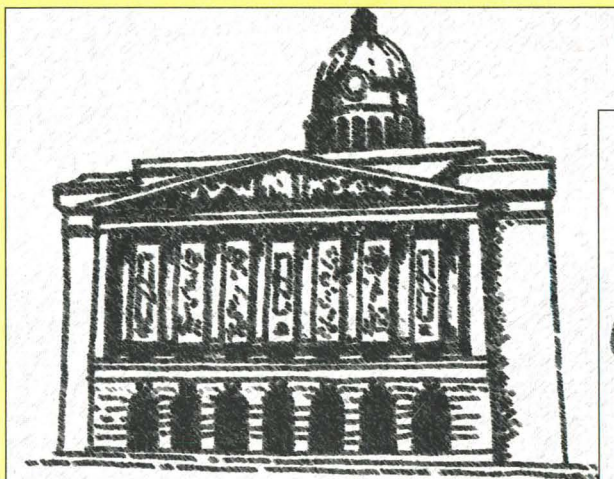
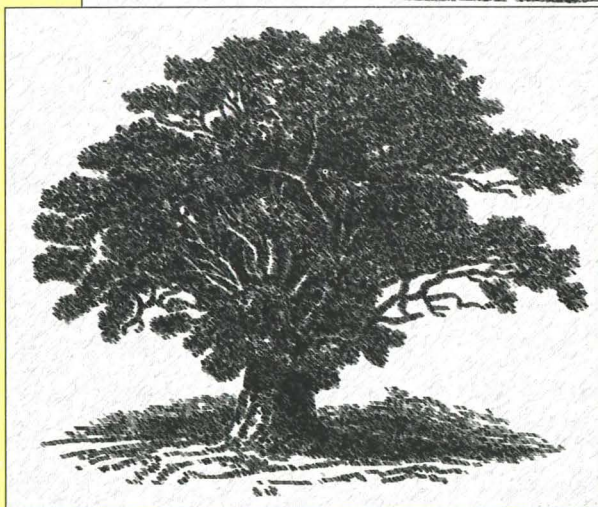


Annual Reports, Resolutions & Papers

Council House



Robin Hood



Oak Tree



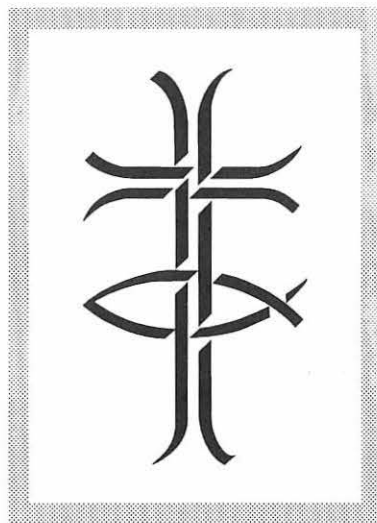
The United Reformed Church
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 1998

July 11th - 14th Nottingham

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

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Synods



General Assembly 1998

Northern Province

1 Mission Statement

- 1.1 The Northern Province Synod:
- ◆ exercises an overview of the life and work of the Church throughout the whole of its area,
 - ◆ enables and resources the Districts to develop their life, witness and mission,
 - ◆ provides support and inspiration for individuals, local churches and communities of interest.

This expression of the task of the Synod arose out of a Vision Day involving the Province's Planning, Mission and Resources Committee in May 1997. This was an opportunity to rethink how the Province needed to address the changing situation in its area and earth some dreams in strategic planning. This was pursued under a number of heads which were taken up and developed by Synod.

2 Strategy and deployment

2.1 We recognised that these represented opportunity and challenge across the whole of our area which were not ours alone but related to the life and work of all our ecumenical partners. Moreover they had to be rooted in a proper understanding of our whole community and the way in which it is changing.

2.2 So we invited the Newcastle Church Relations Group to engage in a consultation on the deployment of ministerial resources to lead to an agreed plan for the common witness of the Church and the Churches' Regional Commission in the North East to establish a communications task group on how to inform the churches on major regeneration plans and what their implications were for the Churches' planning separately and together and the use of resources.

3 Training and support

3.1 There was a concern about quality in the life of local churches in terms of the presentation of worship and nurture, study and pastoral care, and about inviting, preparing and supporting people in situations of leadership.

3.2 So we have asked one of our committees to create appropriate opportunities for developing worship skills, communication, preaching, leading

prayers, use of music - and our Development Team to arrange a series of pilot opportunities for key personnel in local churches on strategies for devolving leadership. *How does your garden grow?* is having its first trial run this year.

4 Council shall speak unto council

4.1 A great deal of work has been done recently in seeking to make the regular visits of local churches by District Councils as creative and effective as possible. Where this has worked well we have seen the value of challenging churches to think through their strategy and do their planning for mission in a way that means that churches can learn from each other's good practice and take heed from the warnings of things that have gone wrong. We believe that this can work in terms of different relationships of councils of the Church across the Province, and probably the whole Church.

4.2 Therefore Synod proposes to visit each District Council to enable the District to share its vision and plans for its life and mission from time to time with visitors from the Province starting in 1998 with the Northumberland and Newcastle Districts. And we have asked Mission Council to make arrangements for the review by visitors of the life, witness and mission of the Province in the year 2001. Because we consider that it could be of value, we have proposed that Mission Council explore the possibility of establishing a regular process of such visits to Provinces as a matter of course.

5 A moving celebration

5.1 *Arts on the Road* was the Province's way of marking 25 years of fellowship and work together. A core exhibition of calligraphy, paintings, embroidery, lace, proggi mats, glass and woodwork was assembled and established in eleven sites across the whole Province. The centrepiece was a quilt formed from 49 squares made in different local churches and the Celtic cross that provided the symbol for the Province in the 1997 Assembly display.

