matters as have the churches in general; other lobbyists will urge their plans and ideas on a new government but the voiceless poor far away rely on people like us to put their case.

3.3 The full-time 'special category ministry' post of **National AIDS Adviser** ceases at the end of 1997 after ten years. To sustain the interest within the church and to send signals of our continuing support to those outside the church, a small working group is being set up with the blessing of Mission Council. Reports will come to Assembly via Church and Society but this is not, and has never been a narrow 'departmental' concern, affecting as it does our witness and discipleship as Christians, our ministry of pastoral care and our basic beliefs concerning the nature and purposes of God.

Mission Council in March passed a resolution of appreciation to the three full-time postholders since 1987, Martin Hazell, Hazel Addy and Justine Wyatt, the current post-holder who made a presentation at Assembly in 1996. This ministry has been a significant emphasis for the United Reformed Church, welcomed by non-church bodies such as the National AIDS Trust and by other church bodies such as the London Ecumenical AIDS Trust whose work is now enlarging beyond one city and to whom it has been agreed to make a grant from 1998.

4 Ongoing diversity

4.1 Instead of employing a second 'generalist' staff member, Church and Society has for some years engaged the more specialist services of a succession of Advisers, e.g. on Housing or Europe. It is proposed for 1997-8 to focus on three themes and to buy in expertise to allow us to work on them. At the residential meeting it was agreed to concentrate on environmental concerns, economics and ageing. This section of the report also gathers up some other work done during the year.

4.2.1 The **environmental work** will be led by David Pickering, one of a relatively small number of URC ministers with a science training. David has already been doing things for the church in this field in a purely voluntary capacity, including the production of material and a spell on a European churches working party on 'economy and ecology'. He has represented us on the Environmental Issues Network of CCBI and is involved in developing plans for that body to evolve into a more effective instrument to act ecumenically for the churches on the range of 'green' issues, as there are existing bodies working on peace or world development, the others in the triad of Justice, Peace and Creation. Now, in addition to that, he will be more available to share ideas within the church, helping to produce more worship and study materials. An advisory group is being formed to monitor this work.

4.2.2 The **work on economics** will concentrate on 'demystifying money' with materials and staff involvement from the Manchester-based William Temple Foundation. This approach is more people-focused than issue-based and was preferred to yet another working party to challenge the dominant liberal capitalist market system about which many Christians have written effectively. The theme is not so much the system itself but the widespread but misguided belief that economics is autonomous, that nothing can be done by 'ordinary' people in the face of mighty forces and not much even by elected governments, in short that 'Mammon rules OK'. We plan to run some events and make available some 'user-friendly' materials.

4.2.3 The **work on ageing** is a joint enterprise with Discipleship and Witness, stimulated in part by Raymond Clarke. 1999 is to be the International Year of Older Persons (presumably before the new millennium leaves them behind!). There are serious public issues about funding welfare and health provision for older people, about assessing early retirement within the wider employment debate, about the cult of youth, about steering lifetime relationships through more decades than our grandparents imagined, etc. There are also issues over the role and contribution of older people within the church, about coping and, critically, about caring, about disability and wholeness. We have commissioned research into what work is already being done in various places; we shall then together determine what programme might be most suitable for 1998/9 for the United Reformed Church.

4.3.1 For three years we have reported on work around **values**. We do so now for the last time formally since the specific programme is being concluded.

4.3.2 This is still an elusive theme as ever, made more so, not less, by the loud voices who suppose they have the answers and who clamour for the church to condemn this or that as a serious lapse or worse. The small group whose agenda this is may have decided that 'pronouncement' is out but remain more convinced than ever that enquiry and engagement and exploration are absolutely vital - not only for the community of faith but for the whole of our society. The analysis we have written of in previous Assembly reports still holds and need not be repeated here. If the 'problem', the objectively perceived and personally experienced crisis in values, is a soul-destroying mixture of individualism, materialism, short-termism and disenchantment, with a dose of sentimentality as

the millennium approaches, then what might a realistic alternative look like? Personal and social renewal will not come simply by abolishing the Lottery even if it is the supreme symbol of the 'problem'! Authentic preaching and prayer have their part. Politics, too, must regain the respect required to function at all in a representative democracy. Above all we need to remain **alert**. So "*we shall not cease from exploration*" (T S Eliot) and trust that more light and truth will be given us.

4.3.3 So we are planning a series of events during early 1998 to share the fruits of the journey so far. There will also be a publication, a compilation of the ideas that have been shared in different ways by many people during this programme of work. Alongside this printed material we hope to produce one or two audio-cassettes. And we have brought to Assembly a resolution on the transmission of values within the education system which should allow for a constructive debate.

4.4 It is timely to raise three other concerns.

4.4.1 For some years we have been concerned with child abuse and prostitution overseas and with 'sex tourism'. We have joined in lobbying for UK legislation to convict those whose offences have been committed in the Far East. It is good to note some progress towards this in the 1997 Sex Offenders Act, though there are continuing concerns. Southern Province, especially through its women's organisation, have joined this lobby. Church and Society will join the re-formed organisation to be known as **ECPAT UK** and invites others to do so too; we can supply details.

4.4.2 We have been members of the **Voting Reform Group** which is campaigning not directly for a change to proportional representation but for a referendum to open up the possibility of such a change. Both General Assembly and FURY Assembly use a form of single transferable voting which may not be strictly analogous but at least points to an instinct for a more representative system than 'first past the post'. Both the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties have now promised such a referendum.

4.4.3 We have been co-sponsors and part-funders of the **Churches Enquiry into Unemployment and the Future of Work**. There will be opportunity at Assembly to discuss the issues they raise in a lunchtime meeting.

In advance of publication of their report we offer this comment.

It's all too easy to quote the proverb from Haiti (or wherever): "If work was such a good thing, the rich would have found a way of keeping it to themselves". Surely one of the top policy concerns of the new government is unemployment, or rather employment; the two are not the simple either - or opposites that they seem. Unemployment meaning 'having nothing to do' is not only an economic but a Christian concern. Employment meaning 'earning a living but feeling insecure and hating every minute of it' should also be a Christian concern.

As usual questions and queries abound. Maybe finding the unemployed something to do is not to be reduced to old-style job-creation? Will the carrot or the stick get the unemployed back into jobs - and what if there are no jobs? Or would there be jobs for them if they were willing to work? Maybe getting machines to do what they do better and more cheaply is OK? What is a 'proper' job? Maybe those millions who do unpaid work (including housework, caring, etc.) need affirmation by the rest of us - and should that be a form of payment? At the time of writing the Churches' Enquiry into Unemployment and the Future of Work is about to report. As with such reports in the past, the media will doubtless seize on some ambiguous or overstated phrase, blow it up into a party political spat for a few days and then leave the main report unread and unconsidered. On this occasion the actual economics of a church report will stand close scrutiny since the Enquiry secretary, Mr Andrew Britton, was until 1996 one of the seven 'wise' economists advising the Chancellor.

This matter is the Gordian knot of our time. What we do about this will demonstrate our fundamental convictions as to what kind of society we really wish to live in.

Another flurry of questions rise from reading the draft of these perceptive pages.

What is work for? What is employment for? Does unemployment lead to despair and alienation and thence to criminality? Which jobs can be in effect exported (to some Third World or eastern European sweatshop) and which cannot be exported - and what links these two categories of employment? Must we swallow a complete set of Keynesian or monetarist or Marxist answers or can we go on rather eclectically as usual with the pick-and-mix of economic policies that are sometimes little more than damage limitation.

The Enquiry team promises a relaunch of their report in September, with study guide and action points. Church and Society **commends** this to the careful and prayerful attention of the churches and will include these issues in its work on economics (see 4.2.2).

RESOLUTION 23

Values in Education and the Community

Assembly

- 1 welcomes the serious attempt made by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) to discover what values are commonly held in different sections of society and affirms the need to continue with this exercise;
- 2 applauds the efforts by many teachers and governors to promote such values within the ethos of their schools and colleges as they assist the development of children and young people growing up in a society which is often hostile to such values;
- 3 believes that, in the "*promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at school*" as required under the 1988 and 1992 Education Acts, moral principles must be linked with spiritual and cultural education and therefore resists the suggestion that 'values' might be taught as a separate subject on the curriculum.
- 4 instructs Church and Society to pass on these views to the FCFC Education Committee, the government and the SCAA.

1 Because the concerns of Church and Society around education policy and practice are effectively handled for us within the Education Committee of the Free Church Federal Council, it is rare for these matters to be brought to Assembly. However during the year the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) has held a 'consultation on values in education and the community' which drew our attention in the light of work we have been doing (*see the report, 4.3*). Media and sectional interest in whether the word 'marriage' was actually going to appear in the report served to obscure what is a most interesting, if frustrating exercise. It is certainly one to which we wish to draw the church's attention.

2 The full SCAA draft cannot be reproduced here. A preamble sets out the aims, constraints and probable outcome of the process; it is this that caused us some concern. The four main affirmations are described as "*a number of values on which members believed society in general would agree; extensive consultation showed there to be overwhelming agreement.*" These four main points from SCAA are each followed by a list of implications for attitude and action, not reproduced here.

- a) *Society: We value truth, justice, human rights, the rule of law and collective effort for the common good. In particular we value families as sources of love and support for all their members and as a basis of a society in which people care for others.*
- b) *Relationships: We value others for themselves, not only for what they have or what they can do for us. We value relationships as fundamental to the development and fulfilment of ourselves and others and to the good of the community.*

- c) *Self: We value ourselves as unique human beings capable of spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical growth and development.*
- d) *The environment: We value the natural world as the basis of life and a source of wonder and inspiration.*

3 "Motherhood and apple pie" may be the immediate comment, meaning "who could disagree?" Perhaps it is as much as might be expected from such an exercise. However, Church and Society voiced a number of concerns. We invite General Assembly to debate these issues not only out of our concern for the many teachers and governors of schools and colleges among the members of the United Reformed Church but because, as a church, they are real issues for us to consider in our work with children and adults.

4 There is the issue of **coherence**. Society needs some living examples of these values in operation. And many schools are such communities. However they are precious oases in a very different society, under great external pressure to break with the values set out here. For example, schools themselves are forced to act competitively as businesses, in a climate of league tables which tend to devalue 'failures'. In short we do not accept what SCAA says, that "*schools and teachers can have confidence that there is general agreement in society upon these values and can therefore expect the support of society if they base ... the school ethos on these values.*" There is a limit to the role of the school (and of the church) in offering a countervailing culture.

5 Then there is the issue of **teaching** itself. We resist the implication that 'values' should be a specific and separate subject on the curriculum. Rather this is a dimension of the whole school, permeating several subjects (e.g. history, English, geography, Religious Education) rather than as a subject itself. It could certainly not be examined!

6 Third is the question of **spirituality**. We note that SCAA says "*Many believe that God is the only source of value; others believe that values have their source in human nature*" which is true. But we dispute their corollary that "*Agreement on the values*

is compatible with disagreement on their sources" if this discounts the inspirational and visionary element without which values are empty words. The authentic pluralism, the community in diversity which is required in a society such as ours, will not be built on high principles which we can all agree to include on a list, even if it were amended to include reference to more relational values such as trust and love, but only on actions which come from minds and hearts that are themselves confident and are also appreciative of others' beliefs and convictions.

Communications and Editorial

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.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Christopher Wright **Secretary:** Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd David Coleman, Mrs Sue Brooks, Mrs Pat Stannard,
Revd Graham Spicer and Mr Doug Fletcher

1 Publications Board

1.1 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.

1.2 1996 saw the publication of seven titles in addition to annual publications of the Year Book, the Diary and Prayer Handbook. These included *Textures of Tomorrow - Words and Images on the theme of Reconciliation* which features embroideries by Pamela Pavitt, and *Developing Discipleship* - a post membership course. Both were launched at the General Assembly 1996. *Textures of Tomorrow* has been widely appreciated both inside and outside the denomination.

1.3 There are six new titles in preparation. *Into Wholeness* - a new pack on the Ministry of Healing, a new edition of *Thank God You've Come* and *From Streams to Oceans* - celebrating 25 years of the United Reformed Church will be available in the spring. Titles planned for later in the year are *Reign Dance* - an anthology from Yardley Hastings edited by Martin John Nicholls, *Getting to Know You* - a pack intended for Methodist/United Reformed Churches and the General Assembly will also see the launch of a pack on the United Reformed Church produced by Northern Province for use in church and school, and a book reflecting on 25 years of the United Reformed Church by Arthur MacArthur. There are also plans for a book of Bible studies in preparation for the Millennium and a new leaflet introducing the United Reformed Church.

1.4 As in previous years all copies of the URC Diary for 1997 were sold. Again there has been a substantial increase in requests for the loose leaf version of the Year Book.

1.5 The 1996/7 Catalogue was distributed to all ministers and a number of Christian Bookshops in addition to church secretaries.

2 Reform

2.1 The new format of *Reform* has bedded down and continues to attract favourable comment from readers. An increase in the size of the magazine and a doubling in the number of colour pages were achieved during the year while, at the same time, significantly reducing the cost of production. It has also been refreshing to see the letters columns maintain and reinforce their crucial place in facilitating debate of the highest quality on issues of national significance.

2.2 The beginning of 1997 provided an opportunity to assess the practical reaction to the changes over the previous year in the form of subscription renewals. It was gratifying to see that the loss of circulation over the previous few years had, for the time being at least, been staunch and that *Reform* distributors continue to add new subscribers via a number of special promotions. Even so, *Reform* cannot be immune to the effect of the fall in numbers within our churches over the previous decade and the Committee is intensely aware that the magazine's finances are now far more finely balanced than in previous years, when a regular surplus was returned. In meetings and Councils, the Editor has continued to stress the responsibility of ministers, elders and officers in ensuring the place of *Reform* in the life of the church.

3 URC Bookshop and Distribution

3.1 There have been changes in the bookshop staff which have not produced any major difficulties. The target of turning orders round in 48 hours is being met in the majority of orders.

3.2 Both students and ministers continue to take advantage of the discount scheme for both "official" and recreational reading. The breadth of titles ordered under this scheme continues to widen month by month. 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.

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

4 Design and In-house Printing

4.1 Once again new and upgraded equipment has led to improved standards of production. Items of less than 20 pages are produced "in-house" and some colour work has been also undertaken.

5 Information Service

5.1 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 Video

6.1 The number of loans of videos has risen over the past year.

7 Church Returns Forms

7.1 The information from the Church Returns Forms is collated and entered on to a data-base. As yet no solution has been found to the problem of standardising the methods of producing figures at the local level.

8 Copyright

8.1 The resolution passed by General Assembly in 1996 has led to 1,100 churches joining the Christian Copyright Licensing Scheme. This has enabled a 10% discount to be given to participating churches. Churches who have not yet responded are encouraged to do so since the larger the number of churches joining in the scheme the higher the discount. It should be remembered that the licence also covers the recording and videoing of services.

8.2 As a consequence of the resolution to General Assembly the Communications and Editorial Office no longer undertakes to clear copyright permissions on behalf of local churches, except in very exceptional circumstances. A list of the most frequently requested copyright holders and their addresses is provided on request.

9 Press and P.R.

9.1 The Press and Media Office continues to offer support and advice to individuals and churches who are, or feel they might soon become, the subject of media attention - whether welcome or unwelcome.

9.2 Over the past 12 months the increasing use of inexpensive computer communication to facilitate the circulation of material has resulted in somewhat wider coverage of a number of issues and initiatives within the confines of the religious media. The national media, on the other hand, continues to express indifference to the Church's existence or activities, by and large.

9.3 All media work within the United Reformed Church has to proceed from the knowledge that a Church of our size (and cumbersome name) is of little practical interest to the mass media. Issues raised within the Church, however well circulated, are unlikely to be picked up unless they fit (or can be misrepresented to fit) current stereotypes of the wider Church or used as an opportunity to attack 'hypocrisy'.

9.4 Such a situation can lead to feelings of discomfiture when the Church's name is associated with artificial controversies or when elements within the media see a chance to don the robes of moral indignation and attack the Church for failing to maintain 'traditional standards'. At such times it is important to realise that it is often the case that such controversies provide the only opportunity for representatives of the Church to address a wider audience.

10 Christian Resources Exhibition

10.1 The United Reformed Church will be present at the Christian Resources Exhibitions at both Sandown Park and Manchester in 1997. This is intended as a special recognition of 25 years in the Church's life. The main focus will be on the training opportunities available at the Windermere Centre, and the National Youth Resource Centre, Yardley Hastings, and *Reform*.

11 Media Contacts

11.1 A 24 hour general consultation for Provincial Media Contacts and others was held at High Leigh in July 1996. It is hoped to extend this to a wider number and to extend the period to 48 hours. These consultations will specialise in specific areas of the media.

12 Ecumenical Links

12.1 CACLB

The Committee is still seeking a new representative to the Churches Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting.

12.2 MAP

The Secretary continues as a member of the Media Awareness Project.

12.3 Church Publishers Network

The Church Publishers Network set up under the auspices of CCBI continues to meet biannually.

Discipleship and Witness

The purpose of the Discipleship and Witness Committee 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.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Committee Secretary: Revd Roger Whitehead

Staff Member: Mrs Muriel Garrow

Other Members: Mrs Jean Antcliffe, Revd Bob Day, Revd Jean Forster,
Revd David Tatem, Dr John Stocks, Mr Jim Wilkinson,

Rural Consultant: Revd Michael Cruchley

Director, Windermere Centre: Revd Peter McIntosh

1 Working Together

1.1 Discipleship covers the whole of Christian life, and people of all ages and abilities within the church. After its first two years of existence the Committee is more aware than ever that its remit overlaps with the work of other committees of the Church, and relates to the essential task of every church, District and Province. Instead of seeing this as a problem we have viewed it positively as an incentive to work closely with other groups and individuals.

1.2 Sometimes this means that we undertake work on behalf of the whole church which could have been done by other committees. For the past year a major amount of our time and energy has been spent on the **Local Leadership** report undertaken on behalf of the Mission Council. This has involved us in a great deal of consultation, and we are grateful to all the people who have been willing to work with us. The process has confirmed to the Committee the rightness of consulting widely and involving as many people as possible in the thinking that leads to any report or publication.

1.3 Such a method of working is inevitably slower by virtue of being thorough. It means that our report on **Evangelism in the URC**, which has been a major topic for over a year, is not ready for presentation, although well advanced. We are grateful to **Wessex Province** for the considerable work they have done with us on this subject.

1.4 A new initiative is work on the subject of **Ageing**. This is of concern to both the Church and Society and the Discipleship and Witness Committees. The two committees are now working together to discover how the church should explore the many issues involved, with the Church and Society Committee taking the lead.

1.5 A representative group from Discipleship and Witness, Youth and Children's Work and Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committees has also met to explore the issue of children and communion.

1.6 It has been established that the Discipleship and Witness Committee will take the lead in relating the URC to 'Partners in Learning'. However, we believe that we also need to discover what range of education and worship materials are currently being used by local churches, and research on this has begun.

1.7 The Committee was delighted that the Northern Province responded to the need for good educational materials about the United Reformed Church for use in primary and secondary schools, but which might also be useful for local churches. They are launching their pack, 'Let's Discover the United Reformed Church' at this Assembly, and we warmly commend it to the Church.

2 The Wider Church

2.1 At last year's Assembly the Convener handed out information about television programmes featuring Bible stories. '*Storykeepers*' is a cartoon series based on the adventures of children caught up in the Neronic persecution of Christians in Rome in AD64. Each episode features a number of Jesus' stories, and also shows how the message contained in the stories affects the way we live. They are being broadcast on ITV on Sunday mornings to a probable audience of four million people, and three further series have already been commissioned. We encourage local churches to pick up on the themes in their work with children. The Scripture Union has produced material for Holiday Club or school use based around five episodes, and there is a book for primary school teachers linking '*Storykeepers*' to the National Curriculum Level Two. Linked books and videos are also available. **Muriel Garrow** has produced a leaflet with full information which is available at Assembly, and will be available to all denominations through the Group for Evangelisation of Churches Together in England.

2.2 This is just one way of opening the Bible to people who might not otherwise be exposed to its message. 1998 will be the year of the '**Open Book**'. This is an initiative of Churches Together in England being managed by the Bible Society. We have to recognise that the Bible has become a closed book to many people, and that the book which has helped to shape our culture needs to be heard again as we try to understand contemporary society. Church leaders in every region have been invited to presentations about the project on five key themes: **Identity, Forgiveness, Freedom, Justice and Hope** — Biblical Themes which are of clear contemporary relevance.

2.3 This is the year of '**Pilgrim's Way**' when people from many denominations, including our own, have walked the land from Canterbury to Derry in thankfulness for our heritage of Christian faith as we celebrate the work of St Columba and St Augustine. But this has not been an exercise in looking backwards, it has provided the impetus for the production of educational and liturgical material which will be of continuing benefit, and has also enabled the pilgrims to be a focus for celebration of faith and communication of the gospel in the communities through which they have passed.

3 Ongoing Work

3.1 This September the Committee is holding a conference at **Willersley Castle** in the East Midlands Province for all who are concerned with District visits to local churches. This will be an opportunity for Districts to share helpful new developments and benefit from a cross-fertilisation of ideas. If your District has been experimenting with new forms of District visit, or if it is considering change, then we do urge you to come along and participate in what should be a useful two days. Details and booking forms for each District were sent out via Provinces last July. The conference takes place from 12th-14th September 1997.

3.2 Last year we mentioned that we hoped to pick up Mission Council's concern for **small churches**. Michael Cruchley, the Rural Consultant, has undertaken to give a lead in this piece of work, and we are also delighted that a minister has chosen to make this a subject of sabbatical study. This, together with similar work undertaken by others, will be the foundation of the committee's approach to this topic.

3.3 It is becoming increasingly clear that the quality of the work done by Districts and local churches during a ministerial vacancy is crucial. The key figure in this process is usually the **Interim Moderator**. Increasingly elders from neighbouring churches are undertaking this task, and both they and ministers fulfilling this role for the first time, and the churches they serve, deserve support. Research reveals that about half our Districts do not have access to guidelines for Interim Moderators. **Jim Wilkinson and Leslie Green** have collected information from those who have had recent experience of vacancies, and in the light of this are preparing **Guidelines** which will be available to Districts which wish to use them.

3.4 The work on **Local Leadership** of churches continues. The desire to affirm and encourage a variety of models of local leadership which are emerging across the Church also reveals the need for us to ask serious questions about the purpose of the ordained ministry, the way we use our non-stipendiary ministry and the vital leadership role of elders.

3.4.1 It was the view of Mission Council when the report on this subject was discussed by them that further work needs to be done, and that it would be particularly helpful to publish stories of good (and bad) examples of local leadership.

3.4.2 We hope to complete the task entrusted to us and bring proposals and supporting materials to the next Assembly.

3.5 A concern for the church to take seriously the faith and needs of people with learning difficulties has remained on our agenda. Discussions have started with the Equal Opportunities Committee whom we expect to become the lead committee for this area of work.

4 The Committee relates to two national staff members apart from our own Secretary. The Rural Consultant and the Director of the Windermere Centre both serve on the Discipleship and Witness Committee, and report to Assembly through this Committee:

4.1 Report of the Rural Consultant

4.1.2 The Revd Michael Cruchley continues to be available to help churches, districts and provinces in their consideration of the ministry and mission of the Church in rural areas. During the past year he has been involved with colleagues at the **Arthur Rank Centre** in pastoral care for rural people experiencing stress. This concern has led to the formation of **The Rural Stress Information Network** which enables co-operation between the churches, government departments and other groups. The suicide rate amongst farmers has remained high, though little evidence exists that this is directly related to the **B.S.E.** crisis.

4.1.3 Many rural churches have the opportunity to welcome visitors to their premises. In October 1996 the **Churches' National Tourism Group** was formed, which exists to help churches use these opportunities for mission.

4.1.4 Following the government White Paper '*Rural England*', discussion between the rural Development Commission and the Arthur Rank Centre has taken place which could lead to a new, modular **Leadership Training Course** for people in rural churches and communities. The Consultant has taken the lead in the preparation of an outline scheme for this.

4.1.5 The issue of **racism in rural areas** has been investigated by some of the media. A Rural Anti-Racism Project has been undertaken by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, and the role of the Church as an influence for good in welcoming strangers is especially important.

4.1.6 The Strategy Group, who advise and support the Consultant, have willingly agreed that he should take a lead role within Discipleship and Witness regarding **small churches**. Many of the features of smallness are common to both urban and rural areas, and comments, reports, challenges etc. would be greatly welcomed so that a major report can be presented to Assembly and the churches within the next year or so. A consultation at the Windermere Centre is already arranged for March 1998 to help focus on this issue.

4.2 Report from the Director of the Windermere Centre

4.2.1 The Facts and Figures:

- ◆ Over 5000 bed-nights - about 1700 people - shared in the Centre's life in 1996: the second highest number since this valuable resource was created over ten years ago.
- ◆ During the week of the tenth celebration in July, about 900 people visited the place to reflect, worship, sing, be creative, enjoy, and give thanks for the Centre's life.
- ◆ Last year's programme offered over 90 courses, retreats and events, and within that 28 churches came for a weekend to reflect on their life and mission.

4.2.2 Comings and Goings:

- ◆ The Centre has five domestic staff, two cooks, a gardener / handyman, a domestic manager, a secretary / receptionist, an Administrator and a Director.
- ◆ **Sue Kendall** the Administrator is leaving. Sue has worked at the Centre since before day one, when in February 1985 she began as a part-time secretary to help establish this residential home in the Lakes for the United Reformed Church. Since that time many have been grateful to her for her care and skills, and on many occasions she has taken full responsibility for the Centre's life. The Centre and the denomination owes her an enormous debt of gratitude for her loyalty, service, faithfulness and commitment. We rejoice that her reason for leaving is that she is to be married in April, which means moving out of the area of Windermere. We wish her well, and every rich blessing in her new life, and record here the very grateful thanks of the Assembly and the whole church for her service. She will be missed.

4.2.3 Answers to the questions most asked:

- ◆ *Yes, it does pay for itself, thanks to the denomination's agreed budget.*
- ◆ *Yes, you can come and stay, even if you are not on a course.*
- ◆ *No, you don't have to share a room, or pay extra for a single, and, yes, there are en-suite facilities in three of the rooms.*
- ◆ *Yes, the Hannah Fund does subsidise students, low-incomed, special needs, unemployed, and yes, the Trustees do appreciate donations from those who wish to see the Centre as a place for everybody.*
- ◆ *Yes, it is not easy making known what is available. Advertising courses and retreats is expensive and complex, which is why we need a Windermere Contact Person from every congregation. At present we have about 460. Please offer to be one.*
- ◆ *Yes, the place does make a difference to people's lives, churches and communities. Thanks be to God, and please uphold us with your prayer.*

5 Holiday Forum

5.1 The theme for 1996 was 'This is the Life' in which we explored down to earth spirituality. Attendance was again up - 200 people of all ages met and were ably led by John Slow. His well produced talks were complimented by the worship led by David Legge (who had been helped during the week by a small worship workshop). Other workshops were bible study, discussion, needlework, art, book review, creative and choral. The week also included a day out to Rufford Park. Scottish dancing on the lawn and a quiz produced by the young people were well attended and much enjoyed. The visit of the Moderator of General Assembly (David Thompson) was appreciated, as was the healing service. Children were well looked after, not only in their individual groups, but also in one group which produced 'The Noah Shoah' on the last evening. Worship began the day and folk dancing ended it, with food for thought and time for fun and relaxation coming in between.

5.2 Holiday Forum has now been running three years and has made a small profit each year, which is being held in reserve in case one year should not be so successful. A meeting was held to hear the Steering Group's suggestions regarding the future, which include changes in the Steering Group and a scheme whereby people can pledge money, to be used if the expenses of running Holiday Forum cannot be met that year.

5.3 Plans for 1997 (23rd - 29th August) are well advanced. The theme is 'Mind the Gap' in which we shall explore, with the help of Peter McIntosh, those gaps which appear in church life as well as in society. Worship will be led by Peter Poulter, with his wife Yvonne, organising the music.

5.4 We are already planning 1998 and 1999. The later year will see the 50th anniversary of Forum, and it is hoped to celebrate this through the theme and also by an exhibition.

6 We are approaching the end of the WCC Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. The United Reformed Church response to this was to set up SPIN (Sharing People In Network) Over the last year SPIN has remodelled its structures and is now making contact with a wider group of women and men. Through greater contact with Provincial Co-ordinators it is becoming more aware of the support still needed by many women as they struggle to find their role in the mission of the church. SPIN is also taking up a major concern of the World Council of Churches - the issue of violence and abuse against women - and is working on a set of guideline for churches, to help them recognise and handle sensitively, cases of violence and abuse within the church family. A fuller report is printed in the information section of these reports.

7 End of an Era

7.1 The Committee is grateful for the work of **Tom Arthur** and **Eileen Sanderson**, who left us last year, and **John Stocks** who completes his term of service this summer. We have welcomed **Jean Antcliffe** and **Bob Day** as valued new colleagues. We are also preparing to say farewell to **Muriel Garrow** as she completes her service as a member of staff of the United Reformed Church.

7.2 Muriel came to the church as a mission educator in the World Church and Mission Department, and played a major part in helping the church respond to the missionary task under the new Council for World Mission approach and ethos. Through the support and encouragement given to the Mission Enabler Teams in the Provinces, the promotion of the Mission Pursuit material, and many personal visits, churches have been helped to examine their approach and commitment to mission. Latterly she became Secretary for Discipleship and Witness, continuing her valuable input in the development of Decade of Evangelism correspondents, and the new work of this committee.

7.3 We are delighted that Muriel is to continue her vocation by becoming Mission Enabler for the European Region of CWM. We shall miss her faith, energy and enthusiasm, and are glad that through CWM we shall still be able to benefit from her wisdom and experience.

8 New Chapter.

8.1 In the light of Muriel's departure, the review of the post of Secretary for Discipleship and Witness gave the opportunity for detailed examination of the various tasks to be done. After

a lengthy process of consultation it became clear that the overlap between this Committee's remit and that of the Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group was so significant that they could usefully be merged. Mission Council is bringing proposals that in future there will be a Stewardship Sub-Committee of the Discipleship and Witness Committee, and that the new member of staff will develop both areas of work as **Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness.**

8.2 We look forward to working with the new member of staff.

Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

The purpose of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is:

- 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.

Committee Members

Convener: Dr David Thompson **Secretary:** Revd Terry Hinks
Revd Wendy Baskett, Revd Jean Black, Revd Stephen Brown, Mr Tony Cheer,
Miss Fiona Gow, Revd Fleur Houston, Revd Donald Norwood, Revd Alan Sell,
Prof Graham Stanton and Revd Philip Nevard.

1 The Committee had two residential meetings in the year: one in July at Damascus House, Mill Hill and one in January at the Windermere Centre. The main business has been:

Theological discussions
Ecumenical issues
Resources for worship
Children and young people
Spirituality

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

2 Statement of Faith in inclusive language

2.1 The committee has wished to stimulate and inform debate on the Statement of Faith in inclusive language. To assist in this, it circulated to all Provincial Synods the Statement, commentary and a version of the Convener's introductory statement given at the 1996 Assembly.

3 Peace and Unity of the Church

3.1 At the October meeting of Mission Council the Committee expressed its concern that there seemed to be a developing tendency to form groupings within the church to foster particular

theological viewpoints. Whilst recognising that the vigorous exchange of theological views is a sign of life, the Committee was aware from experience elsewhere in this country and overseas that such groupings, even with the best of intentions, could develop in a way which threatened the unity of the church. Mission Council was sympathetic to the concern and it was suggested that the Convener's statement should be published in *Reform*, which was done. The Committee has responded to correspondence and made it clear that its concern was of a general nature and not directed at any one individual or group of individuals. The Committee has stressed that the Basis of Union upholds the rights of personal conviction, and also recognises the need to guard the peace and unity of the church.

Assembly notes the statement on holy living prepared by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee.

Introduction

4.1 The question of the meaning of a "holy life" first arose in the Committee's discussion of the revision of Schedule C (questions to ministers at ordination and induction) in 1992-94. Correspondence related to the more recent discussion of human sexuality led the Committee to believe that the time was appropriate to offer a statement on the matter for the guidance of the Church.

4.2 Question 6 in the revised Schedule C reads, "Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?" This echoes the question in the *Presbyterian Service Book* (1968), "Do you engage, in the strength and grace of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, to live a holy and circumspect life ... zealously to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?" The *Congregational Book of Services and Prayers* (1959) after stating that the office of minister could only be fulfilled "in holiness of life", asked candidates to promise "to live a godly life". The Churches of Christ Service for the Induction of a Minister (1966) also asked candidates to promise "to live a godly life", and the Churches of Christ Service for the Ordination of Elders (1942) stated their duty to set "an example to all in purity of life" and asked them to promise "always to do those things which make for peace, purity and spiritual growth in the Church".

Holiness in the old testament

4.3 The word "holy" is used in various ways. The simplest meaning is an object or person, which is separated from common use by being dedicated to God. In the Old Testament holiness is also linked to ideas of ritual purity. Foods which were unclean could pollute a person. Certain actions and even bodily functions were regarded as unclean. It was therefore particularly important for the priests who offered sacrifices to God not to be contaminated by ritual uncleanness.

4.4 The Old Testament also speaks of a holy people, a whole nation, which belongs to God through a covenant relationship. In some places the emphasis is on being separate from the world (*e.g. Ezra 10:11*): in others the emphasis is upon a people dedicated to the purposes of God for the sake of the world (*e.g. Isaiah 49.6*).

The Holiness of the Church

4.5 The ritual distinctions between clean and unclean were dropped by the Church. But holiness, though it is not the only way of characterising the Christian life, remained an important mark of the Church. Thus the Church is described as holy in the ecumenical creeds.

4.6 In the New Testament the call to God's people to be holy is grounded in God's holiness. 1 Peter 1:15-16 quotes Leviticus 19:2, "Be holy as I am holy", and applies this call to Israel to Christian believers. The "holy living" of believers is thus a response to the whole Christ event. God's gift of grace in Christ, and God's demand for "holy living" are inextricably linked. The power which enables believers to live a life pleasing to God (*Romans 8:1-4*) comes from the indwelling of the Spirit.

4.7 Numerous New Testament passages refer to all Christian believers as "God's holy people" - or "saints", as in older translations - (*e.g. Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1*). Several passages spell out what "holy living" means from day to day. Romans 12: 1-2 lays down basic principles of Christian conduct: "conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds; then you will be able to discern the will of God and know what is good, acceptable, and perfect". These principles are followed in Romans 12: 3-16:6 by an extended set of examples of "holy living", some of which are positive (*cf. also Colossians 3:12*), some negative (*cf. also Ephesians 5:3-5*). In some New Testament lists of virtues and vices, sexual conduct is referred to, but it is never singled out for exclusive attention as so often happens today.

4.8 Two aspects of New Testament teaching on the "holy living" of Christian believers deserve special emphasis. First, conduct which is truly Christian should lead unbelievers to give glory to God (*Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12*). Secondly, the conduct of Christians should not cause others to stumble (*1 Corinthians 9: 12-22; 1 Timothy 3:7*).

4.9 With rare exceptions the New Testament does not state that higher standards of conduct are expected of those called to exercise leadership. On the other hand, numerous New Testament passages do attach considerable importance to the example Christian leaders should set. Paul refers the readers of his letters to his own example of "holy living" (*1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:7,9*), though he is well aware of his own failings (*Philippians 3:12-13*). *1 Timothy 3:1-13* and *Titus 1:5-9* set out the qualities to be expected of bishops (or elders) and deacons; these lists cover many aspects of human behaviour and relationships.

God's Holiness

4.10 Nevertheless, God alone is holy; others designated as holy derive their holiness from God. P.T. Forsyth observed that God is not only utmost pity and kindest love: "He is Holy Father and Redeemer and it is his holiness of fatherhood that is the source of our redemption and sonship" (*The Holy Father, 1897, p4*). Similarly Karl Barth commented on the description of Christians in *Philippians 1:1* (and elsewhere) as "holy in Christ Jesus" and noted: "'Holy' people are unholy people, who nevertheless as such have been singled out, claimed and requisitioned by God for his control, for his use, for himself who is holy" (*The Epistle to*

the Philippians, 1927, E.T.1962, p10). Holiness is therefore about a whole and complete relationship with God who as the source of holiness sanctifies us with the Holy Spirit.

4.11 The chief aim in all that we are and do should be to glorify God. A more corporate and less individualistic understanding of the Christian life will help each to see that we have a common task as members of the Church to live up to our calling as a holy people, holy church. This will make us less ready to sit in judgement on one another and more ready to help one another to live up to our high calling as an unholy people whose holiness is in the end always the attribute of a gracious and holy God, a gift and not our achievement.

5 Patterns of Ministry

As a result of the 1995 Assembly's decisions on the Report of the Working Party of Patterns of Ministry, the Committee was asked to consider further the statement on the theology of ministry. The Committee considered the original document and after redrafting offered this paper on the theology of ministry to the Mission Council.

6 The Committee was also asked to advise the Mission Council on the resolution of the 1995 Assembly concerning presidency at the sacraments in cases of emergency. It has proposed a formal amendment to the Basis of Union which the Mission Council is bringing to this Assembly.

7 The Committee was represented by its Secretary at discussions of 'Local Church Leadership' arranged by the Discipleship and Witness Committee.

ECUMENICAL ISSUES

8 The Committee continues to be represented at discussions nationally and internationally. The Revd Dr Donald Norwood is its representative in discussions arising from the Leuenberg Fellowship of Churches. The Committee has responded to statements on the Trinity and Christology arising from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Committee's response to the Papal Encyclical 'Ut Unum Sint' has been sent to Rome and welcomed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The Revd Fleur Houston also represented the Committee at a consultation arranged by the British and Irish Churches to consider the encyclical. The Revd Fleur Houston represents the

Committee on the conversations between the British and Irish Anglican churches and the French Lutheran and Reformed Churches.

9 The Committee provided comments for the Ecumenical Committee on a United Reformed Church response to 'Called to be One' and 'Commitment to Mission and Unity'. The Committee also has continued to be represented on the informal conversations between the United Reformed Church and the Church of England. The Committee has commented on recommendations from the Churches Together in England's working party on Baptism and Church Membership, on which it was represented by the Convener.

Resolution 25

10 At each meeting, the Committee receives a report from the representative of the Methodist Faith and Order Committee, at present Mrs Mary Wetherall. We are grateful for this opportunity to share information, resources and concerns.

RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

11 Service Book

11 The Committee continues to consider guidelines to worship and is beginning to make plans for a new service book to be produced by the end of the century. It has begun to seek the views of the Church as to the format and content of the new service book.

12 Companion to Rejoice and Sing

12 It is hoped that the Companion to *Rejoice and Sing* will be published in 1998. There are also plans to produce an expanded version of the theme index to *Rejoice and Sing*, which is contained in the full music version.

13 Prayer Handbook

13 *The Prayer Handbook* continues to be a much valued resource for personal prayer and corporate worship. At the Committee's suggestion the 1997 Handbook included an outline for daily prayer and the Committee hopes that this has proved useful. The Committee records its thanks to the present Editor, the Revd Janet Wootton; a new editor, the Revd Janet Lees, has been appointed for the 1999 issue.

14 25th Anniversary Worship Materials

14 Members of the Committee produced worship materials to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church and encourage local churches to use these on Sunday 5 October 1997.

RESOLUTION 25

Revised Common Lectionary

Assembly welcomes the publication of the *Revised Common Lectionary*, notes the increasing use of the lectionary in other churches in the United Kingdom, and agrees to commend it for use in the United Reformed Church in place of that printed in the 1989 *Service Book*.

15 The Committee's report to Assembly last year referred to the probability that the Methodist and Anglican churches would adopt the *Revised Common Lectionary* (already printed in the 1994 edition of the Church of Scotland's *Book of Common Order*) from 1997 and that this would also be used for *Partners in Learning*. At its January meeting the Committee received a paper comparing the Revised Common Lectionary with the four-year Joint Liturgical Group Lectionary. The former follows a three-year cycle, based on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in turn, but incorporates readings from John in all three years. The JLG lectionary follows a different gospel in each of the four years.

A rough comparison suggests that the coverage of scripture is approximately equivalent in each, because the average length of passages in the *Revised Common Lectionary* is slightly longer.

15.2 The Committee recognises that many congregations do not use a lectionary; but it also believes that on ecumenical and liturgical grounds there are good reasons to commend the use of the *Revised Common Lectionary* and to print it in the annual publication, *Scripture Readings* along with the readings for *Partners in Learning* with effect from Advent Sunday 1997. The Assembly is invited to approve this proposal.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

16 Representatives of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, the Discipleship and Witness Committee and the Youth and Children's Work Committee met and discussed *Partners in Learning*, children and communion and church membership.

17 The joint meeting asks local churches to consider how far they have addressed the question of children and communion. It is recognised that

the churches have different practices on this matter. However precisely because of that diversity it is important that churches should be able to respond to the expectations of members received by transfer who have been accustomed to a different practice. Each local church needs to understand what they do and why they do it. The joint meeting therefore invites all local churches to reflect on their practice.

SPIRITUALITY

18 Silence and Retreats Group

18 The Silence and Retreats network continues to develop and evolve. Michael Playdon has been appointed Convener of the group and represents it on the Committee. In addition our Staff Secretary provides oversight on behalf of the Committee.

19 Churches Together in England Spirituality Co-ordinating Group

19 Churches Together in England have formed the Spirituality Co-ordinating group to support and monitor the Ecumenical Spirituality Project, whose director is Ruth Harvey. Fiona Gow is the Committee's representative on this group.

Committee and the Church

20 The Committee has asked each Province to appoint a Provincial Contact to improve two-way communication between the Committee and the local church and this is proving to be helpful. It welcomes correspondence from churches and individual church members in all areas of theology, prayer and worship.

Membership

21 This year the Committee says farewell to the Revd Prof Alan Sell, Prof Graham Stanton and our Convener, Dr David Thompson. We thank Alan and Graham for their wise and interesting input. We wish to express special thanks to David, who has made an outstanding contribution to the Committee and its predecessor over many years. We record our gratitude for his dedicated service.

Ecumenical

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 United Reformed Church 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 of other faiths.

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

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

It is responsible for the United Reformed Church'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.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Murdoch MacKenzie

Secretaries: Revd Sheila Maxey, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations,
Revd Philip Woods, Secretary for International Church Relations

Members: Revd Dr Peter Arthur, Mr Desmond Curry, Revd David Fox,
Ms Bethan Galliers, Mrs Grace Ntiamoah, Revd Elizabeth Welch

Representatives of other committees: Revd Peter Brain,
Revd Fleur Houston, Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee,

Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Revd Tony Ruffell, Revd David Tatem

Representatives of other churches: Revd Keith Reed (the Methodist Church),
Canon David Goldie (the Church of England), vacancy (Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

1 Resolutions

As Shakespeare put it towards the end of Hamlet's speech beginning "To be or not be":

"And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
and lose the name of action."

Hamlet IIIii84

So what has the Ecumenical Committee done with all those good resolutions of the 1996 Assembly? The answer to this lies in the following report which is based on Resolution 31 of last year's Assembly.

2 *The General Assembly reaffirms the commitment of the United Reformed Church to 'take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people'.*

2.1 Evidence of that unity world-wide is already experienced as we welcome many overseas visitors to our churches and to the Assembly. In particular, this year, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Presbyterian Church of England Mission. Guests from China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Bangladesh have been invited and the history of the Mission from 1947 - 1972 by Revd Eric Fenn is being published to complete the account begun by Edward Band in *Working His*

Purpose Out - The history of the English Presbyterian Mission 1847 - 1947 published in 1948. On August 15th 1997 India celebrates the Golden Jubilee of her Independence and on 27th September the Friends of the Church in India invite us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Church in South India, whose moderator we welcome to Assembly. We also welcome visitors from Europe, the United States and from many of our partner churches in Britain and Ireland.

3 ... *commits the United Reformed Church to continue to express that commitment to the goal of visible Christian unity through:*

3.1 a. Resource sharing of theological insights, people, buildings and money

3.1.1 The Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee convened by **Revd Barrie Scopes** with **Revd Philip Woods** and **Revd Sheila Maxey** as staff secretaries has continued to care for people who go from and come to the United Reformed Church

The Council for World Mission

The resource sharing and companionship in the world-wide mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, as far as the United Reformed Church is concerned, is experienced most fully in our membership of the Council for World Mission. It is important, therefore, to have a voting representative from the Council at our Assembly and to this end we support the constitutional resolution giving representation at the Assembly.

Retirement of long-serving missionaries. the Revd Derek and Mrs Joan Jones have retired after 42 years of distinguished service in Botswana. They are living in Botswana where the Church continues to use Derek as a consultant.

Missionaries to the UK Reviews of three of the United Reformed Church's Special Category Ministry posts through the Council for World Mission have been carried out. After a decision to end the King's Hall Inter-faith project in Southall, Revd Dineke Ferwerda has returned to the Netherlands. Revd Andrew Midian's excellent work in Christ Church, Estover, Plymouth, has been greatly appreciated as has that of Mr Johnson Jesudoss at the Peace and Justice Centre, Milton Keynes. All three of these overseas partners have made important contributions to the life of the churches and the people they have served during their three years in England.

Most recently Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper has been appointed as the United Reformed Church's Multi-racial/Cultural Development Worker, a post which expresses at a national level the United Reformed Church's partnership in the Council for World Mission. Meanwhile Revd Emmanuel Frimpong, the Ghanaian chaplain and Revd John Ponnusamy, who is serving for three years as a theological educator at Northern College, continue to enrich our work.

By the end of 1997 two of the five posts will be vacant and there is an urgent need for Districts or groups of churches to identify imaginative ways in which people from other Council for World Mission member churches can be invited to serve in the life of the United Reformed Church.

Scholarship-holders The United Reformed Church offers scholarships at St Andrew's Hall Missionary College, Selly Oak, Birmingham and during the year the following have benefited from Selly Oak College courses:

- Dr Lajos Szabo, Lutheran Church in Hungary
- Revd Christian Ohm, Pomeranian Evangelical Church
- Revd Anita Demeter Sipos, Reformed Church in Hungary
- Revd Paul Ssemwanga, Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda
- Revd Beong Gil Jeoung, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
- Mrs Clementina Bondo Pandu Panda, Evangelical Reformed Church of Angola
- Revd Marcos Efraim Macamo, Presbyterian Church of Mozambique
- Mrs Huda Nassar, National Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Syria
- Revd Jan Mamula, Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren
- Revd Jan Blazek, Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren
- Revd Frau Pfarrerin M Ritcher, Evangelical Church of the Union

The United Reformed Church has also supported a theologian from the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, Mr Maciej Gornnicki, under the Oxford Theological Exchange Programme.

Short-term Volunteers Abroad Through the Sub-committee arrangements have been made for four British volunteers to serve abroad, namely:

- Ms Charlotte Atkinson, Reformed Church in Hungary
- Ms Hilary Macro, Reformed Church in Hungary
- Mr Alison Taylor, Reformed Church in Hungary
- Mr Robert Westerdale, Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

The United Reformed Church is now a sponsoring body of Scottish Churches' World Exchange (SCWE) so that United Reformed Church members volunteering for service abroad are now placed, briefed and supported by SCWE. Open to anyone over the age of 18 who is willing and able to give a year of their time, the scheme offers many exciting and challenging opportunities. Further information is available from the Secretary for International Church Relations.

Short-term Volunteers serving in Britain The following volunteers from abroad have been serving the United Reformed Church:

Mr Menja Rakotovao followed by

Ms Zolya Ranirianavelo, both from Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM), serving at Llanfair Local Ecumenical Partnership, Penrhys

Mr Arpad David from the Reformed Church in Carpatho-Ukraine, serving as a team member at Yardley Hastings

Exchange Visit to the Church of Lippe, Germany In 1995 a group of ten people from the Church of Lippe, Germany, visited the United Reformed Church and the Church of England. A return visit took place in May with a cross-section of people representing the United Reformed Church's work with young people, on rural affairs, international and ecumenical relations, and with a contingent from the South Western province exploring the possibility of developing a partnership with the Church of Lippe.

The new Secretary for International Church Relations The sub-committee was well served by the Revd Tony Coates, who has been called to Hutton and Shenfield Union Church, and we wish him well in his new post. In his place we have welcomed the Revd Philip Woods who brings a wealth of experience of working with European Churches. He is anxious that the United Reformed Church should become more aware of, and strengthen its links with, the Council for World Mission member churches as well as with European churches. Recognising the overlap of agendas in respect of international affairs, the Ecumenical and Church and Society Committees reviewed the respective roles of the Secretary for International Church Relations and the Secretary for Church and Society and agreed a set of principles to guide them both as they work together in this area.

3.1.2 Ireland Our ongoing sharing with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is greatly valued as an expression of our solidarity in the Gospel. Thanks are due to Revd Jim Waring for his work in the Ecumenical Committee and also to Revd David

Campbell, Convener of the World Church Relations Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, who attended one meeting. Their sharing of news from Ireland, at a deep level, is always much appreciated.

3.1.3 Sharing money Some new work and new insights have been made possible through the sharing of the Hong Kong money and by the giving of small grants or the supporting of applications to the appropriate grant-making bodies.

3.1.4 Long-term Planning The United Reformed Church commitment to the Ghanaian Chaplaincy is to be reviewed in the context of an overall policy on the place of ethnic congregations. After discussion with the Discipleship and Witness Committee, the committee proposes to encourage the Mission Council to set up a major, broad-based consultation on our understanding of mission. A paper *Belonging to the World Church* prepared by the Secretary for International Church Relations with particular focus on our partnership in the Council for World Mission sets out a new strategy for the promotion and advocacy of our links with the world church. At its meeting in June the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee will have welcomed representatives of the Ministries Committee to reflect with them on how the United Reformed Church receives ministers/missionaries from overseas.

3.2 b. Identifying and offering the rich insights of our tradition to others and being open to receive theirs

3.2.1 Called to be One The Called to be One process of the Churches Together in England has encouraged all the churches to reflect on how they understand the word *church* and what kind of unity is their goal. One result has been a greater awareness of our own and others' traditions and treasures. A leaflet *Questions and Challenges for the United Reformed Church* was produced by the committee to stimulate discussion. The committee's response on behalf of the United Reformed Church is the subject of **Resolution 26**.

3.2.2 The Church of England/United Reformed Church Conversations These informal conversations have taken place over a period of two years, chaired jointly by the Convener of the Ecumenical Committee and by the Bishop of Winchester. It is hoped that the report, which has been made to the appropriate committees of the two churches, will feed into any bilateral or multilateral conversations in which either church is engaged.

3.3 *c. Active involvement in ecumenical bodies locally, regionally, nationally and internationally*

3.3.1 **The World Council of Churches** the Ecumenical Committee responded to the World Council of Churches document 'Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches'. Members of Assembly continue to be grateful for the outstanding contribution being made by Revd Elizabeth Welch through her membership of the Central Committee of the World Council.

3.3.2 **The World Alliance of Reformed Churches** (WARC) will be holding its 23rd General Council in Debrecen, Hungary, in August. Linking 70 million Christians in 199 member churches in 99 countries WARC is one of the largest Christian world communions. Both in the European region, where Revd Elizabeth Nash serves on the Executive Committee, and in the organisation as a whole the United Reformed Church plays a full part. Our representatives to the General Council (list available from the International Church Relations office) will be available to report on the meeting and its outworking of the theme *Break the Chains of Injustice*.

3.3.3 By the time of our Assembly the biennial Council meeting of the **Council for World Mission** will have been held in Botswana around the theme, "Called to be a blessing." Freed from the constraints of having to decide how the Hong Kong money should be used (this was settled last year), the Council will, amongst other things, be considering how a global partnership of churches can best promote God's mission today.

3.3.4 Working with the **Churches Centre at the United Nations**, the Secretary for International Church Relations, with the encouragement of the Church and Society Committee, has begun exploring the possibility of developing contacts with the United Nations institutions such as we have developed with the European institutions.

3.3.5 **Europe** The committee prepared and forwarded the United Reformed Church response on the work of the **Conference of European Churches** (CEC) and its priorities during the period 1998 - 2003 in preparation for its Assembly in July. We have responded to the first draft of the working document for the **Second European Ecumenical Assembly** at Graz in June, where over and above our official representatives several United Reformed Church members will be participating in the extensive visitors programme.

3.3.6 As part of our ongoing programme of involvement with the **European Institutions** the Moderator, Dr David Thompson, took part in the annual British Free Church leaders visit to Strasbourg last December which we organise in conjunction with Dr Gordon Adam, MEP (a URC member) and the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society. The immediate past-Moderator, the Revd John Reardon, and the Secretary for International Church Relations, together with the Moderator and the Church and Nation Convener of the Church of Scotland, met with the Foreign Secretary, the Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind, MP, to express concern about how the UK was approaching its membership of the European Union. This builds on the work we are engaged in together with other European churches on European integration.

3.3.7 **The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland**

The United Reformed Church continues to work through the Council, its Commissions on Mission, Racial Justice and Inter-Faith relations, and its many networks. Most of our Assembly committees have four-nation ecumenical work which is made possible through the Council. The Council's role and remit have recently been reviewed. Some reduction of the Council's remit and budget and an equivalent increase in the work of the English, Scottish and Welsh ecumenical bodies has been suggested. Final decisions on the review recommendations will be taken in November by the Church Representatives Meeting where we are represented by Mrs Ruth Clarke and the General Secretary.

3.3.8 **A joint meeting of the Unity Committees (Ecumenical Committees) of the member churches of Churches Together in England.** This 24-hour meeting took place in September 1996 and was felt to be very valuable. As a result the committee brings **Resolution 27**.

3.4 *d. The development of and support for Local Ecumenical Partnerships and United Areas.*

3.4.1 **The Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee**

This committee continues to try to ease the path of united congregations and areas whose parent churches remain divided. It is working with the Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England on advice on finance in joint churches. The pack for local churches entitled *Getting to know you* is now available. It is hoped that the Baptists

might contribute to a second edition. The 1997 edition of the annual broadsheet *Quickstep* is also available. At the committee's request the Wessex Province and the Methodist Southampton District have piloted a 24 hour training course for ministers newly appointed/called to joint churches.

3.4.2 Guidelines for Local Co-operation between the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the United Reformed Church These are now available, with an insert of amendments for use in England.

3.4.3 Guidelines on Baptismal Policy for Joint Baptist/United Reformed Churches are now available from the URC Bookshop at 50p (40p for 10 or more). These are the result of two years' work and are recognised to be a particularly valuable contribution in a difficult ecumenical area. They have been sent to all United Reformed Church/Baptist churches.

3.4.4 Networking Networking of District Ecumenical Officers and Provincial Ecumenical Officers continues to be the bedrock on which the work of the committee is done as far as local ecumenical work is concerned. Encouragement of the work of the Intermediate Bodies, in close consultation with the Group for Local Unity, is beginning to produce agreed practice and suggested guidelines for some aspects of United Reformed Church participation in LEP's.

3.5 e. Active participation in initiatives leading towards organic union

3.5.1 Union talks between the Scottish Congregational Church and the United Reformed Church Prospects seem good for a union to take place. The 1988 'Proposals for Unification' are being revised and definitive proposals will be brought to the 1998 Assembly. The United Reformed Church's ecumenical partners are being kept informed of these developments.

3.5.2 Scottish Church Initiative for Union The five churches involved (Scottish Episcopal, Church of Scotland, Scottish Congregational, Methodist and United Reformed Church) include the latter two which are present in Wales, England and Scotland. Long-term work is being done on a Common Statement of Faith and the possible shape of a united church and, in the shorter term, on how local churches can be enabled to share minority and other resources for the sake of mission. A leaflet for discussion at local and district level has

been distributed to every United Reformed Church in the Northern Province and to ecumenical officers in other provinces.

3.5.3 Wales The Wales Province is preparing a response to the formal proposal to bring into being an Ecumenical Bishop in Wales. It is also responding to the papers being produced by the Free Church conversations. Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) has been reviewed and the Covenanted Churches' (ENFYSS) documents on baptism and church membership have been revised.

3.5.4 Commitment to Mission and Unity, the report of the informal conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

A draft of this report appeared on the last day of the 1996 General Assembly. The full version is now available from the bookshop at £1.95 and a summary called *Is Now the Time?* costs 50p. All ecumenical partners have been invited to comment on the report. The United Reformed Church is in a special position because of its 200 joint churches and 3 united areas with the Methodists and also the many Local Ecumenical Partnerships where it is involved with the Church of England. The committee's proposed response is the subject of **Resolution 28.**

4 Greetings and thanks

4.1 After two years of its existence the Ecumenical Committee is still coming to terms with the new arrangements and continues to evolve its procedures. Particular thanks are due to members of various other Assembly committees who have given their time and energy in sharing their concerns with each other in the Ecumenical Committee. Further work needs to be done to discover how this sharing can be more effective. Mr Desmond Curry has served both this committee and its predecessor, the Mission and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee, very faithfully and we wish him well as he takes on the onerous task of Secretary to the Nominations Committee.

4.2 Thanks are also due to many friends from other churches who share in our work at General Assembly and in particular to the Rt Revd Michael Scott-Joynt of the Church of England, Mr Ashton McIntosh of the Moravian Church and Mrs Priscilla Desir of the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain who have given much of their time, energy and wisdom to our deliberations. They come to the end of their three-year term at this Assembly.

4.3 The committee would like to record its debt to Revd Murdoch MacKenzie, its convener, who also comes to the end of his term of office at this Assembly. Murdoch has guided the work through the committee changes, enabled the committee to

deal with its enlarged agenda, and, above all, kept the ecumenical flame burning and the vision bright. The staff secretaries, in particular, would like to pay tribute to his personal support and encouragement.

RESOLUTION 26

Called to be One

The General Assembly endorses the response to the *Called to be One* process presented by the Ecumenical Committee and encourages its representatives attending the July Forum of Churches Together in England to seek God's guidance as to an appropriate form of visible unity for churches in England as they enter the Third Millennium.

Responding to the *Called to be One* process of Churches Together in England

Recalling Resolution 31 of the 1996 General Assembly which urged local churches in England to study *Called to be One* and to continue to express the United Reformed Church's commitment to the

goal of visible unity through active participation in initiatives leading to organic union, the Ecumenical Committee offers the following response.

The United Reformed Church responds to *Called to be One*

1 General comments on the process.

1.1 The Presidents of Churches Together in England remind us in the Preface of *Called to be One* that a divided Christendom cannot bear witness to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the midst of a divided world. The real mission issues concern racial tensions, the gap between rich and poor, employed and unemployed, as well as a Europe struggling to overcome the enmities of past centuries in a world where a few powerful nations dictate the terms of trade to all the rest. The ability of the Church to witness to the Gospel in the midst of these evil divisions, is directly related to overcoming division within itself. As a contribution to this work of reconciliation, the *Called to be One* process has gathered together the different churches' understandings of how they are called to respond to the prayer of Jesus that they may all be one that the world might believe.

1.2 The United Reformed Church welcomes this imaginative initiative by Churches Together in England. By asking the member churches to reflect, at every level of church life, on what they mean by 'church' and 'unity' and 'visible unity', the ecclesiological questions are being faced by a very wide range of people.

1.3 Such broad consultation exposes a tension between the official church statements drawn up by trained theologians and historians, and grass roots faith and experience. The United Reformed Church, as a conciliar church, is used to working with that tension whenever it seeks to make new policy or alter its agreed statements of faith. It may, however, be difficult for churches with very different traditions of consultation and decision-making to travel this road in parallel with churches like ours.

1.4 We see the *Called to be One* process as an on-going process with no end in sight. The responses received will feed the discussion at Forum in July and that discussion will, in turn, direct and even quicken the next stage of the pilgrimage towards that unity to which the Church is called.

2 How the United Reformed Church has handled the process.

2.1 The United Reformed Church has been committed to the process from the beginning. In 1993, its Mission and Ecumenical Work at Home Committee (now the Ecumenical Committee) commented on the original questions and then, in 1994, gathered a group of people from different theological positions and ecumenical experience to

draft a response which was finalised after consultation with the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee.

2.2 During 1966/7, widespread discussion of the *Called to be One* book and group use of the *Workbook* were encouraged through the ecumenical officers' network. Local churches were each sent a leaflet entitled *Questions and Challenges for the United Reformed Church*.

2.3 This response has been sent to Churches Together in England from the Ecumenical Committee on behalf of the United Reformed Church to be used in the preparation for the July Forum, but will also be offered to the General Assembly in July 1997 for its approval. The grass-roots views, gathered at the March Synods, will be reported to the Assembly and added to the submission to Churches Together in England.

3 The United Reformed Church's commitment to and experience of unity in relation to this process

3.1 The 1972 Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church makes clear that commitment to the unity of the Church is part of its very being. At the 1996 General Assembly that commitment was re-affirmed in terms of the current stage of the ecumenical journey. An additional clause, proposed from the floor of Assembly, committed the United Reformed Church to *active participation in initiatives leading towards organic union*. It was approved by an overwhelming majority.

3.2 The United Reformed Church is the only member church of Churches Together in England with experience of organic union across the denominational divide. It illustrates what is described in *Called to be One* 6.13 as organic unity or union.

'This unity would retain many of the gifts and traditions at present distinctive of different denominations, but the separate denominations would die to be reborn within the unity of a living and integrated fellowship' (CTBO 6.13)

It can bear witness that this model does not mean uniformity. For example, the United Reformed Church holds together in fruitful tension two different convictions about baptism.

4 Responding to some of the specific challenges in the *Called to be One* process

4.1 Within the overarching commitment of the United Reformed Church to the full, visible unity of the Church, the *Called to be One* process poses some specific and immediate questions and challenges.

Most of these were already on the United Reformed Church's agenda, either being tackled with ecumenical partners or alone. Where the latter is the case, the first challenge is to begin to tackle the matter with ecumenical partners.

A. *What do we mean by Church?*

i. The United Reformed Church welcomes the challenge to renewal (CTBO 7.6 i) which urges it to rediscover and renew its own traditions. This 25th year of its union is a good time to identify, renew and offer its traditions of corporate discernment through the councils of the church, of shared leadership by ministers and elders, and of the exposition of the Bible in the context of worship. Each of those traditions is, of course, shared with some other members of Churches Together in England. The United Reformed Church needs to explore further how these elements are to be recognised and affirmed in single and multiple - congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

ii. The United Reformed Church is not large enough in this country to be present in every community. Strategic decisions about deployment of ministers and the planting and closing of churches have to be taken. More work needs to be done on an ecumenical ecclesiology to inform those decisions.

iii. The United Reformed Church also needs to seek ways to help United Reformed Churches which are not in ecumenical partnerships of any kind to come close enough to other traditions to be able 'to examine one another's traditions' and 'to explain what it is in other traditions that they find it difficult to accept' (CTBO 7.6 ii and iii)

B. *Belonging to the Church*

i. The United Reformed Church understands membership as the calling of the baptised on confession of faith to join with the people of God in worship and in service and in corporate discernment of God's will. This calling is expressed primarily, but not only, through the local church.

ii. Today the United Reformed Church is concerned at the growing reluctance of worshippers to become members. It is also concerned at the emphasis on individual commitment and choice at the expense of the corporate calling. A renewed understanding of the Church as a holy people, in the world but not of the world, may be a timely offering to all the churches.

iii. However, the United Reformed Church, through its experience of sharing in parish ministry with the Church of England in various kinds of Local Ecumenical Partnerships, also recognises and appreciates that inclusive understanding of belonging to the Church. More work is needed to try to reconcile the two understandings of membership. In particular, the United Reformed Church will continue, for the sake of those in rural areas, to look at the possibility of meaningful membership of two churches.

iv. The United Reformed Church recognises the difficulties for our partner churches which arise from the varying practices and understandings found in local churches regarding the relationship between baptism, membership and admission to communion. It warmly welcomes the report of the CTE working party on Christian Initiation, Baptism and Membership. A recent URC consultation on *Believing and Belonging* will also contribute to the work which the United Reformed Church needs to do in this area, both within its councils and through the ecumenical instruments.

C. Authority and Leadership

i. The United Reformed Church's experience of bringing together a Congregational and a Presbyterian system of authority is worth sharing. It has required a tactfulness on the part of District Councils and a tolerance and restraint on the part of Church Meetings. These have not, of course, always been in evidence. This flexible and sensitive kind of relationship between local and wider church is an offering to the ecumenical pilgrimage.

ii. There has, however, also been some confusion about where authority rests in particular matters.. The January 1997 meeting of the Mission Council discussed a paper on the exercise of authority in the United Reformed Church and asked for more work to be done. The United Reformed Church would welcome an ecumenical working group on this.

iii. Although personal leadership is valued, especially from local ministers and from provincial moderators, the United Reformed Church continues to be convinced that authority must be exercised in councils consisting of ministers and elders and members.

iv. The term *collegial leadership* needs clarification. It could mean an elders' meeting as well as the moderators' meeting. Further work needs to be done between the churches on collegial leadership and its relationship to oversight ministry.

D. Passing on the Faith

i. The United Reformed Church is called, with all the other churches, to pass on the faith of the Gospel from generation to generation. It fully recognises that *God's mission is greater than any individual church can grasp* (CTBO A.33) and it believes that division has *made it impossible for Christians fully to know, experience and communicate the life of the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.* (Basis of Union A.7)

ii. A major stumbling block to that mutual acceptance of ministry and eucharistic sharing so necessary to our growing together and to our mission together is our different understandings of how to safeguard the handing on of the faith . The United Reformed Church therefore welcomes the call to the Church of England and the Free Churches (in CTBO 7.9) to consider the renewed understanding of apostolicity to be found in the Porvoo Common Statement . However, it believes the understanding set out in the report of the 1984 Anglican - Reformed Dialogue *God's Reign and our Unity*, and in the more recent Leuenberg discussion document on *The Church of Jesus Christ* should also be part of any further work..

iii. In addition, the United Reformed Church is also committed, with partner churches in Wales and in Scotland, to exploring alternative routes to a mutual acceptance of each other's apostolicity.

5 Conclusion

The United Reformed Church gives thanks to God for the many ways in which it has been enriched, enabled and inspired by the churches who are its fellow pilgrims on the way to the Kingdom. It also acknowledges, with penitence, that it may have contributed to continuing division through complacency, prejudice, or impatience. It believes the *Called to be One* process is calling the United Reformed Church to the renewal of its life at every level, whether in Local Ecumenical Partnerships or not, with various partners, through all kinds of ecumenical bodies, so that it may faithfully be '*part of what God is doing to make his people one.*' (Basis of Union para.8)

RESOLUTION 27**Council and Committee Agendas**

General Assembly urges the councils and committees of the United Reformed Church, including the local, to head every agenda, as a matter of regular practice, with the question "what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?"

This resolution arises from the joint meeting of the Unity Committees of all the major churches in England held in September 1996. Some years ago, there was a suggestion that each committee meeting

should remember to switch on the ecumenical light. This resolution seeks to strengthen that commitment.

RESOLUTION 28**Commitment to Mission and Unity**

The General Assembly approves the response prepared by the Ecumenical Committee to *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, the report of the informal conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

Commitment to Mission and Unity, the report of the informal conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

1.1 This report, published in September 1996, recommends that formal conversations between the two churches be established. The aim of the formal conversations would be to prepare a Common Statement, including a Declaration of mutual recognition and solemn commitment, in order to enable the two churches to take significant steps on the way to visible unity. Ten issues have been identified which need to be addressed in any talks.

The ten issues are:

- ◆ Initiation and membership
- ◆ Authorization of lay persons to preside at the eucharist
- ◆ The three-fold ministry
- ◆ The nature and role of the diaconate
- ◆ The nature and style of the office of bishop
- ◆ The ordination of women to the episcopate
- ◆ The reconciliation of ordained ministries
- ◆ The structures of authority, oversight and government
- ◆ The relation of Church and State
- ◆ Relations of our world communions

1.2 These formal conversations would aim to prepare a Common Statement setting out:

- a) agreement on the goal of visible unity and a commitment to that goal

- b) agreements in faith, including the nature of apostolicity and succession
- c) a description of the shared life they already enjoy
- d) any remaining issues of difference and a commitment to face them together
- e) a Declaration of mutual recognition and solemn commitment to live a more closely shared life.

1.3 On the basis of the Common Statement the two churches would be invited to make the Declaration.

1.4 Ecumenical partners have been invited to comment on the report by the end of July 1997, before the General Synod of the Church of England, in November 1997, and the Methodist conference, in June 1998, make the views of the two churches known. Ecumenical observers would be invited to contribute to any formal conversations.

1.5 The full text of *Commitment to Mission and Unity*, together with the discussion document *Is Now the Time?* is available at £1.95 and 50p respectively from the URC Bookshop.

1.6 The Ecumenical Committee offers the following response:

As a church committed to the search for the organic unity of the Church, the United Reformed Church welcomes the recommendation of the report of the informal conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church that they now enter formal conversations.

Encouraged by the extent of local sharing in mission, worship and service which the United Reformed Church already enjoys with both the Church of England and the Methodist Church, and bearing in mind the Scottish Church Initiative for Union and the Welsh Covenant (Enfys) in which the United

*Reformed Church shares with the Methodist and Episcopal churches in Scotland and Wales, we hereby express our interest in becoming a full participant in the process of **Commitment to Mission and Unity**.*

Our particular contribution to formal conversations would be insights from the Reformed tradition, notably the conciliar expression of the apostolicity of the Church and the shared ministry of the Elders.

We await with interest the responses of the Church of England Synod and the Methodist Conference to the recommendations of the report, assure them of our prayers, and look forward to the contribution the United Reformed Church may be able to make to this process from our united traditions.

Equal Opportunities

The role of the Committee is to

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

[Also at Assembly 1994 the following Equal Opportunity Policy was adopted:-

- a) The Church affirms in its Basis of Union that "all ministries shall be open to both men and women". At Assembly 1987 it adopted a Declaration on Racism and in 1990 adopted a Declaration of Equal Opportunities Policy in relation to ministers.
- b) This policy is not a statement of what the Church has already achieved; it is a declaration of the way it intends to move forward at all levels and in all aspects of its life within the limitations of its resources. In particular, it is an aid to appointing the most suitable people to all positions of responsibility within the church disregarding irrelevant considerations; it does not oblige the church as employer or otherwise to make appointments of people other than those most capable of fulfilling the responsibilities.

Assembly declares:-

- i) The Church will behave as an "equal opportunity organisation" and not discriminate on grounds of race, gender or disability.
- ii) The Church works to combat racism, sexism and prejudice against people with disabilities and is committed to positive action rather than containing the issues.
- iii) The Church is aware of possible barriers, for example to women, black people and people with disabilities, within the structures of the Church in ministry and other posts; this has to do with expectations, position, role and status.
- iv) The Church will there establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, call, representation and position of women, black people and people with disabilities in the Church and take appropriate action where necessary.']

Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand **Secretary:** Revd Simon Walking
Mrs Daphne Beale, Revd Elaine Dunn, Mr Hilary Gunn (staff link), Ms Lucille King,
Revd John Macaulay and Mr Doug Thacker.

1.1 Equal Opportunities Consultation.

The Committee is in the process of arranging a consultation which will be held on 1st November 1997 at the Arthur Rank Centre in Stoneleigh. We hope that all those interested in equal opportunities issues will come. Further details will be publicised shortly but we plan to explore equal opportunities issues in respect of gender, race and disabilities. This will be an opportunity for everyone who is interested in developing a national multi-racial network to come so that they can play a part in how the Network proceeds.

Speak to either Daphne Beale, tel: 01509 261688 or John Macauley, tel: 0181 806 9908.

1.2 National Multi-Racial Network.

At the 1996 General Assembly we launched our requests for names from provinces from which a core

group could emerge to generate the network. This Network will promote the positive diversity of ethnic backgrounds in the church. A number of Provinces have responded and the names given will be especially invited to the Consultation mentioned above.

1.3 Multi-Racial, Multi Cultural Development Post.

This will be reported more fully elsewhere, however the committee are very pleased about the developments and are glad to welcome the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper at this Assembly. We look forward to having the benefit of her wide experience and hope that she will be able to play a key role in the national multi-racial network and will be able to be present at our consultation in November.

1.4 Monitoring.

The Equal Opportunities Committee would like to thank everyone who helped us with our recent questionnaire which was sent to every church within the URC. At the time of writing we have received replies from 1127 individual churches, that is nearly 65% response rate. At least two districts managed a 100% response!

We asked a variety of questions to provide us with a base line from which to measure representation of people within the structures of the church and the accessibility of our buildings and worship.

We found that there is a lot of willingness to try and make services as accessible as possible and we would strongly encourage all churches to look regularly at themselves and their buildings and ways of worship to see how inclusive they are.

We believe that we are all people of God. Each of us, whatever our race, gender or ability, has our own gifts to give. The least we as a church can do is to try and ensure that everyone can take part in our worship.

From the comments we received there are a lot of congregations trying hard to make their churches welcoming to all. Perhaps you have made changes and there has been no immediate response. Don't be disheartened! If someone has grown up experiencing discrimination and had obstacles placed in their way, it can take a lot of courage to go to a new place. A person may need a lot of reassurance in order to believe that the people there genuinely want to welcome them. **We would welcome churches' stories of what they have achieved so that we can encourage others to try something similar.**

Some interesting facts found from the questionnaires:-

- a) Every Province has some black/Asian church members

- b) Every Province has at least one black/Asian person in an eldership-type role.
- c) Across the country as a whole you're more likely to be elected as an elder if you are male. We have come a long way from the times when only men could be elders but we have some way to go to being a fully representative church.
- d) Over half our churches have a loop system fitted to help hearing-aid users.
- e) A larger number (almost 80%) offer large print hymn books but only 14% offer their newsletters in large print.
- f) A few churches meet other needs by offering braille hymn books, sign language interpreters etc. People often do not ask for the help they need. Do you know what would help your community to worship more fully in your church?
- g) 76% of our churches reported that their church building was accessible for wheelchair users. We did not ask for unassisted access, it would be interesting to see what those figures showed.

We have listened to the comments received about the questionnaire and will try and bear them in mind when preparing any future ones. With such a diverse church it is difficult to devise one set of questions to suit everyone!

1.5 Training.

We are exploring ways in which we can ensure that equal opportunities issues are taken into account when training courses are developed and presented.

1.6 More thanks.

The Committee wishes to thank Elaine Dunn and Doug Thacker for their service on the committee and look forward to welcoming their replacements.

Representation: numbers of members and elders by gender and racial group

Province	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Totals
Membership													
Male	1895	2513	1599	1432	1892	2518	2039	1794	3192	2171	3912	1083	26040
Female	3890	5781	3753	3454	3738	5191	4380	3835	6111	4686	7641	2684	55145
Total	5922	8689	5406	4886	5630	7937	6639	5751	9427	6911	11553	3885	82636
Elders													
Male	369	462	333	335	381	408	363	345	467	354	524	261	4602
Female	448	678	375	419	493	552	431	417	573	486	614	314	5800
Total	832	1140	708	754	874	960	806	762	1050	851	1138	582	10457
Members													
Black	7	64	6	43	50	160	9	20	40	561	406	3	1369
White	5739	8454	5333	4979	5462	7742	6449	5688	9297	5849	10986	3879	79857
Asian	4	11	3	0	13	18	10	4	12	48	45	1	169
Other	0	4	5	0	7	6	3	4	4	57	45	2	137
Elders													
Black	2	10	1	8	1	20	1	5	4	67	50	0	169
White	812	1130	708	758	853	929	792	756	1034	779	1071	576	10198
Asian	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	6	0	11
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	1	10
No. of churches reporting	78	112	67	83	101	101	101	93	110	96	115	70	1127
No. of churches in Province	117	157	104	127	160	150	156	142	165	157	186	146	1767
Percent reporting	66.7	71.3	64.4	65.4	63.1	67.3	64.7	65.5	66.7	61.1	61.8	47.9	63.8

Accessibility and aids Province	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Totals
Percentage figures* for:													
Wheelchair access to church	65.4	72.3	76.1	69.9	79.2	73.3	89.1	71.0	84.5	80.2	84.3	61.4	76.4
Wheelchair access to other parts of building	61.5	67.9	71.6	72.3	81.2	73.3	86.1	67.7	81.8	69.8	80.9	51.4	73.1
Toilet facilities for disabled people	33.3	40.2	41.8	42.2	39.6	45.5	57.4	39.8	49.1	62.5	59.1	22.9	45.5
Large print hymn books	61.5	83.9	80.6	83.1	80.2	78.2	84.2	81.7	88.2	80.2	86.1	52.9	79.5
Large print newsletters	12.8	14.3	17.9	9.6	21.8	14.9	13.9	14.0	13.6	11.5	16.5	10.0	14.4
Induction loop system	42.3	61.6	50.7	48.2	41.6	45.5	51.5	54.8	67.3	62.5	69.6	22.9	53.0
No. of churches reporting	78	112	67	83	101	101	101	93	110	109	115	70	1127
No. of churches in Province	117	157	104	127	160	150	156	142	165	165	186	146	1767
Percent reporting	66.7	71.3	64.4	65.4	63.1	67.3	64.7	65.5	66.7	66.1	61.8	47.9	63.7

*expressed as percentage of churches reporting

Finance

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

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Graham Stacy (*Hon. Treasurer*)
Revd Paul Bedford, Mr Desmond Davies (*Convener, United Reformed Church Trust*),
Mr Bill Grieve, Revd John Reardon, Mrs Elizabeth Reeve, Mrs Edwina Rockey, Revd Richard Wiggins,
Secretary: Mr Clem Frank
Mr Chris Langham, Mr Tegid Peregrine (*Secretary, Church Buildings Fund*), Revd Bill Wright

1 Remit of Committee

The remit of the Committee, which is set out above, is in the expanded form approved by the Mission Council at its meeting in October 1996.