5.2 At each location the core was supplemented with a locally generated display of arts and crafts. There was usually a focus event such as an organ recital, *Songs of Praise* or dramatic presentation.

6 Thinking about Synod

6.1 We continue to hold our Autumn Synod over two days, with an evening session on the Friday as well as morning and afternoon on Saturday. This enables us to take some leisure to explore important issues, often in workshop mode, as well as ensure that necessary business has sufficient time.

6.2 One of these has considered Synod itself and raised some sharp questions about just how accessible our councils are to those who are not always in on the know. We are currently exploring how to strike the right balance between meeting as a learning and growing fellowship and enabling the business to be properly conducted - and part of that proper conduct is about ensuring that everyone has a full understanding of the issues involved and an opportunity to make an impact upon them.

North Western Province

1 LYNX

1.1 Last October one hundred and forty young people from the North Western and Yorkshire Provinces enjoyed a unique youth event in Leeds. For fun, there were films, concerts and walks, and on a more serious note there were discussions on Fair Trade. A video message was sent to leading Supermarkets urging them to stock more Fair Trade goods. Both Provinces hope to co-operate to hold similar events in the future.

2 Designated Lay Leadership

2.1 As most stipendiary ministers are now deployed in group pastorates, we have been giving serious consideration to the needs of each congregation to identify with a 'Designated Lay Leader'. We see this role not as an alternative to ordained ministry, but as a complement to it. Churches in Bolton have benefited from this type of leadership for many years, and it is now being offered within the Province. A Lay Leader would receive training, and would be approved by District Council. He/she would act as a 'channel of communication' to ensure that pastoral information is gathered from the congregation, or community, and passed on to the minister or Elders Team. Lay Leadership is viewed as a specific role within the Eldership. We are not creating another 'layer of leadership' or threatening the United Reformed Church concept of Eldership, Churches will not be obliged to have Designated Lay Leaders but some are already choosing to put this scheme into practice. The March Synod supported the principle but commissioned more work to be done on the details.

3 Lancashire Church Leaders meet on Motorway bridge

3.1 Last September marked a significant 'beginning' for churches in Darwen. Representatives of three Methodist, two Anglican and four United Reformed Churches, signed an Ecumenical Covenant at a service held on a new motorway bridge in the town - before the road opened for traffic! These churches believe it is better to share their resources with each other than form denominational grouping with churches with whom they have less in common. The mission of these churches has been strengthened. We hope this is a venture other towns will follow in future.

4 News from Cumbria

4.1 The manse of Ravenstonedale United Reformed Church, High Chapel House, has now been refurbished and is being used to accommodate people who need a time of rest and reflection. Assembly representatives are welcome to find out more about the Ravenstonedale Project by visiting the display area during Assembly.

Mersey Province

1 Ministerial Deployment

1.1 The Mersey Province will not be alone in seeking ways forward to meet the challenges facing our Church. Considerable time has been given to find practical and equitable solutions to the sharing of Ministry among our congregations. It is a sensitive matter for all involved; patience, understanding and hope are essential ingredients to the process. Part of our hope in the Province is the pilot scheme for the training of Local Church Leaders. The twenty week course was attended by sixteen people from across the Province and, at the time of writing, had proved to be of interest and value to those concerned. The outcome of how the skills and experience of the trainees, to be commissioned by District Council, will benefit the churches is in the process of being determined.

2 Provincial Office and Resource Centre

2.1 As a result of the 'Gift of Grace' via CWM to the Mersey Province plans are advancing for the replacement of the 'temporary premises', now in their 12th year, with a planned and well-equipped centre in Liverpool. The scheme is exciting and we believe it will be an important asset in serving the staff and churches of the Province.

3 Northern Ireland

3.1 In the last few years our Province has sought to build on our exchange visits - the Church and Education. In 1998 our contacts with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland continue with an exchange visit of United Reformed Church members belonging to Police Forces in Merseyside and Cheshire, with the RUC. The exchange has been particularly welcomed by our Northern Ireland counterparts.

4 UCC (USA)

4.1 With the North Western Province we share the link with the United Church of Christ (USA), Northern Illinois Conference, and in 1997 our Minister, Brian Acty, from Manor Church Centre, Wallasey, enjoyed his visit to rural churches and those in the City of Chicago.

5 Province Workshop Day

5.1 Plans are well advanced for June 1998 with a day at Upholland called 'Take My Gifts'. A series of 'Workshops' are to be held covering every aspect of church life, where members can come and brush up their skills, explore new ideas and learn different ways of approach.

6 Chaplain to Universities in Liverpool

6.1 Last Autumn a new Chaplain, the Revd John Scott (from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland), was inducted to his post in the University of Liverpool and John Moores University. His arrival reminded us of the wide variety of needs of the City of Liverpool - education, employment, etc. One bright spot in 1997 was the 'Songs of Praise' recording of *Mersey Glory* from Goodison Park, enjoyed by those who were there and viewers at home.

7 The Old and the New

7.1 Sadly we record the closure of two churches in the Province at Fairfield, Liverpool, and at Sandbach in Cheshire. However the small Church at Elmwood Avenue in Warrington deserves a medal for persistence. After many years of frustration they were able to celebrate the opening of their new premises in 1997 on the site of their old buildings in conjunction with a housing development scheme. During 1998 the Provincial Property Task Group is holding a seminar day titled 'Re-pitching the Tent' to show how our churches can see the possibilities of old, worn-out buildings becoming renewed for the new Millennium.

District Boundaries

The Synod formally reports to the General Assembly, under paragraph 2(4)(ii) of the Basis and Structure, that at its meeting of Synod on 1 November 1997, it was agreed that Huyton United Reformed Church move from West Lancashire District to the Liverpool District.