2 1996 Accounts

The 1996 accounts are set out in Appendix 3 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31st December 1996.

3 Charities Act 1993 and The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 1995

The new regulations affecting annual reports and accounts came into force on 1st March 1996 and apply to accounts for periods commencing after that date.

In preparation for the full implementation of these regulations the Committee spent the early part of the year preparing the central Church accounts for 1995 in a revised format. These accounts, which were presented to General Assembly in July 1996, were well received.

The Committee then continued in its work of advising local churches about their reporting responsibilities. Guidance notes for churches with annual income of less than £100,000 were

circulated with the Information Service in November 1996. The guidance for larger churches (those with an annual income of over £100,000) has proved difficult but it is hoped that it will be circulated before the 1997 General Assembly to all local church treasurers who have requested it.

4 Church Buildings Fund

The Committee continues to be prepared to consider applications for financial assistance for the purchase or improvement of church and manse property. Guidelines on the conditions for assistance can be obtained from the Secretary of the Church Buildings Fund.

With a view to making better use of the increasing amount of monies accumulating in the Church Buildings Fund, the Committee agreed that grants should be made for 50% of the cost to local churches of providing for easier access to buildings or to parts of buildings, especially for wheelchair users and for those with prams. Grants will be subject to a maximum of £10,000 for any one case.

In addition, £639,000 was spent on the purchase of manses for Assembly ministerial staff thereby removing this burden from the general funds, from which this expenditure would otherwise have been met.

RESOLUTION 29

Accounts

Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31st December 1996. (Appendix 3)

RESOLUTION 30

Ministry and Mission Fund

Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 1996 to the Ministry & Mission Fund.

Methodist/URC Health and Healing Development Group

Committee Members

Chairman: Revd Ward Jones

Secretary: Revd Jim Hollyman

1 This new group held its first meeting in November 1996. Earlier in the year a joint Consultation Day for Methodist District Secretaries for Health and Healing and URC Provincial H and H Consultants was held at Stafford. A second consultation is planned at Stafford for May 1997.

2 The group has supported a conference at Willersley Castle, Derbyshire on the theme "Healing is Caring". A second joint conference is planned at the same venue for November 1998 on the theme "Health, Healing and Worship".

3 Working with the Churches Council for Health and Healing the group has shared in the

production of ecumenical materials: a Resources booklet, St Luke's prayers and new Guidelines for Good Practice.

4 The Acorn Christian Healing Trust, which is Anglican, has agreed that a member of the joint Development Group will share in each of their regional conferences.

5 "*Into Wholeness*", the new URC study pack is now available and will also be promoted by the Methodist Publishing House.

6 The Health and Healing *Bulletin* is now a joint Methodist/URC publication.

Inter-Faith Relations

The task of the committee is -

- to encourage and assist churches in inter-faith situations
- to affirm and support individuals involved in inter-faith dialogue on behalf of the church
- to engage in direct contact with people of other faiths, particularly through our consultants in Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and New Religious Movements
- to develop theological understanding of inter faith dialogue and mission
- to keep abreast with what is happening in the teaching about other faiths in schools and colleges.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Bill Mahood **Secretary:** Revd Brenda Willis
Mrs Linda Hopley, Miss Sarah King, Revd Molly Kenyon, Revd Jon Dean

1 The new committee met for the first time in December at Castle Green, Bristol. It explored areas of continuity from the former Mission and Other Faiths Committee and where changes are to be made. Although "Mission" is no longer part of our title it is still our task to help the Church to understand its mission in a multi-faith society. At Bristol we met with local Muslims, at their invitation, for a meal. The church at Castle Green has developed a good relationship with the Muslim community in their area. Our second meeting was at Trinity Church, Blackburn, and included discussions with those working in inter-faith situation on behalf of local churches and hospitals.

2 **Theological understanding arises from meeting people and not from theory.**

3 With this in mind a very successful dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims was held in 1996. Another has been arranged for 1997. The committee will continue the tradition of organising Sikh/Christian consultations. The United Reformed Church is the only church to take an initiative in this area.

4 We held an open day consultation in April on the theme, "My Journey inter Faith". It was addressed by the Revd Dr John Hick, and by two members of the committee, John Parry and Molly Kenyon. The consultation gave us the opportunity to invite everyone on our Network mailing list and also to give a more general invitation through *Reform*. We plan to create further opportunities for people to come together in a fairly informal way to explore inter-faith issues.

5 With the cooperation of the Provincial Moderators the committee is forming a clearer picture of what is already being achieved in the area of inter-faith relations throughout our denomination. This information and information about the day to day work of the committee is available through the convener or secretary. We would also appreciate any stories that churches or individuals want to share with us about inter-faith activity in their area. This building up of material is intended to enable theological exploration to rise directly out of the experience of inter-faith meeting and dialogue.

6 **Other Faiths and the Millennium**

6.1 The committee is playing its part in the United Reformed Church's preparation for the Millennium Celebrations. The convener is a member of the Millennium Task Group. This is clearly a Christian celebration. Members of other faiths recognise the importance we feel in celebrating 2000 years of Jesus. Much of their concern arises from the involvement of the Government in these celebrations. They feel that it is implicitly indicating their second class citizenship. This, combined with the prominence given to the National Lottery in financing and promoting Millennium projects, can make it deeply offensive for them. But if, as Christians, we engage in the celebrations in a sensitive way and use them as an opportunity for a renewal of our faith we will receive complete understanding and support from most people of other faiths.

Ministries

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.

Committee Members

Convener: The Revd Keith Forecast

Secretary: The Revd Christopher Baker

Mrs Doreen Courtney, Mr John Ellis, The Revds Sandra Lloydlangston,

Tony Ruffell and Graham Sweeney

Secretary for Ministries: The Revd Christine Craven

1 The Committee began the year labouring under great difficulty. Michael Diffey and his personal assistant left the office in June and, until the beginning of October, there was no-one in either post. We would express our warm gratitude to the Revd John Waller and his personal assistant, Shelagh Richardson, for 'holding the fort' very effectively during this period in addition to their own work. We were delighted when the Revd Christine Craven and Mrs Grace Ntiamoah arrived however and, as we welcome them to office, we express our admiration for the enthusiasm and efficiency with which they have taken up the work. It is a pleasure to work with them.

2 Committee Work

Much of the work of the Committee has been concerned with Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal, the age of retirement from stipendiary Ministry and the age of entry to Ministry. Resolutions and supporting material on these matters are set out at the end of this report. Other things with which the Committee has concerned itself are described below.

3 Expenses of Non-Stipendiary Ministers

The Committee has been asked for guidelines for local churches on the payment of the pastoral expenses of non-stipendiary ministers. On the advice of its Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, it offers the following criteria and urges they be used in future when settlement agreements are drafted:

3.1 By definition, non-stipendiary ministers are not paid any kind of stipend or other remuneration by the Church.

3.2 Nevertheless, non-stipendiary ministers are entitled to expect full reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses as set out in the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration (Revised 1997), paragraphs 6.3.3 and 6.3.4

3.3 It would not be normal for a car to be provided by a pastorate to a non-stipendiary minister. Paragraph 6.3.2 of the revised Plan for Partnership states: 'Where the minister...provides a car, the financial arrangements shall be agreed with

the provincial Maintenance of the Ministry Committee, the local Church and the minister...... Such arrangements should be entered into with regard to the travel costs of the non-stipendiary minister. The revised Plan for Partnership also provides for the central maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee to *'distribute annually recommended rates of reimbursement of the cost of motoring on church business, which must not be exceeded'*. These rates should be referred to in establishing the level of reimbursement of a non-stipendiary minister. Occasionally, and exceptionally, a District Council may give express agreement for a pastorate to provide a car for a non-stipendiary minister. In this case, arrangements should be made in accordance with paragraph 6.3.3.1 of the revised Plan.

3.4 It would not be normal for housing to be provided for a non-stipendiary minister. Where there is a manse available, and the non-stipendiary minister wishes to use it, there is no reason why this should not be arranged. Such an arrangement, however, should include a lease or licence, entered into by the Trustee on the advice of a solicitor, and a commercial rent would be payable.

3.5 Housing allowances would not normally be paid to non-stipendiary ministers.

3.6 Whether or not housing or a car are provided by the church, or by the minister, no tax assessments should be raised on a non-stipendiary minister, provided the above guidelines are followed. However, a non-stipendiary minister will not be able to obtain tax relief against other income for any unrecovered expenses.

3.7 It is the responsibility of the District Council to attend to and arrange for the reimbursement of the expenses of non-stipendiary ministers who undertake ministries other than in local churches.

3.8 Where it is the custom of a local church to offer a gift to a visiting worship leader in addition to travelling expenses, such a gift should also be offered to a non-stipendiary minister.

4 The Support and Development of Lay Preaching

4.1 Ministries Committee has identified the following tasks in relation to the ministry of Lay Preaching:

- a) Recruitment
- b) Assessment
- c) Accreditation

- d) Training
- e) Support
- f) Development
- g) Advocacy
- h) Ecumenical engagement (that is, contact and working in partnership with those involved in similar ministries in other denominations)

4.2 Of these, **Assessment** is currently on the agenda of the Ministries' Committee with a view to recommending some standard form of procedure to assess a candidate's vocation before embarking upon training; **Accreditation** is the responsibility of the Accreditation Sub-committee; **Training** comes under the aegis of the Training Committee, whose task is to recommend and validate courses. This leaves **Recruitment, Support, Development, Advocacy** and **Ecumenical engagement**.

4.3 While Ministries Committee can, and is willing to, have overall responsibility for these aspects of the work, it cannot undertake the detailed work required. These tasks can most effectively be carried out at district or province level by Lay Preaching Commissioners.

4.4 There is however, a continuing need for national oversight, co-ordination and resourcing, both for the commissioners and the preachers themselves. We envisage at least the following responsibilities:

- a) Advice and encouragement
- b) Consultation with District and Provincial commissioners (presently taking place annually)
- c) Organising a network for the dissemination of information
- d) Publications.

4.5 The Ministries Committee brought the following proposals to Mission Council in January 1997;

- a) That a National Lay Preaching Commissioner be appointed to oversee and advocate the work and to liaise with the District and Provincial Commissioners and with the lay preachers themselves;
- b) that a sub-committee of the Ministries Committee be formed to co-ordinate the various interests and concerns, comprising up to four active nationally accredited lay preachers nominated by the annual Lay Preaching Commissioners Consultation, together with one representative from each of the following Assembly Committees:

Ministries, Training, Doctrine Prayer and Worship, and Discipleship and Witness; the national Lay Preaching Commissioner to act as Convenor and organiser

These proposals were accepted and the Ministries Committee was asked to put them into immediate effect.

4.6 We do not envisage the national post as being salaried. It will be done voluntarily on an expenses-only basis. The post holder will ideally be, or have been, a lay preacher with experience and vision. A detailed job-description will need to be worked out. The administrative work involved will be added to the portfolio of a present member of Church House staff.

5 Assessment of Ordinands

5.1 Following concern expressed about the process through which an ordinand proceeds to ordination especially for those at the end of their penultimate year of training, Mr Peter Bunker was asked in 1995, with the help of a working party, to research the facts and to recommend any necessary changes. The working party included representatives of both the Ministries and Training committees. The final report was prepared in the autumn of 1996 and considered by the Ministries and Training Committees early in 1997. The Ministries Committee wishes to record its thanks to Peter Bunker and other members of the working party for the final recommendations and accompanying papers. The report was accepted as a working document which will aid the Committee in its relationship with the Training Committee and Colleges as individuals move from being candidates to ordinands.

5.2 In particular the Ministries Committee will seek to strengthen links between the Provincial Ministries Committees, the National Assessment

Board and the Colleges/Courses in order that there should be a joint assessment of each ordinand at the end of the first year in training.

6 Higher and Further Education

Graham Sweeney has agreed to be responsible for the Higher and Further Chaplaincy network and will also work alongside Judith Johnson, Administrative Assistant for Ministries, in the promotion and administration of the Student Link-up.

7 Pre-Retirement Courses for Ministers and Spouses

The Pre-Retirement courses for ministers and spouses continue to be much appreciated. This year approximately 23 will attend the courses held in May and November for those due to retire in two years time.

8 The Committee faces major changes in personnel from this Assembly. The Convenor of the Assessment Board, Mr Raymond Clarke, comes to the end of a most significant period of service during which the effectiveness of this vital work has immensely increased. The Convenor of the Accreditation Sub-Committee, Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, becomes Clerk to the Assembly and therefore relinquishes a post which she has carried out with grace and efficiency. Several other members of the Committee and its sub-committees come to the end of their period of service and the Revd Keith Forecast concludes a seven year stint as Convenor of the main Committee to which post he brought dedication, patience and good humour. All these have served during a period of considerable change and upheaval. Assembly will wish to express its gratitude.

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 7th 1996 and February 12th 1997. It plans also to meet on June 10th 1997. As a sub-committee of the Ministries Committee it has been important to maintain good contact, and this has been achieved mostly through the two Conveners attending both meetings whenever possible.

2 Age of entry to the Ministry

2.1 Following the rejection by the General Assembly of the proposals brought before it in 1996, the Sub-Committee has considered this matter again and it is the subject of a resolution brought at the end of the Ministries Committee report. (page 118)

3 Pastoral Measure

3.1 Responsibility for those areas presently within the scope of the Pastoral Measure which will not be covered by the new Disciplinary Process has now been passed to the working party on ministerial discipline, who will report separately.

4 Induction Training

4.1 The Committee is liaising with the Training Committee with a view to providing Induction Training for Ministers transferring to the URC, whether from other Churches in Britain or from overseas. We plan also to update the 'Welcome pack' for use by churches when an overseas minister is called, and hope to include a check list for local churches of information an incoming minister needs.

5. College Leaving Certificates / Completion of Study Certificates

5.1 On completion of an agreed course of ministerial training stipendiary candidates are granted by the colleges a Leaving Certificate, and non-stipendiary candidates are granted by the Board of Studies a Certificate of Completed Study.

5.2 The Sub-Committee has become aware that no reference can be found to any recorded procedure regarding the period for which these Certificates are valid. The current understanding with some, is that they are valid for three years in the first instance. however, there appears to be no

agreement to support this and no suggestions regarding the procedures for renewal. The Provincial Moderators (July 1995) asked for clarification of the period for which such certificates are valid and for a procedure to agree to an extension for those not ordained during the initial three year period.

5.3 Certificates of Eligibility issued to ministers of other Churches who may be permitted to be introduced to a URC pastorate are valid for 3 years in the first instance from the date of issue

5.4 It seems wise to the Accreditation Sub-committee that this matter should be clarified. In doing so, the intention is not to be prescriptive but to ensure, as far as possible, that those not called are supported and are clear about the procedures.

5.5 Those who have completed training for the ministry remain under the care of a Province until ordination and induction to a pastorate. Following completion of training the Province which had the care of the ordinand during training should, if the ordinand no longer resides within that Province, consider commending the ordinand to the care of the Province in which he or she now resides.

5.6 The procedure which will apply from Assembly 1997 regardless of when the certificates were issued will be as follows:-

- a) A College Leaving/Completion of Study Certificate shall, in the first instance, be valid for three years from the date of issue.
- b) Those who have been granted Certificates who are not ordained in the initial three year period may apply for an extension of the Certificate.
- c) Applications shall be made through the Moderator of the Province in which the person resides.
- d) The appropriate provincial committee shall consult with the following:-
 - (i) the ordinand;
 - (ii) the Moderator of the Province which accepted the candidate for training (the sending province) if it is different from the one in which the applicant now resides;
 - (iii) in the case of a stipendiary minister, with the college in which he/she trained or, in the case of a non-

stipendiary minister, with the Studies Panel of the Training Committee;

(iv) the Secretary for Ministries, who shall, if appropriate consult with the Secretary for Training.

- e) The purpose of these consultations shall be :-
- (i) to determine whether or not to recommend that it is still appropriate for the candidate in question to proceed to ordination;
 - (ii) to determine whether or not to recommend that any additional training shall be required.

(If it is the view that additional training is required, the candidate may be asked to meet the costs, particularly if the reason for additional training is entirely due to the ordinand's decision not to proceed to ordination at the time when the College Leaving Certificate/Completion of Study Certificate was issued).

- f) A report shall be forwarded to the Accreditation Sub-Committee which will decide whether the candidate may still be introduced to a pastorate, or whether any additional training is required. If appropriate it may renew the certificate for a further period of three years. It will report its conclusion to the Moderator who, if and when appropriate, will take the name to the meeting of the Provincial Moderators for introduction to a pastorate.

6 Lay preachers

6.1 The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been accredited:

Geoffrey Allwright, Carol Barra, Heather Brown, Andrew Buxton, Shirley Clarke, William Cowie, Richard Davey, Anne Dove, Richard Duley, Robert Dyson, Joseph Elliott, Gwynneth Freeman, Derek Gard, Nicola Glasse, Bernard Groves, Christopher Hardman, Jan Harper, Patricia Hinks, Stuart Jones, Lillian Jones, Irene Kendall, Susan Liddell, Jean MacMeekin, Pauline Oakley, Heather Pollard, Jean Potter, Hazel Roberts, Ronald Roderick, Sydney Shore, Margaret Stacey, John Stocks, Margaret Sutton, Sarah Wickett, Daphne Woodward, Judith Yates, Robert Yates, Susan Yates

7 Church-Related Community Workers

7.1 Mission Council agreed the principle that Certificates of Eligibility could be granted to CRCWs from other denominations. The Accreditation Sub-committee will work with the CRCW programme Review Group in order to draw up a procedure.

7.2 The following was admitted to the Roll:

By Transfer: Christine Ramsden

8 Roll of Ministers

8.1 Certificates of Eligibility - Transfer from other churches to the Roll of Ministers

The Sub-Committee has prepared a procedure to deal with applications from Ministers of other Churches seeking to be included on the Roll of Ministers though not seeking a call to a pastorate:

a) The normal procedure for those seeking to exercise ministry in the United Reformed Church is to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility which entitles a minister of another denomination to seek a 'call' to a United Reformed Church pastorate. On induction to a pastorate, following a call and the concurrence of the District Council, the minister transfers to the United Reformed Church.

b) Some ministers of other denominations have been permitted to transfer on to the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church without the intention of seeking a pastorate. These have been ministers of other Churches, usually from overseas or from other nationalities within the British Isles (e.g. a minister from the Church of Scotland working and living in England), who have been appointed to secular work or church 'related' spheres of service but for which the denominations have no direct responsibility e.g. teaching posts in universities (sometimes theological), or Christian work e.g. Mission to Seamen. In these cases ministers have sought permission to be included on the Roll sometimes because their own denomination has no facility to retain them once they have moved to an area where their own Church has no jurisdiction, sometimes because it seems more appropriate to relate formally to a 'sister' denomination where their own is not present. Such stipendiary ministers, once their names are included on the Roll, are entitled to seek a pastorate and, if called and inducted, to be paid by the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund.

c) Up to now there has been no agreed procedure for the Accreditation Sub-Committee to deal with such requests from ministers of other Churches seeking to be included on the Roll of Ministers though not seeking a call to a pastorate. The Sub-

Committee has prepared the following procedure which has been approved by the Ministries Committee and will be included in the Ministries section of the Manual (section J)

- d) i) Applications to be made to District Council;
- ii) District Council to decide whether
 - a) to acknowledge the applicant as a minister within the District Council but not in pastoral charge, or
 - b) to apply to Synod for the minister to be appointed to membership of the District Council
- iii) District council requests Synod to refer the matter to the Accreditation Sub-Committee with a recommendation relating to ii) above;
- iv) The Accreditation Sub-Committee to consider the application bearing in mind the requirements relating to those applying for Certificates of Eligibility as outlined in the Manual, page J20, 2 (a), (b), (c) and (d) If it is deemed that further training is required, then that shall not be a charge on the Ministerial Training Fund.
- v) If the Accreditation Sub Committee approves the application the minister transfers to the Roll of the United Reformed Church, the appropriate Synod and District Council are informed and the matter is reported to the next General Assembly.

8.2 The Sub-Committee is preparing a procedure to be applied when applications for transfer are received from ordinands of other Churches

8.3 **Admissions to the Roll** (from 22nd February 1996 to 19th February 1997)

- a) **By Ordination - stipendiary:**
Wilfred Bahadur, Richard Becher, Sarah Bevan, Marlene Brown, Patricia Clamp, Timothy Clarke, Jennifer Davies, Carole Ellefsen, Mark Elvin, Susan Flynn, John Gordon, Kenneth Gray, Barry Griffin, Stephen Lewis, Donald MacAlister, Ruth Maxey, David Miller, Monica Mills, Alan Morris, Martin Smith, Jean Spragg, Robert Street, Aileen Walker.

- b) **By Ordination - non-stipendiary:**
Kenneth Coles, Ivan Fowler, Ian Kirby, Graham Mercer, Brenda Moore, Heather Morgan, David Simpson, Fiona Thomas, Christopher Tonge, William Young.

- c) **By Transfer from Other Churches:**
James Findlay (UCC), Douglas Gay (Church of Scotland), Rachel Poolman (Baptist Union of Great Britain), Keith Riglin (Baptist Union of Great Britain)

8.4 **Deletions from the Roll** (from 22nd February 1996 to 19th February 1997)

- a) **By Resignation:**
James Pettitt, Philip Stephens, Alistair Swinford, Peter Travis

- b) **By Resignation and/or Transfer to Other Churches:**
James Cernohlavek (USA), Robert Gillespie (Methodist), Albert Ferwerda (Netherlands), Dina Ferwerda-Arends (Netherlands), Nancy Heimer (USA), Roger Heimer (USA), Brian Phillips (Australia), Barry Thorley (Church of England)

8.5 **Changes within Roll**

- a) **Non-stipendiary to Stipendiary:**
Linda Elliott, Jennifer Martin, Ronald Wilson

9 Recruitment

9.1 Two Enquirers' Conferences have been arranged for 1997

May 17th -18th Frodsham; this conference is organised by Mersey Province.

November 8th

The Community of Reconciliation, Barnes Close; this conference is being organised by the West Midlands Province.

10 The National Assessment Board

10.1 The Convener of the National Assessment Board is a member of the Sub-Committee, and we have been kept in touch with the work of the Board through regular reports. We welcomed the approval given by the 1996 General Assembly to the Criteria for Assessment Process, and commend the Board for the steps it is taking to implement this. We share with the National Assessment Board a concern that the selection and training of Board members should be such that the present high standard and balance of skills, experience and interests is maintained.

National Assessment Board

Convener: *Mr Raymond Clarke*
Secretary: *The Revd Christine Craven*

1 Since the approval of the Criteria for Assessment at General Assembly 1996 the Board has redrafted the application and reference forms and intends before General Assembly 1997 to circulate guidelines for candidates, local ministers, Church meetings, District Councils and Provincial ministries committees.

2 During 1996 there were 3 National Assessment Conferences and 2 Re-Assessment Panels. Graham Long, Edith Tolley, Christine Craven and Peter Richards completed their terms of service as members of the Board. We are grateful to them for their invaluable contributions. Jean Barraclough, Ivor Rees, Daryl Sinclair, Flo Humes-Dixon and Howard Starr have joined the Board and we look forward to their contributions.

Church-Related Community Work Management Sub-Committee

Convener: *The Revd Vaughan Jones*
Secretary: *Mr John Boddy*

1 During the year there were a number of changes in personnel. Marie Trubic, who had worked as a CRCW in Everton and Milton Keynes, resigned her post to start training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, and Janine Lawley resigned from her post in South Leeds to move to Devon. Both Marie and Janine had been involved with the CRCW programme for nearly ten years and have been valued members of the CRCW team.

2 Three new CRCWs have been accepted. Adella Pritchard and Alison Micklem have started training with the Salford Urban mission; and Chris Lawrence, who is an experienced and well-qualified community worker, has been accredited, but has not been required to undertake further training.

3 A fourth CRCW has been accredited. Chris Ramsden, a Church of Scotland deaconess with many years community development experience, is the first person from another denomination to have been accepted as a URC CRCW. She has since been appointed to the vacant post in Forest Fields/Hyson Green Nottingham.

4 Work has continued on the developments of new posts, with particular emphasis on a plan to develop up to six new posts in Thames North Province by the year 2000. In order to facilitate this development, proposals are being considered for more flexible forms of training, including distance learning and a CRCW apprenticeship scheme.

5 The CRCW post in Salford was reviewed by the District Council. Bethan Gallier's unique ministry was wholeheartedly commended and it was recommended that the post should be extended for a further five year term. The CRCW Development worker post was also reviewed. It was agreed to extend the post for one year until August 1998, when a decision would be taken on whether to extend it further. Mission Council had agreed to a wide ranging review of the CRCW ministry and it was considered appropriate to make decisions on the development worker post in the light of the review's recommendations.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Committee Members

Convener: Mr Michael Harrison **Secretary:** Revd Peter Grimshaw
Miss Margaret Atkinson, Revd Bill Gathercole,
Mr Victor Hughff (Convener, Pensions Executive), Mrs Barbara Martin,
Mr Graham Stacy, Revd Tony Wilkinson

Revd Christine Craven, Mr Clem Frank, Mrs Judy Stockings, Revd Bill Wright

1.1 Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration. The Plan for Partnership was last completely revised in March 1992 by the Assembly Executive; it has been modified by most subsequent Assemblies. In the five years since the last revision there have been changes in law and in Church practice which have led the Sub-Committee to review the Plan as a whole. The Plan, as revised, is shown in Appendix 5 and is the subject of Resolution 31.

1.2 Paragraph 8.1.4 provides that in certain circumstances a retirement resettlement grant may be paid even if no removal has occurred at the actual time of retirement. In the opinion of the Sub-Committee all other changes in wording arise solely from changes in legislation or Church policy (already accepted by Assembly) or administrative procedures.

1.3 Stipends. One of the factors used in determining stipend levels in the past has been pay levels in other comparable occupations. Since the last major increase in stipend (in 1993) national average earnings have increased by more than the Retail Price Index, whilst stipends have been raised by the RPI figure. To avoid the need to make another huge increase in stipends at some future date, it seems best to make small increases above

RPI at appropriate times. For this reason the Sub-Committee has recommended to the Resource Planning Advisory Group that for budgetary purposes the 1998 stipend level should be taken as the relevant RPI figure (2.17%) + 1.5% above the 1997 level.

1.4 Review of ministerial remuneration. As it is nearly ten years since the last major review of ministerial remuneration as a whole, the Sub-Committee has decided to initiate another such comprehensive review. Experience in carrying out the last review suggests that, after widespread consultation, the findings of such an investigation would be placed before General Assembly, with appropriate recommendations, in 1999.

1.5 Central Staff. The revision of the Plan for Partnership made great demands of some of the Finance Staff in the Central Office. That the revision should have been accomplished without any lowering of the very high standard of service to those who have sought the help of the Finance Staff reflects great credit on the whole Finance team.

1.6 It has been a pleasure for the Sub-Committee to work so harmoniously with the new Secretary for Ministries, the Revd Christine Craven. Her support and encouragement have been greatly valued.

RESOLUTION 31

Plan for Partnership

Assembly adopts the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, as set out in Appendix 5 of the book of Annual Reports to the 1997 General Assembly.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Committee Members

Convener: Revd David Hannen **Secretary:** Mr Clive Willis
Mr Martin Ballard, Mrs Pauline Mewis, Revd Janet Sowerbutts,
Mr Graham Stacy, Mrs Barbara Williams.

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

2 With retirements continuing to run at a high level the need for housing assistance remains high and help was given to 14 ministers and to one widow whose husband died in service during 1996; in addition, 6 tenants were rehoused into properties more suitable to their needs.

Number of Properties

As at 1st January 1996	304
Purchased in 1996	21
Received as Legacies or gifts	1
	326
LESS Properties sold in 1996	15
Number of properties as at 31 st Dec. 1996	311
Of which:	
Unoccupied	1
For Sale	7
Occupied by - retired ministers	191
ministers' widows	104
non-URC tenants	8
	311

At the year-end 8 properties were in the process of purchase and 1 applicant was seeking a property for purchase.

3 Properties are purchased in the name of either URC Trust or the Society but in all cases are managed by the officers of the Society. Where tenants have a financial stake in the property this is recognised by means of a Declaration of Trust.

4 The maximum contributions made by the Society 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:-

1) 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.

2) Applicants wishing to have a retirement property costing in excess of the joint ceiling figure should consult with the Secretary.

3) 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.

4) 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 1996 the standard rent was £58 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 1997 the standard rent has been set at £60 per calendar month.

6 Rental income for 1996 was £184,000 (as compared with £172,000 for 1995). This sum was credited to Property Management Account, from which all costs relating to maintenance, repair, insurance and administration are taken. In 1996 these costs totalled £191,000, thus giving a deficit for the year of £7,000 on Property Management Account. However, General Revenue Account, which includes grants, donations, legacies and profits on sale of properties, showed a surplus of £604,000, thus enabling our Reserves to increase by £597,000.

7 The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year. These amounted to £325,000.

8 It is anticipated that during 1997 assistance will be required for 18 retiring ministers. After allowing for possible need for widows or for rehousing it would be prudent to expect up to 25 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to £1,500,000 and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.

9 During 1996 visits were made by the officers of the Society to approximately 40 applicants, tenants or other properties. An information stand was provided for the Southern Province Day and leaflets on the work of the Society were distributed to all Provinces.

10 We continue to rely heavily upon, and are grateful for, the commitment of those members of local congregations who generously give oversight to our retirement properties and who assist those who live in them. We would like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to volunteer their assistance in this respect.

11 Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre under the auspices of Ministries. Two courses were held in May 1996 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.

RESOLUTION 32

Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal

- a) **General Assembly approves a national Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal scheme as set out in Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal - a scheme for the United Reformed Church**
- b) **General Assembly approves the timetable set out in section 8 of Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal - a scheme for the United Reformed Church**

Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal - a scheme for the United Reformed Church

1 In September 1993, the then Ministries Committee presented a paper on the Appraisal of Ministers to Mission Council. A considerable amount of time had then been taken to research the subject with other denominations and with secular sources, and to develop a theology of Appraisal. The outlined proposals were broadly accepted by Mission Council and, at the committee's suggestion that the Scheme be piloted for two years, it was agreed to use the West Midlands provincial scheme which was already in operation for this purpose. Through 1993 - 1995 the original group monitored the work being done in the West Midlands province. The Province is to be congratulated for the work carried out.

Other provinces have also shown an interest in the West Midlands scheme and Southern Province is currently preparing a scheme largely based upon it. As a result of this monitoring period we request General Assembly approves the setting up of a national ministerial accompanied self-appraisal scheme using the West Midlands provincial scheme as a basis.

2 A Theology of Appraisal

- (i) Any system of appraisal of Christian ministry should be undergirded by theological principles.
- (ii) Those principles in relation to the scheme we propose are;
- ◆ God calls us as we are but that every call contains not only God's grace and acceptance but also a mission or task;
 - ◆ the grace of God involves, indeed requires, diversity;
 - ◆ the call to service involves accountability;
 - ◆ God has given humanity the responsibility to act as stewards of creation;
 - ◆ personal stewardship of individual gifts is a part of that responsibility;
 - ◆ Jesus commands us to love one another and our neighbour as ourselves;
 - ◆ Jesus promises peace and life in its fullness as a consequence of following him.

- (iii) From these principles we believe that;
- ◆ all who are called by God need to recognise and affirm their own gifts and have them recognised and affirmed by those with whom and for whom they work;
 - ◆ at the same they need to consider whether their gifts are being used and developed in response to God's call;
 - ◆ all who are called by God need to know how the command to love one another and neighbour as self finds practical expression in their relationship to others and others relationship to them;
 - ◆ all who are called need to challenge un-Christlike expectations and burdens.

The proposed scheme of accompanied self-appraisal offers a structured space in which the ministers of the United Reformed Church may do this.

3 The aims of Appraisal

- (i) to affirm ministers in their work and encourage them to follow God's calling with a renewed sense of vision.
- (ii) to aid the continuing personal and professional development of ministers in ways which are of benefit to them and to the Church they serve as they
- ◆ take stock of their ministry thus far and identify areas on which to build and areas of need which should be addressed
 - ◆ become realistic about strengths and weaknesses
 - ◆ set goals for work and personal development
 - ◆ identify training and personal development needs and ways of addressing them
 - ◆ become aware of sources of support.

4 Style of Appraisal

- (i) each individual will be asked to embark on the exercise of accompanied self-appraisal in the light of the promises made upon ordination (Schedule C)
- (ii) The exercise should be seen as supportive and non-threatening, but for it to be effective it is important that it is objective and acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses.
- (iii) For this reason the task of appraisal will be shared with a person, an Appraisal Companion, who has received appropriate training in attentive listening and questioning.

- (iv) This scheme is not about checking one person's 'performance' against some measurement of ministerial tasks. This would need such a standard to exist and in any case responsibility for carrying out the total ministry in any one situation does not lie with the minister alone but also with the Elders and other members in a local church or colleagues in a team or chaplaincy. We encourage such appraisal but believe it lies within the context of a District Visit.

5 Participants

- (i) Ministers in the United Reformed Church; for the purpose of the scheme this means Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers
- (ii) Each minister will be accompanied by an Appraisal Companion drawn from a provincial team.

6 National /Provincial Partnership

- (i) A scheme for the United Reformed Church has the advantage of being easy for ministers to move into as they move from province to province.
- (ii) The scheme would however be administered provincially with overall support and monitoring being the responsibility of the Ministries Committee.
- (iii) Training of Appraisal Companions will be given through the Training Committee.
- (iv) For maximum benefit the scheme envisages appraisal happening on a regular basis but not so frequent as to become time-stealing. We recommend an interval of 18 months to 2 years.

7 A Proposed Method

7a Provincial Administration

- (i) A provincial administrator/secretary needs to be appointed to keep an up to date record of the provincial ministers and Appraisal Companions, to be responsible for setting up appraisal meetings and to keep a record of the dates of Appraisal meeting.
- (ii) The same person may also convene meetings of the Appraisal Companions and arrange with others for their training. This aspect of the administration may however be handled separately by a training officer.

7b Appraisal Companions

- (i) A provincial Appraisal team will be selected by the province, possibly from names submitted by District Councils.
- (ii) We recommend that each Appraisal Companion be asked to do no more than four Appraisal meetings a year. Therefore each province needs to appoint sufficient Appraisal Companions to cover biennial Appraisal meetings with each provincial minister
- (iii) The Appraisal Companions may or may not be ordained but need to have the following characteristics;
- ◆ they should be good listeners
 - ◆ they should have a talent for asking pertinent questions
 - ◆ they should have the ability to handle confidentiality
 - ◆ they should be able to relinquish personal agendas
- They should also have:
- ◆ a thorough understanding of the role of a minister
 - ◆ a depth and width of personal experience
 - ◆ time to give to the task

This time will include training sessions and support group meetings as well as the time given to Appraisal meetings and their preparation.

7c Documentation

- (i) letters of introduction explaining the background of the scheme to each minister
- (ii) The Appraisal booklet. This is a key tool in the exercise.
- (iii) The booklet will be a detailed questionnaire designed to be an aide-memoire and reflective tool for ministers in diverse situations.
- (iv) The questions in the book will be specific but framed to promote self-appraisal in the light of the promises in Schedule C
- (v) With the aid of the Appraisal booklet, the minister makes a personal appraisal of his/her present ministry and attitudes towards the work involved, their personal devotional life, opportunities for development and family/friend situations

- (vi) The booklet will be used a prompt during the meeting with the Appraisal Companion
- (v) The booklet will provide space for the individual to describe his/her ministerial situation for the benefit of the Appraisal Companion
- (vi) the booklet will provide a space, to be completed when the meeting is over, for the minister to record the result of the Appraisal exercise
- (vii) A copy of the Appraisal booklet is kept by:
- ◆ the minister
 - ◆ the Appraisal Companion so that it can be referred to at the next Appraisal

7d Data

- (i) provincial administrators will keep record of provincial ministers
- (ii) record of the dates of appraisal will be kept to assist continuity of the scheme
- (iii) **It is perhaps worthwhile to state clearly that the content of each appraisal is confidential and not the concern of those who administer the scheme or provide back-up for it.**

7e The process of accompanied self - appraisal

- (i) the provincial administrator of the scheme will contact the minister and supply a current list of Appraisal Companions.
- (ii) The minister may or may not choose to work with a previous companion but the administrator will on the advice given by the minister put an Appraisal Companion in touch with him/her and send a copy of the Appraisal booklet.
- (iii) The Provincial Administrator is notified of the date of the accompanied Appraisal meeting.
- (iv) Working through the booklet is an important part of the process and at least two hours should be set aside to work through the booklet.
- (v) Some people will wish to complete this part on their own; others may wish to discuss certain aspects with family, friends and colleagues. How the individual deals with this stage is a matter of personal preference.

- (vi) A copy of the completed booklet is returned to an Appraisal Companion in time for the next stage; the accompanied Appraisal Meeting .
- (vii) Using the book as a prompt, the minister shares with the companion the result of the earlier personal reflection.
- (viii) It is the companion's task to listen attentively and to respond appropriately which in this instance may involve pointing out where either strengths or weakness, opportunities or challenges appear evident but unrecognised.
- (ix) At the end of this meeting the minister sets out the result of the Appraisal affirming strengths, acknowledging weakness, identifying goals and development needs and claiming or reclaiming the vision of their calling.
- (x) This meeting should take place over at least half a day which allows for introductions and a gentle return to other business. The later process may take place during a meal.
- (xi) The meeting should preferably take place in the ministers home in a relaxed and uninterrupted atmosphere. Nevertheless this can be a tiring exercise for both ministers and Appraisal Companion so it is recommended that participants do not arrange other major meetings on that day
- (xii) It is not envisaged that there will be any further meetings until the next Appraisal
- (xiii) If major concerns are raised or particular problems appear the Appraisal Companion should encourage the Minister to seek counselling or other appropriate help.
- (xiv) So that the right advice is given, Appraisal Companions need to be kept abreast of the resources which are available to ministers and their families.

8 A proposed Timetable

If the 1997 General Assembly approves the setting up of the scheme we suggest the following timetable:

- (i) July - December 1997
Provinces appoint Appraisal teams and set up the administration
- (ii) The Ministries Committee liaises with the West Midlands and Southern provinces in particular but also with the other provinces about the range of provincial diversity possible within an overall scheme.
- (iii) The Appraisal booklet is finalised
- (iv) January /February 1998 National Training consultation.
The Training Committee will invite two representatives from each provincial Appraisal Team to the consultation.
- (v) February - June provincial training of their colleagues by those who attended the national consultation. (Training will be organised annually for new Appraisal partners)
- (vi) By July 1998 the Appraisal scheme will be in operation. A report on the implementation will be made to General Assembly

9 Acknowledgements

The Ministries committee is grateful to the working party, The Revd David Cornick, The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, the Revd John Oldershaw and Mrs Eileen Sanderson and to all those who co-operated with them including the West Midlands Province, individual ministers and churches, and ecumenical colleagues.

RESOLUTION 33

Age of Retirement

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

1 In 1993 Assembly resolved *'that ministers should retire from full time stipendiary service not later than six calendar months from the date on which they have attained the age of 65'*

The grounds for bringing this resolution were principally that at that time it was believed that the Church had more ministers in full pastoral charge than it could afford to pay. This was one of the several methods suggested for reducing that number.

2 The situation which gave rise to this resolution no longer pertains. Accordingly assembly in 1996 passed a resolution *'inviting the Ministries Committee to present a case for the retention of this rule, as against the reinstatement of the earlier rule'*. That earlier rule permitted ministers to continue in full time stipendiary service for three years provided that their pastorate wished it and District Council concurred, and for further continuance of service subject to annual review.

3 Ministries has done as it was asked. In coming to the conclusion it has reached, it realises that, if the rule is to continue, albeit in a modified form, it will need to be supported by considerations other than the financial one, which no longer applies. The committee would therefore make the following points:

3.1 Both the state pension and the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension fund are geared to the age of 65.

3.2 Some local churches, while honouring the service given by their minister to the point of retirement, would prefer that ministry now to come to an end; a clear rule about retirement age enables this to happen without embarrassment or hard feelings.

3.3 Most ministers reaching the age of 65, especially those who have given active service to the church either as ministers or in some other capacity for forty or fifty years, are ready to retire and the existence of the rule gives them an honourable reason to do so without any pressure to continue.

3.4 To permit ministers to remain in full-time service beyond the age of 65 increases the average age of our ministry and contributes to an impression, at least in the eyes of younger people, that the Church is an institution for the elderly led by elderly ministers.

3.5 The rule merely obliges ministers to retire from full time service. There are, we believe, many other avenues of service open to them in which their experience can still be available to the Church, should they so wish. Among these are part time stipendiary ministry, non-stipendiary ministry, regular leadership of worship, interim moderatorship, committee membership and eldership in a local church.

3.6 Retirement can be not only the end of a long phase of working life but also the beginning of a rewarding new phase of living, provided it is available at an age when physical and mental energy remain intact. It is therefore to be positively encouraged.

3.7 As we bring this resolution however we are aware that there are sometimes circumstances in which it may be desirable for a minister to continue, albeit for a limited period. For example a minister might be drawing near to the end of a particular project or piece of work and need to spend a year or two to bring it to conclusion; or a District council might be planning a new grouping of churches in a particular area and it might be felt desirable for a minister to remain for a short while to see plans through to fruition; or a minister,

Resolution 34

coming into ministry later in life, might have just a year to go to qualify for retired Ministers' housing; or a ministers spouse might have a short period to go to retirement. Only in such exceptional

circumstances however do we believe that full time ministry should continue beyond retiring age and we have proposed a mechanism by which permission to do so may be sought and agreed.

RESOLUTION 34

Age of Entry

- a) Assembly resolves that training for the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments may begin from the date of a candidates 18th birthday, recognising that enquiries may be made several years earlier
- b) Assembly resolves that the normal minimum age for the commencement of training for the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments shall be 25
- c) Assembly believes that Ordination to the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should take place by the age of 55, and to this end, given the present Assessment and Training processes, resolves that formal application for training for the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments must be received by the Province by the date of the applicant's 50th birthday
- d) Assembly believes that Ordination to the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should take place by the age of 55, and to this end, given the present Assessment and Training processes, resolves that formal application for training for the non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments must be received by the Province by the date of the applicant's 50th birthday.
- e) Assembly resolves that the provisions of resolutions c) and d) above shall apply to all applications received by the Provinces after the close of the 1997 General Assembly.
- f) Assembly resolves that applications to transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry must be received by the Province before the date of the applicant's 53rd birthday
- g) Assembly resolves that the provisions of resolution f) above shall apply to any applications received by the Province after October 1 1997
- h) Assembly resolves that any variation to the requirement established in resolutions a) - g) will need the agreement of the Accreditation Sub-committee

Age of entry into Ministry and Ministerial Training

1 A resolution brought to the 1996 Assembly which set the lower entry for training at 21 and the upper age for application for training at 50 failed to gain the Assembly's support. Among the reasons were:

- i) a strongly felt desire to lower the permitted age of entry to training to at least 18, so as not to put off aspiring young candidates
- ii) an equally strongly felt desire not to impose rigid restrictions at the upper end of the scale

iii) in the case of older candidates, an unwillingness to accept the 'economic argument' about what we felt was a reasonable aim: to get at least a reasonable return in terms of active ministry from people upon whom the Church has expended a considerable sum to train.

2 Towards the end of Assembly there was a motion proposed from the floor whose aim was to remove all stated age restrictions, at either end of the scale, and leave the judgement as to readiness and suitability entirely in the hands of the assessment processes. This resolution was 'not put' but we were expected to note its implications.

3 Assembly's failure to pass any resolution on this matter leaves the Church, in effect, with the status quo: namely that candidates for stipendiary Ministry are accepted from the age of 21 and those for non-stipendiary from the age of 30, while at the other end of the scale candidates for either form of ministry are not 'normally' accepted for training after 55.

4 The Accreditation Sub-Committee brings a further resolution on the age of entry to Assembly in recognition that the status quo still has many dissenters and to leave things as they are creates a continuing sense of dissatisfaction.

5 The Ministries Committee is not minded to recommend that all restrictions are lifted and to leave the judgement to the assessment processes since

- (i) past experience has shown that in practice such judgements are left, in the main, to only one part of the assessment process i.e. the National Assessment Conference
- (ii) it does not seem unreasonable at the upper end of the age scale to expect that at least ten years of stipendiary service may be given. With a retiring age of 65 this means ordination at 55 and under the present process for assessment and training this will normally mean initial application before the date of the applicants 50th birthday and application for transfer before the 53rd birthday
- (iii) as there are basic educational criteria to be met before ministerial training can begin it does not seem unreasonable to set a lower age limit which presumes that these criteria can have been achieved.

6

6.1 However at a time when the church is looking for more balance in the age range of ministry and conscious of the need to create the opportunity to develop future scholars and teachers, the committee came to the conclusion that the lower age limit should be 18 in order to allow

people to give ministerial vocation serious consideration at the time when they have to make choices about life after school. 18 also allows the more academic candidates to undertake at least two degrees.

6.2 It must be stressed that an age limit on training does not preclude enquiry and the Church's encouragement and support to have begun several years earlier

7 The Ministries Committee gave serious thought to the differing present requirements for stipendiary and non-stipendiary applicants since this seems to fly in the face of the Assembly 1995 decision to remove as many differences between SM and NSM as possible.

7.1 However at the lower end of the age scale the committee believes people must be given an opportunity to settle into their chosen secular employment before they begin training for non-stipendiary ministry. This will allow time for job training and time for reflection about their vocation. Therefore the resolution brought to Assembly is for an older age for commencement of training for non-stipendiary ministry than for stipendiary. It is however lower than the present age because it is recognised that some people are indeed established in their secular career in their mid-twenties.

7.2 As with stipendiary candidates however, enquiry and the Church's support of that enquiry, may begin several years earlier.

7.3 The applicant may have engaged in the TLS course so making progressive development through lay training to training for non-stipendiary ministry

7.4 The resolutions applying to the upper age limit are identical because, although non-stipendiary ministers do not retire in the same way, District Councils are required to review their ministry at 65 and every three years thereafter.

Nominations

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.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Jessie Clare* **Secretary:** *Revd Arnold Harrison*
Revd David Jenkins, Revd Geoff Tolley, Mr John Yates, Revd Donald Hilton, Revd Chris White,
Mr Ron Webb, Revd David Tatem, Revd Ray Adams, Revd George Thomas, Mrs Mary Stacy,
Mrs Christine Meekison, Mr John Trollope

The following appointment and review groups have been established :-

- 1 Thames North - Provincial Moderator Review Group
 Convened by Mrs Wilma Frew
- 2 Appeal to General Assembly - Commission
 Convened by Revd Alasdair Walker
- 3 Secretary for Church and Society - Review Group
 Convened by Revd Bill Mahood
- 4 Secretary for Youth Work - Review Group
 Convened by Revd John Reardon
- 5 Thames North - Provincial Moderator Appointment Group
 Convened by Mrs Wilma Frew
- 6 Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness - Appointment Group
 Convened by Revd Jessie Clare
- 7 Secretary for Youth Work - Appointment Group
 Convened by Revd John Reardon

For the past five years this committee has been served magnificently by its Secretary, Arnold Harrison. It is impossible to overestimate the volume of detailed work and the number of letters involved in the task of keeping our committees staffed, as well as our representation on other bodies up to date. As Arnold moves on to his new ministry as Moderator of Synod of the Yorkshire Province we wish to place on record our very great appreciation of his service through the Nominations Committee.

COMMITTEES AND REPRESENTATIVES

- 1 The Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the immediate past Moderator and the General Secretary are members ex officio of every Standing Committee.
- 2 Officers and members appointed since Assembly 1996 are indicated by one asterisk, two asterisks denotes those whom Assembly 1997 is invited to appoint for the first time.
- 3 The date in brackets following the names indicates the 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 George Morton [2001]**

Revd David Fraser [2000]

Revd Michael Powell [1999]

Revd Hazel Barkham [1999]

Ms Janine Lawley [1998]

Mr Paul Franklin representing the Youth & Children's Committee

COMMUNICATIONS AND EDITORIAL

Convener: Mr Chris Wright [1999]

Secretary: Mrs Carol Rogers

Revd Paul Brewerton [2001]**

Mr Richard Lathaen [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

Revd Michael Forster [2001]**

Mr John East [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

Mrs Pat Stannard [2000]

Revd David Coleman [2000]

DISCIPLESHIP AND WITNESS

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell [1999]

Secretary: Revd Roger Whitehead [1998]

Miss Tina Arthur [2001]**

Revd Bob Day [2000]

Revd David Tatem [1999]

Revd Jean Forster [1998]

Mr Jim Wilkinson [1998]

Mrs Jean Antcliffe representing the Youth & Children's Committee

WINDERMERE - Advisory Group

Convener: Revd David A. L. Jenkins [1999]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Revd Frank Cochrane, Mrs Angela Hughes, Revd Jean Mortimer, Revd Stephen Thornton,

Mrs Moira Rose, Revd Alan Gaunt.**

DOCTRINE, PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Colin Thompson [2001]**

Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks [2000]

Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2001]**

Revd John Hall [2001]**

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 Philip Nevard representing the Youth & Children's Committee

ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Bob Andrews [2001]**

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Mrs Jackie Marsh [2001]**

Mr John Rees [2001]**

Ms Bethan Galliers [2000]**

Revd Peter Arthur [1999]

Revd Elizabeth Welch [extended to 1998] Revd David Fox [1998]

ECUMENICAL - Sub-Committee - OVERSEAS EXCHANGE

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes [1999]

Secretary: Secretary for International Church Relations

Mrs Virginia Becher [2001]**

Revd Ken Graham [1999]

Revd David Helyar [1998]

Revd Mia Hilborn [1998]

Mrs Muriel Sleight [1998]

Mrs Rosemary Johnston representing Youth and Children's Committee

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand [1999]

Secretary: Revd Simon Walkling [1999]

To be advised [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

Ms Lucille King [2000]

Revd John Macauley [1998]

Mrs Daphne Beale [1998]

FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

To be advised [2001]**

Mr Bill Grieve [2000]

Mrs Elizabeth Reeve [1999]

Revd Richard Wiggins [1999]

Mrs Edwina Rockey [1999]

Convener of the URC Trust

HEALTH AND HEALING Development Group - Joint Committee **

Revd Robin Hine, Revd Jim Hollyman, Mrs Jackie Ballard, Dr Margaret Moore.

INTER-FAITH RELATIONS **

Convener: Revd Bill Mahood [1998]

Secretary: Revd Brenda Willis [1998]

Mrs Linda Hopley, Miss Sarah King, Revd Jonathan Dean, Revd Molly Kenyon

MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Graham Long [2001]**

Secretary: Revd Chris Baker [1998]

Revd Martha McInnes [2001]**

Revd Brian Jolly [2001]**

Revd Tony Ruffell [2000]

Revd Graham Sweeney [2000]

Mr John Ellis [1999]

Revd Sandra Lloydlangston [1999]

Convener of National Assessment Board

MINISTRIES - Sub-Committee - ACCREDITATION

Convener: Revd Robert Way [2001]**

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell [1998]

To be advised [2001]**

To be advised [2001]**

Mr Bert Worrall [1999]

Revd John Humphreys [1999]

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Brian Evans [2001]**

Retiring 2002** Mr Alan Small, Revd Denise Megson, Miss Margaret Compton

To be advised

To be advised

To be advised

Retiring 2001

Revd Derek Wales, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Mrs Flo Humes-Dixon

Retiring 2000

Mrs Jean Barraclough, Revd Ivor Rees, Revd Reginald Rooke, Revd Howard Starr

Retiring 1999

Mrs Shirley Moss, Revd Elizabeth Scopes, Revd Graham Cook

Retiring 1998

Mrs Pat Pierce, Mrs Marva Ward, Revd Cecil White, Revd Barbara Plenderleith,
Revd Leonard Bhagwandin

PANEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES - CRCW - Sub-Section

Mrs Daphne Beale

Revd Peter Loveitt

Revd Kate McIlhagga

Revd Vaughan Jones

Mrs Ann Sutcliffe

MINISTRIES - Sub-Committee - CRCW Management

Convener: Revd Robert Vaughan Jones

Secretary: Mr John Boddy

Revd Marlene Brown

Mrs Doreen Finneron

Revd Janet Loveitt

Mr Simon Loveitt

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission **

(The Nominations for the 25 members of the Commission will be submitted to Assembly in the Supplementary Report of the Nominations Committee)

MINISTRIES - Sub-Committee - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY

Convener: Mr Michael Harrison [1999]

Secretary: Revd Peter Grimshaw [1999]

Revd Tony Wilkinson [2000]

Mrs Barbara Martin [1999]

Miss Margaret Atkinson [1999]

The Treasurer

MINISTRIES - Sub-Committee - RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING

Convener: Revd David Hannen [1998]

Secretary: Mr Clive Willis [1999]

Mrs Margaret Waller [2001]**

Mrs Sheila Woodcock [2001]**

Mr Martin Ballard [1998]

Revd Janet Sowerbutts [1998]

The Treasurer

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY LTD - Management Committee

Convener: Revd David Hannen

Secretary: Mr Clive Willis

Ass. Secretary: Mr Ken Meekison

Mr John Gilbey

Mr George Anderson

Revd Janet Sowerbutts

Revd George Hooper

Mr Martin Ballard

Mrs Barbara Williams

Mr Brian Vaughan

Mr Brian Gould

Mr Norman Fabb

Mrs Pauline Mewis

Mr Bob Carruthers

Mr Clem Flank

Mr Graham Stacy

Mr Malcolm Summers

ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Mrs Wilma Frew [1998]

Secretary: Office & Personnel Manager

Provincial Representative for forthcoming Assembly

Provincial Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting by Provincial Representative for Assembly two years hence.

Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly

NOMINATIONS

Convener: Revd Jessie Clare [1998]

Secretary: Mr Desmond Curry [2001]**

Provincial Representatives

I Revd David Jenkins

II Revd Geoff Tolley

III Revd Angus Duncan

IV Mr Brian Evans

V Revd Chris White

VI Mr Simon Rowntree

together with the immediate past Moderator.

VII Revd David Tatem

VIII Revd Ray Adams

IX Revd George Thomas

X Mrs Mary Stacy

XI Mrs Christine Meekison

XII Mr John Trollope

ASSEMBLY PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Johansen-Berg [1999]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

To be advised [2001]**

Revd John Humphreys [1999]

General Secretary

Revd Jean Forster [2000]

Convener of Welfare Sub-Comm.

Mrs Joan Staples [2000]

The Treasurer

WELFARE -Sub-Committee

Convener: Mrs Shirley Paton [1999]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Sutcliffe [1999]

Secretary: Revd Dr Catherine Middleton [1998]

To be advised [2001]**

Dr Iain Frew [2000]

Revd Ron Forster representing Youth and Children's Committee

Dr Tony Jeans [2001]**

Dr Jean Butler [1999]

Revd Sandra Dears [2000]

Revd Chris Warner [1999]

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Stephen Thornton [1998]

Secretary: Mrs Jean Antcliffe [1999]

To be advised [2001]**

Revd Philip Nevard [2000]

Revd Brenda Plenderleith [1999]

FURY Chair

Revd Margaret Collins [2001]**

Miss Kathryn Swift [1999]

Mrs Elizabeth Crocker [1998]

FURY Council Member

Mr Simon Loveitt [2000]

Revd Ron Forster [1999]

MISSION COUNCIL

Moderator, Moderator-elect, immediate past Moderator, General Secretary, Clerk, Legal Advisor, Deputy General Secretary, Conveners of Standing Committees (except the Pastoral Committee), Convener of the Advocacy and Stewardship Task Group, 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, Mr Peter Clarke, Revd Ann Jackson
North Western:	Revd Bob Day, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw
Mersey:	Mrs Barbara Martin, Mr Wesley Woodside, Revd Peter Roche
Yorkshire:	Mr Brian Evans, Revd Duncan Wilson, Mrs Angela Hughes
East Midlands:	Mr Geoff Prentice, Revd Graham Maskery, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands:	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Patricia Nimmo
Eastern:	Mr William McVey, Mrs Elizabeth Whitten, Revd Margaret McKay
South Western:	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Mr Geoff Lunt
Wessex:	Revd Bernie Collins, Revd Jeffrey Evans, Mrs Christine Robertson

Thames North: Dr Jack Gow, Miss Marian Crack, Revd John Edwards
 Southern: Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Graham Campling
 Wales: Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, 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:	Miss Valerie Ham	Mr Desmond Davies
	Mr Tom Swan	Mr Geoffrey Lunt
	<i>To be advised [2001]**</i>	
Members of the Fund:	Revd Pam Ward	Revd Tony Spring
	Revd John Martin	Revd Dr Arthur Chadwick
	Revd Alasdair Walker [2001]**	

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Mr Desmond Davies

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Revd Tony Burnham	Mr Clem Frank	Mr Robert Hardie
Mr Harold Kempton	Mr Ron Masser	Mr William McVey
Revd Richard Wiggins	Mr Graham Stacy	Mr Clive Willis

TASK GROUP

ADVOCACY AND STEWARDSHIP - (To continue until 1st April 1999)

Convener: Revd Julian Macro

Secretary: Revd Bill Wright

Revd Christina Vivian	Mr Tom Hamilton	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	Dr David Thompson, Mrs Doreen Courtney
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Christine Craven
Methodist Conference	Revd Sheila Maxey
Baptist Union of Scotland	<i>To be advised</i>
Church of Scotland	Dr David Thompson, Revd Fleur Houston
Scottish Congregational Church	Revd Dr Stephen Orchard
Presbyterian Church of Wales	Dr David Thompson
Union of Welsh Independents	<i>To be advised</i>
Congregational Federation	Revd Chris White
World Alliance of Reformed Churches General Council	Revd Elizabeth Nash, Revd John Humphreys
WCC Assembly 1998	Revd Pat Nimmo, Ms Tina Arthur, Mr Dylan Morgan
Second European Ecumenical Assembly	Revd Tony Burnham, Mrs Wilma Frew
Eleventh Assembly of the Conference of European Churches	Revd John Waller, Mrs Sheila Brain, Mr Peter Lyth
	Revd Philip Woods, Revd John Waller, Ms Jenny Hale

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	Mr Tony Cheer **	

Churches Together in England - Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - Assembly 1997

General Secretary Convener of the Ecumenical Comm.

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

plus

Revd Peter Brain

Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow

Ms Melanie Frew

Mrs Eileen McIlveen

Revd Elizabeth Welch

Revd David Taylor

Mrs Ruth Clarke

Mr John Bradbury

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

CYTUN

Assembly

Revd Simon Copley*

The Provincial Moderator (Wales)

Revd John Joseph*

Provincial Ecumenical Officer

Revd David Wilkinson*

Council

Ms Jackie Yeomans

The Provincial Moderator (Wales)

Mr John Rhys (Synod Clerk)

Steering Committee

Provincial Ecumenical Officer

Council for Wales Consultation on Forming a United Free Church in Wales*

Revd John Humphreys

Revd James Breslin

Revd David Fox

Revd Mary Davies

Mr John Rhys

FREE CHURCH FEDERAL COUNCIL

Council

General Secretary

Mrs Rosalind Goodfellow

Revd Eric Wollaston

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Revd Peter Beaman

Mr Desmond Curry

Executive

General Secretary

Chaplaincy Board

Revd Peter Beaman, Revd Brian Holroyd, Revd Daphne Williams

Education Committee

Mr Graham Handscombe, Revd Michael Powell*

Co-options - Dr Stephen Orchard and Revd John Sutcliffe

Women's Council

Revd Janet Lees

METHODIST/URC LIAISON COMMITTEE

Revd Susan Henderson

Miss Betty Vickerton

Revd Michael Hubbard

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Revd Joe Clemson

SCOTTISH UNION TALKS*

Co-Convener:

Revd Dr Stephen Orchard

Co-Secretary:

Revd Tony Burnham

Revd Peter Arthur; Revd James Breslin, Miss Felicity Harris

3. OTHER COMMITTEES AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund

Mr Ken Meekison (Hon. Treasurer), Revd Geoffrey Satchell,

Mr Laurence Macro

Cambridge Theological Federation

Joint Academic Committee

Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee

Christian Education Movement Council

Churches Commission for Racial Justice

Churches Community Work Alliance

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd

Revd Tony Addy (Trustee)

Revd Vaughan Jones (Management Committee)

Mr Clem Frank, Mr Hartley Oldham, Mr Tegid Peregrine

Churches Main Committee

Congregational Fund Board

Joint Liturgical Group

Methodist Faith & Order Committee

National Christian Education Council

National Council of Voluntary Organisations

National Ecumenical Agency for Further Education

Scottish World Day of Prayer

Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church

United Navy, Army and Airforce Board

United Reformed Church History Society

Wharton Trust

Widows Fund of the Three Denominations

Women's World Day of Prayer

Revd Cyril Grant, Revd Dorothy Havergal-Shaw

Revd Aubrey Lewis, Revd Eric Allen

Revd Fleur Houston, Revd Nigel Uden

Revd Fleur Houston

Revd Keith Forecast, Mrs Rosemary Johnston

Revd Peter Brain

Secretary for Ministries, Revd Kevin Swaine

Mrs Molly Glen

Revd Florence Frost-Mee

Secretary for Ministries, Revd Dennis Friend

Revd John Paul, Revd Hamish MacLagan

Revd Tony Burnham

Mrs Mary Davies, Revd Peter Jupp, Mrs Carol Rogers

Revd Eric Wollaston (Dr David Thompson also serves)

Mrs Betty Taylor

Mr Ken Meekison, Revd Geoffrey Satchell

Mr Laurence Macro

Mrs Josie Owens

4. COLLEGE AND SCHOOL GOVERNORS AND COUNCILS

Aberystwyth (Memorial College)

Bishops Stortford College

Cambridge Theological Federation

Caterham School, Board of Governors

Cheshunt Foundation

Eltham College/Walthamstow Hall

Homerton College Trustees

Mansfield College Ministerial

Training Committee

Milton Mount Foundation, Governors

Northern College

Queen's College, Birmingham

St. Andrew's Hall Selly Oak

Silcoates School, Governor

Taunton School

Tettenhall College Governors

Wentworth Milton Mount, Governor

Westhill College Foundation Governor

Westhill College Foundation Trustees

Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris, Mr Leslie Jones

Revd Margaret McKay

Convener Westminster College Governors

Secretary Training Committee

Revd David Helyar

Mr Desmond Davies, Revd Michael Dunford

Mrs Jean Garwood

Mr John Chaplin, Revd Margaret McKay, Mrs Elisabeth Jupp,

Dr David Thompson

Revd Julian Macro, Revd Noel Shepherd

Revd Colin Thompson

Miss Margaret Canning (to 31.12.97), Mrs Gwen Hall*

Revd Peter Grimshaw*, Revd George Thomas*

Revd Erica Beglin, Mr David Butler (from 1.1.98)*

Revd Dr. Lesley Husselbee, Revd John Marsh,

Mrs Helen Brown, Mr Jim Wilkinson*

Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee

Revd Gwen Collins, Mrs Haro Horsfield

Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, Revd Sheila Maxey*

Dr Clyde Binfield

Revd Ray Adams

Dr William Blakeley, Mr Roddy McKenzie

Mrs Melanie Hawley, Mrs Doris Margetts

Revd George Thomas*

Dr Richard Jurd

Mr J E Payne, Prof Robert Steel, Revd Eric Lord

5. COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

Revd Tony Burnham

Ms Bethan Galliers

Revd Philip Woods*

Mr Wallie Warmington

6. CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp

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

Mr Graham Stacy*

Revd John Pugh

REPRESENTATIVES APPOINTED BY COMMITTEES**Other Committees and National Organisations**

BBC Central Religious Advisory Committee

Church Hymnary Trust

Churches' Commission on Overseas Students

Churches' Consortium on Industrial Mission

Churches' Council for Health and Healing

Churches' Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting

Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations

Churches' Group on Funeral Services
at Cemeteries and Crematoria

Council of URC Boy's Brigade Companies

Guides' Religious Advisory Panel

International Bible Reading Association

Media Awareness Project

Scout & Guide Fellowship (URC)

Scouts' Religious Advisory Group

Revd Tony Burnham

Mr G R Barr, Mrs Fiona Smith

Revd Kevin Swaine

Revd Tony Ruffell

Revd Robin Hine

Revd Jim Hollyman*

Mrs Connie Bunker

Mrs Carol Rogers

Revd Brenda Willis

Revd Dr John Parry

Revd Dr Peter Jupp

Revd Sally Thomas

Revd Michael Rees, Mr Paul Franklin

Mrs Susan Walker

vacant

Mrs Carol Rogers

Mr Paul Franklin

Mr D Marshall-Jones

RESOLUTION 35**Nominations**

Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 120 to 127 of the Book of Reports subject to the additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report before Assembly.

Pastoral

The purpose of the Pastoral Committee is to 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, it also deals 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 reports in general terms only, directly to the General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd John Johansen-Berg* **Secretary:** *Revd John Waller*
Miss Ruth Archer, Revd Tony Burnham, Revd Jean Forster
Revd John Humphreys, Mrs Joan Staples and the Convener of The Welfare Sub-Committee

1 From time to time ministers and their families find themselves in situations which overwhelm them. Some of these cases come to the Pastoral Committee which gives help as far as it is able. The Committee again draws the attention of the Church to the work of the Provincial Moderators in the care of ministers. Its own contribution is made in partnership with them.

2 During the year the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service has come into full operation.

All ministers have been told of its availability. It is good to be able to report the existence of this extra confidential support at a time when stress in the ministry is a continuing factor.

3 Ruth Archer completes her term of service on the Committee at this Assembly. The Church is in her debt for the personal and professional skills which she has brought to the work.

Welfare Sub-Committee

Convener: *Mrs Shirley Paton* **Secretary:** *Mrs Judy Stockings*

4 The work of the sub-committee has continued satisfactorily and it has been able to give assistance to ministers and their families, especially those who fall outside the remit of other areas of Church welfare.

5 The scope of the Gray Bequest has been widened to allow birth grants for children born into stipendiary ministers' families as from 1 January 1996, and ministers have been informed of this. In 1996 £3,400 was paid in respect of these grants.

6 It has also been decided that payments from the Fowler Scholarship Fund, which assists with provision of school equipment should no longer be

means tested. The Fund is open to all stipendiary ministers for assistance, especially at times of school change. In 1996 a total sum of £7,500 was made available.

7 Christmas gifts were given to 556 widow/ers at a total cost of £33,180 and further assistance from other welfare funds of £3,100 was given to 13 other ministers or their dependants.

8 The work of this sub-committee is considerably helped by the guidance of the Provincial Moderators and this is much appreciated.

Training

The Committee will encourage and enable the integration of the training of the whole people of God and to this end will seek to influence the philosophy and methodology of learning; the core content of courses; and the 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 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.

Committee Members

Convener: *The Revd Dr John Sutcliffe* **Committee Secretary:** *The Revd Dr Catherine Middleton*
Mrs Jean Butler, Revd Sandra Dears, Mr Iain Frew, Revd Elizabeth Nash, Revd John Proctor,
Revd Chris Warner, (in attendance: Mr John Quilter, Mrs Muriel Garrow,
Revd Christine Craven and Revd Ken Howcroft (Methodist Church)
Staff Secretary: *The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee*

1 Ministry and Education

1.1 Ministers have a key role in the teaching ministry of the church. Ministers are "teaching elders". We want them to be equipped to take their place in the front line of the church's ministry of teaching and raising awareness.

2 Assessment of Candidates

2.1 The Committee has received a thorough report on the assessment of ordinands during their training. Its recommendations are currently being discussed with the Ministries Committees, Colleges and Provinces.

3 Plan for the Training of Ministers

3.1 We anticipate that there will continue to be diversity in the education of ministers. Some ordinands already have theological degrees when they are accepted, some are most suited to take a post graduate course. The Committee believes that ordinands should be given the richest possible opportunity to learn and develop skills and potential. There will be no dull uniformity. The routes through learning in ministry will be varied. It is important for the candidate and for the church that before they are accepted as ordinands, candidates should be able to demonstrate their readiness for learning and their ability and eagerness to learn. The Committee is of the view that minimum entrance qualifications should be re-established.

4 Ecumenical Ministerial Training Strategy Group

4.1 The Assembly agreed last year that the Church would participate in this Group and that a report should be made annually via the Training Committee to the Assembly.

4.2 The Aims of the Group are:

- a) To exchange information
- b) To establish what are the existing policies of the various Churches and what common policy exists between them.
- c) To foster ecumenical collaborative working between providers of theological education in the regions.

4.3 The Group has met on four occasions. Agenda items, in which the United Reformed Church has a central interest, have included the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme; the review of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry; the over-provision of theological college places; and possible future patterns for training ministers.

4.4 Membership of the Group is the Baptist Union, Black Led Churches, Church of England, Congregational Federation, Methodist Church, Moravian Church, Roman Catholic Church and the United Reformed Church.

4.5 The Group is working towards a pattern of provision for lay and ministerial education which will be based in a number of ecumenical regional

centres which will offer a rich variety of courses delivered in-house and in local churches on a part-time, full-time and mixed basis and with the possibility also of open learning. The group's aim is to ensure that Churches that need to make decisions can do so in the light of ecumenical discussion.

5 Inspection of Colleges and Courses

5.1 Together with the Congregational Federation, the United Reformed Church undertook a review of the Ministerial training programme at Mansfield College, Oxford in March 1997. The findings of this Inspection will be included in the 1998 General Assembly Report.

5.2 The Ecumenical Inspection of the South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE), under the leadership of the Revd Canon June Osbourne, Chief of Staff to the Bishop of Salisbury, took place during the first half of 1997. Representatives of the Methodist Church and the URC are included in the team of five. Mr Barry Wakefield represents the URC, the sole lay person in the team. The Institute, which was formed in 1994 out of a merger of the Southwark Ordination Course and the Canterbury School of Ministry, has centres in Southwark, Rochester and Canterbury.

6 Northern College Manchester Review

6.1 Northern College Manchester and the Manchester Christian Institute are currently undergoing review and major review of the structure of the Northern Theological Federation and the Local Ecumenical Partnership are also taking place. The Training Committee is heartened by the way in which the various colleges of the Federation are beginning to work more closely together and to plan for a future in line with the vision of the Ecumenical Initial Ministerial Training Strategy Group.

6.2 We welcome the Revd Dr John Ponnusamy from Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, South India to the staff at Northern College as one of the CWM Special Ministry posts. John has already made a valuable contribution to Luther King House.

7 Non-Stipendiary Ministry Training

7.1 Twelve students entered into training for the non-stipendiary ministry last autumn, a small increase on the previous year's number.

7.2 The 1996-97 academic year started with 36 students in training, each of the twelve Provinces having at least one student in training. About 15 of these students are expected to complete their training in 1997.

8 Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme

8.1 During the past year we have been involved with representatives of nine southern Dioceses of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in setting up this new Course. It will take the place of the Southern Diocesan ministerial Training Course which was based in the former theological college building in Salisbury. This will also be the base of the new Course which is fortunate to have such good library facilities available to it. A new charitable trust has been formed on which the United Reformed Church is represented by the Revd Derek Wales. The Revd Dr John Sutcliffe is a member of the Board of Studies and the Revd Stephen Thornton is a part-time member of staff.

9 Post Ordination Training

9.1 We propose that post ordination training should be set in an agreed national framework, partly provided by the Provinces and partly by the Colleges. To facilitate this, those ordinands who are placed on ecumenical part-time Courses will also be linked to a College. There will also be an agreement signed by the minister, local church, District and Province all of whom would need to be party to the post ordination training package. Training should address both the personal needs of the Minister and the needs of the church as they are set out in the pastoral profile. The Training Committee hopes to bring a resolution to next year's General Assembly based on the following criteria:

- a) The minister - commitment to the programme in ensuring s/he attends the whole projected programme and complete the associated reading. Only in special circumstances would it be possible for a minister to study for a higher degree while on POT. Generally speaking, the training will focus on the practical issues of ministry. Commitment to attend the Provincial Summer School is also desirable.
- b) The Local Church - acceptance that time, including Sundays, will be needed for the programme. Agreement to pay travel costs to training.
- c) The District - to provide an appropriate Pastoral Adviser and ensure that the local church and Minister keep their agreement.
- d) The Province - to arrange 3/4 days/evenings of local training and to ensure the support of the Provincial Director of Post Ordination Training.
- e) The College or Course which provided part of the initial training.

10 Continuing Ministerial Education

10.1 The Training Committee will be inviting representatives of Colleges and Courses and Provincial Trainers to meet, as a matter of urgency to consider how best the needs of Continuing Ministerial Education might be met, to cost any proposal and to report to the Training Committee.

10.2 As was reported last year, the Training Committee believes that life long Continuing Ministerial Education is at the heart of a Church equipped to participate in the Mission of God and to address the needs of individuals and the issues of a plural and changing society.

10.3 In particular we believe that Ministers and Church Related Community Workers should be firmly committed to keeping abreast of new thinking and methodologies in order that the whole people of the church may be equipped with the new insights and may be able to respond positively to the challenges that come to those willing discover the ever new things God is doing.

11 Training of Lay Preachers

11.1 The valuable part that lay preachers play in the life of the United Reformed Church has led the Training Committee to review how they are trained and how better to equip them and and the Church in their role.

11.2 The *Exploring the Faith* Course will finish at the end of June, 1998. We are pleased to hear that many students on this course are trying very hard to complete their work by this time. We are very grateful to Mr Andrew Armour who gives his time two days a week to administer this Course.

11.3. We commend the *Training for Learning and Serving* Course as the main programme for training Lay Preachers. This is a two-year foundation Course, plus an additional "Worship and Preaching" year. We also recognise (with United Reformed Church additions), the *Milton Keynes Christian Training Course*, and, for those in Methodist/United Reformed Church Local Ecumenical Partnerships, we accept, (also with United Reformed Church additions), the *Faith and Worship* Course.

11.4. Some people, however, are reluctant to begin a major Course commitment without gaining some experience in Lay Preaching before they decide to join a three-year Course. We have sought advice from the Methodist Church which has a significant record of training and recognising Lay

Preachers. We commend to those responsible in District Councils (in some instances Lay Preaching Commissioners, in others District Councils, the Pastoral Committee etc) the practice of an apprenticeship system. This would mean attaching a person who has expressed interest in Lay Preaching to a small team composed of two or three Lay Preachers and one Minister. The candidate would accompany preachers in his or her team and would begin by taking only part of a Service. This might be prepared in partnership and be the subject of conversation afterwards. It is hoped that, in this way, a candidate would gradually build up his or her skills and would hear helpful critical comment on his or her performance. The District Council would not recommend the candidate to the *Training for Learning and Serving* Course until after a report had been received from the Apprenticeship Group. We suggest apprenticeship as an introduction to Lay Preaching and to assessment; it will not of itself lead to recognition by the Church. That will remain dependent on a candidate successfully completing a programme of Lay Preacher training, such as the *Training for Learning and Serving* programme.

11.5 **In-Service Training for Lay Preachers** has not been given much attention to date, but, like other areas of service within the Church, we encourage all to undertake continuing education. In some cases, Lay Preaching groups organise training sessions on a regular basis, and these are well attended by Lay Preachers, but in many cases, although training courses are available locally, or nationally, (including the Windermere Centre, the Joint-Lay Preacher Conference at Selly-Oak and the Open Learning Centre distance learning courses,) there are many Lay Preachers who rarely, if ever, undergo further training after completing a course leading to National Accreditation. Even more worrying are the many Local Preachers who failed to complete their initial course and have never given themselves the opportunity to learn about new techniques or, for instance, about the fruits of Biblical scholarship, at refresher courses. The fact that they continue to preach regularly may be a rather worrying aspect of how our Church conducts its worship. At a time when there will be an increasing shortage of ordained ministers it is very important that Provincial and District Lay Preaching Commissioners ensure that training opportunities are brought to the attention of Lay Preachers within their area, and that every encouragement is given to ensure that each Lay Preacher undertakes some sort of training every three years at least. Such training might be anything from half a day's course to a week's course to a longer period of accredited study.

Resolution 36

Lively, interesting leading of worship requires a lively and well informed mind and proper training is an important way to feed a lively mind. (See 11.3)

12 Training for Learning and Serving

12.1 We are delighted with the growth of the *Training for Learning and Serving Course* in England and Wales and especially for the leadership of the Revd David A L Jenkins. In its second year, the Course now has 76 students with a good spread throughout the Country; at least 3 in each Province. We are impressed by their liveliness, enthusiasm and hard work both in their course work and in their varying areas of service. We hope to introduce our first add-on units in September 1997 including the *Worship and Preaching* course, which will be led by the Revd Sandy Mailer. Hopefully we shall be able to introduce pastoral and other courses in September 1998.

13 Youth and Children's Work Training Team

13.1 The Revd Eileen Sanderson ceased to be the National Youth and Children's Work Training Officer shortly after last year's Assembly. The management of the Youth and Children's Work Training Officers is an item in the Report of the Mission Council. The Training Committee wishes to express its gratitude for the work of the Revd

Duncan Wilson in supporting Youth Leadership Training Officers and Youth and Children's Work Training Officers during the past year.

13.2 Mr John Quilter has been appointed as full-time Youth and Children's Work Trainer for East Midlands Province from January 1997, but at the time of writing, Yorkshire has been unable to appoint an equivalent post.