Yorkshire Province

1 Moderators

1.1 1997 saw two memorable Provincial events. On Saturday 28 June, our retiring Provincial Moderator, Revd Donald Hilton, to whom we paid tribute in last year's Report to Assembly, conducted his farewell service, a celebration of ministry, at St Andrew's Church, Roundhay. And then, on Saturday 4 October, Donald's successor, Revd Arnold Harrison, was inducted to his new ministry at Longcauseway United Reformed Church, Dewsbury. Both these events brought real inspiration to the large congregations that attended them. Reports of our death have, indeed, been greatly exaggerated!

2 YCWT

1.2 In addition to our new Provincial Moderator, we welcomed to the Province this year our first Youth and Children's Work Trainer, Mick Maskell. His appointment became possible when, in March 1997, Synod repented of its reluctance to make such an appointment in 1995. We anticipate exciting new developments as Mick joins with our Director of Training, Jim Wilkinson, in forming a new training team.

3 Inter-Provincial Sharing

1.3 Yorkshire people's reputation for being 'canny' sustained a heavy blow in March 1997, when Synod scornfully rejected the invitation to contribute 2% of our investment income to a

central fund shared between Provinces - and insisted, instead, that our contribution should be 5%. There is a reluctance, however, to see inter-Provincial sharing only in terms of cash: in October, we hosted in Leeds the LYNX youth conference, in which 150 young people from all four northern Provinces joyfully shared, exploring, amongst other things, the potential of Information Technology within the church. In June, our ministers are due to be joined by their colleagues from Northern Province at the feet of Bishop Jack Spong, who galvanised a previous Yorkshire ministers' summer school in 1995.

4 Good News and Bad News

1.4 Why are people associated with our churches so reluctant to commit themselves to full membership? Is it, as has been suggested, part of a wider malaise that makes us today reluctant to commit ourselves to anything, or any organisation, that makes costly demands on us? If so, it may be that one antidote to this apathy has been found in the Alpha courses, which have been successfully run by a number of our churches, and have been found to be genuinely challenging. Developments in Pilots illustrate both the strength and the weakness of church life. We have been unable to appoint a successor to Margaret Batty, who has resigned after many years of faithful service as our Provincial Pilot Officer; but a number of our fellowships report a renewal of interest in Pilot companies at the local level.

East Midlands Province

1 Working Together

1.1 Working Together has been very much on the province agenda since the 1997 Assembly.

2 The Province Training Team

2.1 The Province Training Team, headed by John Quilter and Revd Elizabeth Nash, each very experienced in their fields, also includes Carole and Grenville Jackson, John Norwebb, Julian Sanders and Revds Mair Bradley, Ivor Smith and Brian Russell.

2.2 Together they offer a training resource across the whole province whilst John and Elizabeth also make a significant input to the national church. We also rejoice that we are able to share Elizabeth with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches whom she serves as Moderator of the Department of Co-operation and Witness.

3 The Hong Kong Gift of Grace

3.1 **The Hong Kong Gift of Grace** of some £28,000 made to the Province came just at the time when we were discussing a Province Mission Policy. We still do not have an agreed written policy but we do have one positive outcome. The money is to be used for the expenses of a three year appointment of a Province Mission Enabler, based in South Leicestershire. The Revd Moiserale Prince Dibeela of the United Congregational Church in Southern Africa in Botswana has been appointed.

4 The Province Evangelism Team

4.1 **The Province Evangelism Team**, first set up in response to a General Assembly resolution many years ago continues in being and has recently been brought more into the structural life of the Synod and reports directly to our Executive Committee. Their brief is to raise awareness of the opportunities, importance and methodologies of evangelism and to assist province, districts and churches in their evangelism.

5 National Resource Sharing

5.1 The financial contribution of £13,813 made to this province as a result of this exercise has enabled us to make our contribution to the national funds of the expenses of the Youth And Children's Training Work Officer and without this help from other provinces we would have been very hard pressed indeed.

6 Within the Province

6.1 **Within the Province** a major piece of work has been going on to make the East Midlands Province Trust more accountable to the churches and more responsive to the needs of to-day and to-morrow. The quinquennial surveys, required by law on listed buildings and properties in conservation areas and advisable for all properties, are now being organised by the province property committee and funded from the Redundant Buildings Fund. This type of good stewardship of buildings is now paying off as some properties, now on their second or third inspections, appear to be much improved.

7 Ecumenical Sharing

7.1 **Ecumenical Sharing** continues to be high on the agenda of many people in the province and in many places is a great joy. We have to report that in several places difficulties have arisen, usually following changes of personnel, when previous agreements have been ignored or evaded and we would like to see a more general spirit of ecumenical co-operation at all levels as the norm rather than as an exception.

8 The new pattern of District visits

8.1 **The new pattern of District visits** has been welcomed as another way in which churches can share their spiritual and practical expertise. It is gradually being adopted across the province and the challenge is being taken up of the greater number of people who will need to be involved in these visits.

District Boundaries

The Synod formally reports to the General Assembly, under paragraph 2(4)(ii) of the Basis and Structure, that it was agreed that Brackley United Reformed Church and Buckingham LEP (URC/Methodist) move from Northamptonshire District to Milton Keynes District.

West Midlands Province

1 Vision for Province

1.1 Over the past year, much effort has been put into developing a vision for the Province. Churches were asked for statements on their mission, discussion groups at Synod contributed further, and Synod Council held a 24-hour meeting to review the results. What is emerging is a clearer picture of the hopes and fears of people in the Province, and how these can be translated into a positive plan of action over the next few years so that our life and work in the West Midlands respond to the calling of the Spirit.

2 Staff appointments

2.1 The staffing changes planned last year have now been implemented, and we have been delighted to welcome new faces to the Provincial team. Rachel Greening joined us as Trust and Property Officer last May, and is already finding that there is more than enough to do in advising local churches how to tackle some of their building problems, and in trying to develop a Provincial property strategy.