14 Training of Church Related Community Workers

14.1 Owing to an unfortunate financial crisis, the training of Church Related Community Workers will transfer on 1st September, 1997, from the Salford Urban Mission to the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry. The Training Committee is considering additional recommendations for training Church Related Community Workers based on more flexible forms of training which, hopefully, might enable Church Related Community Workers to train part-time.

15 Wales

15.1 The Committee has been considering some of the special concerns that Wales has about training and the training of ministers in particular, and is working on some of these issues with the Province of Wales.

RESOLUTION 36

Entry Qualifications for Ministry

Assembly accepts the following qualifications for entry into the United Reformed Church Ministry:

- a) **GCSE (Grade A-C) in English Language or the equivalent as an essential prerequisite.**
- b) **Plus one of the following:**
 - i) **2 'A' Levels including at least one in a discursive subject**
 - ii) **3 Scottish "Highers" including at least one in a discursive subject**
 - iii) **a degree from a UK University, or equivalent.**
 - iv) **120 first degree credits from the Open University or other UK University working on a modular system.**
 - v) **An advanced GNVQ, involving a substantial quality of discursive work**

1.1 The 1996 General Assembly approved rigorous assessment criteria, submitted by the Ministries Committee, so that we now weigh with great care the personal qualities and experience of applications. The criteria require candidates to be able "to respond positively to ministerial education and training", and the accompanying report points

out that "the existing requirement of five GCSE passes is an inadequate measure of learning potential". The Training Committee now brings forward proposals for Assembly's consideration, to clarify what the church means by "ability to respond positively to ministerial education and training".

1.2 Competence in using the spoken and written language, (English or Welsh), as tools of communication is essential for ministry; competence in English is essential as a basis for serious study. A reasonable confidence in study skills and in managing a personal study programme will be needed if a student is to engage properly with the substance of a theological course. Without these various basics the work itself may be seen as an obstacle and a threat, rather than as a means for developing strengths, shaping wisdom and identifying and addressing weaknesses. We must ask ordinands to show an initial readiness and desire for learning if the training institutions are to serve the students and the church effectively. This is partly a matter of attitude and enthusiasm, partly a matter to be demonstrated.

1.3 The Training Committee is aware of the wide variation in school, college and professional qualifications that help people to develop study skills. This is the reason for the variety of paths

suggested in (b) above. In addition, one year's work on the *Training for Learning and Serving* Course (TLS) with essays assessed to an agreed standard, will exempt a candidate from one 'A' Level, but the Committee is firmly convinced the candidates should also be tested by an examining body outside the church. Thus TLS will not gain full access qualification.

1.4 A small group, convened by the Secretary for Training and taking advice from outside consultants, will adjudicate on equivalence of other qualifications and on individual cases where there is any lack of clarity.

1.5 Candidates should normally have secured their access requirements before they seek to attend a National Assessment Conference.

1.6 These qualifications should apply for those accepted for training for United Reformed Church Ministry after September, 1997

RESOLUTION 37

Minimum Qualification for Ordination

Assembly recommends that, at the end of initial ministerial training, the minimum qualification for ordination should be 240 undergraduate credit points, or the equivalent of two thirds of a first degree on a course recognised by the Training Committee, plus 800 hours of supervised and assessed placement or internship work.

2.1 It is difficult, in seeking to work towards parity of training between Stipendiary Ministers and Non-Stipendiary Ministry ordinands, to see how a four year full-time and a three year part-time course can be thought to be comparable. Diversity in learning in ministry is important; we do not envisage all ministers becoming theology graduates. So, rather than attempt to define upper limits, the

Training Committee has discussed the need for a definition of minimum qualification for entry into the URC ministry.

2.2 The above qualifications should apply to those accepted for training for United Reformed Church Ministry after September, 1997

RESOLUTION 38**Course Paths**

Assembly accepts the course paths for training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments outlined below:

to obtain the minimum requirement for ordination, candidates will follow one of the following course paths; or a mixed-mode combination.

- a) The satisfactory completion of the Introductory Course, including attendance at the "United Reformed Church ethos and History" weekend.
- b)

Full Time College based 3 or 4 years including Internship year or placements in each year.	Part Time Ecumenical course (3 years) plus one year assessed placement work, supervised by college staff in consultation with the Provincial Training Officer or Faith in Living Course (4 years)
---	--
- c) **Ordination**
- d) **followed by post Ordination training**
- e) **Continuing Ministerial Education**

3 Full-time and Part-time Learning in Ministry

3.1 In last year's report we discussed the possibility of a more flexible approach to ministerial education. In recommending that SM and NSM ordinands might train on either a full-time or a part-time Course we have kept in mind observations made at last year's Assembly. We recognise that some ordinands currently studying full-time would have been prevented from candidating because of the demanding nature of their employment had they not been able to make a break and go away to college. We also remain committed to the idea of an educated ministry which is part of the Reformed tradition.

3.2 A three or four year full-time college course remains one option for both SM and NSM candidates. Another option would be a part-time course combined with a shorter time in college. Yet another would be a three year part-time course followed by one year of supervised and assessed placement or internship experience or attendance at a four year part-time course which included the appropriate number of hours of supervised and assessed placement experience.

3.3 In making a recommendation about a candidate's training we expect the Training Board to take into account the candidate's past experience and, as far as it can be ascertained, a candidate's potential. The major consideration will be what members of the Board believe is the best educational option, bearing other factors in mind. Generally this will be full-time education for SM candidates and part-time education for NSM candidates. However, there may be educational, family or financial considerations which would lead the Board to suggest that a part-time course will be more appropriate for a stipendiary candidate and a full-time course for a non-stipendiary candidate. We are not ashamed to say that in some instances Provinces should be asked to bear in mind the costs involved. A college course and maintenance grants for an ordinand with dependents may cost between £40,000 - £60,000. If a candidate will have only ten or a dozen years of service to offer after the completion of a course, it may be a better stewardship of resources for the church to place a candidate on a part-time, rather than on a full-time course. On the other hand educational considerations pointing to the appropriateness of full-time education, might be overwhelming and finance would not enter in the reckoning.

Youth and Children's Work

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 & Society', and 'Discipleship and Witness' Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: The Revd Stephen Thornton
Mrs Liz Crocker, Mr Stephen Fidler, Revd Ron Forster, Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn, Miss Jenny Hale, Mr Simon Loveitt, Revd Philip Nevard, Revd Barbara Plenderleith, Ms Catherine Rook, Miss Kathryn Swift,

Secretary: Mrs Jean Antcliffe

OUTBURSTS OF ENERGY AND PASSION

1 Introduction

1.1 "Discussions about work with children and young people, and about training those who work with them, prompted outbursts of energy and sometimes passion from the Mission Council," writes the Revd Flora Winfield, Theological Reflector for Mission Council in October.

1.2 Energy and passion have been required by the Committee and all involved in Youth and Children's Work issues this year, for there have been many changes. With the departure of the Master Pilot we are working hard to appoint a new Development Officer/Master Pilot; we have been developing new programmes for our young people; a full review of FURY has been set in train, and the end of the NYCTO post and future plans have absorbed much time and energy.

2 Youth Work

2.1 Since the restructuring of Assembly work, we have been concerned that youth representation on Assembly Committees has been difficult for a number of reasons. We are glad that the problems are being addressed, and progress is being made.

2.2 A full review of the work of FURY is underway, and we look forward to receiving its findings in due course. Meanwhile the work of FURY Council goes ahead, and we believe that the way in which FURY prepares for General Assembly, responds to its own Assembly, and prioritises its work is a good model for other groups within the church.

2.3 FURY Assembly continues to be attended by representatives from a large number of Districts and provides over 160 young people with a chance to grapple with energy and enthusiasm over issues

of concern. This year Assembly has voiced its support of the Snowdrop Appeal, and the continued boycott of Nestlé products, and has begun a debate about the meaning of membership in the Church. FURY Council is responding to all the issues raised.

2.4 Meanwhile a splendid new video has been produced to make the work of FURY more widely known, and a worship resource book called *Reign Dance* became available in May.

2.5 The National Activity Programme continues to grow in quality. Events staged include *Blaze of Glory* (11-14), *One Step Beyond* (14+) and *Theatre Week* (14+). In all there were 15 national events over the last year. The FURY Fund enables young people who cannot afford to attend such events to come. This fund is heavily used and contributions would be gratefully received.

2.6 The Yardley Hastings Centre has seen a number of important landmarks and developments this year. Heather Whyte was welcomed as the Centre's Resource and Development Officer, and has brought a great deal of colour and experience to her new role. We have welcomed our 10,000th residential guest, and of the 50 team members to join the community over the last five years, 10 are now active candidates for the ordained ministry somewhere in the world. Outreach to schools and other youth organisations is well established with a reputation for high quality accommodation and service.

2.7 Paul Franklin continues to do sterling work encouraging, supporting and resourcing young people and those who work with them throughout the church and we are grateful for this work. Paul's present contract comes to an end at the close of this year. The Staffing Advisory Group has agreed that the post shall be continued, and a Review Group has been working to ascertain the way forward.

3 Children's Work

3.1 The issues of the URC's relationship to *Partners in Learning, Children & Communion*, and *Membership* have been shared with Discipleship and Witness Committee and the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee and progress is outlined in their reports.

3.2 Last year we welcomed the *Big Blue Planet*, a new resource of songs for worship in God's world, for young children to share with everyone. A splendid tape of many of those songs is now available and we commend it to the churches.

3.3 The Master Pilot, The Revd Derek Gardiner, ceased this work in October at a very successful day to celebrate Pilot's 60th Birthday. It was well organised and revealed dedicated leaders and children from a wide range of backgrounds, some of which are not generally touched by the church. Mission Council has agreed that new Development Officer/Master Pilot can be appointed and, with the Congregational Federation, we are actively seeking a successor to Derek.

3.4 Much time and effort has been put in by Rosemary Johnston, the Children's Advocate, to encourage, resource and support workers with children in the Provinces and Districts. Rosemary has also taken every opportunity to bring to mind the important part that children have in the life of the church. We are grateful for this work.

4 Ecumenical Links

(i) Partners in Learning

The new *Partners in Learning* was launched in May at the National Resources exhibition. We are confident about its quality as a resource for worship and learning for people of all ages and we commend it to the Churches.

(ii) The Other Churches

In both Children's and Youth Work we have very close links with our partners in the other Churches, and have cross-representation on our Committees with the Methodist Church. This enables us to learn from and with each other, to do joint work and to do work on behalf of each other.

(iii) Prayer and Music

A National Youth Prayer Day is planned for Saturday, 4 October 1997, when youth groups are invited to participate in imaginative ways. The suggested title is *Search for the Hero* and possible ideas are a prayer breakfast and an evening prayer breakfast, *The Late, Late Prayer Breakfast*.

It is proposed that over the next two or three years, there should be a major initiative of writing and creativity amongst writers and musicians in order to launch a new worship book for the millennium.

(iv) National Youth Sunday

We are still very much involved in National Youth Sunday on the last Sunday in November. The theme last year was 'Racial Justice' and this year, 'Disability'.

(v) Joint Church Youth Service Initiative

This initiative has appointed a Development Officer, Pat Maddon, and it is working towards the creation of a Pilot Ecumenical Forum which will include young people from all the denominational Youth Councils.

(vi) Scottish Churches World Exchange

This Committee, in co-operation with the Ecumenical Committee has joined The Scottish Church World Exchange which operates an exciting programme of overseas voluntary opportunities for all ages, but particularly young people. We are to publicise these opportunities throughout our networks and produce a volunteer opportunities leaflet.

(vii) Jamaica/Guyana/Cayman Islands Exchange Programme

This summer sees six of our Young people flying to the Caribbean in the final part of this exchange which has been well supported by CWM. Such events are life-changing for the young people involved.

5 Training

5.1 The Committee is aware of all the support that *Kaleidoscope* and *Spectrum* give to those who work with children and young people across the church. These initiatives have been a way for people in other aspects of the church's life to discover the work of training for work, service and development.

6 Mailings

6.1 *URCHIN, FURY Information Service* and *Pinpoint* are the key mailings which link our people throughout the church, giving support, encouragement and ideas to many. However, we know that there are many who have never even heard of them, and we ask all who will to promote the existence of and the active use of these splendid resources. Of course, we are always grateful to hear of any ways in which they can be improved for the benefit of all.

Advocacy and Stewardship

The purpose of the Task Group is:

- (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.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Julian Macro **Secretary:** Revd Bill Wright
Miss Janet Turner, Revd's Christina Vivian, David Netherwood, Stephen Thornton
Messrs Tom Hamilton, Geof Wood, Marshall Wood and Keith Webster

1 Introduction

1.1 Enabling local churches to capture a vision of what God is calling them to be and do and helping them to release the resources to make it possible, has continued to be a focal point of our work. The Vision Workshops and TRIO have been central to that task and will be joined by the GEM (Gifts Enable Mission) programme which will be launched at Assembly.

1.2 In addition we have begun the process of sharing the Five Year Plan with District Councils, have published a leaflet encouraging legacies and have suggested ways in which communication might be improved.

2 Vision Workshop

2.1 Demand for the workshops continues and while the Secretary continues to spend much of his time leading them, many more are being led by Provincial Officers and others. It has been fulfilling to see local churches produce clear plans for their life and involve a great many more of their members than were previously involved in the life of the church, in turning the plans into action. One church summed its plans up as follows:-

Together We Can

inspire worship and be more involved
enhance fellowship and meet the members and
local needs
provide a broader programme of Christian
education
encourage evangelism with confidence
surpass the financial needs of the church
enhance the appearance and usefulness
of our church buildings
strengthen links with the wider community.

We have insisted that if a Vision Workshop is to be successful then the majority of the congregation need to share in it so that they own the vision from the outset. The fact that so many more of the congregation are prepared to be involved in turning the vision into reality has proved the point.

Another church, after a Workshop, produced a Mission Statement which read as follows:-

The Church is a family of people who base their lives on Christ and His teachings, whose members grow in faith into a united, caring community and who witness their faith by working with the wider community for the benefit of others and to the glory of God.

They have set out to achieve this by ongoing programmes, for people of all ages, of:

- Worship
- Prayer
- Christian Education
- Fellowship
- Pastoral Care
- Community Care

Teams comprising Elders, members and adherents have been formed under each of the headings and been given a clear sense of purpose and responsibilities.

2.2 We look to the day when every church has a clear vision of what God is calling it to be and do in the building of His Kingdom.

3 TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours)

3.1 This programme continues to have a dramatic effect where ever it is used properly and though a little less than half of our churches have used it, stories of its success continue.

Resolution 39

There is no doubt that many churches which have greatly increased their income from direct giving have been given new heart to go on and dare to ask what God's purpose for them is.

4 GEM (Gifts Enable Mission)

4.1 This programme will be available at Assembly and is designed for churches which have completed a Vision Workshop or a similar exercise. The purpose is to challenge members of the congregation to give of their Time, Gifts and Money so that the vision captured at the Workshop can become a reality. We had hoped to produce this programme ecumenically although that has not

proved possible it can be used in ecumenical situations. We want to emphasise that GEM is not for churches which simply want to improve their financial situation, they should use TRIO.

5 Legacies - A Place In Your Will

5.1 This leaflet will be distributed through Provincial Offices. We hope that every church will draw members attention to the availability of the leaflet and encourage them to give serious consideration to the church when they make their Will. The church, both locally and nationally, has cause to be grateful to many people who have given so generously in this way.

RESOLUTION 39

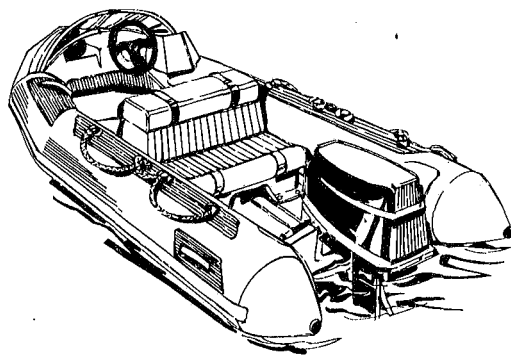
Rededication Sunday

Assembly asks local churches to observe the first Sunday in October (or other convenient date) each year as a Rededication Sunday in the United Reformed Church.

1 Every Sunday provides us with the opportunity to renew our commitment to Christ and his Church but we believe it would be good to have a special day of rededication each year. In the light of the proposals to mark the 25th Anniversary of the United Reformed Church, we suggest that each year the first Sunday in October be set aside as a day of rededication in the United Reformed Church because it is the day nearest the date when the URC came into being. This will provide the

opportunity to focus our rededication, to celebrate our unity and tradition, and challenge us all to new commitment and service. We realise that there are churches which already have a regular day of rededication and this is not intended to make them change the date but rather that on one Sunday each year we should all think on what it is to be part of the URC, and face the challenge of grasping the exciting opportunities before us.

Appendices



General Assembly 1997

Appendix 1

Annexes On Human Sexuality

WARNING: Please remember throughout this annex that only 29% of the churches responded directly to the General Secretary by the due date.
Since 71% did not respond, the statistical findings alone cannot be taken as representative of all the local churches in the United Reformed Church.
 February 1997

Annex I: totals of responses from local churches figures taken from the full statistical (Province by Province) report, 'What was said'.

A Participation of churches

Table 1 Response of Churches

	Total Churches	Church Responses	%
Totals	1,768	513	29%

The Provinces with the highest responses were North West with 64 (41%) and Southern with 75 (40%). Over a third of churches responded in Thames North Province (56). Under a third responded in South Western (44), Northern (39) and East Midlands (32) Provinces. Over a quarter responded in Mersey (27), West Midlands (39) and Eastern Provinces (40). Under a quarter responded in Wessex Province (40). In Yorkshire and Wales Provinces, 21% of their churches responded (27 and 30).

Table 2 Membership of responding churches

	Total Membership	Membership of Responding churches	% of Membership
Totals	102,582	43,452	42%

Responding local churches contained 42% of the overall URC membership which was higher than the number of churches responding (29%) reflecting the greater response rate from larger churches. This was the pattern in all the Provinces. The variation between Provinces corresponded closely to that shown in Table 1.

Table 3 Number of meetings

	1	2	3	4+	Several	Not stated	Total
Totals	296	90	31	10	49	37	513

Over half the churches (58%) held one meeting to discuss the issue of Human Sexuality (296). 36% held two or more meetings - with 90 holding 2 meetings, 31 (6%) three meetings, 10 four or more meetings and 49 holding several meetings. 37 churches did not state how many meetings they held.

Table 4 Type of Meetings

	Elders	Church	Special	Combination	Not stated	Total
Totals	21	242	66	131	53	513

Nearly half the churches (47%) called Church meetings (242) to discuss the Human Sexuality issues. Over a quarter (131) organised a combination of Elders, Church and/or Special meetings, which in some churches included House Groups. 66 convened Special meetings. 53 (11%) did not state what type of meetings they held.

Table 5 Author of Reports

	Minister	Secretary	Joint	Others	Not stated	Total
Totals	155	278	14	11	55	513

The Secretary reported on the discussions in over half the churches (278) and the Minister in under a third of churches (155). Yorkshire and Wales were the two Provinces where more Ministers reported on the proceedings than Secretaries. In a few churches both the Secretary and Minister wrote a joint report (14). Other Members, including Elders and a Treasurer, wrote the report in 11 (2%) of churches. 10% of churches did not state who was the author of their reports.

B Resolutions and Voting

Although Mission Council advised against voting on formal resolutions, some were moved; some other votes were taken, to agree a statement or report, etc. Some churches used a questionnaire.

Table 6

	A Used a Resolution	No Resolution	Withdrew Resolution	Total	B Used a Questionnaire	Voted at the meeting	No vote at all
Totals	81	428	4	513	81	156	276
Percentage	16%	83%	1%	100%	16%	30%	54%

A Out of the 81 resolutions passed, 70 were against calling practising homosexuals to the ministry. Of these, 10 churches used the 'Medway resolution'. 7 churches in the Sussex East district used their district's resolution.

B Under a third voted on their resolutions or statements (156). 276 churches took no soundings at all. 81 (16%) churches used a questionnaire; most of these were based on the questions asked in the Paper E of the Task Group papers. Churches used questionnaires extensively in only two Provinces - 53% of churches in North West Province and 41% in West Midlands Province. 20% of churches used them in Eastern Province. In other Provinces, very few churches used questionnaires to assess their members' opinions.

C Acceptance of homosexuals as Members, Leaders and Ministers

These figures are derived by Dr Winter from letters and reports of meetings as well as from resolutions or local questionnaire findings. The full report sets out the basis for this result.

Table 7.1 Acceptance of Homosexuals as Members

	Yes	No	Split	If celibate	No Vote	Not stated	Total
Totals	178	18	30	59	18	210	513

Over a third of churches responding (35%) were willing to accept homosexuals as members, with a further 12% willing to accept celibate homosexuals. In contrast, only 18 (3%) were unwilling to accept homosexuals as members. However, 41% did not state their views; no reasons were given.

Table 7.2 Acceptance of Homosexuals as Leaders

	Yes	No	Split	If celibate	No Vote	Not stated	Total
Totals	62	87	58	76	19	211	513

62 churches (12% of those responding) were willing to elect homosexuals to leadership roles, with a further 15% willing to elect celibate homosexuals as leaders. A higher percentage of churches (17%) were not willing to elect them (85) compared with only 4% (19) not willing to accept them as members. Again, 41% did not state their views with no reasons given.

Table 7.3 Acceptance of Homosexuals as Ministers

	Yes	No	Split	If celibate	No Vote	Not stated	Total
Totals	48	259	64	97	19	26	513

In contrast to membership and leadership (Tables 7.1 & 7.2), only 5% of responding churches (26) did not state their views.

48 churches (9% of those responding) were willing to call a practising homosexual to the ministry. A further 97 (19%) were willing to call a celibate homosexual. Half the churches were not willing to call a practising homosexual as their minister (259). It is possible that some of those churches which did not state their views on leadership would also be against electing homosexuals to leadership roles.

PS Much more analysis would be required to discover any correlation between the findings in the sections, e.g. whether having more meetings led to a different result on acceptance or whether the type of meeting is reflected in the level of acceptance. The full report, 'What was said', gives the figures Province by Province.

Annex 2: cross-section of responses from local churches

In their main report, the Task Group declared that the use of quotations from the submissions is **essential** because, although the proportion of churches responding was low (under 30%) and therefore statistically unreliable as a quantitative survey, there is no reason to believe that the responses received do not contain the full range of views held by people throughout the church.

♦ *NB direct quotations from responses are printed in this style (italics plus 'bullet pointer').*
These few extracts illustrate the range of responses from over 500 local churches in different Provinces, many of which are reproduced in the published Task Group report, 'What was said'. This abridged version is based on Dr Winter's work in categorising the responses.

Participation of churches

Positive and negative experiences of discussions were reported:

- ♦ *If it is possible to sum up: the meeting grasped that we are talking about a complex issue, and was grateful for the opportunity to reflect in the way we did. A number of those present could see a need for further discussion and clarification, including what the real 'yes' or 'no' issues were. For a substantial part of the meeting, it was unprecedented in their experience to consider the matters that were before us. For some, their "position" shifted as a result of the discussion, due to being better informed. It is not possible to say that the meeting was of one mind even if we were one in spirit.*
- ♦ *I wish the church would spend as much time and energy on other matters as it has on this. Hopefully, the matter will be resolved at the next Assembly because if not, much damage will have been done.*
- ♦ *It has been an interesting matter for discussion, but provoked one of the most difficult incidents that I have ever had to cope with since I was ordained! In brief, it led to the resignation of two elders and the leader of junior church. In a sense the debate was a catalyst, and the real issue was about rigid biblical literalist interpretation.*

Opinions correlate with age and gender:

- ♦ *Our discussions were friendly, frank and open. The difference in opinion seemed to be part of the 'generation gap' - it tended to be our younger members who supported the freedom to be homosexual in all aspects of life.*
- ♦ *We found the women much more willing to discuss what they read, even if they disagreed with it, than the men were, many of whom felt quite 'threatened' by the whole subject.*

Many churches found the sensitive issue of Human Sexuality almost too difficult to discuss:

- ♦ *The meeting at which the issue of 'Human Sexuality' was discussed was poorly attended, in part because some members deliberately stayed away, not wishing to be involved in even discussing the subject. In addition there were others who were upset by the subject matter within the meeting, including one of our elderly members who found the subject so distasteful that she had to be accompanied home while the meeting was still in progress.*
- ♦ *However, both elders and church meetings were concerned that some of our members, because of age or cultural background, were unable to take part in the discussion at all because it was a taboo subject. At church meeting it was proposed that the statement be sent along with a letter saying that this was the case.*

Some saw this as a main factor for poor attendance:

- ♦ *One or two people attended that meeting specifically for the discussion, but I fear others avoided it for the same reason: the overall attendance was the smallest for any Church Meeting this decade!*

Comments and challenges on the nature of Biblical authority

- ♦ *Finally we agreed that the portrayal of homosexuals in the media has built up a stereotype that many can not accept. The more the church can do to break down this stereotype the easier it will be for people to accept homosexual ministers. Biblical interpretation was agreed to be the biggest factor and perhaps the area where there needs to be more discussion.*
- ♦ *All biblical references to homosexuals are negative.*
- ♦ *We have been prepared to accept women in ways very different from those accepted in the Middle East when the Bible was written, so why not homosexuals?*
- ♦ *We are saddened and disappointed by those who use the authority of the Bible as a weapon to attack those of a different opinion than their own. The Bible is a tool for healing the wounds of God's people not an instrument of anger for inflicting hurt and division.*
- ♦ *There was considerable debate on the definition of 'sin' and the perceived conflict between Biblical teaching and contemporary morality. However, it was accepted that if a Christian life is to be founded on the tenets of the Ten Commandments, any homosexual activity must be perceived as turning away from God i.e. a sin.*

Points made in sympathy with homosexuality

Homosexuality is not sinful, but part of creation; we should celebrate diversity:

- ♦ *We were unanimous in affirming that sexuality is about more than procreation. We named the expression of love, tenderness, and physical desire and other reasons for engaging in sex.*
- ♦ *We were of the opinion that homosexual orientation is not, in itself, sinful and is not a barrier to being a Christian. Human relationships should show love, care and support of one partner to another and should not be destructive in any way. We could not find any reasons why this criteria should not apply to both heterosexual and homosexual relationships*
- ♦ *God is the Creator of all things and the variety of human beings is part of his creative intention. Homosexuals are no exception. They are not God's mistakes.*

Homosexuals bring gifts and talents to the wider community (the arts, caring professions, etc.):

- ♦ *There seems to be in this country a tendency for some people (men) to have a proclivity to be feminine. It is recognised that there are men and women, especially in the arts, often particularly gifted, including many eminent names, who are openly confessed as practising homosexuals. The contributions they make to society through their artistic ability is both acknowledged and appreciated.*

Homosexual men are less threatening to women:

- ♦ *It was pointed out that some heterosexual men were a considerably greater threat to women than homosexuals.*

There has been persecution of homosexuals by churches:

- ♦ *The meeting agreed that very few people would have admitted being homosexual in previous generations because they would have been persecuted. But society has changed and become much more tolerant. Why should the church not be more tolerant.*

Homosexual clergy are nothing new:

- ♦ *There have been practising homosexual clergy since the church began. For being honest about their sexual orientation candidates are turned away, but honesty is a good quality in a candidate and we should be grateful for such honesty.*

Attitudes change over time:

- ♦ *In summary, the meeting was inclined towards a liberal point of view recognising the changing attitudes of both society and the church to many other controversial issues over the years such as divorce, remarriage, the roles of females in ministry and cohabitation of heterosexuals.*

Homosexual and heterosexual relationships should not be treated with different rules:

- ♦ *The majority did not consider homosexuality to be sinful but were quite clear that it should be judged by the same standards as heterosexuality, e.g. that it was sinful if it was promiscuous, or hurt others.*

Ministers should be discreet:

- ♦ *I sense the feeling was that if ministers said nothing about their sexuality (or nothing for several years) there would be no difficulty, but if they made an issue of their being gay or lesbian, practising or not, they would find it difficult to find churches that would call them.*

Arguments against homosexual practice

The argument that it is against Biblical and Church teaching and therefore God's wishes was put in various ways, e.g.:

- ♦ *Our elders are of the opinion that homosexuals are not born as such. The elders interpretation of Biblical instructions on the subject is that homosexual acts are contrary to God's wishes. As parents they would find it difficult to accept one of their own children's admission as being gay or lesbian.*
- ♦ *... URC, after prayerful discussion with regard to Scripture and the traditions of the church, believe that no practising homosexuals be ordained to the Ministry of the URC.*

Homosexuality is unnatural. The only natural relationship is heterosexual marriage. All sexual relationships outside marriage are therefore wrong, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

- ♦ *Having discussed the issue in question and whilst not against genuine homosexuality, the church fellowship at ... believes that the ordination of homosexual men and women is not within God's purpose for the leadership of His church.*

The so-called 'Medway resolution', first passed by that District Council and circulated nationwide, was used with minor variations by 16 local churches in different Provinces; the main argument of that resolutions reads:

- ♦ *We believe that the expression of human sexuality outside the bounds of faithful marriage between a woman and a man is contrary to our discernment of the Word of God, to the Basis of Union and to the general ethos of joining churches: therefore we will not knowingly concur in the call of ministers of word and sacrament whose sexuality finds its expression outside these stated bounds.*

Homosexual relationships are against the vows of Ordination:

- ♦ *A minister of the church, although, like every other human being in the congregation, not perfect, is nevertheless looked up to, and expected to lead a life worthy of his calling. This congregation felt it could not call as minister a practising homosexual. Therefore it cannot agree to the training of such people as ministers.*
- ♦ *We cannot visualise candidates for ministry who practise same-sex genital activity, as honestly making their vows accepting the scriptures as rules of conduct and faith and a holy life.*

Worry about the influence on young people of an inappropriate role model:

- ♦ *As regards application for ministry, the elders feel that a practising homosexual in a position of influence could adversely affect the conduct of young persons and as such would not be acceptable to ... URC.*
- ♦ *Considerable concern was expressed at the influence a practising homosexual Minister could have on both children and adolescents in veering them towards homosexual relationships at a highly formative period of their lives. A Minister has to get close to the children in a congregation and occupies a considerable position of trust. Brigade and Junior Church leaders would be worried by the presence of any known homosexual and would be even more watchful for child abuse.*

There is concern for the church's reputation:

- ♦ *What would the villagers say if a Minister and his/her partner moved into the manse?*

There is a basic repugnance:

- ♦ *Others held the view that homosexual practice was not a Christian option.*
- ♦ *As was expected the subject has proved to be controversial and also distasteful to several of our members.*
- ♦ *Only a small minority can bring themselves to discuss any matter of a sexual nature with their own families, let alone in meetings. They are mostly rural, conservative in attitudes and far removed from urban sophistication where the gay movement is active.*

Flaunting of homosexuality is counterproductive:

- ♦ *We find it difficult to understand why there seems to be this need for homosexuals to 'come out' and declare their sexual orientation. It seems to be the thing for them to tell us of their orientation on TV, radio and at gatherings etc. Some members wondered 'are they trying to shock us or are they afraid?' If a homosexual is celibate why do they want to tell us; is it a kind of release?*

Churches should not pander to politically correct views:

- ♦ *Ministers and elders should set a high standard in Christian lifestyle which is not consistent with active homosexuality. The church must be aware of abdicating its God-given moral authority to the prevailing tide of politically correct opinion.*

General Issues

There is widespread anxiety that the issue of ordaining homosexuals will split the URC; a small selection of many comments:

- ♦ *The only consensus view was that to pose the question and force a vote would split the church.*
- ♦ *Concern was expressed that whatever decision the URC reaches at the end of the debate, there is a great danger of splitting the Church. Concern was also expressed that while the Church should be prepared to make a stand on certain issues, what happens to existing Ordained Ministers, or even existing Ordained Elders if the decision of the URC is not to accept homosexuals.*
- ♦ *Every denomination that has voted on this issue has been divided into so-called 'winners' and losers'. No matter how the United Reformed Church decides about whether practising homosexual persons may be ordained, we too will be split.*

Threats to leave URC were expressed:

- ♦ *If it became the policy of the URC to accept practising homosexuals for Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, a warning was given that some members would vote with their feet.*
- ♦ *The membership of the URC is declining and on the Human Sexuality question many voices are being raised for leaving the URC if homosexuals / lesbians are allowed into 'role model' positions in the Church.*

Pleas for tolerance came from several quarters:

- ♦ *In the light of our experience of a homosexual minister, we hope that the United Reformed Church will not set up barriers to the ministry of men and women on the grounds of their sexuality.*

Some felt this will run and run:

- ♦ *This is a debate that will continue and whatever resolution is made at the General Assembly there will remain a potential problem at local church level by virtue of the way the URC works in respect of accepting persons into membership, election of elders and the calling of ministers.*

Some general comments on policy

It is churches against homosexuality who request the URC to stand firm:

- ♦ *The church is called upon to make a decision. Is it going to accept the Lordship of Christ, or is it going to follow the way of the world where the prevailing pressure of present day culture is that any kind of sexual relationship goes? If we say we believe that Christ comes to us promising his grace is sufficient for us, no matter what difficulties we have to face, how can we fly in the face of that and go the way of the world?*
- ♦ *The meeting felt it was essential that the United Reformed Church should make its position known unequivocally, and avoid the confusion that has been caused by the Methodist Conference decision.*

Others urged that no vote/no action should be taken, to give more time and space:

- ♦ *It was felt that the discussion which had taken place was only a 'starter' and no vote should be taken on any aspect of the matter. We were left with the questions as to whether the homosexual tendency is inborn and also whether the sexual act within a homosexual relationship is considered acceptable. It was felt that the whole question of homosexuality needs to be thought about - also what will happen in the future and what will be the views of young people as they grow up.*
- ♦ *It gives time for attitudes to change and views to soften. We are less likely to tear ourselves apart over just one, although very important, issue.*

Several interpreted the present position as depending on local decision-making:

- ♦ *Homosexuals should not be stopped from entering the ministry of the United Reformed Church. It should be left up to each individual church to make its own decision when the time comes for them to call a minister.*
- ♦ *The majority opinion was that neither our local fellowship nor General Assembly should prejudge the suitability of a candidate or a trainee for the Ministry on the grounds of their sexual orientation and practice. If there was a reasonable possibility that some churches would be happy to invite such trainees to become their Minister, they should be allowed to be trained, ordained and inducted.*
- ♦ *It should not be the place of the General Assembly to prejudge whether or not some local congregations will find these men acceptable or not. If no congregation is willing to accept them then they are unlikely to become ordained into the Ministry but this is a risk that the men themselves must accept as no local congregation can or should have a Minister with whom they feel unable to work.*

Two churches proposed holding a referendum:

- ♦ *In addition, there was a very strong feeling that this matter should not be finalised merely taking into account the 'feelings' from churches who take the trouble to respond. We would recommend that a referendum is undertaken so all members have the opportunity to vote on a resolution and this will give a voice to all.*

One implication not drawn elsewhere:

- ♦ *We are alarmed by the level of violence against lesbian and gay people in our neighbourhood. This has been particularly acute as a result of fascist groups operating in our part of London. This violence cannot be ignored and the Church must not give an ambiguous message. Those under attack need our solidarity.*

Another church called on the URC to stand firm in a different way:

- ♦ *Whilst most people in the church would understand and be sympathetic to a person's sexuality, they may not necessarily accept them as the "norm" - but the Free Churches fought against the "norm" in the Reformation anyway!*

A postscript:

- ♦ *It was recognised that either a Yes or a No from the church on this issue will cost the church a lot. It is hard to say No without compromising the open welcome of Christ's Gospel; it is hard to say Yes without compromising what some see as Christ's call to holiness. The church, as well as her homosexual children, will need compassion and loving support throughout this debate.*

Annex 3: reports of Provincial Synods

The full report of the Task Group, 'What was said', contains a two or three page extract from each of the responses submitted by the Provincial Synods.

This annex contains the outlines of Synod submissions, followed by a note of some figures from questionnaires and votes taken.

NB The Mission Council Task Group read and studied in full the reports from all the Synods.

♦ *As in all our reports, verbatim extracts from texts received are reproduced thus (in italics with bullet point).*

Northern Province

Synod considered the matter on November 1 & 2, 1996. On the Friday evening a presentation was made by Revd Rhona Jones and Synod agreed the procedure for the following morning. On the Saturday, personal statements were made by a panel of five, Ms Janet Turner, Revd Graham Hoslett, Ms Carolyn Smyth, Mrs Pat Atthey, Mr Ian Buist. This was followed by discussion in groups of 8. There was then a plenary for reporting back and putting points to the panel.

Each person was given a short questionnaire which they completed in silence after a prayer. Some of the questionnaire results are reproduced in tables at the end of this annex.

The Synod submission comprised a 15 page booklet which was produced later, containing the presentations and group reports. This may be obtained from the Province office.

North Western Province

Synod in March 1996 was addressed by five speakers, Revd Walter Houston, Revd Hazel Addy, Revd John Hall, Mr David Evans, Mrs Hylde Hurst. This was followed by group discussion and an open session at which questions were asked of the panel and many points of view expressed. 160 copies of a questionnaire were distributed and 149 returned. Some of the questionnaire results are reproduced in tables at the end of this annex.

In October 1996 Synod expressed its regret that the subject of Human Sexuality had been reduced to this aspect.

The Synod submission comprised a letter from the Provincial Moderator with a 27 page booklet which was produced later, containing the plenary addresses and group reports, plus a further contribution from Dr Jack McKelvey. This booklet may be obtained from the Province office.

♦ *It is the carefully considered and overwhelming view of this synod that the United Reformed Church is not yet ready to make a decision on the matter and that to do so would harm the unity of the church.*

Mersey Province

Synod in October 1995 agreed a process. Three training events were held attended by 58 people. A collator was appointed in each District. Reports from around half the churches were sent to the collators who reported on 10 recurring themes and offered some statements for synod to vote on. Among the themes were the authority of the Bible, the difference between practising and celibate, the different expectation of people in leadership positions, the reputation of the denomination, the welfare and pastoral support of homosexual candidates and ministers, the generation gap in these matters. The Synod submission following their meeting in October 1996 comprised the statements and the voting with a note on the procedure.

In addition to the votes tabulated at the end of this annex, Synod voted against leaving things as they are for 5 more years while further discussion takes place (40 for, 71 against) and also against a moratorium for the next 5 years on candidates for the ministry who declare themselves practising homosexuals (37 for, 64 against).

Yorkshire Province

Synod in October 1995 appointed a monitoring group of 3 who eventually received 58 responses and made a report in October 1996. This was discussed in the morning and questionnaire were completed by those present; the group then analysed these and drafted a Synod statement which was discussed during the afternoon, amended and agreed. This statement, with a note on procedure from the Synod Clerk, formed the Synod's submission.

No figures of questionnaires were submitted.