2.2 Neil Messer joined us this January from Maidenhead United Reformed Church as our first half-time Training Officer and United Reformed Church Tutor at the Queen's Foundation. There is great demand for his expertise, and the only problem is how to make sure that his workload is realistic and manageable.

2.3 Our secretarial support has been strengthened by Patricia Willetts, who joined us last April primarily to support the Trust and Property Officer, Clerk and Treasurer, but is also providing much-needed computer expertise.

2.4 We have commenced the required five-yearly review of the YCWT post, and await the report with interest.

3 Vocations strategy

3.1 Our links with Queen's have been further strengthened by a joint working group to develop a strategy across the Province to encourage vocations. This is a long-term piece of work, but one we see as our contribution to try and address the shortage of ordained ministry in the United Reformed Church. At present, the group is concentrating on planning visits by students from Queen's to local churches and councils to talk about ministry, and on the possible production of a video about the non-stipendiary ministry.

4 District developments

4.1 In all Districts Pastoral Committees are devoting considerable time to the form of pastoral visitations in the recognition that these have not always met their objectives. Much has been learned from the approaches used by different Districts, and it is hoped to develop some joint training for visitors through the Training Officer.

4.2 The structure of Districts is also much on the minds of Councils, and changes are being made to try and improve the way they operate and to encourage more people to participate in its activities. Some years ago, Worcester and Hereford merged most of its committees into one. Staffordshire has recently constituted its own Mission Council, replacing many previous committees, and Shropshire is also considering simplifying its committee structure. Birmingham is in the middle of an imaginative two-year programme discussing its mission strategy, and Coventry and Warwickshire has also been conducting a District review of its pastorates, concentrating initially on one of the Coventry groups where one of the ministers will retire shortly.

4.3 Tomkin, a very small church in the north of the Staffordshire, has been designated as a Mission Project under the oversight of the District Council to encourage its survival and development. In Gloucestershire, the United Reformed Church in Cirencester has united with the local Methodist Church in the latter's buildings, while at Tetbury a United Reformed Church minister is being sought to work both in the united church with the Methodists and in the Methodist Circuit, which includes Cirencester. It is also hoped that one, if not both, of the two Special Category Ministries approved in Coventry and Warwickshire (one in the north, and the other combining a half-time pastorate in Leamington Spa with the Mission in the World of Work based in Coventry) will be filled shortly. Over the Province, the number of ministerial vacancies remains worryingly high, not least because of a number of imminent retirements.

5 Synod

5.1 We have continued the practice of trying to focus on one or two main issues at each Synod. We were delighted to welcome the Assembly Moderator and his wife to our October meeting, and to have Marjorie Lewis-Cooper with us in March, when we also concentrated on the CCBI Report on Unemployment and the Future of Work.

5.2 Considerable interest is being generated in the Jubilee 2000 campaign focusing on the G8 Summit in Birmingham, and we hope to have a large Provincial presence there on Saturday 16 May.

5.3 The United Reformed Church is participating in the Millennium working groups established in each county ecumenical area and, instead of the previously held Provincial 'Family Day', we are planning a Millennium worship event in Worcester Cathedral for our churches as part of our October 1999 Synod.

5.4 Another highlight in 1999 will be the presence of the Assembly Moderator from our Province at our March Synod. Wilma and Iain are very much in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

Eastern Province

1 Personnel

1.1 1997 saw a number of personnel changes within the Province. In February, our new Provincial Moderator, Elizabeth Caswell took over from Bill Gathercole. We wished Bill and his wife Betty well as they moved to York for a well-earned retirement.

1.2 Elizabeth has fitted into her busy timetable a comprehensive programme of getting to know the ministers in the Province. As was planned during the latter part of Bill's time with us, the Whittlesford Office near Cambridge has become fully operational as the hub of Province's activities, with Elizabeth and her family moving to live close by.

1.3 During the summer, Ken Woods took over from William McVey as Synod Clerk. William had agreed to stay on to aid the transition to a new Moderator. In the autumn, David Tatem moved on to pastoral charge outside the Province, at Bedford. His place has been taken by Lawrence Bennett Moore as our new Training and Development Officer. Lawrence, whose roots are in Southern Africa, is a Baptist layman with theological training. Rosemary Scarrow (CWTO) and Henry Playle (YLTO) remain to complete the training team.

2 Provincial Life

2.1 A major highlight of the year was undoubtedly the Province Day Out, on the pilgrimage theme of 'On the Move'. We had chosen a new venue in the north of the Province - at Thetford in Norfolk. Blessed with fine weather, estimates of attendance exceeded 600 visitors. We borrowed two friends from across the border in Thames North - Elizabeth Byrne and Ian Smith - who led us in worship during the day. In addition to a whole range of fun and activities, we tried out a new idea - information sessions on the work of Provincial committees. The finance and property presentations were predictably less well-attended than Monty Helmn's magic show, but nonetheless seemed to have been much appreciated by those who had sought out 'Money and Mortar'. The Listed Buildings presentation drew a fair level of interest, possibly reflecting the concerns of affected congregations as they strive to make their buildings relevant within the constraints of historical conservation.

2.2 On the sad side of Provincial life, the year has not been without its difficulties. There have been two disciplinary hearings for ministers in the Province. The common feature has been that, irrespective of the outcome, there is much pain for the church(es), minister and all others involved. The new 'Section O' procedures can be expected to clarify processes for the future, but can never take away that pain.

2.3 The Training Strategy Group continues to develop its support role for the training team. We were pleased to have Rosemary Johnston speak to Synod, with some reflections on our attitudes to children in the Church.

2.4 Interest in the world of work - including, as elsewhere in the country, difficulties for rural communities - have engaged our Church and Society Committee. Also, the autumn Synod heard some challenging words from Chris Warner, our Industrial Chaplain for Norfolk and Waveney.