- ♦ *The views from the churches showed a greater overall tendency to resist the involvement of homosexuals.*
- ♦ *50% of Synod members felt they were still on a journey, continuing to learn about the issues involved and not yet ready to reach a decision.*

East Midlands Province

Synod tackled the subject in October 1996. During the morning session, members of synod filled in the questionnaire covering 26 questions on aspects of the matter, 3 of which are tabulated at the end of this annex. Among the many other questions, Synod members agreed:

(by 86 - 6) that it is appropriate for the URC to discuss the issue;

(by 56 - 32) that when someone applies as a candidate for the ministry questions about sexual orientation or practice should be asked;

(by 67 - 20) that the church should treat sexual activity generally as a private matter; and

(by 47 - 36) that the church should treat sexual activity generally as acceptable within a stable homosexual relationship.

The results were tabled later in the day and Synod resolved *"to adopt this analysis as Synod's response to the Human Sexuality debate"*. The Synod Clerk submitted the findings with a brief covering letter:

- ♦ *I am particularly requested to say that it does not represent division even if it does represent a divergence of views.*

West Midlands Province

- ♦ *Our discussion (at October 1996 Synod) opened with an exercise used at one of our District Councils which was designed to get people to think about where they stood on various ethical and moral issues other than human sexuality.*

Synod then heard four speakers (Revd Dr John Sampson, the Methodist District Chairman, Revd John Hall, Mr David Evans, Dr Iain Frew) followed by a brief plenary discussion. After lunch there was an hour of group discussion after which a questionnaire was circulated. Some of the questionnaire results are reproduced in tables at the end of this annex.

The Synod submission comprised a letter from the Provincial Moderator with a 40 page booklet which was produced later, containing the plenary addresses and group reports. This booklet may be obtained from the Province office.

Eastern Province

Synod submission comprised the findings of a questionnaire used in October 1996, with a similar report on the questionnaire completed by non-members present at Synod.

In addition to the answers tabulated at the end of this annex, voting members of Synod felt it would not be right to ask questions about sexual orientation and behaviour of would-be church members (70% - 18%) or of nominee elders (55% - 31%) but it would be right in the case of ministerial candidates (60% - 27%).

South Western Province

Synod submission comprised the findings of a questionnaire used in October 1996. In addition to the answers tabulated at the end of this annex, voting members of Synod felt that matters of sexuality are, in considering a person's suitability for:

	not at all	have some bearing	very important	of vital importance
Church membership	59	59	19	7
Ordained Eldership	25	48	39	25
Christian Ministry	18	36	41	49

Wessex Province

The Synod Clerk submitted a letter reporting a Synod discussion in October 1996. No formal report or figures were given.

- ♦ *Probably the overriding feelings are that the whole subject is very complex and one we have only just begun. The hope was expressed fairly strongly that this issue will be dealt with not only sensitively but also without undue haste. We need to remember always that we are dealing with people and that all people, whatever their sexual orientation, are the children of God.*

Thames North Province

The Acting Synod Clerk submitted a copy of a report containing the papers prepared by Dr Lesslie Newbigin and Revd Janet Webber and notes of the discussion in 18 small groups in Synod October 1996.

- ♦ *No formal vote was taken on any of the issues involved, although some of the small groups took their own.*
- ♦ *The discussion in the groups indicated: In the groups which discussed the issue the majority view was that the General Assembly should not legislate about accepting or rejecting openly homosexual people in leadership positions in the church. The discussion on homosexuality and scripture showed the division between those who said the Church should accept the clear guidance which rejects homosexual practice and those who state that scripture should be interpreted more broadly in the light of modern scientific anthropology and culture. The general points revealed a common desire to show understanding and love to homosexuals. However there appeared to be a division on whether or not practising homosexuals should be accepted in positions of leadership in the Church; in this a majority view is not clear.*

Southern Province

Two main papers produced by a small group in the Province were circulated prior to the discussion in October 1996 Synod. Paper A presented a number of proposition relating to Theology (4 paragraphs), Homosexuality (5) and the Church (10). Paper B offered a possible draft statement incorporating in 9 paragraphs the main substance of the propositions presented in paper A. Both papers are reproduced in the Task Group full report.

After the discussion questionnaires were distributed and posted back later showing more than two-thirds agreeing with both texts. Paper B was thus submitted, 12 persons formally dissenting, and was studied with care by the Task Group as they formulated their report. Some Synod members described it as fudging the issue between orientation and practice where there is a call for a clear unequivocal message to be given; others (reportedly fewer) felt it offered a sensitive and helpful way forward since it leave the final decision with the local church.

Province of Wales

The Synod Clerk reported that Synod has resolved not to add anything to the responses being made by local churches and District Councils.

Provincial Synods 1996

Some apparent figures can be deduced from the reports of questionnaires completed at seven Synod meetings. Other Synods do not quote figures at all.

The different questions put and several provisos attached make this an unreliable statistical base.

If we try to ascertain how many Synod members would accept practising homosexuals into church membership, into positions of leadership or into the ministry of word and sacraments, we find these totals and percentages:

A Into membership

Province	"yes"	%	"no"	%	"maybe"	%	total
1 Northern	141	83	11	6	19	11	171
2 North Western	116	80	15	10	15	10	146
5 East Midlands	78	76	13	13	11	11	102
6 West Midlands	120	83	7	5	18	12	145
7 Eastern	109	83	14	11	8	6	131
8 South Western	119	81	27	18	1	1	147
total of these	683	81	87	10	72	9	842

B Into leadership

Province	"yes"	%	"no"	%	"maybe"	%	total
1 Northern	112	64	45	26	17	10	174
2 North Western	95	65	29	20	21	15	145
5 East Midlands	37	37	39	39	25	24	101
6 West Midlands	107	74	20	14	18	12	145
7 Eastern	87	66	30	23	14	11	131
8 South Western	72	49	74	50	1	1	147
total of these	510	61	237	28	96	11	843

C Into ministry

Province	"yes"	%	"no"	%	"maybe"	%	total
1 Northern	96	60	50	31	13	8	159
2 North Western	75	58	36	28	18	14	129
3 Mersey	58	51	34	30	22	19	114
5 East Midlands	33	32	53	51	18	17	104
6 West Midlands	90	63	38	26	16	11	144
7 Eastern	72	54	44	33	15	13	131
8 South Western	51	34	95	64	3	2	149
total of these	475	51	350	38	105	11	930

Annex 4: reports of District Councils

The full report of the Mission Council Task Group, 'What was said', contains a summary of the responses submitted by District Councils. The Task Group members read these submissions. A few District Councils merely forwarded local church responses or sent extensive transcripts of group discussions and, in two cases, tape recordings; the Task Group was unable to appraise these submissions.

♦ *verbatim extracts from texts received are reproduced thus (in italics with bullet point).*

43 District Councils responded directly to the General Secretary by the due date:

1B; 1C; 1D; 1E; 1F; 2A; 2B; 2F; 2G; 4A; 4B; 4C; 5A; 5B; 5E; 5F; 6B; 6C; 6E; 6F; 7A; 7B; 7C; 7D; 7E; 8A; 8C; 8E; 9A; 9B; 9C; 10A; 10B; 10E; 10F; 11A; 11B; 11D; 11E; 11G; 12B; 12D; 12F.

These responses varied from a short letter to a lengthy submission of agreed statements and survey results. 10 Councils took some measurable soundings of members' views, 3 via a 'straw poll', 7 through a questionnaire. 18 Councils submitted the secretary's record of the discussions. 6 submitted an agreed response, in 2 cases a statement, in 4 cases a agreed record of discussion. 5 specifically mentioned that they would not make a statement. 4 reported on specially held meetings. There is no statistical base to report any voting figures from District Council meetings.

We offer this cross-section of comments.

- ♦ *Having spent some time writing this report as a synopsis of all the comments received I can say that the most significant part is not the summary of voting results but the comments made.*
- ♦ *The officers agreed not to put a resolution to the Council but with something of a heavy heart a straw poll was taken in November.*
- ♦ *A number of people complained about the time that had been taken over the issue at the various levels within the URC.*
- ♦ *Whatever is decided by the church will hurt many. ... We met and leave as friends. There is much more to say in our search for truth and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*
- ♦ *A District opinion is a difficult one to represent.*
- ♦ *There is a need to balance carefully the three issues of biblical authority, respect for human individuality and the safeguarding of the unity and the credibility of the whole church.*
- ♦ *Ministers practising homosexuality could be a scandal to the community.*
- ♦ *Members were asked to indicate if they agreed or not with the proposal that 'practising homosexuals may be ordained to the URC ministry in future' A secret ballot revealed 3 for, 22 against, 4 abstentions.*
- ♦ *Concern was expressed for homosexual ministers already in service.*
- ♦ *The District consultation concluded that further debate within the church should focus on four inter-related issues: the authority of the Bible and how we use its witness today; the nature of vocation and calling; the nature of the Christian community; the need to recognise gifts already offered in ministry as the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.*
- ♦ *The fact of orientation does not bestow licence to behave in a way which might damage oneself, other people or the cause we represent.*
- ♦ *There was a wide belief that the church is not yet ready to accept admitted practising homosexuals into membership.*
- ♦ *Homosexuals face prejudices and problems because of society's pressures and may therefore be unable to sustain a permanent stable relationship.*
- ♦ *I sensed that people had made their minds up before the meeting.*
- ♦ *What of the silent majority?*
- ♦ *Although a straw poll was suggested it was not the majority wish of those present that this be taken.*
- ♦ *There was considerable effort made by ... to ensure that churches voted on a particular resolution.*
- ♦ *Is the present strong tradition of prejudice particularly Anglo-Saxon?*

- ♦ *The views of the students (at Westminster College) range across all opinions in regard to the ordination of homosexuals.*
- ♦ *It would be better if the church goes on discussing this and other deep issues.*
- ♦ *On one thing were unanimous, our hope that the wider debate when it comes will not harm the Church.*
- ♦ *... District affirmed the procedures currently in use in the URC as adequate for assessing and approving or rejecting candidates for ministry and believes that such candidates for ministry, as for eldership and church membership, should be considered on the basis of whether they are perceived as being called of God.*

The so-called 'Medway resolution', subsequently passed by several local churches, was passed by that District in April 1995:

- ♦ *Medway District Council believes that the physical expression of human sexuality outside the bounds of faithful marriage between a woman and a man is contrary to our discernment of the Word of God, the Basis of Union and the general ethos of the joining churches. Therefore we will not knowingly concur in the call of Ministers of Word and Sacrament whose sexuality finds its physical expression outside these stated bounds.*

In another District this 'Medway resolution' was proposed with the comment that "it had not been the intention of the proposers that this should be seen as directed against those divorced or married to divorced partners"; the Council minute notes that "various speakers pointed out that it could be so interpreted (and) after an unsuccessful bid to move that the question be not put the resolution was rejected by 25 to 0, with 1 abstention".

One District offered this conclusion which seems to echo many:

- ♦ *In summary it appeared that if homosexuals were to be openly ordained in the United Reformed Church a few people in the District would be quite happy, most would be uneasy and some would be dismayed.*

Appendix 2

Ministerial Discipline

This Appendix consists of the text of Resolutions 13 - 19 passed by the General Assembly of 1996 which are submitted for ratification by this Assembly in **Resolution 20** (page 50).

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 or have been appointed to a post by Councils of the Church or are associate members of a 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 Council 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 (without prejudice to a minister's conditions under the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration), to suspend a minister which involves a temporary ban on the exercise of ministry by the minister concerned but not his/her removal from the Roll of Ministers.

- 4 A minister under suspension, whether in pastoral charge or not, shall not present him/herself as a minister and shall not preside at Communion. The minister shall refrain from all activity which may lead others to believe that he/she is acting as a minister of religion. Suspension also means that the minister may not exercise the ministerial rights of membership of any council of the Church. Suspension does not remove any of the rights accorded by the process of determining the disciplinary matter which has led to the suspension.

- 5 A person whose name has been deleted from the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church and who remains a member of the United Reformed Church has the 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 O 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, the substantive provisions of such process being set out in Part 1 of the Annex to 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):'

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- 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 on 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 'councils' on the second and last lines.
- 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), (xxii) 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 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 on Ministerial Discipline

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)(xi) 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. | 3.5 | “The Commission Panel” shall mean a Panel consisting of twenty-five (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. |
| 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 it remains 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. | 3.6 | “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 | For the purpose of this Section O, the following words and expressions carry the following meanings :- | 3.7 | “The Secretary of 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. |
| 3.1 | “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). | 3.8 | “The Appeals Commission” shall mean the Commission constituted for the hearing of each Appeal in accordance with Paragraph 12. |
| 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)(xxiii) 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. | 3.9 | “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. |
| 3.3 | “The Roll of Ministers” shall have the meaning given to it in Paragraph 25 of the Basis of Union (Section A of the Manual). | 3.10 | “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. |
| 3.4 | “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. | 3.11 | “To suspend” and “Suspension” shall have the meanings assigned to them in Paragraphs 3 and 4 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 twenty-five (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 Paragraphs 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.

Appendix 2

- 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 advisers 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.

Appendix 3

Accounts

ACCOUNTS page 1

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1996

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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Note: These accounts do not include the "Review of activities" which normally forms part of a charity's annual report and accounts. The information which would be included in such a review is incorporated in the book of Annual Reports to General Assembly.

For readers unfamiliar with financial statements there is an explanatory note at the foot of most pages describing the content in simple terms.

ACCOUNTS page 2

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

FORMAT OF THE ACCOUNTS

Last year we introduced radical changes to the format of the annual accounts. This year we have followed the new format with a few minor changes. As many people may be studying the annual accounts for the first time we think it may be helpful to explain again the main features of the accounts in the hope that it will make them of greater interest to a greater number of people.

Perhaps the most important thing to recognise is that the accounts are designed to show the overall financial position of the URC - by which we mean those parts of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom that are administered nationally under the overall authority of the General Assembly. The accounts do not attempt to show detailed information about every individual fund included in the overall figures.

A further important feature is the way that funds are divided into categories according to the manner in which we are allowed to spend them. **Unrestricted income funds** are funds we can use freely for any URC activity. It is these funds for which a budget is prepared and presented to the General Assembly each year. **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** - permanent endowments the capital of which cannot be spent but the income from which may be added to restricted or unrestricted income funds according to the original terms.

For those who are not familiar with financial statements, there are explanatory notes at the foot of most pages to help focus on what the page is about. The most important overall information is contained in the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Financial Activities on pages 4 and 5. The following four pages give analyses of the main headings of income and expenditure and the breakdown of the overall figures over the major funds or groups of funds.

RESULTS FOR 1996

The results for 1996 are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5. In summary the situation before taking account of changes in the value of investments was as follows:-

1995		1996			
Total funds £'000		Total funds £'000	Unrestricted funds £'000	Restricted funds £'000	Capital funds £'000
19,358	Total income	20,306	18,294	1,753	259
18,000	Total expenditure	21,058	19,992	1,066	0
1,358	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources	(752)	(1,698)	687	259

As indicated earlier, the distinction between unrestricted and restricted funds is very important so in reviewing the 1996 results it is best to consider each category separately.

Unrestricted funds

These are the funds we can use freely for any purpose and it is these funds which are covered by the budget approved by the General Assembly each year. On pages 18 and 19 there is a comparison of 1996 actual results with the 1995 actual and 1996 budget which you may find it helpful to refer to.

The final result for the year was a deficit of about £1.7 million but this was after taking account of an exceptional additional contribution to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund of £2.5 million in October 1996. Thus the result before taking this contribution into account would have been a surplus of about £800,000. This is an improvement on the result for 1995 and very substantially better than the out-turn indicated by the 1996 budget adopted by the General Assembly in 1995. The main reason for this is that the average number of ministers paid in 1996 was much lower than anticipated at the time the 1996 budget was prepared.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CONTINUED**Restricted funds**

The net surplus for the year in the restricted funds was £687,000. Of this amount, £585,000 arose in the Retired Ministers' Housing Society and Retired Ministers' Housing Fund. During 1996 15 retiring ministers or dependants were housed involving an increase of £800,000 in our investment in property.

FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31st DECEMBER 1996

Our financial position at the end of 1996 is set out in overall terms in the Balance Sheet on page 4. It shows total net assets of over £35 million. Where this large sum is invested and for which fund can be found on page 9. This page is a good example of the way that the new format of accounts highlights where our resources are and helps to focus on areas where we might make our resources work better for the Church.

The second column on page 9, headed property, shows where £16.8 million is invested in properties: the most significant amounts are in retired ministers' housing, totalling some £11.6 million. It is interesting to note that the investment in properties by the Church Buildings Fund, which totals about £1.3 million, is more than double the amount shown in last year's accounts; this is because we have been using these funds to purchase manses for Assembly appointed ministers rather than use "unrestricted" funds, thus freeing up the unrestricted funds for use elsewhere.

The fourth column on page 9, headed investments, shows how investments with a total value of about £17.4 million are owned by many funds. Some of these funds have specific objectives which are clearly meeting the needs of the Church, for example the Retired Ministers' Fund pays ex-gratia pensions over and above the pensions payable by the Pension Fund, particularly to retired ministers and widows of ministers with service to the former Congregational Church, where the fund pension is very small. The "other funds" shown at the foot of page 9 have investments of over £3 million and comprise a large number of funds, some dating back many years with restricted objectives that are not easy to match with current needs. We are examining these funds with a view to identifying ways of using them more effectively, or seeking Charity Commission approval for the terms under which they are held to be varied.

One aspect of our financial affairs which continues to be extremely important but which is not apparent from the Balance Sheet is our obligation to pay pensions to retired ministers. At the time of preparing the 1996 accounts we are awaiting the report on the actuarial valuation of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund as at 1st January 1997. The last valuation, three years ago, disclosed a deficiency of some £11 million which is being paid off by increasing annual contributions continuing up to the year 2006. In 1996 an exceptional additional contribution of £2.5 million was made to the Fund which will substantially reduce that part of the actuarial shortfall relating to pensions already being paid. Despite this contribution there is little doubt that the latest valuation will disclose a substantial deficiency to be paid off over future years. The reduction of this burden will continue to be a matter of concern to the Finance Committee in consultation with the Resource Planning Advisory Group and the Pension Fund Trustee.

We hope that this report and the accompanying accounts will provide greater understanding of the URC's financial position. The Treasurer and the Financial Secretary will be pleased to respond to requests for further information or explanations.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee.

Graham Stacy
Convener

26th March 1997

ACCOUNTS page 4

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1996

1995 £'000		Notes (pages 12 & 13)	1996 £'000
	FIXED ASSETS		
	Tangible assets	2	
10,811	Houses for retired ministers		11,619
2,854	Houses for serving ministers		3,480
1,770	Other properties		1,729
15,435	Total properties		16,828
239	Cars and equipment		307
15,674			17,135
18,180	Long term investments	5	17,362
805	Loans and advances	3	662
34,659			35,159
	NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	Current assets		
52	Stock		71
3,120	Short term investment	5	3,038
986	Debtors	4	993
1,732	Bank balances and money market deposits		1,539
5,890			5,641
5,044	Less: Current liabilities	6	4,935
846	Net current assets		706
35,505	TOTAL NET ASSETS		35,865
	Representing:		
10,677	Unrestricted income funds		9,131
20,876	Restricted income funds		22,312
3,952	Capital funds		4,422
35,505	TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 8 & 9)		35,865

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered for the benefit of the URC nationally. It includes, in particular, the assets and liabilities of the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1996

1995		1996	--- Income	funds ----	Capital
Total		Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	funds
funds		funds	£'000	£'000	£'000
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME					
16,149	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,462	16,462		
1,392	Investment income	1,409	612	797	
840	Grants received	880	810	70	
306	Legacies	579	74	364	141
306	Sundry income	589	251	220	118
365	Profit on sale of properties	387	85	302	
19,358	Total income (see page 6)	20,306	18,294	1,753	259
EXPENDITURE					
14,195	Ministry	17,026	16,092	934	
1,366	Training	1,370	1,347	23	
474	Assembly appointed staff	546	546		
1,028	Mission	1,069	997	72	
152	Assembly related costs	151	149	2	
161	Communication and editorial	177	166	11	
624	Administration	719	695	24	
18,000	Total expenditure (see page 7)	21,058	19,992	1,066	0
1,358	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources	(752)	(1,698)	687	259
Gains and losses on investments					
426	Realised gains	1,183	1,007	176	
2,036	Unrealised (losses)/gains	(71)	(855)	573	211
2,462	Total (losses)/gains on investments	1,112	152	749	211
3,820	Net increase/(decrease) in funds in the year	360	(1,546)	1,436	470
31,685	Balances brought forward at 1st January	35,505	10,677	20,876	3,952
35,505	Balances carried forward at 31st December	35,865	9,131	22,312	4,422

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered on behalf of the URC nationally. The total for 1996 is then divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which may be used for any purpose, "Restricted income funds" which may be spent for specific purposes only, and "Capital funds" which have to be invested to provide future income. The column headed "Unrestricted" shows the income and expenditure covered by the budget shown on pages 18 and 19

ANALYSIS OF INCOME

1995		1996	— Income	funds —	Capital
Total		Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	funds
funds		funds	£'000	£'000	£'000
£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS					
Provinces					
1,043	Northern	1,075	1,075		
1,540	North Western	1,538	1,538		
1,090	Mersey	1,100	1,100		
1,050	Yorkshire	1,100	1,100		
1,032	East Midlands	1,060	1,060		
1,200	West Midlands	1,220	1,220		
1,437	Eastern	1,462	1,462		
1,040	South Western	1,105	1,105		
1,831	Wessex	1,831	1,831		
1,905	Thames North	1,940	1,940		
2,400	Southern	2,445	2,445		
580	Wales	586	586		
16,148		16,462	16,462	0	0
1	Non-provincial contributions	0			
16,149		16,462	16,462	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME					
1,012	Dividends	1,034	304	730	
380	Interest	375	308	67	
1,392		1,409	612	797	0
GRANTS RECEIVED					
518	Memorial Hall Trust	518	448	70	
220	New College London Trust	225	225		
62	URC Insurance Company Ltd.	78	78		
40	Department for Education & Employment	59	59		
840		880	810	70	0
LEGACIES					
For					
63	Ministry and Mission Fund	74	74		
21	Westminster College	0			
204	Housing Retired Ministers	270		270	
18	Other	235		94	141
306		579	74	364	141
SUNDRY INCOME					
103	Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	152	152		
136	Donations	158	42	113	3
67	Other	279	57	107	115
306		589	251	220	118
365	PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	387	85	302	
19,358	TOTAL INCOME	20,306	18,294	1,753	259

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5.

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

1995 Total funds £'000		1996			
		Total funds £'000	Income Unrestricted £'000	funds Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
MINISTRY					
11,766	Stipends - local and special ministries	11,615	11,615		
121	Stipends - CRCWs	133	133		
579	Pension grants	873		873	
377	Resettlement and other grants	415	354	61	
354	Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	390	390		
998	Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	1,100	1,100		
0	- exceptional	2,500	2,500		
14,195		17,026	16,092	934	0
TRAINING					
716	College training for stipendiary ministry	660	637	23	
75	Other training for stipendiary ministry	72	72		
72	Training for non-stipendiary ministry	81	81		
297	YLTO/YCWT programme	360	360		
53	Support for Westminster College	29	29		
42	Support for Windermere Centre	27	27		
28	Support for Yardley Hastings	51	51		
7	TLS course costs	12	12		
76	St. Andrew's Hall grant	78	78		
1,366		1,370	1,347	23	0
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF					
220	Salaries/stipends - executive staff	237	237		
170	Salaries/stipends - support staff	181	181		
84	Housing and expenses	128	128		
474		546	546	0	0
MISSION					
535	Council for World Mission	614	614		
139	Missionaries	75	75		
252	Grants for national and local mission	258	186	72	
102	Ecumenical councils	122	122		
1,028		1,069	997	72	0
ASSEMBLY RELATED COSTS					
67	General Assembly	71	71		
58	Assembly committees/conferences	58	56	2	
27	Mission Council committees/conferences	22	22		
152		151	149	2	0
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL					
131	Salaries	143	139	4	
30	Other costs	34	27	7	
161		177	166	11	0
ADMINISTRATION					
222	Personnel and finance - salaries	245	245		
26	- other costs	9	9		
143	Premises costs	168	171	(3)	
72	Professional fees	83	79	4	
161	Miscellaneous expenses	214	191	23	
624		719	695	24	0
18,000	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	21,058	19,992	1,066	0

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of expenditure shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5.

**MOVEMENT ON FUNDS
YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1996**

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Investment	Balance
		1st Jan 1996 £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	value change £'000	31st Dec 1996 £'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	310 7,651	17,916	(19,125)		94	310 6,536
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	503	49	(49)		40	543 0
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	117 1,025	315	(818)		9 58	126 580
Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund	Capital *Unrestricted	2,001	14				0 2,015
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	865 917	9 125	(23)		43 49	917 1,068
Church Buildings Funds	Capital Restricted	184 2,820	181	(12)		125	184 3,114
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	355 1,258	79				355 1,337
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted	6,743	524	(18)			0 7,249
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	101 256	26	(14)		8 19	109 287
Retired Ministers' Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	136 619	55	(48)		11 48	147 674
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted	3,494	275	(353)	413	289	0 4,118
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	201 1,072	92	(59)		13 81	214 1,186
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	344					0 344
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	550					0 550
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	1,180 2,803	250 396	(539)	(413)	87 138	1,517 2,385
Totals (see page 5)		35,505	20,306	(21,058)	0	1,112	35,865
Comprising:	Capital	3,952	259	0	0	211	4,422
	Restricted	20,876	1,753	(1,066)	0	749	22,312
	Unrestricted	10,677	18,294	(19,992)	0	152	9,131

* 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.

This page and the following page 9 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 5 by major fund or group of funds

**DISPOSITION OF FUNDS
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1996**

Balance 31st Dec 1996 £'000	Property £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Investments £'000	Loans £'000	Net Current assets £'000	Inter- -fund balances £'000	Fund
310	310					0	Ministry and Mission Fund
6,536	2,152	188	3,283	160	1,408	(655)	
543			543				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
126			126				Ministerial Training Fund
580			790	54		(264)	
0							Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund
2,015						2,015	
917	657		260				Westminster College Funds
1,068		8	1,097	(54)		17	
184			184				Church Buildings Funds
3,114	1,253		1,325	498		38	
355	355						Retired Ministers' Housing Funds
1,337	1,218					119	
0							Retired Ministers' Housing Society
7,249	10,046			(80)	(702)	(2,015)	
109			109				Welfare Fund
287			267	10		10	
147			147				Retired Ministers' Aid Fund
674			653			21	
0							Retired Ministers' Fund
4,118			4,135			(17)	
214			214				World Church and Mission Funds
1,186			1,077			109	
0							Windermere Centre Fund
344	304	31				9	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
550	482	69				(1)	
1,517			1,517				Other Funds
2,385	51	11	1,635	74		614	
35,865	16,828	307	17,362	662	706	0	Totals (see page 4)
4,422	1,322	0	3,100	0	0	0	Capital
22,312	13,354	119	10,189	448	(702)	(1,096)	Restricted
9,131	2,152	188	4,073	214	1,408	1,096	Unrestricted

This page shows the breakdown of the assets and liabilities in the Balance Sheet on page 4 by major fund or group of funds.

ACCOUNTS page 10

**CASHFLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1996**

1995 £'000		1996 £'000
	RECONCILIATION OF NET (OUTGOING)/INCOMING RESOURCES SHOWN IN THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES TO THE ACTUAL CASH (OUTFLOW)/INFLOW FROM GENERAL ACTIVITIES	
1,358	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources (see page 5)	(752)
2	(Increase)/decrease in stock	(19)
(256)	Increase in debtors	(7)
(206)	Decrease in creditors	(43)
(272)	Decrease in sums held for provinces and congregations	(66)
(365)	Profits on property sales	(387)
85	Depreciation	91
76	Amortisation of gifts	76
(41)	Interest added to loans	(28)
381	Net cash (outflow)/inflow from general activities	(1,135)

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE SOURCES AND
APPLICATIONS OF CASH RESOURCES IN THE YEAR**

381	Net cash (outflow)/inflow from general activities (above)	(1,135)
	Net amount of cash received from/(applied in) investing activities	
772 (2,096)	Fixed assets	941 (2,106)
	sales	
	purchases	
1,337 (1,193)	Long term investments	3,706 (1,770)
(1,180)	sales	771
	purchases	
	Cash received from a net decrease in loans and advances to congregations and ministers	
(175)	Loans made	(193)
414	Loans repaid	364
239		171
(560)	Decrease in cash balances	(193)
2,292	Cash balances at beginning of year	1,732
1,732	Cash balances at end of year	1,539

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 £193,000.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 - ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities". The particular accounting policies adopted are described 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 8.

(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) Pensions

The church operates a defined benefit pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are managed independently of the Church. Pension costs are assessed in accordance with the advice of an independent qualified actuary. Contributions for the regular ongoing cost of pensions are such that the regular pension cost is a substantially level percentage of the current and expected future pensionable payroll.

(v) 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.

(vi) 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.

(vii) Stock

Stock, which consists of books in the URC bookshop, is stated at the lower of cost and net realisable value.

(viii) 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 - 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 1996	10,811	2,854	1,974	631	16,270
Additions during year	1,291	639	11	165	2,106
Disposals during year	(483)	(13)	(50)	(42)	(588)
As at 31st December 1996	11,619	3,480	1,935	754	17,788
Depreciation					
As at 1st January 1996			204	392	596
Charged during year			2	89	91
Written back on disposal				(34)	(34)
As at 31st December 1996			206	447	653
Net book value					
At 31st December 1996	11,619	3,480	1,729	307	17,135
At 31st December 1995	10,811	2,854	1,770	239	15,674

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 1996 were £184,000 (1995 - £172,000) and maintenance costs were £170,000 (1995 - £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 1996 311 (1995 - 302) houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 30 (1995 - 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.

NOTE 3 - LOANS AND ADVANCES

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Loans and advances comprise:		
To churches	520	675
To ministers	142	130
	<u>662</u>	<u>805</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 4 - DEBTORS

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	85	90
Prepayments and accrued income	457	415
Other debtors	451	481
	<u>993</u>	<u>986</u>

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 5 - INVESTMENTS

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Long term investments		
Investments held for the longer term comprise the following:		
Units in the URCT Investment Pool at market value	14,730	15,488
Other listed securities at market value	2,308	2,368
The URC Insurance Company Limited shares at cost (see note 12)	73	73
Other unlisted securities at cost	24	24
Investment properties at cost	227	227
	<u>17,362</u>	<u>18,180</u>

All investments are in UK companies or properties.

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Short term investment		
The short term investment is £3 million 8.75% Treasury Stock 1997		
At cost less amortisation (see note 1(vi))	3,018	3,047
Gain in market value	20	73
Market value at 31st December 1996	<u>3,038</u>	<u>3,120</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 4.

NOTE 6 - CURRENT LIABILITIES (Amounts falling due within one year)

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Current liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for provinces and congregations	2,855	2,921
Advance contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	525	537
Other creditors	1,555	1,586
	<u>4,935</u>	<u>5,044</u>

NOTE 7 - REMUNERATION

During the year the following remuneration was paid:

	1996 £'000
To 740 ministers	10,264
To 85 lay staff	1,021

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and part-time staff are included at the appropriate proportion.

NOTE 7A - AUDITOR'S REMUNERATION

Amounts charged for the audit of the accounts of the Church, the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited, and the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund were as follows:

	1996 £'000	1995 £'000
Auditor's remuneration	<u>38</u>	<u>39</u>

NOTE 8 - ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS

At 31st December 1996 United Reformed Church Trust held investments with an original cost of approximately £14 million (1995 - £15 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)).

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

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 an independent Trustee. 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 completed 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 an expected shortfall on the long term valuation basis in the region of £11.3 million. The Actuary advised that, based upon the current actuarial assumptions, it was necessary to make a series of annual additional contributions, increasing by 10% per annum compound, until the year 2006. The amount of the additional contribution in 1996 was £1,100,000 (1995 - £998,000). During 1996 an exceptional additional contribution of £2,500,000 was made which will substantially reduce that part of the actuarial shortfall relating to pensions already being paid.

A further triennial valuation of the Pension Fund is being carried out as at 1st January 1997 but the actuary's report was not available at the time of preparation of the 1996 accounts. The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee of the URC intends that future additional contributions to the Pension Fund will be equal to or exceed any amounts which may be recommended by the actuary at the completion of the current triennial valuation.

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 1996 The URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited had contractual liabilities for the purchase of properties amounting to £118,000 (1995 - £126,000) and commitments for the purchase of other properties amounting to £312,000 (1995 - £150,000). In addition, at 31st December 1996, the Church had contractual liabilities for the purchase of properties amounting to £63,000 (1995 - NIL).

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 building, now standing on the site of the former Memorial Hall, on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. In 1996 the URC received income of £518,000 (1995 - £518,000) from this trust. In addition, 24 (1995 - 29) properties owned by the trust are occupied by retired URC ministers or their dependants.

New Collège London Trust - This trust holds assets relating to the former New Collège London on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. The URC's interest amounts to approximately 82%. In 1996 the URC received income of £225,000 (1995 - £220,000) 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 entered into a deed of covenant to pay to the URC 95% of its pre-tax profits; in 1996, this amounted to £78,000 (1995 - £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 - 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 15. Of the total investment valued at £32.6 million (1995 - £32.1 million) in the Pool, only £14.7 million (1995 - £15.5 million) is held for URC central funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 4).

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1996**

CAPITAL	1996		1995	
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 Units	£'000
Units in issue at January 1st 1996	641,095	32,107	611,523	26,695
Units issued in the year	39,905	2,058	57,629	2,751
Units cancelled in the year	(78,355)	(4,113)	(28,057)	(1,392)
Management fees		(70)		(64)
Increase in value of investments during the year		2,587		4,117
Units in issue to Central Funds	272,559	14,730	309,273	15,488
Units in issue to other funds	330,086	17,839	331,822	16,619
	<u>602,645</u>	<u>32,569</u>	<u>641,095</u>	<u>32,107</u>

REPRESENTED BY

	Cost	Market value	Cost	Market value
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Investments				
British Government				
Gilt-edged securities	9,611	9,556	9,299	9,544
Other British fixed interest stock	906	976	1,813	1,946
British equities	15,606	20,480	15,727	20,121
	<u>26,123</u>	<u>31,012</u>	<u>26,839</u>	<u>31,611</u>

Cash and short term deposits 1,291 630

Sundry debtor/(creditor)

The United Reformed Church 266 (134)

32,569

32,107

Based on the underlying market value of investments and uninvested cash, the value of each unit was

5.40 pence

5.01 pence

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	0.0383	246	0.0410	251
30th June	0.1511	984	0.0640	397
30th September	0.0840	548	0.0744	472
31st December	0.0648	390	0.1423	915
	<u>0.3382</u>	<u>2,168</u>	<u>0.3217</u>	<u>2,035</u>

Change in policy for accounting for income

During 1996 the policy for accounting for income was changed by the trustee to the following:

a) Income receivable from fixed-interest securities is credited to income on a daily basis.

b) Credit for dividends receivable from listed equity investments is taken when the security is first quoted ex-dividend.

In previous years interest and dividends were included in income on the basis of actual amounts received at the date of receipt. If these changes in policy had not been made the income of the Pool in 1996 would have been approximately £250,000 lower and the unit value at the year-end would have been 0.0024p higher.

ACCOUNTS page 16

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 4 to 15.

A G Burnham
General Secretary

Graham Stacy
Treasurer

C M Frank
Chief Accountant and
Financial Secretary

26th March 1997

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 4 to 15 which have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out on page 11. 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 16, 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 1996, and of its financial activities for the year then ended.

186 City Road
London EC1V 2NU

ROBSON RHODES
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditor

26th March 1997

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.

Appendix 4

Budget

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DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1998

	Actual 1995 £'000	Actual 1996 £'000	Budget 1996 £'000	Estimate 1997 £'000	Budget 1998 £'000
EXPENDITURE					
MINISTRY					
Stipends - local and special ministries	11,766	11,615	12,578	11,842	12,081
Stipends - CRCWs	121	133	153	153	163
Resettlement and other grants	364	354	355	297	310
Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	354	390	353	378	390
Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	998	1,100	1,100	1,130	1,158
- exceptional	0	2,500			
	13,603	16,092	14,539	13,800	14,102
TRAINING					
College training for stipendiary ministry	676	637	760	710	730
Other training for stipendiary ministry	71	72	64	77	82
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	72	81	113	76	90
YLTO/YCWT programme	297	360	323	434	446
Support for Westminster College	53	29	55	84	100
Support for Windermere Centre	42	27	37	33	35
Support for Yardley Hastings	28	51	32	45	46
TLS course costs	7	12	11	27	32
St Andrew's Hall grant	76	78	78	80	83
	1,322	1,347	1,473	1,566	1,644
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF					
Salaries/stipends - executive staff	220	237	239	268	283
Salaries/stipends - support staff	170	181	190	199	207
Housing and expenses	84	128	111	117	121
	474	546	540	584	611
MISSION					
Council for World Mission and support of missionaries	674	689	685	662	676
Grants for national and local mission	191	186	205	206	211
Ecumenical councils	102	122	109	135	141
	967	997	999	1,003	1,028
ASSEMBLY RELATED COSTS					
General Assembly	67	71	63	97	144
Assembly committees/conferences	56	56	44	63	68
Mission Council committees/conferences	27	22	26	23	23
	150	149	133	183	235
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL					
Salaries	131	139	116	157	164
Other costs	30	27	29	31	32
	161	166	145	188	196
ADMINISTRATION (support for the church nationally and locally)					
Personnel and finance - salaries	219	245	226	272	283
- other costs	18	9	10	25	25
Premises costs	146	171	142	163	166
Professional fees	65	79	50	71	73
Miscellaneous expenses	148	191	178	178	171
	596	695	606	709	718
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	17,273	19,992	18,435	18,033	18,534

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1998

	Actual 1995 £'000	Actual 1996 £'000	Budget 1996 £'000	Estimate 1997 £'000	Budget 1998 £'000
INCOME					
INVESTMENT INCOME					
Dividends	370	304	324	158	144
Income from World Church & Mission Fund				50	50
Interest	206	308	171	260	250
	576	612	495	468	444
GRANTS					
Memorial Hall Trust	448	448	440	448	448
New College London Trust	220	225	216	225	225
URC Insurance Company Limited	62	78	37	75	78
Department for Education & Employment	40	59	58	61	63
CWM towards cost of multi racial development worker				6	8
	770	810	751	815	822
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS	16,149	16,462	16,464	16,807	16,973
LEGACIES AND MAJOR DONATIONS	63	74		50	50
OTHER INCOME					
Sundry income	18	99	63	24	25
Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	103	152	88	194	202
	121	251	151	218	227
PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	128	85			
TOTAL INCOME	17,807	18,294	17,861	18,358	18,516
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) IN YEAR	534	(1,698)	(574)	325	(18)

The budget presented to the General Assembly covers expenditure and income of the following funds: Ministry and Mission, Maintenance of the Ministry, Ministerial Training, and Memorial Hall Trust Grants. In the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5 of the annual accounts all of these funds are added together and shown in the column headed Unrestricted Income Funds.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS PENSION FUND

	1996		1995	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME				
Contributions from ministers and central funds	1,345		1,384	
Transfer values received	44		1	
		1,389		1,385
Investment income	1,689		1,468	
Underwriting commission	3		3	
		1,692		1,471
Allocation toward Actuarial Deficit	3,610		1,009	
Donations	1		53	
		3,611		1,062
		6,692		3,918
EXPENDITURE				
Benefits paid	2,935		2,907	
Transfer values paid	3			
	2,938		2,907	
Management expenses	134		108	
		3,072		3,015
NET NEW MONEY AVAILABLE FOR INVESTMENT		3,620		903
Realised profit on sale of investments		3,088		1,856
Increase in unrealised surplus on investment revaluation		1,535		3,594
TOTAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR		8,243		6,353
Balance of resources at 1st January		41,271		34,918
Balance of resources at 31st December		49,514		41,271
Represented by:				
Investments		48,195		40,924
Net current assets		1,319		347
		49,514		41,271

This account should be read in conjunction with note 9 on page 14

This account is a summarised account of the full accounts of the Fund.