2.5 Church and Society has also been considering the issues of reconciliation from Graz, and Jubilee 2000. In addition, the committee has now set itself the task of pondering what changes regionalisation might make to local politics in our part of the world. Recently, we were pleased to welcome Peter Brain to one of our committee meetings.

3 The Future

3.1 As the Province Day Out is every other year, we are planning a new venture for this summer - a Roadshow that will visit different areas of the Province over a one week period. Watch this space!!

3.2 Consultation between local United Reformed Churches has continued to take place within the Province on mission strategy. Significant work is being done on a District-wide basis within two of our Districts. In addition, the Ministries Committee, together with the Church Development & Ecumenical Committee, organised a one-day seminar on use of our resources. The objective was to see in what new ways we should be using our ministers, money, and buildings. As we consider the reducing numbers of ministers, we wrestle with its impact on fulfilling aspirations. The way forward remains far from clear, but we are not despondent at the challenge.

3.3 As local churches seek to find what God is calling them to be or do, we are confident that we have the skills, energy and enthusiasm to rise to that call.

South Western Province

1.1 After several years of changing personnel within the Synod office, a whole year with a settled full complement of staff has enabled us to consider how we might better serve Districts, United Areas and local churches.

1.2 The Synod agreed during the year to send Provincial teams to visit District and Area Councils to reflect with them on their effectiveness, improve communication, and discuss the viability of existing structures. It is hoped that it will also highlight training needs, and even Provincial policy for investment in areas of growth and ecumenical opportunities.

1.3 Those who hold the training brief within the Province are seeking to work more collaboratively. The Revd Roy Lowes (Director of Training), Mr Ivan Andrews (Youth and Children's Work Trainer) and the Revd Helena McKinnon (Silence and Retreats) have agreed 'to provide, promote and co-ordinate appropriate learning opportunities in Christian education, church life, spirituality and mission for local churches, Districts and Areas' within the Province. The 'team' has already identified others within the province with particular areas of expertise who can help resource local churches.

1.4 The Province continues to be committed to Mission, and in ecumenical partnership wherever possible:

a) In January a declaration of intent was signed between the Church of England, Methodist Church, Baptist Association and United Reformed Church to work together at Locking Castle in the Bristol District. Already the United Reformed Church provides one-third funding of the stipend of a Methodist Deaconess working in this new housing development.

b) The United Reformed Church has also provided a small but significant proportion of the costs of the new Severnside Industrial Chaplain - an ecumenical appointment in the growing industrial area at Avonmouth.

c) One third of the support costs of a Methodist deaconess in North Swindon Abbeymeads housing development are also paid by the United Reformed Church. The Methodists and Baptists (under a long-standing agreement) will join us in building a church at Abbeymeads as soon as the developers release the site. Under the leadership of Deaconess Maureen Spinks, about 60 people gather for worship regularly, after less than two years' work.

1.5 It would be wrong to report only success stories. There is continuing concern at the decline in church membership within the Province. A mission-orientated church cannot neglect the need for a viable 'home base' from which it can reach out. There are signs of several areas of opportunity and outreach in which local churches are keen to be involved, but have not the human resources to back up their commitment with action.

1.6 This suggests the need for more strategic placing of ministry, use of buildings, and financial resources. It is hoped that the present round of Provincial visits to Districts will be a first step to facing these issues together.

Wessex Province

1.1 Throughout the year, the Province has been looking at priorities in the life of the churches. Over the past few years all our church buildings have been inspected, and considerable work has been done to bring them up to standard for the late 1990s.

1.2 Following this work, much emphasis has been placed on the use of our buildings and the standards required in worship. There have been two training days held for Ministers under the title of 'Good Practice and Worship in the Reformed Tradition', days that have included training for all-age worship. Later in the year there is to be a further day for Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders. Much of the thinking concerning worship arises out of discussions on the question of 'Fair Shares of Ministry'. Whilst the Districts are seeking to accept a reduction in full-time Stipendiary Ministers, much needs to be done to encourage Lay Leadership, an issue we are seeking to address.

1.3 The Province was pleased to host the General Assembly in 1997, and as a result of that Assembly has been busy appointing panels for ministerial discipline. A consultation for those who will be involved with 'Accompanied Self-Appraisal for Ministers' will have been held by the time of this year's General Assembly. Representatives from the Province attended a consultation weekend over 'District Visits', and a further day has been arranged to help those within the Districts on best practices for future visits/consultations to local churches.

1.4 Our association with the Southampton District of the Methodist Church continues to be fruitful, and we are sharing thoughts and ideas on a regular basis and are represented on the respective Methodist District/United Reformed Church Province committees. We have also adopted, and are working on, a policy for sharing resources ecumenically, and are pleased to note that this issue has been taken up by the central Church Committees on Ecumenism.

1.5 Health and Healing has also been an issue presented at the March 1998 Synod, work which is also shared with our Methodist colleagues.

1.6 Looking to the future, we are involved in celebrating the 250th anniversary of the death of Isaac Watts and expect to be involved in BBC broadcasts on this Southampton minister.

1.7 The last Synod also included a presentation concerned with the Jubilee 2000 Coalition.

1.8 With the emphasis on worship and pastoral care, the Province is seeking to be ready for the many opportunities of the new millennium, and we are glad to share with other Provinces our resources as well as our prayers.

Thames North Province

Change seems to be the theme that underpins much of what we have to report this year.

1 Working Together, Growing Together

1.1 Every District Council is engaged in deep and prayerful consideration of the implications of having fewer Ministers available to deploy in the future. The challenge this situation presents goes to the heart of how many local churches perceive themselves and their ministry. Plans are at varying stages of development for the formation of 'Areas of Shared Ministry', 'Clusters' or 'Focus Groups' to enable ministry (in the widest sense of the word) to be developed and shared.

1.2 During 1997 the Province sought, through workshops and market place events, to help churches live with and manage the change that will inevitably go hand in hand with this re-evaluation of ministerial provision.

1.3 For 1998 the focus has moved to assisting Districts and churches to better understand the concept of shared ministry, and to the training of Ministers and others to work together effectively.

1.4 We believe that the Holy Spirit is speaking to the churches through the changes in ministerial deployment. We are developing training policies focussed upon releasing people - both lay and ordained - to live out the priesthood of all believers and so strengthen the mission of the Church. Our aim is that today's challenges should not signify decline to church members, but stimulate both numerical and spiritual growth.

2 Provincial Office

2.1 The Provincial office has been situated at the City Temple for a great many years. However, several factors combined to convince the Synod Executive that a move was desirable. Within weeks of that decision we became aware of office space available in a building recently purchased by the Council for World Mission - in Great Peter Street, London SW1 - in which their own central offices are situated. The premises have since been refitted to meet our needs and by Easter 1998 we expect to be settled in offices that will offer us the space and facilities we shall need for several years to come.

3 Celebration Godspell

3.1 In last year's report we wrote of the preparations for a Provincial Celebration in July 1998, centring upon a production of the musical *Godspell*, using the London Arena in Docklands and joining with Southern Province for the first such co-operative venture. The preparatory work occupied many people throughout much of 1997. Unfortunately, excitement turned to disappointment in February when the London Arena suddenly reneged on the contract.

3.2 However, after a great deal of frantic activity, we are now planning to step forward in faith by moving the entire venture to a vast big top situated at Mudchute Farm near the southern tip of the Isle of Dogs.

3.3 Watch out for more about *Godspell* in a circus ring next year!

4 People

4.1 The past year has seen a number of significant changes amongst the officers of the Province. Having stepped into the breach as Acting Synod Clerk for eighteen months, and gained the respect and indebtedness of the whole Province, Maurice Husselbee was able to return to retirement following the appointment of a new **Synod Clerk** - Adrian Bulley - in April. Within the Province, the Synod Clerk is now supported by the appointment of an **Assistant Synod Clerk** - Michael Gould. Finally, Maurice Dyson retired as **Synod Treasurer** in December, and was replaced by Valerie Ham.

4.2 At the end of 1997 Sandra Ackroyd completed her term as Thames North **Youth and Children's Work Training Officer**. Her training skills with youth and children's workers, and her own work amongst children and young people have been highly valued. Sandra continues to serve the church in her new position as Co-ordinator of the Urban Churches Support Group. It is anticipated that the appointment of a Youth and Children's Work Training *and Development* Officer will soon be possible.

4.3 The October Synod agreed to the appointment of a **Mission and Evangelism Enabler** with responsibility for working alongside local churches to help them identify, resource and

monitor opportunities for mission and evangelism. The appointee will also be responsible for the recruitment and training of a team of people who will act as catalysts in the Province in the areas of mission and evangelism. The response to advertisements has been very encouraging and we hope an appointment will be made before Easter 1998.

4.4 It is not possible to summarise adequately the contribution of **Janet Sowerbutts** to the Province as Moderator since 1990. Her ministry has been exceptionally caring, challenging and constructive, and greatly appreciated. We plan to mark the close of this chapter in the life of the Province with a service of thanksgiving and a reception in July.

4.5 Our sense of loss at Janet's departure is tempered by our feelings of excitement as we anticipate the induction of **Roberta Rominger** in September.

4.6 Following so many changes in personnel, we look forward to now being able to draw on the gifts of the whole provincial team to serve the churches.

District Boundaries

Thames North Synod formally reports to General Assembly, under paragraph 2(4)(ii) of the Basis and Structure, that at its meeting on 11 October 1997, it was agreed that Queens Park United Reformed Church move from Central and North London District to West London District.

Southern Province

1 Stories

1.1 On Education Sunday this year we were reminded of the powerful influence of stories and story-telling in every culture and community.

1.2 The dramatic stories in the Bible address and shape our human living at every level, and we were glad to welcome to our October Synod the Revd Dr David Spriggs who challenged us to engage with 'The Year of the Open Book'. The Provincial Weekend in February, attended by over 80 people, pursued this theme by exploring ways in which we might share more meaningfully the great Story of God's relationship with the world. Through sessions led by David Spriggs and Colin Greene, and in workshops designed to help us in drama and story-telling, planning events, praying creatively, shaping society, and passing on the message we inspired to look afresh at how we might open up God's great Story to the world as we move towards the next millennium. A presentation was made to the March Synod, with a challenge to all churches to explore how they might more effectively open wide the Book.

1.3 Story-telling also continues to hold an important place in each Synod as, in rotation, Districts offer a story of an event, a vision, a project or an experience which, through its telling, might stimulate and encourage others. These are not all success stories, and in October we were confronted with a situation in which a large number of children had been brought into a local church where, sadly, the demands and problems caused by the influx, proved too great for the project to continue. Such stories provide a focus for prayer and renewed commitment. In March the stories focused on the work among refugees in Croydon and the detainee centre in Gatwick, with an emphasis on the combined efforts of local churches in seeking to meet basic human needs.

2 Visions

2.1 Many churches in the Province have engaged or are engaging in Vision workshops, with the aim of clarifying and expressing the faith which they hold and how it might be communicated in word and deed. We are grateful to our Provincial Training Officer and our Evangelism Enabler for the help and stimulus they have provided. Districts are also beginning to think along similar lines. Croydon District, with more than 80 of its members present, gathered together for a Saturday workshop and produced the following Statement:

Croydon District, as part of the Church of Jesus Christ, witnesses to the Good News, guided by the Holy Spirit, and aims to encourage, support and train local

churches in their mission, through

- ◆ pastoral care of churches and ministers;
- ◆ commitment to growth in quality of worship, witness and service;
- ◆ creating and sustaining a sense of belonging for people of all ages;
- ◆ stimulating involvement in the wider work of the Church for healing, justice and peace;
- ◆ developing ecumenical strategies to address the needs of our communities.