The full accounts of the Fund have been audited by Robson Rhodes, who have given an unqualified audit opinion

The full audited accounts of the Fund are available from the Central Office of the Church

Appendix 5

Plan for Partnership

The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

The Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration was first approved by Assembly in 1980 and has since been revised by Assembly from time to time.

Abbreviations used in this Plan

URC	United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom
MoM	Maintenance of the Ministry
URCMPF	United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund
CRCW	Church Related Community Worker
DSS	Department of Social Security

PART I - GENERAL

1	OBJECTS OF THE PLAN	2.3	The total budgeted requirement of the MoM Account shall be submitted annually for approval to the Resource Planning Advisory Committee by the MoM Sub-Committee of the Ministries Committee (the MoM Committee).
	To provide a unified scheme for the remuneration of stipendiary ministers and church related community workers in the service of the Kingdom of God within the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom (URC).	3	ADMINISTRATION AND CONSULTATION
2	PRINCIPLES OF THE PLAN	3.1	The Plan is administered by the MoM Committee whose members are appointed by the General Assembly of the URC. The MoM Committee recommends to the General Assembly any changes to the Plan.
2.1	The whole ministry of the URC is to be made available to the whole of the Church, and the financial responsibility for this ministry is to be shared throughout the whole of the Church. It is recognised that the extent and type of ministry will vary in different situations.	3.2	Normally in October of each year, the MoM Committee will meet to consider the criteria to be used in the preparation of the budget for the year after next. This will be submitted to the Resource Planning Advisory Committee for consideration.
2.2	Payment to ministers of a basic stipend and other payments provided for by the Plan will be charged to a central account known as the Maintenance of the Ministry (MoM) Account, which will be substantially funded from local church contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund.	3.3	The committee in each province responsible for the administration of the Plan for Partnership is designated in the Plan as the Provincial MoM Committee.

PART II - SCOPE OF THE PLAN

4	CHURCHES TO BE INCLUDED	5.1.1	Ministers of the URC serving whole time a single church pastorate or a joint or a group pastorate, or holding a special appointment within a Province.
	Each local church of the URC, and each ecumenical situation involving the URC.	5.1.2	Ministers of the URC holding appointments approved as special category ministries by the Ministries Committee (to such number as shall be determined from time to time by the General Assembly).
5	MINISTERS, CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORKERS (CRCWS), AND STUDENTS		
5.1	Ministers to be included:-		

- 5.1.3 Ministers of the URC serving as Provincial Moderators or holding stipendiary appointments in the central departments of the Church; and those ministers inducted to teaching posts at Westminster College.
- 5.1.4 Ministers of other denominations serving the URC, as the Ministries Committee shall, from time to time, determine.
- 5.2 **Part time ministers to be included:-**
Stipendiary ministers who are not in other full time remunerated employment.
- 5.3 **Students to be included:-**
Students who have already commenced training for the stipendiary ministry of the URC, giving ministry during their vacations, with District Council approval, to URC pastorates which are in vacancy.
- 5.4 **Special cases to be included:-**
 - 5.4.1 Ministers to whom remuneration for specific periods has been authorised by the Assembly Pastoral Committee.
- 5.4.2 Such other special cases as are accepted by the MoM Committee.
- 5.5 **Lay workers to be included:-**
 - 5.5.1 Accredited CRCWs serving in posts recognised and designated by the Ministries Committee.
 - 5.5.2 Lay missionaries serving in posts recognised and designated by the Ecumenical Committee.
- 5.6 **Whole time ministers NOT to be included:-**
Ministers over the age of 65 years and 6 months (see Note 2).
- 5.7 **Part time ministers NOT normally to be included:-**
Ministers and local pastors who are already in, or enter into, full time remunerated employment.
- 5.8 **Ministers NOT to be included:-**
Non-stipendiary ministers.

PART III - ENTITLEMENTS

-
- 6 **REMUNERATION OF MINISTERS AND CRCWS**
 - The remuneration of each minister and CRCW included in the Plan consists of a basic stipend together with other entitlements and allowances as set out below.
 - The level of the grants, loans and allowances shown in Appendix A will be set from time to time by the MoM Committee, who shall review these levels as at 1 January each year.
 - The level of the basic stipend will be set each year by Mission Council who will be advised by the MoM Committee.
 - 6.1 **Amounts paid from and at the expense of the MoM Account.**
 - 6.1.1 Basic stipend: changes to the basic stipend will be determined by the Mission Council having considered the advice of the MoM Committee. In the case of "part time" pastorates the proportion of whole time basic stipend which is appropriate, having regard to the work involved, shall be determined by the Provincial MoM Committee upon the recommendation of the District Council.
 - 6.1.2 Reimbursement of heat and light costs.
 - 6.1.2.1 The basic stipend will be reduced by an amount advised by each minister annually, being the actual cost of heat and light of the manse in which the minister resides. A reimbursement of the actual heat and light costs will be paid to each minister, without deduction of National Insurance and Income Tax under PAYE. These adjustments will be subject to a tax assessment as a benefit in kind.
 - 6.1.2.2 Each minister will be required to submit a return by 31st May of each year setting out the amount of heat and light costs paid in the preceding year ending 31st March. This return will form the basis of the amount to be provisionally deducted in the following year as well as being used to adjust the amount deducted in the previous year.
 - 6.1.2.3 Paragraph 6.1.2 does not apply to CRCWs.
 - 6.1.3 Payment during sickness: remuneration shall be paid during sickness for such periods and in such sums as shall be determined from time to time by the MoM Committee, which will take into account the regulations and benefit schemes of the Department of Social Security (DSS).

- 6.1.3.1 Ministers and CRCWs who are unable to work because of sickness or accident shall be paid full stipend (less any National Insurance Sickness Benefit or Industrial Injury Benefit received) for a period of six months. However, any sickness arising in the twelve months prior to the first day of a new period of illness will be taken into account in the calculation of those six months. At the appropriate times after the beginning of any illness, the MoM Committee shall take steps to determine, in consultation with the Provincial Moderator, what further help, if any, should be given when the entitlement to full stipend comes to an end.
- 6.1.3.2 Ministers and CRCWs who are unable to work for more than three days should advise the Finance Office as soon as possible during their illness in order that the necessary records can be maintained.
- 6.1.3.3 Ministers and CRCWs who are sick for periods in excess of twenty eight weeks will claim Sickness Benefit from the DSS and should notify the Finance Office of the amount of benefit received in order that the next available stipend payment may be reduced.
- 6.1.3.4 The local church shall pay pulpit supply fees and expenses during the minister's sickness, as defined in para 10.
- 6.1.4 Pension Fund: ministers who have not attained the age of 50 years at the date of initial induction to stipendiary service under the Plan may join the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF).

A minister aged 50 years or over at the date of initial induction to stipendiary service under the Plan, may not join the URCMPF. Only in these circumstances will an amount agreed by the General Assembly be paid, at the minister's request, to any personal pension arrangement chosen by that minister. From July 1st 1992 this will be 10% of basic stipend.

If a minister who is entitled to join the URCMPF elects not to do so, no contributions will be paid to any alternative personal pension arrangement. If the minister is already a member of the pension fund of another denomination at the time of qualification for stipend payment under the Plan, a contribution may be paid at the discretion of the MoM Committee to the minister's denominational fund.

- 6.2 **Amounts paid through the central payroll system to be recovered from the local church.**
- 6.2.1 In order to comply with Income Tax and National Insurance regulations any additional emoluments must be paid through the central

payroll system, the costs (including employer's National Insurance contributions) being recovered monthly from the local church by direct debit. Such emoluments include:-

- 6.2.1.1 Housing allowances paid to a minister or CRCW who does not occupy a church-owned manse.
- 6.2.1.2 Stipend Supplements: the payment of stipend supplements is discouraged by the General Assembly. However where the local church continues this practice the supplement must be paid centrally.
- 6.2.1.3 Fixed car allowances (see para 6.3.3.2).

6.3 Financial responsibilities of the local church

- 6.3.1 District Councils (taking advice from Province where required) should take note of the condition and facilities of the manse or, if alternative housing arrangements are to be made, should approve the details of the arrangements before concurring in calls and regularly thereafter.
- 6.3.2 Manse Accommodation: for the purposes of the Plan a manse means a home for the minister or CRCW and his/her immediate family (spouse and children), owned or leased by the church, provided and maintained in good repair and decoration, free of rent, ground rent, council tax, all rates (where payable), water/sewage charges and property insurance.

The local church should ensure as far as possible, that the minister has the use of a separate room as a study. In some cases, ministers may agree to use a room at the church but normally it should be expected that a separate room will be made available at the manse itself.

- 6.3.2.1 In the case of part-time ministers the church should meet the full standing charges of the manse, regardless of the proportion of stipend paid to the minister.
- 6.3.2.2 If the accommodation is owned or rented by the minister or CRCW, a housing allowance, agreed by the pastorate and the minister or CRCW, approved by the District Council shall be payable. Guide-lines for calculating such allowances shall be issued by the MoM Committee (see Appendix B).
- 6.3.2.3 The payment of removal costs shall be met by the local church (see Note 3).
- 6.3.3 Travel: the costs of travel on church business shall be met as follows.
 - 6.3.3.1 Car: where the regular use of a car is considered necessary by the local church in consultation with the District Council, it is the responsibility

of the local church to provide a suitable vehicle; the costs of private motoring shall be borne by the minister or CRCW under locally agreed arrangements.

- 6.3.3.2 Where, however, the minister or CRCW provides a car, the financial arrangements shall be agreed with the Provincial MoM Committee, the local church and the minister or CRCW. The MoM Committee shall distribute annually recommended rates of reimbursement of the cost of motoring on church business which must not be exceeded.

Where the minister or CRCW and the church agree that the recommended rates do not adequately reimburse the costs incurred, a fixed car allowance may be paid (see para 6.2.1).

- 6.3.3.3 Other Travel: the cost of travel on church business by public transport shall be reimbursed by the local church or other appropriate body.

- 6.3.3.4 Where a minister or CRCW, following an introduction by a Provincial Moderator, visits a church in pastoral vacancy other than in connection with a preaching engagement, the cost of travel shall be paid by the church visited. A grant, which shall not exceed the cost of travel within the United Kingdom of the minister or CRCW and spouse, shall be paid from the MoM Account to the church for a maximum of two such visits.

- 6.3.4 Expenses: the local church or other appropriate body shall reimburse the minister or CRCW for the cost of postage, telephone, stationery and any other expenses necessarily incurred on church business. The reimbursement of expenses will be on the basis of actual cost incurred, and not by a predetermined lump sum.

7 ADDITIONAL PAID WORK

Stipends and other allowances paid to whole time ministers or CRCWs shall normally be on the basis that these represent the main earned remuneration. It is recognised that a minister or CRCW will from time to time accept other paid work (e.g. hospital chaplaincies or teaching). Where this work, in the view of the District Council and Provincial Moderator, can be performed without detriment to the pastoral care of church, congregation and local church witness, the additional remuneration may be retained by the minister or CRCW involved, provided the work does not exceed the equivalent of one working day per week. Where more than one day per week is involved, the MoM Committee may reduce the stipend by an appropriate amount after consultation with the District Council and Provincial Moderator.

8 GRANTS AND LOANS PAID TO MINISTERS AND CRCWS FROM THE MOM ACCOUNT

8.1 Resettlement grant

- 8.1.1 Every stipendiary minister or CRCW, whether whole time or part time, shall be entitled to a resettlement grant (up to the maximum amount shown in Appendix A) upon settling into his/her first pastorate and each subsequent pastorate or into an appointment paid under the terms of the Plan and upon final retirement; always provided that the settlement involves a change in the place of residence and that the grant shall not be payable more than once in any period of three years.

- 8.1.2 Except at the time of a minister's initial induction or a CRCW's initial commissioning, (upon which settlement a full resettlement grant is payable) where the pastorate is part time the grant shall be pro-rata according to the scoping of the pastorate to be served. Where a minister's or CRCW's years of service up to normal pension age have not all been whole time the proportion of the resettlement grant on retirement shall be determined by the MoM Committee.

- 8.1.3 In the case of a minister or CRCW who dies before retirement (whether or not he/she has already passed retirement age) the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence. If the death occurs after final retirement but before the first change of residence then the spouse shall be entitled to the equivalent of a resettlement grant.

- 8.1.4 If a minister or CRCW does not receive a resettlement grant upon removal into a property which, at a later date, becomes the retirement home, a retirement resettlement grant will be made available. This will be a taxable emolument.

- 8.1.5 Where a minister or CRCW has not received a retirement resettlement grant at the time of retirement, he/she shall be entitled to a resettlement grant upon the first change of residence (subject to the three years' restriction in para 8.1.1).

8.2 Ordination loan.

- 8.2.1 An interest free loan (as shown in Appendix A) is available to ordinands for the stipendiary ministry: this loan shall be re-payable by deduction from stipend over a period of not more than five years or such other period as the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the MoM Committee, shall from time to time determine.

Appendix 5

8.2.2 A similar loan is available to former non-stipendiary ministers at the time they take up the stipendiary ministry, and to CRCWs upon commissioning.

8.3 Retirement removal grant.

The cost of removal within the United Kingdom shall be paid (as shown in Appendix A) on the first removal of a minister or CRCW following final retirement from a pastoral charge or from an appointment paid under the terms of the Plan (or to the spouse of a minister or CRCW who dies before retirement) provided that at least two estimates have been obtained. Normally the cost of the lowest estimate will be met.

8.4 Supplementary provisions.

8.4.1 Notwithstanding what is written above in paras 8.1 and 8.3, in the case of a husband and wife being ministers or CRCWs, their combined entitlement to resettlement grant and retirement removal grant shall not exceed that of one whole time minister or CRCW.

8.4.2 In a situation other than those covered above the MoM Committee shall have discretion to make available, in whole or in part, a resettlement grant, ordination loan and retirement removal grant.

8.4.3 The resettlement grant, ordination loan and retirement removal grant shall be payable whether or not the property is church-owned.

8.4.4 Changes in grants and loans will be determined by the MoM Committee after taking into account the views of the Mission Council or the General Assembly.

8.4.5 Where the minister has attained the age of 60 and, with the approval of the pastorate and the District Council, moves into the property designated as the retirement home, retirement resettlement and removal grants shall be paid. Retirement removal and resettlement grants shall only be paid once during the ministry of a minister, or ministerial married couple.

9

REMUNERATION OF STUDENTS

9.1

Students working in pastorates to which para 5.3.1 applies may be paid from the MoM Account such amounts as the MoM Committee shall from time to time determine. Housing and all out of pocket expenses (including the cost of travel to and from the pastorate) shall be borne by the local church. (See Appendix A).

9.2

Students in the circumstances to which para 5.3.2 applies may be paid such stipend and allowances as may be agreed in accordance with that paragraph.

10

PULPIT SUPPLY COSTS

When it has been advised to the MoM office that a minister or CRCW remunerated under the Plan

1. is unable to work due to ill-health, and is receiving Statutory Sick Pay or DSS benefit,
- Or 2. is on maternity leave,
- Or 3. is the Moderator of the General Assembly,
- Or 4. is absent on a sabbatical term which lasts for a period of more than four weeks,

the actual pulpit supply costs incurred by the minister's or CRCW's church arising because of the absence will be reimbursed to the limit shown in Appendix A. In group pastorates and part time pastorates, reimbursements shall be available only in respect of services which would have been conducted by the absent minister or CRCW. Claim forms for the reimbursement of pulpit supply costs can be obtained from the MoM office.

11

GRANTS

The MoM Account shall bear the cost of grants in support of ministry in ecumenical situations. (See Appendix C.)

PART IV - PAYMENTS

12 PAYMENT OF STIPENDS

The payment of the basic stipend, together with any allowances, shall be made monthly on or before the 26th day of each month.

APPENDICES

- A. Approved rates under the Plan
 B. Guide-lines for Housing Allowances
 C. Grants.

NOTES

The following notes are given for information

1. Removal Costs
2. Holiday provisions for Ministers

APPENDIX A - APPROVED RATES UNDER THE PLAN

	as at 1.1.97	as at 1.1.98	as at 1.1.99
para 6.1.1	Basic stipend, whole time Maximum stipend, part time	£14,232 75% of whole time	
para 8.1	Resettlement grant	£ 2,200	
para 8.2	Ordination loan	£ 2,200	
para 8.3	Retirement removal grant	Actual removal costs up to £1,100	
para 9.1	Maximum weekly payments to students Maximum weeks for which payment made	£60 10	
para 10.	Pulpit Supply costs	maximum refund per service: £20 plus appropriate travelling expenses.	

APPENDIX B - GUIDE-LINES FOR HOUSING ALLOWANCES

The provision of a dwelling for the minister is part of the normal conditions of service.

The Assembly has acknowledged

- a. The wish of some ministers to be owner-occupiers and
- b. The problem such a course can create for the stewards of the Church's material resources;
- c. The desirability of reviewing housing allowances annually.

1. Basic understanding

In most cases ministers who live in their own houses are doing so by choice, a choice which the Assembly has recognised they may make, whilst acknowledging at the same time that it can create problems for the local church. They are entitled to expect that the local pastorate will pay, in lieu of the manse accommodation, an allowance to cover the standing charges on the property, consisting of the same elements that the local church would expect to meet had the minister been living in the manse.

2. Allowance specifically 'in lieu of manse accommodation'

Allowances which are currently being paid may have been calculated on various bases and for different reasons and it is expected that these will be honoured. When determining new allowances the following should be taken into consideration:

- i. rates (where payable), Council Tax
- ii. water/sewage charges
- iii. interior and exterior re-decorations (estimated yearly average)
- iv. repairs (estimated yearly average)
- v. property insurance.

The allowance should be re-calculated annually.

3. Other factors

In some cases where the manse is let, it could be reasonable to take into consideration the net rent (ie the rent after meeting all expenses of the up-keep and letting) to see whether a further sum is available for payment to the minister. (The net rent is only being received because the minister is not living in the manse and the local pastorate would have been required to pay all the expenses in para 2).

In those cases where a manse has been sold (perhaps because the minister or his/her predecessor wished to have his/her own house), and the money realised has been invested, the situation is more complex. Experience has shown that the only way to ensure that sufficient capital is available to purchase another manse in future, is to retain virtually all the interest being received on the original capital. Therefore the local pastorate should give very careful consideration before using any part of this interest other than to add to the capital available for the purchase of a future manse.

4. Exceptional circumstances

Where a District Council feels that a settlement has been made possible only by the willingness of a minister to provide his/her own accommodation, the local pastorate shall pay a higher allowance than would otherwise be the case. In particular, consideration should be given to recognising the capital element contributed by the minister in providing the property. There may be other exceptional circumstances which justify a higher allowance.

Exceptional circumstances could also require the local pastorate to 'gross up' the allowance for Income Tax and National Insurance.

5. Part time pastorates

Part time ministers will be paid a proportion of a housing allowance, as determined by the scoping of the pastorate.

Note

It is recognised that there is an anomaly where a part-time minister is living in a manse (see para 6.3.2.1).

6. Procedure

The MoM Committee acknowledges that the determination of a fair allowance depends very much upon local knowledge. Therefore, each District Council should forward its recommendation to the Provincial MoM Committee for a decision, unless that committee has delegated authority to the District Council.

APPENDIX C - ECUMENICAL SUPPORT GRANTS

Ecumenical support grants may be made when a pastorate is faced with the responsibility of contributing towards the cost of ministry of another denomination after the Ministry and Mission Fund contribution for that pastorate for a particular year has already been agreed. For example, in a UR/Methodist church, where a UR minister is replaced by a Methodist minister, the

Ministry and Mission Fund contribution would normally continue at the same level for the remainder of the Ministry and Mission Fund financial year, but the pastorate would probably have to contribute extra to the Methodist Circuit and a grant from the Ecumenical Support Account of the Maintenance of the Ministry Fund would enable it to do this.

NOTE 1 - REMOVAL COSTS

The local church is responsible for paying the costs of removal (see para 6.3.2.3). Where the removal is within the United Kingdom reimbursement of up to 50% of the cost incurred (subject to a maximum of £1,000) is available from central funds and application should be made via the MoM Office. Reimbursement in excess of £1,000 will not be paid unless prior approval from the Finance Committee has been obtained. Where a minister is called from abroad reimbursement will be based on the removal costs from the port of entry.

Ministers called to the URC under the Overseas Recruitment programme in conjunction with the Ministries Committee will be reimbursed from central funds up to 75% of the cost of removal of themselves, their families, and their baggage from abroad to the pastorate in the UK, up to a maximum of £2,000. A similar reimbursement will be made for their return on termination provided that the period of service has continued for more than three years.

NOTE 2 - HOLIDAY PROVISIONS FOR MINISTERS

The following guide-lines were reported to Assembly 1982 and reaffirmed by the MoM Committee in 1997.

- i. We recognise the need for adequate holiday, which is freedom from all pastoral and preaching duty, and we believe that every local church will seek to ensure this for its minister. Ministers are urged to take holiday as provided, for the sake of effective future ministry.
- ii. We offer as guidance the provision that there should be 5 weeks such holiday in each calendar year; and that each minister should be enabled to take one further Sunday away from his/her pastorate without any claim upon him/her to arrange or pay for pulpit supply. On further occasions of Sunday absence from the pastorate the minister would be responsible for arranging and paying for pulpit supply.
- iii. We consider that circumstances may arise when one week of holiday is carried forward to the following year.
- iv. When a minister serves a part year in a local church on appointment or transfer or retirement, holiday provision should be pro rata, according to paragraph (ii) above, but we do not think that service of under three months in a calendar year should be a basis for such a calculation.
- v. The above sections do not refer to sick leave.
- vi. The above sections do not refer to in-service training courses or Sabbatical leave for study.

Appendix 6

Ministers' Pension Trust Limited

Chairman of the Board of Directors: The Revd Dr T A Chadwick
Secretary of the Board of Directors: Mr G Lunt
Mr D Davies, Miss V Ham, Revd J Martin, Revd A Spring
Mr T Swan, Revd P Ward

1 The Company has continued its work 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. Both directly and through its Investment Sub-Committee, regular meetings are held with the Investment Managers to review investment performance and strategy, having due regard for the aims of the Trust and prevailing and forecast trends in financial markets. The Board is always mindful of its duty and objective to maximise the total return on the Fund; the investment portfolio is regularly scrutinised to ensure that the Board's declared ethical investment policy is maintained. From time to time changes have been made in the light of variations in company structures and activities.

3 Throughout the last year much work has been done by the Board and its advisers to ensure that the Trust complies in a full and timely way with new and emerging regulations consequent on the enactment of the Pension Act 1995. To this end procedures have been developed to cater for the need to comply with Disclosure and Disputes regulations, an Investment Policy Statement has been adopted and advice has been given to the United Reformed Church about the mechanism for appointing "member-nominated Trustees". As ever, the Board is particularly grateful for the advice it receives from professional actuarial and legal advisers.

4 Always 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 (£11.3 million at January 1994) may be reduced and eliminated in as short a time as is possible. It is grateful for the decision made and implemented over the last 12 months by the United Reformed Church to inject an extra £2.5 million to the Fund in addition to the regular subvention from the Ministry & Mission Fund. The effect of this additional funding on the size of the deficit will become clear as the results of the January 1997 Actuarial Valuation become known.

5 The Board once again is pleased to place 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.

6 During the last year the first rotational retirements of Directors and Trustees took place. The Board expressed its warm thanks to Mrs Gwen Hall and the Revd Raymond Royston-Bishop for their service since the inception of the Trust and has been pleased to welcome Miss Valerie Ham and the Revd John Martin to service in their stead.

Appendix 7

United Reformed Church Trust

Chairman of the Board of Directors: Mr Desmond Davies **Director and Secretary:** Mr Clem Frank
 Revd Tony Burnham, Revd John Clague (retired 16.5.96), Mr Robert Hardie, Mr Harold Kempton,
 Mr Ronald Masser, Mr William McVey, Mr Graham Stacy, Revd Richard Wiggins, Mr Clive Willis

1 The Trust continues its work as acting as Trustee for the URC centrally, and for many United Reformed Churches throughout the country.

2 During the year, it became apparent that the task of transferring local church trusteeships to Provincial Trust bodies would be far in excess of the normal workload of the Secretary of the Trust. The Board was glad that the Church accepted the offer of Mr Tony Bayley, who had recently retired from full-time employment, to work on these matters for what must be regarded as a nominal salary. All Provinces have been circulated with the Trust's proposals, and some Provinces have accepted the Trust's request, although difficulties are foreseen by others. Where Provinces have indicated willingness to

accept the transfer of trusteeships to Provincial Trusts, the appropriate local churches have been approached. So far about 15 trusts have been transferred, and the work continues.

3 In addition to the transfer of local trusteeships, changes in staffing in the Finance Office have meant that the Secretary of the Trust is able to report on many of the Sundry Trusts to the Board, and steps are being taken to reduce the number of Sundry Trusts that exist. This is a time-consuming task, often involving detailed negotiation with the Charity Commissioners, but it is hoped that many funds which have not been fully utilised in the past can be freed for use in wider spheres in the future in accordance with the provisions of the Charities Act 1993.

Appendix 8

Reports from Colleges

Mansfield College

1 In college ministerial education we have 18 from the URC, one from the Congregational Federation, one Dutch Reformed, one Swiss Reformed, and one from the United Church of Japan. There are 8 on the Oxford M.Th. programme. Others are studying theology in the college for B.A., M. Stud., and D. Phil all of whom add up to 45 all in, making those who study theology about 18% of total number of students. It is an exciting community. Oxford has three Anglican colleges, four Roman Catholic colleges, one Methodist, one Baptist, one Unitarian based as well as a Catholic lay training college. There are about 100 faculty of theology members and about 500 studying theology in some form or another. We have various interactions with each other.

2 We use the University's new M.Th in Applied Theology for ministers and others who want advanced 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, plus dissertation. Do write to the college if you are interested. A 2/1 or equivalent classification is necessary from a previous theology or religious studies degree for admission.

3 Building is about to begin 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. President Clinton and others from Rhodes House are supporting it. Among other things, we need to continue to study those British religious traditions which have been most influential in the non-conformist founding of America and its continuing way of life.

4 Mansfield's Oxford Centre for Environment, Ethics and Society is making itself known for 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 £500,000 already.

5 We have appointed Prof David Marquand as our new Principal. David is a political historian, and started an academic unit at Sheffield University in politics and history, and he has also been an M.P. for around 10 years. He plans to be at Assembly.

6 Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, our new Associate Director of Ministerial Education, is a former Mansfield ordinand, and previously worked as a minister

in Wolverhampton, and Leicester, and as Director of Training for the South West Province. We were dismayed to find in February that she has been stricken with a serious illness, and this summer we shall know how her treatment has progressed. Catherine organises the Internship Year and Placements as well as much administration. She also teaches theology.

7 Our other staff put in a lot of hours. Flora Winfield, our Associate Chaplain, has left for a post at Church House for the Church of England. We wish her well and were grateful for her 3 years with us. Donald Sykes looks after early church history. Peggy Morgan handles world religions, John Muddiman has large attendances for his New Testament lectures which keeps Mansfield's biblical reputation alive in the Cadman, Dodd, Marsh & Caird tradition. Elaine Kaye takes the history of the churches from the 17th century (and having completed the history of the college is now finishing a history of Northern College and its various parents). Carolyn Brock teaches hymnody, Chris Sudgen helps in mission, Neil Messer teaches ethics, Andrew Mein delves into Old Testament and Charles Brock supplies liturgy, a 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 feminist understandings, musical and art trips of the spirit. The college domestic staff look after us wonderfully and Mansfield's food is the talk of Oxford.

8 A new project we are putting our minds to at the college is to set up a Religion & Democracy Programme. The idea is to look at various aspects of the historical and contemporary relationships between religious and various democratic movements. Independent and Reformed churches and their theologies have been crucial for the rise and continuance of democracy and we need to have a close look at how it has worked so we don't lose it in the future. Our plans so far are to have 4 lectures from well-known figures in this area in 1998 for Town and Gown, urbi et orbi. This will be followed up by workshops for invited participants from all over the world. Publications will be forthcoming. Depending on how this works we might expand operations outside Oxford as well.

Northern College

1 There are twenty-seven students on our roll, twenty-five of whom are preparing for ministry in the URC.

2 We have welcomed two new members of staff, the Revd Dr John Samuel Ponnusamy, overseas theological educator from the Church of South India who specialises in the Hebrew Bible, and Dr Peter Oakes a lay Baptist, who will be teaching New Testament studies in succession to Dr Helen Bond who has moved to a full-time post at the University of Aberdeen. The Revd Bob Day, our new Mona Powell Fellow, took up his duties in October. He will be conducting research in the area of community ministry and theology.

3 The Faith in Living course goes from strength to strength generating a high quality of work and commitment from staff and participants alike. Our first batch of graduates received their degrees in December at a University ceremony which brought a great deal of satisfaction to all concerned with the creation of the course. The standards set by our first graduates will be difficult to follow.

4 We started teaching an MA in Contextual Missiology in September. This will be followed by a partner MA in Contextual Ministry starting next September. The status of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry as an Affiliated Institution of the University of Manchester now also means that members

of the College staff can supervise students who wish to read for M Phil or PhD through the Federation. All these post-graduate degrees add to the post-ordination and in-service training opportunities for our ministers.

5 This session, the College, the Manchester Christian Institute and the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry have been holding internal reviews of their work, particularly trying to discover what they need to become if they are to respond to the needs of the churches and the opportunities of our time. There seems to be a widespread agreement that our theological colleges need to offer theological resources for lay as well as ordained education, that they should serve the churches in the geographical areas in which they are set, and that the work should be done ecumenically.

6 The Luther King House premises have been greatly enhanced by the creation of a new periodicals and reading room and the refurbishment of the chapel.

7 We benefit annually from the presence of our overseas students. This year we have welcomed Tamas Hadhazi from the Reformed Church in Hungary.

8 The speaker at the College Lunch at this year's URC Assembly will be the Revd Dr John Samuel Ponnusamy, our theological educator from Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary Madurai.

The Queen's College, Birmingham

1 The Foundation

1.1 The strategy outlined in the College's report to the 1996 General Assembly has now been implemented: this means that Queen's College and the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course have joined as partners in The Ecumenical Foundation for Theological Education. The third partner in the Foundation is a newly established Research Centre: the Revd Dr Kenneth Wilson (formerly Principal of Westminster College, Oxford) is now in post as Director of Research. The reorganisation is already fulfilling its aim, in giving a new impetus to our work in promoting an ecumenical approach to theological education training for the lay and ordained ministry of the churches.

1.2 Oversight of the Foundation is provided by a reconstituted Council on which the Methodist Anglican and URC Churches (and their respective ministerial training departments) are represented. Within the Foundation the three Directors (of College, Course and Research) give collaborative leadership; along with my responsibility as College Director, the Council has appointed me as Principal, with particular concern for the co-ordination of the three sectors.

1.3 Two developments in the region are opening up valuable new opportunities. The University of Birmingham Network for Research in Theology and World Religions brings together more than fifty theological teachers qualified to supervise research, from the staffs of the University, Selly Oak Colleges, Newman College and Queen's. Each of the member Colleges can enrol students on higher degrees of the University, with appropriate supervision. At the same time, the West Midlands Regional Consortium is beginning to get to work, creating a closer partnership between the concentrated resources which Queen's and other Christian institutions represent and the dispersed form of theological learning in the regional churches.

2 Staff

2.1 There are currently twelve academic staff and two resident research fellows in the Foundation. Dr Paul Smith has continued to take responsibility as tutor for URC students, while the Revd Paul Quilter (Research Fellow) has assisted with the programme of internship and attachment seminars. The Revd Dr Paul Collins (Liturgy) and the Revd Helen Cameron (Pastoral Theology) joined the teaching staff at the beginning of this academic year, as did the Revd Dr Dennis Stamps, the new Director of WMMTC in succession to Christina Le Moignan (now Chair of Birmingham District of the Methodist Church). Dr Andrew Chandler, modern church historian, has joined the Research Centre as Director of the George Bell Institute: his particular concern is to foster and support an international network of experience, enquiry and scholarship linked in spirit

with the common concerns which actuated George Bell and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in their relationship. Six more students joined the College this year under the Access for Black Theology Students scheme (with backing from the Methodist Church); Black and Asian students now constitute more than 20% of the community and this ethnic diversity has immensely enhanced our life.

3 Students

3.1 There are 101 students in the Foundation (62 full-time and 39 part-time) of whom 4 are URC (3 full-time and one part-time). The contribution of URC students to our common ethos and life remains far greater than the numbers might suggest. Regular exchanges of students continue to take place with Tamilnadu Theological Seminary in south India and the Theology Faculty of Leipzig University (involving candidates for the Lutheran ministry).

4 Curriculum and Courses

4.1 The Revised Curriculum now in operation brings all our courses of study into a coherent framework, with Certificate, Diploma B.A. (Hons) and M.A. programmes in Applied Theological Studies, Opportunities for contextual study (e.g. the Handsworth programme, which involves students living in and engaging with religious and secular life in this multi-cultural area from options within these programmes validated by the University of Birmingham).

5 BBC Films: The Calling

5.1 Filming, under the direction of David Pearson, had begun in June 1994. The programmes (five fifty-minute documentary films) were broadcast on BBC 2 in June/July/August 1996, fully two years later. The programmes have occasioned rather more positive than negative reaction. They give a fascinating and sensitive depiction of personal and interpersonal aspects of ministerial formation, though not a balanced impression of the work of the College (e.g. not a single shot of the Library!).

6 Chapel Refurbishment

6.1 Proposals for the internal refurbishment of the Chapel have been prepared in consultation with APEC Architects (Dr Martin Purdy and Mr Gary Dyhouse). The proposals were worked out in dialogue with students and staff of the Course and the College and with the support of the Friends of Queen's, they are intended to improve accessibility, enhance the appearance of the Chapel and make it more flexible for ecumenical use. An appeal for funds for this work is now successfully under way.

Westminster College

1 Farewell to Martin Cressey

1.1 On June 15th 1996 Westminster threw a 'thank you' party for Martin and Pamela Cressey. We have so much to say 'thank you' for. When the history of the URC comes to be written, Martin Cressey's name will loom large - one of the architects of the 1972 union, an Assembly Clerk with an unrivalled knowledge of church law (one colleague pointed out that this should be so, for Martin had written most of them!), an ecumenical statesman of world stature whose skilled drafting hand lies behind many of the most significant WCC Faith and Order Commission statements of recent years, but above all for Westminster, a teacher of theology and philosophy, a friend and a pastor. Martin was on the staff of the college for 23 years, 17 of them as Principal. Generations of our ministers learnt to do theology with integrity, clarity and commitment from Martin. The unwritten history of his Principalship is to be found in the quiet and reasoned advice that many have sought and continue to seek from Martin.

1.2 Principals' spouses are inclined to disappear into history. A frantic search for information about a previous Principal's spouse rendered only 'she was a gracious hostess at the Lodge!' And so Pamela was, but she brought to the college her own distinctive concerns about the life and witness of Christian women, the ethical dilemmas of medicine and the problems and opportunities of the third world. We wish Martin and Pamela well in their already busy retirement, and are glad that they live close enough to continue to be part of the Westminster community.

2 A year of change.

2.1 Change is natural. All institutions develop and adapt to new circumstances. Westminster is changing as the church changes and asks different things of its training institutions. We have welcomed new staff members. David Cornick moved from being Director of the Cheshunt Foundation to take over as Principal as from September 1st. Janet Tollington has taken over as Cheshunt Director. The 1996 Assembly also approved the appointments of the Revd Dr Peter McEnhill from Anderston Kelvingrove Parish Church, Glasgow and the University of Glasgow as Director of Studies in Systematic Theology, and the Revd Lance Stone of the Hackney Group of United Reformed Churches as Director of Pastoral Studies. We have already discovered some of the many gifts that Lance and Peter bring to the college - not least nearly thirty years experience of inner urban ministry between them.

2.2 Last year's Assembly approved a new administrative structure for the College, and this year has seen our new Board of Governors establish themselves as an essential part of college life. It is good to have the wisdom and experience of such a group of people to hand

as we look to the future and assess the ways in which Westminster can be of most service to the United Reformed Church and to the Cambridge Theological Federation of which it is also an essential part.

2.3 The academic profile of the college has altered completely in the last couple of years. The Cambridge Federation now includes 6 members - the two Anglican houses, Ridley Hall and Westcott House, the Methodist Wesley House, which also provides a home to the Catholic Margaret Beaufort Institute for Theology (devoted to the education of Catholic lay women and women religious) and the ecumenical regional East Anglian Ministerial Training Course as well as Westminster. As a Federation we are in partnership with three universities - the University of Cambridge, Anglia Polytechnic University and the University of East Anglia. All who know John Proctor will admire the Federation's wisdom in electing him as their President.

2.4 That rich set of affiliations means that we can offer a diverse and exciting menu of courses. The Certificate in Theology for Ministry, which has been our basic course for a number of years, has become the foundation for a new Cambridge University bachelor's degree, the BTh, and the first cohort of students were accepted onto it in October 1996. In partnership with Anglia Polytechnic University, we have created an MA in pastoral theology which has the flexibility to be part of initial ministerial training for appropriately qualified candidates, but also part of continuing ministerial education and lay training. It is proving remarkably popular (some 57 students are registered, including 5 URC ministers), and we have high hopes of its growth and development. Two Westminster students of the class of 95/6 will be amongst our first MA graduates in April. Higher research degrees continue to be available through the University of Cambridge, including a new one year MPhil in Theology which will be launched in 1997/8. We are discussing the possibility of part-time higher degrees with our other university partners, and hope to report back positively to 1998 Assembly.