2.2 The aims of the Statement will be developed through Action Plans for the various District Departments, with the Statement being updated every two years.

3 Development

3.1 One development during this last year has been that of the Ministry Self-Appraisal Scheme. The scheme, 'Taking Stock', was approved by Synod, and two blocks of two-day training for Appraisal Partners have now been completed. There are about 30 Appraisal Partners, lay and ordained, and the ordained Partners have engaged in their own self-appraisal prior to the scheme commencing fully in the early summer. The scheme is administered for the Province by Mr Neville Bedford, with the help of a co-ordinator from each District. We firmly believe that this scheme will offer greater support, encouragement and enrichment to those who serve Christ and the Church through ordained ministry.

3.2 Two other developments are still in embryo form. One is to move to the appointment of a full-time Provincial Development Officer, with responsibility for developing the Integrated Training Team within Southern Province, co-ordinating and engaging in Lay Ministry Training, facilitating Ministerial In-Service and Post Ordination Training, and developing the whole Provincial Programme.

3.3 The other is to invite each District to appoint a part-time mission enabler, lay or ordained, to work directly with the Provincial Evangelism Enabler.

4 Education

4.1 The Provincial Religious Education Fund, brought into being many years ago, has been utilised to provide every pastorate in the Province with a copy of *Let's Discover the URC*.

4.2 A day conference on Religious Education is being organised for all RE teachers and others in the Province concerned with religious education in schools. But that is a story for telling on another occasion!

Wales Province

1.1 One major emphasis of our life in the Wales Province is a clear commitment to encourage and enable training for the Whole People of God for Growth.

1.2 The Province establishes its training priorities through a Training Policy Working Group consisting of the Moderator, Provincial Training Officers, Provincial Ecumenical Officer, the Youth and Children's Work Training Officer, Christian Education Secretary and others. Holding these interests together in this way we are able to plan our work and integrate training for the Whole People of God. What follows represents a flavour of our training activity.

2 Training For Learning and Serving.

2.1 The Training Policy Working Group advocates the TLS Course throughout the Province as the main opportunity for those who not only want to learn more about the Faith, but also for those who have a calling to work within the church. Our aim is to establish a TLS group in each of the six Districts which make up the Province. To enable this one of the two part time Provincial Training Officers, has been given particular responsibility of stimulating and encouraging the use of TLS. This forms a significant commitment to what we regard as an exciting element in training of the Whole People of God.

3 Great Expectations

3.1 We have begun an exercise the aim of which is to encourage all ministers and every local congregation throughout the Province to discuss openly and honestly the expectations each has of the other. Entitled *Great Expectations*, it follows papers written within the Province asking *What are ministers for?* and *What are Congregations for?* To enable churches to discuss the issues involved we have produced a 'pack' which has been made available to every local congregation. It is our hope that after a year or so we can assess the conversations and the 'growth' that have ensued. The emphasis and basis of the exercise is trust, mutuality and the ministry of the Whole People of God.

4 Provincial Day

4.1 Though not intended primarily as a training event, around 1,000 people of all ages from United Reformed Churches throughout Wales gathered at Brecon Cathedral for Provincial Day. With a welcome from the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon, for the first time communion was celebrated in our Reformed tradition in the Cathedral. Apart from the worship and celebration people were encouraged to explore and learn together in workshops which ranged in subject from TLS to Devolution for Wales, using computers in the church to music.

5 Council for World Mission Money

5.1 Financial resources are always at a premium for the Wales Province so we were delighted that the United Reformed Church made available to us £28,000 of the total money it received as a gift of grace from CWM. It was decided to divide the money among projects throughout the Province which would encourage mission. One of the stipulations was that the money was *not* to be used for building projects. Districts were asked to draw up proposals for consideration and out of a number of imaginative proposals and most of those which were finally approved have a significant training as well as mission element.

South Wales District - Mission Enabler working within an imaginative District Mission Strategy.

Fairwater United Reformed/Methodist Church, Cardiff - Towards a 'Time for God' worker.

Builth Wells Ecumenical Pastorate - Mission and Church Growth Project, instruments for a music and drama project.

Brecon Rural Group - Expenses towards a Special Category Ministry for mission and growth in an area experiencing the classic signs of rural poverty and isolation.

Newport URC - Setting up a Christian education resources library aimed particularly at children and young people.

Pembrokeshire District - Providing expenses for a NSM whose ministry will be to encourage the churches in their work with children and young people.

Christchurch URC, Rhyl - Priming capital for a Multi-Agency Rent Guarantee Scheme for the homeless.

Canton Uniting Church, Cardiff - Towards a proposed Church Related Community Worker Project which the church hopes will have a significant role within the Canton Community.

6 Training : Wales and the wider United Reformed Church

6.1 Whilst focused on our local church contexts in Wales, our training agenda tries to reflect our belonging to the United Reformed Church in three nations. Whilst we are thankful for the experiences of others outside Wales which enrich our life we believe that the Wales Province also has valuable

experience of being church to offer the wider church which arises out of our context. There is often a need to add to and adapt material offered by others to our situation, but as we think through our priorities the question of how we can share the insights Wales affords through its history, culture, language, ecclesiology, ecumenical commitment with the whole United Reformed Church - a broader kind of ecumenism - is always before us. However it is not only a matter of how we can share our *experience*, it is also a matter of how the rich academic resources that exist within Wales can be utilised by the wider church that is the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom.

RESOLUTION 1**Provincial Boundary Amendment**

General Assembly alters the provincial boundaries to transfer the Isle of Axholme from the Yorkshire Province to the East Midlands Province.