3 And into ministry...

3.1 The year's settlements were, Wilf Bahadur to Trinity, Blackburn; Richard Becher to the South Leeds Team; Janet Calderley to Newbiggin-by-the-sea and Widdrington; Carole Ellefsen to Heaton St Andrews and Wilsden; Mark Elvin to Weymouth and Portland; Phillip Gray to Wisbech and Long Sutton; David Miller to St Andrew's Peterborough; Geoff Townsend to Westbury Gardens, Blackburn.

3.2 We also said farewell to Alistair Jones, to Eva Khasarova, a Slovakian student who spent two years with us, and to Geoff Thompson, our Lewis and Gibson scholar who has returned to ministry in Australia having successfully completed his PhD thesis on Barth. All our

leavers have made distinctive and important contributions to the life of the college, and we wish them well in the varied work of church and kingdom to which they have gone.

4 The future

4.1 Our new intake brings our total student numbers to 32, predominantly from the URC, but maintaining an international flavour with visitors from America, Germany and Japan. Visiting senior associates from the States, Iceland and Germany have been a welcome addition to our life - including an old friend, Dr Billy Butzke from Berlin, who provided some welcome help in the teaching of ethics during the Michaelmas term.

4.2 One of Westminster's finest resources is its exceptional library. Considerable changes have happened in the use of the library and in library policy. The sale of the Nestle collection has enabled us to bring to Westminster the Henry Martyn Mission Studies Library and its Director, Canon Graham Kings. This library is fast becoming an archive and scholarly resource of international significance in mission studies. We are also pleased to be providing office space for the North Atlantic Missiology Project of the University of Cambridge's Centre for Advanced Theological and Religious Studies. The presence of Dr Brian Stanley, the Project Director, and its Research Officer, Mr John Casson, is a welcome contribution to our corporate life.

4.3 The former Principal's study has become part of the library, and the home of our new Institute for Reformed Studies (as set out in our Five Year Plan) which was accepted by Assembly in 1995. The Institute will be launched in the October of this year when the

Convener of our Board of Governors and immediate Past Moderator, Dr David Thompson, will give a lecture on 'Ecumenism and the Reformed tradition' to mark the 25th anniversary of the formation of the URC. An exciting programme is being formulated for the next three years, and we will report more fully next year.

4.4 In theological education in the late twentieth century nothing is certain except uncertainty! As new patterns of ministry and new styles of mission develop, the way we use our resources, and who we use them for, are significant issues. Westminster's Governing Body and staff are clear that their primary responsibility is the service of the people of God, to be part of the equipping of the saints for the work God has for us all. The kaleidoscope is moving - our life consists not just of training ordinands. We are delighted to be of service to TLS, who meet at the college on a regular basis, as do the remaining students on Exploring the Faith. We are privileged to be able to welcome ministers undertaking in-service training of many kinds, to host Provincial Spring Schools and refresher courses, and to share with provincial partners in lay theological education. The buildings and staff of the college are being used by the whole church. That is only right, for theology is for all. It is the people of God at work thinking through the issues before them. We are excited to be part of that, and we look forward to its development.

5 And in conclusion...

5.1 Such changes make heavy demands on the office (who have to cope with our very own version of 'hot-bedding'), the catering team and the bursar. It would be quite wrong to end without acknowledging their dedication and enthusiasm. We could not do what we do without them.

Salford Urban Mission

1 During this year although no-one from the URC has completed their accreditation, one candidate has transferred to training as Minister of Word and Sacrament after one year with SUM. The partnership we have with Faith in Living course makes this transfer much simpler as several modules offered by SUM have been accredited within the Faith in Living Course and so qualify towards the Manchester University's Diploma in Theology. Other participants have included a Catholic Church Related Community Worker who completed two years with us while working to develop support networks for prisoners families and a secondee from the Swedenborgian Church who spent one year with us during which he completed several community development modules.

2 There have, however, been two new CRCW trainees who joined SUM in the autumn of 1996. Their programme has been devised to complement the weekend

programme of the Faith in Living course and this arrangement has worked well. We have also welcomed an "apprentice" from the Saltshaker project in Moss Side, an Anglican inner city initiative, and all three full-time participants have attended other community courses which we have had on offer. Their modules for Year Two have now been accredited by the University of Manchester.

3 Unfortunately by the end of the year it has become obvious that the programme developed for the bid to the Single Regeneration Budget and the European Social Fund to secure our base funding cannot be delivered on account of the late arrival nationally and regionally of NVQ's in Community Work. This situation entails a major review of our programme which is already in process to ensure the United Reformed Church's continuing commitment to current CRCW trainees and to a viable CRCW Training Programme for the future.

St Andrews Hall

1 It was a joy to end the calendar year with a celebration of our 30th Anniversary, with special events held on 30 November 1996, St Andrew's Day. We had an exhibition illustrating facets of the work of the URC, CWM and BMS and a special meal to which many guests had been invited. Greetings were received during worship in the chapel, the high point of which was the dedication of two new banners which had been designed and made by a gifted team of women from Kenilworth URC. One banner depicts the Americas and the other Europe and they make a stunning addition to the six existing ones loaned to us by CWM. The day ended on a high note with a public lecture given by Revd Michael Taylor, Director of Christian Aid, with the title Jesus and the International Financial Institutions. This excellent lecture is being published as a Selly Oak Colleges Occasional Paper and copies can be obtained at a modest cost through the College.

2 An interesting feature of the academic year 1995/96 was that throughout it we have had five URC Scholarship holders. Obed Fiagbenu from Ghana obtained the MA in Mission, Eva Debreczeni from Romania undertook studies in English and Mission and Jae Sung Kim from Korea studied English whilst continuing to develop his specialist knowledge and skills in advanced theological study with particular reference to North East Asia. It has been a real pleasure to have had with us Johnson Mbillah from Ghana who is undertaking his doctorate in Islamic Studies. Through a combination of additional help he has now been able to bring his wife

Rose and their four daughters and the family are living at St Andrew's Hall. In addition we also had with us Joel Ruml, Tomas Jirku and Vera Lukasova from the Czech Republic each of whom did one terms course in English. On a similar basis we had Christel Handt and Albrecht Naumann from Germany and Vilma Kiss Szabo from Hungary. From January until July we had Zickry Gayed from Sudan, who completed his Diploma in Church Education through Westhill College in spite of suffering from a very serious accident. For half the Spring Term we had Robert Westerdale, a URC volunteer, preparing to work in Madagascar.

3 Major restructuring of the Selly Oak Colleges has taken place, with a separation of the work of Endowment Trustees and the work of the Council, which has been slimmed down and formed into a company limited by guarantee. The Learning Resources Centre is virtually completed and St Andrew's is to be linked to its wide range of IT facilities through a Wider Area Network. The School of Mission has introduced a new MPhil course and will be launching a new taught Doctoral course in Missiology to commence in September 1997.

4 The Principal of the College, Revd David Grainger will be leaving in August and steps are underway to recruit someone to replace him. Revd Fei Taulealeausumai has been invited to spend a second period of service as Tutor with effect from September 1997.

Appendix 9

Students in Training 1996 - 1997

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Kay Alberg (Northern), Tony Haws (Alternative/Northern), Christopher Parker (Northern), Margaret Robb (Northern), David Salisbury (Westminster), Alistair Smeaton (Mansfield),

Non-Stipendiary

Raymond Anglesea (NEOC)

NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Jane Barron (Alternative/Northern), Robert Heathcote (Northern), Craig Muir (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Barbara Exley (MCI), Mark Houghton (MCI)

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Elizabeth Blair (Northern), Gary Gotham (Northern), Martin Hardy (Northern), Keith Hulse (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Christine Davies (MCI), Alan Poolton (MCI), Glenys Wilkinson (MCI)

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Georgina Brotherton (Mansfield), Julie Martin (Northern), Louise Montague (Westminster), Pauline Parkin (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Sandra Griffiths (MCI), Angela Hughes (MCI), Tjarda Murray (MCI), Peter Sharp (MCI)

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Jason Askew (Westminster), Edward Landon (Westminster), Ann Marie Trubic (Northern), Jeffrey Tunningley (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

John Hayton (EMMTC), Susan Lichfield (EMMTC), Patricia Lloyd (EMMTC), Jeremy Phelps (EMMTC), Sallyann Phelps (EMMTC), Rosemary Smith (STAOMTC), Elaine Sutherland (EMMTC)

WEST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Marilyn Allen (Mansfield), Barbara Bennett (Queens), Mary Burgess (Queens), Elizabeth Campbell (Northern), Edward Cox (Northern), Adella Pritchard (CRCW; Salford Urban Mission), Pauline Rate (Westminster),

Non-Stipendiary

Marion Thomas (WMMTC)

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

James Dalgleish (Westminster), Steven Faber (Westminster), Simon Franklin (Westminster), Geoffrey Haigh (Westminster), Jacqueline Knight (Westminster), Timothy Lowe (Northern), David Sebley (Westminster), Karen Stratton (Westminster), Kathryn Taylor (Westminster), Helen Wood (Mansfield),

Non-Stipendiary

Deborah McVey (EAMTC), Geoffrey Knight (EAMTC)

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Kathleen Wilson (Mansfield),

Non-Stipendiary

Susan Kirkbride (SAOMTC), Yvonne Stone (SWMTC)

WESSEX PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Philip Burroughs (Mansfield), Christopher Coe (Mansfield), John Du Bois (Mansfield), Sarah Hall (Mansfield), Owiny Laber (Northern), Alison Micklem (CRCW; Salford Urban Mission), Michael Shrubsole (Westminster), Raymond Stanyon (Northern), Alan Wickens (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Thomas Grant (STETS), Brian Hesketh (STETS), David Parkin (STETS), Rosemary Pullen (STETS), Jackie Hillier (STETS)

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Samuel Ansa-Addo (Westminster), Susan Chapman (Alternative - Northern), David Dones (Westminster), Anthony Howells (Westminster), Iain McDonald (Mansfield), Philip Nicholas (Mansfield), Nigel Watson (Westminster), Christine Willis (Westminster),

Non-Stipendiary

Robert Calderan (URC), Deborah Hodge (SAOMTC), Derek Ilines (SAOMTC), Alan Kirkcaldy (SAOMTC), John Mackerness (MCI), Edward Sanniez (MCI),

SOUTHERN PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Delia Bond (Westminster), Clare Downing (Westminster and SEITE), David Downing (Westminster), David Featonby (Westminster), Catherine Hare (Westminster), Roger Jones (Mansfield), Michael Meachin (Mansfield), Michael Perrott (Northern), Robert Pickering (Westminster), Peter Stevenson (Westminster), James Thorneycroft (Mansfield), Jane Wade (Mansfield), Kathy White (Westminster), Michael Whitfied (Westminster),

Non-Stipendiary

Barbara Pearson (SAOMTC),

PROVINCE OF WALES**Stipendiary**

Diana Cullum (Queens), Jacqueline Gavin (Northern), Richard Pope (Mansfield), Robert Pope (Westminster), Kathryn Price (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Martyn Evans (URC), David Marshall Jones (MCI)

Appendix 10

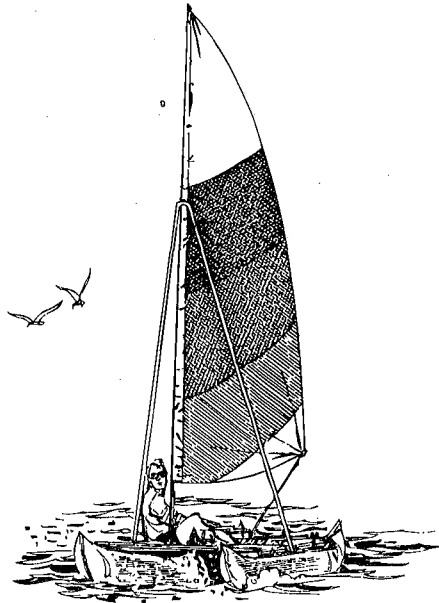
Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training			Anticipated Entry into URC Service			
	Feb 1995	Feb 1996	Feb 1997	1997	1998	1999	2000+
Full-time Courses							
Mansfield	25	19	16	6	4	3	3
Northern	27	21	25	6	9	5	5
Queens	10	6	3	1	2	-	-
Westminster	29	27	29	10	7	6	6
Selly Oak	1						
Salford Urban Mission	1	1	2				
Sub total	93	74	75	23	22	14	14
Part-time Courses							
EAMTC**	-	2	2	-	2	-	-
EMMTC**	4	8	6	3	3	-	-
NEOC**	4	1	1		1		
MCI**	15	11	12	5	2	2	4
STAOMTC**	1	1	6	1	-	5	-
STETS**	6	5	5	3	1	1	-
SWMTC**	1	1	1	-	-	1	-
WMMTC**	2	2	1	1	-	-	-
SEITE**	3	1	1	1*			
URC**	8	3	2	1	1	-	-
Sub total	44	42	36	15	10	9	3
Total	137	109	112	37	32	23	22

* Jointly with Westminster College, Cambridge

** EAMTC East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
 ** EMMTC East Midlands Ministry Training Course
 ** NEOC North East Ordination Course
 ** MCI Manchester Christian Institute
 ** STAOMC St Albans Dioceses Ministerial Training Scheme
 ** STETS Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
 ** SWMTC South West Ministry Training Course
 ** WMMTC West Midlands Ministry Training Course
 ** SEITE South East Institute for Theological Education
 ** URC URC Non-Stipendiary Ministry Training Programme

Information



General Assembly 1997

URC History Society

1 The Society met in Cromford, Derbyshire, for its Study Weekend 20 - 22 September 1996. This year's Annual Lecture, "The religious professional in modern Britain", was given by Dr Grace Davie and six papers and talks were presented by members. These were far ranging - from "An introduction to Nonconformity in Derbyshire" to "The melting of Tutuila". On Saturday afternoon there was a choice of guided excursions to Belper, Ashbourne and Chesterfield. A Study Day is planned in London at Dr William's Library on 20 September 1997, to include the Annual Meeting and Lecture.

2 Dr Clyde Binfield, the editor, continues to get first class articles for the *Journal*. The October 1996 issue included a bibliography of recent work by Dr Geoffrey Nuttall and a number of appreciations of his work. A Supplement to mark 25 years of the URC will be published in the autumn of 1997 in addition to the regular issue of the *Journal*.

3 Written enquiries and visitors continue to come to the Library. We are very grateful to the volunteers who help there, especially Mrs Mary Davies, who attends every week. It is heartening to receive a steady stream of published histories of local churches and occasional books by members of the Society.

4 The topic for the Society Lunch during the General Assembly at York was "The Ecclesiastical Exemption Act". Members were able to share their experience of helping congregations deal with proposed alterations to their buildings and a lively discussion ensued.

5 After serving on the Council of the Society since 1971, including three years as Chairman, the Revd Stephen Mayor retired at the 1996 Annual Meeting. Besides being a distinguished historian, generous in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasms with others, Dr Mayor has delighted us with his dry sense of humour and provoked us with his penetrating and unusual questions. Revd Stephen Orchard has been elected Chairman to succeed him and Revd Elizabeth J Brown succeeds Dr Orchard as Secretary. Dr John Thompson has been elected to fill a vacancy on the Council.

6 The annual subscription to the Society remains at £8.50. Individuals and congregations who have an interest in the ancient or modern, local or global history of the United Reformed Church are warmly invited to join.

URC Musicians' Guild

1 'Christ for the world! we sing' - these words from the hymn by Samuel Wolcott are the message proclaimed on the Guild Badge where they are superimposed on the opening notes of the tune 'Milton Abbas' by Eric Thiman (1900-1976), distinguished Composer, Conductor, Recitalist, Professor of Harmony, Music Examiner, Organist of London's Park Chapel, then of The City Temple and a member of the Guild. Singing, as well as the playing of instruments, has certainly featured in the activities of the Guild in the last year.

1.1 The annual Celebration Day in October 1996 was held at St Andrew's Roundhay, Leeds and members and friends from many parts of the country enjoyed singing, playing and listening to a wide variety of music. Earlier in the year the Guild had organised a competition for the composition of a tune for the hymn 'New every morning'. Eighteen entries arrived and the winner (sung in Celebration Day worship) selected by the judges, - Revd Caryl Micklem (Guild President), Revd Arthur Jack Beeson (Guild Chairman) and John Mansfield (Editor of the Guild magazine) - was submitted by Mrs Valerie Ruddle.

1.2 The competition had been launched at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park in May where the Guild had a small display stand. This had been arranged under the auspices of CHIME of which the Guild is a member. CHIME (The Churches Initiative for Musical Education) was founded in 1991 to survey Church Music diploma and degree courses and in 1993 produced a set of guidelines for those providing and taking such courses. Although operating and adapting the guidelines is an ongoing task, CHIME is seeing itself very much now as a meeting point and forum for Church Music bodies and groups of all

denominations. Forty organisations belong to CHIME and the exchange of ideas and the pooling of resources must be a useful function in these days of development and changing fashions in music.

1.3 The Guild plans to be represented again this year at the Christian Resources Exhibition in May. If you are at the Exhibition please visit our stand and make yourself known to our representative.

1.4 Our numbers this year have increased slightly and several more Churches have joined as Corporate members. A certificate has been designed and is now issued annually to each Church in Corporate membership. Our magazine, 'Guild Review', has maintained its high standard and the three annual issues alone are worth the annual membership subscription! The Organ Advisory Service has continued to advise Churches when asked and a number of redundant pipe organs have been re-located.

1.5 In the last year we have also re-designed our notepaper which now incorporates the new URC logo and the Guild badge. The Guild has also given some financial help to needy Church musicians from a small fund set up a few years ago following receipt of a sizeable donation for this purpose.

1.6 As we continue to worship and praise Almighty God through music and strive to make the musical offerings of our Churches more meaningful and worthy, we ask for your support (perhaps by joining us yourself or encouraging your Church to do so) and by remembering us in your prayers.

Schools linked with the URC

1 In 1996 and 1997 representatives of the Six Schools have met twice. They met in London in May 1996 for a business meeting and at Taunton School for their Conference, which was held on 6 and 7 February 1997, with the theme "They shall renew their strength". Sessions were led by the Revd John Rackley, minister of Manvers Street Baptist Church, Bath, and by the Revd Peter Brain. The Headmaster of Taunton, Mr Barry Sutton, who retires in 1997, held his audience with a shrewdly elegiac retrospect.

2 The Schools congratulate the Headmistress of Walthamstow Hall, Mrs Lang, on her election as President of the Girls' Schools Association.

3 Several of the Schools are developing links with the Collegio Valdese, at Torre Pellice, and there are possibilities of appropriate links with other European schools of the Reformed tradition.

4 Grants made by the United Reformed Church from its share of the Memorial Hall Trust and by the Milton Mount Foundation allow the Schools to exercise their responsibility to the wider Free Church community. These grants contribute particularly to the education of children of serving ministers and missionaries but they can also contribute to the education of children of women and men preparing for ordination.

5 Acknowledgement is also made of the grant to the Six Schools by the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust toward sixth-form scholarships. The schools can provide details of the terms of these grants.

6 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.

7 **Caterham School**

7.1 The new Caterham School is in its second year. Now fully co-educational from age three to eighteen the school aims to provide quality education from pre-preparatory to sixth form. A visit from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of

Education confirmed that the school is doing well and that the adjustment from single sex to co-education has taken place with a minimum of disruption. Examination results continue to be good and most upper sixth form students gained places at the University of their choice.

7.2 The undoubted highlight of the past few months was the opening of the new Sports Complex by Sebastian Coe. It has a competition size swimming pool, a large sports hall, a fitness room and a social area. The place is well used by pupils and friends of the school. It is a pity that such a fine facility cannot be used by the general public because of restrictions imposed by the local authority. Negotiations are underway to change these.

7.3 The school continues to provide education for the sons of URC ministers. Now the daughters of ministers can come to the school. This was not possible before 1995 except at sixth form level. At present there are six sons and one daughter at the school.

7.4 The changing pattern of boarding has meant that pupils no longer attend the local United Reformed Church. The school values its links with the church and re-instituted the annual carol service to take place in it. Other ways in which the church could be more extensively used by the school are being explored.

7.5 For the past two years our boarders' service has been at 8.30 pm on a Sunday evening. The formality of the past, when pupils came dressed in suits for a traditional service, is no more. They now come dressed casually and share in a variety of worship. This ranges from services inspired by Taizé with an emphasis on quiet and reflection to ones in which rock groups lead. An attempt is made to involve the boarders in worship which means something to them.

7.6 There are three traditional services, apart from the carol service, during the year. These are appreciated because of what they stand for. The Leavers' Bible Service takes place in May and is an occasion when the Headmaster can say goodbye to leaving pupils and present each one with the gift of a Bible. This continues a tradition which goes back to the foundation of the school in 1811.

7.7 Then there is Founder's Day when the school remembers its foundation by a Congregational minister, John Townsend. The merger with Eothen School has given the new school two other founders, the Pye sisters. They were concerned, at the end of the last century, to start a school which would afford girls an education of similar quality to that available for boys.

7.8 The Remembrance Sunday service has become an important feature of the school's life. It is supported by parents and pupils and in 1996 there was a capacity congregation in the assembly hall. It is interesting that many, who are so far removed from the wars remembered, find such meaning in this service.

7.9 The school relies heavily on the support of local United Reformed Church ministers who readily give of their time to speak at assemblies and lead Sunday worship. Their help is much appreciated.

8 Eltham College

8.1 The highlight of 1996 was undoubtedly the opening of the Eric Liddell Sports Centre on 26 June 1996. The new facility has already proved of great benefit to pupils and to the local community. It was fitting that the double-Olympic gold medallist Sebastian Coe, MP should perform the opening ceremony. In his speech Mr Coe referred to Eric Liddell as "a sporting genius".

8.2 In the foyer of the Centre now stands a beautiful sculpture depicting Eric Liddell in the final stride of a race. The bronze shows Liddell consumed by the ecstasy of supreme physical effort through which he both served and praised his maker. Appropriately enough the sculpture is entitled "Eric Liddell, Athlete and Evangelist". A few days previously the artist, Emma Pover, had entranced the school when she explained during Chapel how she had found great inspiration in working on the project.

8.3 One theme raised in morning Chapel during the year was that of suffering. The Revd Barry Carter, a local URC Minister, was able to respond to the Dunblane tragedy. The Chaplain wrote a modern version of the story of Job to continue the theme. The school also listened in profound silence to a moving description of a visit to Auschwitz. Later on in the year the school welcomed the local URC Moderator, the Revd David Helyar, as the speaker at its Remembrance Service. The Chaplain has continued to develop

links with the local UR Churches and was welcomed as a member of the Bromley district synod in June.

8.4 The school has continued to flourish academically, once more achieving outstanding results in the summer examinations. Pupils have opportunities to excel in all sorts of pursuits and to develop their talents in many areas. Two boys won schoolboy international Rugby "caps" - for England and Scotland - and another two won gold medals in the national Physics Olympiad. Indeed, one of these achieved the first position, going on to lead the United Kingdom team in the international Olympiad.

8.5 In concluding this report we would point members of Assembly to words from Nelson Mandela's inaugural address with which the Headmaster closed his remarks at the opening of the Sports Centre. They are appropriate both as a memorial of one of the school's most famous sons and as an expression of the philosophy of the school:

"We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
Permission to do the same.
As we are liberated, our presence
automatically liberates others."

9 Silcoates School

9.1 We concluded our 175th Anniversary year and the Centenary of the Old Silcoatians' Association with two significant events. At the Senior Prize-giving the Guest of Honour, the Duke of Devonshire, buried a time capsule for a future generation of Silcoatians to unearth. A memorable Thanksgiving Service in the Chapel was also the occasion of a happy reunion for many with Silcoates connections.

9.2 It has been a good year for pupil numbers, with a record 112 new pupils in September, giving us an unprecedentedly large Junior School of almost 200. Of our two tied schools, St Hilda's topped 150 for the first time and Sunny Hill House, while remaining full, nonetheless also saw an increase in numbers with the establishment of a nursery section.

9.3 Our ablest A level student was awarded a Certificate of Excellence in Religious Studies as one of the examination board's top three candidates nationwide. We have introduced three new A level subjects: Business Studies, Physical Education and English Language.

9.4 Of the many extra-curricular achievements worthy of note, perhaps the most satisfying was the eleven Gold Awards attained by participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Scheme.

9.5 Significant improvements recently made to the Junior School included a new library and the Sixth Form Centre underwent a major refurbishment last summer.

9.6 Finally, the three schools have now been established by the Charity Commissioners as the Silcoates School Foundation.

10 Taunton School

10.1 We hope that our founders would have approved the decision to turn the Schoolroom into a proper theatre, allowing drama to flourish and, marvellously, pupil-directed drama to blossom, because these activities challenge and extend the boys and girls in so many disciplines - direction, acting, lighting, props, management, marketing - that they are an education in themselves. 1995/96 therefore has been the year of the theatre in Taunton School.

10.2 Not that radio-astronomy has declined following the triumphs in the United States in the wake of Shoemaker-Levy IX, but astral planning is long term and is currently focused on the total eclipse of the sun in 1999, which will be viewed (if radio telescopes view) from west Cornwall where the Head of Science has already taken a lease on a field for his apparatus.

10.3 It is also good to report that debating, including participation in national and international competitions, is in good health as we try to combat the political indifference of the young. That indifference certainly does not extend to matters athletic with rugby and hockey teams (boys and girls) narrowly missing unbeaten seasons and the netball team obliging the President of the School Council to treat them all to dinner because they had achieved just that.

10.4 And the Advanced Level results were excellent enabling the Headmaster, who believes them to be an abomination, to regard the league tables with a less jaundiced eye despite himself.

11 Walthamstow Hall

11.1 The year began well with the move into the new Sixth Form centre in the Spring Term. Transformed by our own skilful maintenance team from former Junior School premises, it now offers sixth-formers suites of seminar rooms for Advanced Level teaching, two elegant common-rooms, a kitchen and dining area and smart cloakrooms. With its hall for lectures, dance-classes and fencing, and its pleasant sunny terrace, it provides a base for the independence and autonomy that is needed by girls soon to be university students.

11.2 With Advanced Level results bringing an average UCAS points score of 22.8, last year's leavers were well qualified. At GCSE, too, results were among the best ever: 20% of the grades were starred As.

11.3 The Drama department, often in conjunction with other disciplines, has given some memorable productions, including workshop performances of *Sophocles' Electra*, *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*. The musical *The Boy Friend* was an extravaganza of Twenties dancing, singing and characterisation. The Junior School's *The Silver Sword* was a moving portrayal of wartime flight, separation and reunion.

11.4 There has been much music-making, both formal recitals and concerts and less formal evenings for players of all ages and stages. A group of musicians entertained visitors to Knole House, the magnificent National Trust property in Sevenoaks, with appropriately historical pieces in the Great Hall.

11.5 Students of German visited Berlin, for a study week, and Hamburg, on a joint exchange with Tonbridge School. Sixty girls went on the French exchange to Pontoise, and sixth-formers had a week's work-experience in France.

11.6 The Careers Department organised a Gap Year Convention to help sixth-formers to plan worthwhile pre-university years. A very large number go to Third World countries to teach or to help with local projects. A Careers Convention brought in representatives of some 150 professions to be questioned by aspirants.

11.7 The new library was completed at the end of the year and we look forward to its official opening by the author Susan Hill.

11.8 The number of missionaries' and ministers' daughters in the school is five: two URC, one Anglican and one Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

12 **Wentworth College**

12.1 In the summer of 1996, the twenty UVI students entered for fifty-six Advanced Level subjects and achieved an 83 per cent pass rate while the forty-one members of form V entered for a total of 353 GCSEs in nineteen subjects. They gained grades *A to D in 99 per cent of their entries - certainly higher than the national average of 72 per cent. Our policy is to enter all the girls who have prepared for these public examinations - not just those who are likely to gain the very best grades.

12.2 We have maintained the number of day girls and boarders at Wentworth College, among them six daughters of ministers and four daughters of URC members. During the last academic year these girls and their fellows had the chance:

- ◆ to face the challenge of rock climbing on the cliffs at Swanage;
- ◆ to reach a sufficiently high standard of musicianship to perform on the South Bank in the National Festival of Music for Youth;
- ◆ to achieve the RLSS Bronze Medallion and thus

help the school to gain the Wessex Lifesaving Cup;

- ◆ to gain a place in the county lacrosse squad and tennis team and to represent the school in swimming, netball, badminton, volleyball, rounders and athletics;
- ◆ to help modify the school boat, "Challenger", using the newly opened Design & Technology facilities, to enable local children with disabilities to sail with members of the school - our Task Force Project;
- ◆ to improve their understanding of French at the Chateau du Tertre, or German at the Gymnasium Pullach;
- ◆ to develop a better standard on the ski slopes at Les Deux Alpes;
- ◆ to act either in the senior drama production of *Jane Eyre* or the junior drama club production of *Will Shakespeare Save Us*;
- ◆ to experience success in the Bournemouth Festival or as a member of the public speaking team in the local round of the Business and Professional Women's competition;
- ◆ to enjoy various international themed evenings.

12.3 An average of 97 per cent of Wentworth students go on to higher education each year. As always it is not simply their Advanced Level and GCSE successes, but the additional enrichment from the breadth of other appropriate activities they can engage in, and experiences they can acquire, that ensure our girls' acceptance onto the higher education course of their choice.

Silence & Retreats Network

During the past 12 months the Network's Core Group has seen a number of changes, both in its relationship to the United Reformed Church (because of departmental and committee changes in the Church's structures) and in its membership. But the Core Group is committed to continuing the aims identified in 1987:

- ◆ to resource Provinces, Districts and local churches, including the publication of *Windows* three times a year;
- ◆ to support and encourage everyone in the Network, including especially the Provincial "Links";
- ◆ to promote silence, quiet days and retreats as means of deepening spiritual life;
- ◆ and to work ecumenically through the National Retreat Association.

The Silence & Retreats Core Group remains an integral part of the Church under the auspices of Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, but is now administered and serviced entirely outside Church House by volunteers. Members of the group have undertaken to share responsibilities as follows:

Nelson Bainbridge: minutes secretary of the group.

Keith Green: editor of *Windows*.

Helena McKinnon: promotional secretary, responding to enquiries and requests.

Mike Playdon: group convener, general correspondence, link with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship, and National Retreat Association.

The other members of the group are Henry Gordon and Peter McIntosh. We record our grateful thanks to former members of the group, Joan Holliday, Kate Compston and Susan Cernohlavek who made a significant contribution to the NRA's highly successful 1996 conference, "Everyday God".

"*Exploring Stillness*", prepared by Keith Green, a "pack" exploring prayer, seeking stillness, and leading into stillness, has proved extremely helpful and has sold well. The group is now in the process of producing a leaflet of introduction to Silence & Retreats.

The financial underwriting of the group's work by the Church is gradually being phased out, and the production of *Windows* is also now being handled outside Church House. By the end of this year we expect to be financed entirely by subscriptions. This means, of course, that we are looking for a group treasurer and that we need to maintain a high level of subscriptions and perhaps look for donations too. (A year's subscription, currently £7.50, brings three issues of *Windows* and the NRA's annual *The Vision*.)

The work of the Network is carried out almost entirely in the Provinces and Districts. In some places (the South West, Wessex and Southern Provinces, for instance) a good deal is happening with quiet days and retreats for Ministers, Ministers' spouses and lay people (often together); but the overall picture is patchy. At the end of April the Core Group held a consultation with the "Links" from all the Provinces, when we were able to receive their input, share our visions for the future, listen to needs and hopes and see in how we can encourage further opportunities for deepening the spiritual life of individuals and congregations within our Church.

The Silence & Retreats Core Group is very much still in business. In its tenth year we are conscious of how much is owed to the vision of those who have encouraged us to use silence more often, to explore the tradition of retreats, to learn from the experience of other Christian communities, and to set up a network of people who share this vision. We believe God, by his Holy Spirit, is telling us to go forward in hope and faith. We invite enquiries from any member of the Church who wants to know more, and value the prayerful support of all.

SPIN (Sharing People In Network)

Joint Co-ordinators: Mrs Lindsey Cole; Revd Bob Day

1 SPIN (Sharing People in Network) is a network of men and women within the URC which was set up as a response to the WCC Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. During its earlier years it responded to the needs of a number of small groups of women who were feeling marginalised and were struggling for a sense of self-worth. We have become increasingly conscious that many of the traditional women's groups which still exist are now losing their sense of self-worth because they do not see a role for themselves in the mission of the church. The old pattern is failing and alternative groups, such as those for retired people, do not as yet present the same opportunities. Because of this, SPIN has tried to widen its purpose and the Network. *Magnet* a very attractive magazine produced by the Methodist Women's Network and *Insaka* produced by the Council for World Mission, Community of Women and Men in Mission, are now part of the Network Mailing. Provincial Co-ordinators have become part of the central planning group, bringing a wider perspective. SPIN is taking a lead in bringing to the fore issues relevant to the whole church but having particular significance for women.

2 Another network which has developed during the decade and which meets annually is the Women in Ministries Network which is open to both ordained and lay women. It has no formal structure but provides valuable support and an opportunity to discuss relevant issues for women in ministry.

3 Links are being made with the Christian Women's Fellowship Conventions, as increasingly women within the URC are finding these an opportunity to develop skills and gain confidence, enabling them to become active in a wider variety of roles within their local congregation.

4 The annual conference of SPIN was held at Westminster College in November. It picked up the theme of Violence and Abuse in the Church. Aply

led by Revd Bill Mahood, it raised awareness of the problems and examined ways in which we can respond. Churches often ignore what is happening because they do not know what to do and it was felt that some guidelines are needed. It was also agreed that the issue needs to be integrated into the thinking and worshipping life of the church. The conference agreed to the following course of action:-

- a) To develop material for use in worship and to examine ways that different parts of the lectionary can be used to raise the issue. Also to examine ways that expressions of equality can be written into services.
- b) To gather together resources on the subject which would be available to anyone wanting to know more on the subject.
- c) To promote the use of '*Hands to End Violence Against Women*'.
(Available from the URC)
- d) To ask the Training Committee to look at ways in which Ministers can be prepared to recognise and handle situations of violence and abuse.
- e) To ensure the topic is kept on the agenda of the Church.

5 At the AGM which formed part of the annual conference, the Revd Bob Day was elected as the second Joint Co-ordinators. Revd Jan Berry was appointed co-ordinating editor of *SPIN-OFF*.

6 An important issue is what to happen with the coming end of the World Council of Churches, Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. What is to happen next within the URC? A SPIN Conference in the Autumn will discuss this issue. Recommendations will be brought to Assembly in 1998.

Women's World Day of Prayer

URC representative on the National Committee: Mrs Josie Owens

1 We greatly appreciate the nine years service given by Mrs Ruth Bowyer to the work of this movement and welcome this first report from Mrs Josie Owens.

2 The Women's World day of Prayer service was held on Friday 7th March with the theme 'Like a Seed which Grows into a Tree'. This service was prepared for us by the Christian Women of the Republic of Korea. The material was very moving and there was great feeling for the women and girls who have discrimination against them in their country. It was, though, most heartening to know that despite the problems and divisions suffered, the capital, Seoul, has over 2,000 Churches and these are constantly growing. Some of them have the largest congregations in the world and Christians are active in evangelism and prayers especially for the reunification of their country and reconciliation of North and South. Through the services of prayer around the world 'may seeds be sown that will grow into fruitful trees, helping to bring reconciliation for their country, whose leaves may offer the shade of love and peace for all.'

3 As well as the services that took place in Churches, Chapels, Cathedrals, Halls and Hospitals, there have been 38 day conferences held throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1996. These act as a good preparation for the day with Bible Study, Prayer and Information about the country who have prepared the service. The conferences have proved so popular that 1997 already has many conferences booked with more coming in all the time.

4 My appointment on the National Committee began in September 1996, and from my first committee meeting I felt the warmth and fellowship that my predecessor Mrs Ruth Bowyer had described to me. The committee had a true Ecumenical feel as barriers in denominations are forgotten and we all work together to a common goal in the service of Christ.

5 The 1998 service comes from Madagascar with the theme 'Who is my neighbour?'

More information about services and conferences can be obtained from the office, Women's World Day of Prayer, Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR.

World Day of Prayer - Scotland

Representative on the National Committee: Mrs Molly Glen

1 'Like a seed which grows into a tree' - was the theme for the World Day of Prayer services held on March 7, 1997. The service this year was written by the Christian Women of South Korea - two of these women visited us in Edinburgh a few months ago, Marian Kim and The Revd Chung Scok Ja, and did a whirlwind tour of the city meeting friends from the URC, Christian Aid, Feed the Minds, Church of Scotland World Mission, Third World Centre, etc. They were interviewed for the local radio in the Synod Office of the Episcopal Church - we had a very happy time of fellowship with them. Revd Chung Scok Ja is very involved in political education in Korea and remarked how interested she was in our national newspaper *'The Scotsman'* to read so many articles either written by or about the role of women in the community; something which is more or less unheard of in Korea.

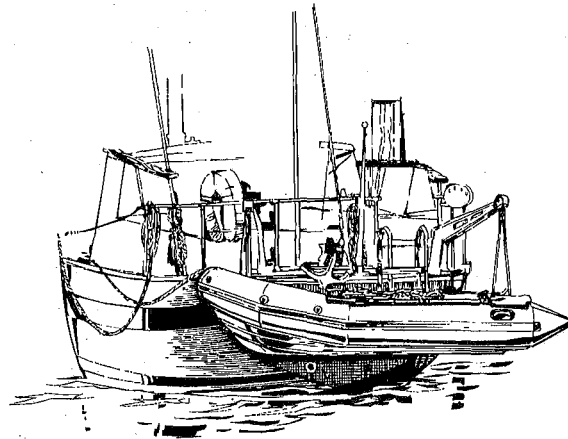
2 Our services were well attended up and down the country and we were pleased to learn about so many Koreans living in our country who were willing to take part in the service. In my

district of Edinburgh we discovered we had a Korean Church meeting quite close to us and they brought along their choir to our service which was much appreciated and they certainly added the right atmosphere for our worship.

3 The requests for our taped service (this year recorded by the Aberdeen Committee) continues to increase - these are used by the housebound and we find are being used more and more by the blind as our requests for the Braille copies of the service has declined markedly. The children's service is still popular with school teachers and those involved in Junior Church. The shortened version of the service used in City Centre churches for lunch time services directed at shop and office workers, we find is still appreciated.

4 Marion Kim (one of the ladies who visited us from Korea) has written a prayer on the theme. This has been printed on a very attractive card by Christian Aid in association with KEEP (Korea Ecumenical Education Programme). It is worth obtaining a copy.

Standing Orders



General Assembly 1997

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 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 Convener 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.

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 this is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

7. QUESTIONS

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

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

7c. Questions asked under standing orders 7a. and 7b. shall be put and answered without discussion.

8. POINTS OF ORDER, PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS, DISSENT

8a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order.

The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.

8b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

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

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

9. ADMISSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

10. CIRCULATION OF DOCUMENTS

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the 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 or evening session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary

correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.

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

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

12. SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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