Yorkshire and East Midlands Synod

**Proposer: Revd Christopher White
Seconded: Mr Brian Evans**

The East Midlands Province and the Yorkshire Province have both agreed to the transfer of the Isle of Axholme to East Midlands in line with the Assembly resolution about harmonising ecumenical

boundaries. There are no United Reformed Churches on the Island although the major settlement is the village of Epworth which has some significance in church history

RESOLUTION 2**Nomination Process for Assembly Moderator**

General Assembly amends the Rules of Procedure in paragraph 3(3) by deleting the word 'not' in the first sentence.

West Midlands Synod

**Proposer: Simon Rowntree
Seconded:**

The sentence to be amended reads 'A nomination for election as Moderator of the General Assembly shall be made by a synod, the consent of the nominee not being required'.

(in a recent instance, nine of the eleven nominated did not wish to stand). Under the present rules, they are not allowed to withdraw and their name has to be included on the Synod ballot paper.

The resolution arises from concerns that present procedures allow the nomination of many candidates with restricted support who do not necessarily wish to stand for election. Under the current rules agreed by Assembly some time ago and reviewed in 1994, nominees do not have the right to withdraw when nominated from within a Province for consideration by Synod. In the West Midlands, the procedure has resulted in several candidates being nominated to Synod, with the majority indicating that they do not wish to stand

However, when nominations from all the Synods reach the General Secretary, individuals are asked if they wish to stand for election by Assembly, and are allowed to withdraw at this stage. This seems inconsistent with the practice Synods are required to operate.

If agreed, the amendment would require the consent of the nominee being required at both the Synods and Assembly stages.

RESOLUTION 3**Amendment of structure 2(3) and 2(4)**

General Assembly resolves to amend a function of district council and to add categories to the membership of district council and synod as follows:

amend 2(3)(iv) by deleting the words: 'from among its members'.

Add 2(3)(j): An elder who has been appointed by the district council as an interim moderator for the period of the appointment shall be a full member of the district council.

Add 2(4)(k): An elder who has been appointed by the district council as an interim moderator for the period of the appointment shall be a full member of the synod.

Eastern Synod

**Proposer: Mr Ken Woods
Seconded: Revd Bill Mahood**

It is considered anomalous that retired United Reformed Church ministers who are appointed as interim moderators are automatically full members of District Council/Synod, whereas elders who are

called upon to perform this valuable service on behalf of District Council are not. Co-opting such persons is not considered a satisfactory solution, given the limit of 12.

RESOLUTION 4

Amendment of Structure 3(1)

General Assembly amends the Structure in paragraph 3(1)(f) by inserting after the word 'meeting' a comma and the following words:

in its concern for mutual understanding within the life of the church, invite a representative of any Provincial Synod from which the General Secretary has duly received such notification to present to the General Assembly the main reason for its objection. After hearing any such presentation, the General Assembly shall.....

Synod of Wales

Proposer: Revd Simon Copley

Seconder: Revd David Fox

The present paragraph 3(1)(f) reads: If by such date such notice has not been received, the General Assembly shall at its next meeting vote on a motion to agree the amendment which shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass.

Paragraph 3(1)(f) deals with the responses from those councils. This proposal amends 3(1)(f) to give provincial synods which object to a particular constitutional change the opportunity to present to the General Assembly the main reasons for their objection.

Constitutional amendments require a majority of two-thirds of the members of Assembly to pass. The proposals are then referred to other councils of the church.

RESOLUTION 5

Residential Assemblies

General Assembly requests the Assembly Arrangements Committee to plan future Annual Meetings of Assembly on the basis that each one is fully residential.

East Midlands Synod

Proposer: Revd R J Brown

Seconder:

This arises from views that the longer non-residential Assemblies are less satisfactory for all concerned than the shorter residential ones.

A considerable amount of time is spent by representatives at non-residential Assemblies in travelling to and from the Assembly venue, and in making their own arrangements for meals. It is harder to meet people as everyone is scattered, and they can lead to representatives being more isolated and, at times, lonely. As they run from Monday to Friday, they also restrict the ability of those in full-time work attending. Four days is taken to cover the business, and there are more restrictions on the time of sessions as account has to be taken of travelling time.

Residential Assemblies run from midday Saturday to the afternoon of Tuesday, and are more concentrated. Because there is no travelling time, sessions can start earlier and go on later if necessary. Mealtimes are fixed, and no time is wasted trying to find food. As people are on one site, it is much easier to make contact with other representatives.

While residential Assemblies are obviously more expensive, we believe they are more productive. The Resource Planning Advisory Group of Mission Council has been informed of this resolution because of the implications for the Budget.

RESOLUTION 6**Small Churches**

General Assembly recognises the value of work done by Churches which do not conform in all respects to the size, organisation or ministry implied by the Basis of Union and the Plan for Partnership and therefore requests Mission Council to set up a Task Group

- 1) to consider the opportunities, challenges and difficulties which such Churches face and**
- 2) to draft a mechanism by which these can be tested.**

General Assembly also directs synods and district councils to reflect on the unique situation of each of the churches in their area, when considering what special (financial, pastoral and other) support they need.

Southern Synod

**Proposer: Mr W Irving
Seconder: Revd R Singh**

In a series of meetings beginning in early 1996, a group of people ministering to smaller churches in the Greater London area discussed their feelings of vulnerability with respect to paid staff, financial subsidy, and other Synod and District support. The group also discussed their perception that agendas for the church as a whole are set by people coming from larger and more prosperous churches who know little about the problems faced by inner-city and isolated country churches. We believe it is necessary for the United Reformed Church to address this situation, and request General Assembly to set up a mechanism to review our staffing and support structures.

- ◆ Many inner-city and small country churches have been supported in the past by larger prosperous churches which regarded their smaller sister churches as outpost 'missions'. This sort of support has now effectively ceased.
- ◆ Smaller churches often struggle to pay MaM contributions. Necessary reporting and administration, required in the smallest church, often has to be done by the minister (frequently shared between two or more churches) since there is a lack of qualified lay help.

- ◆ Many smaller fellowships have an impact on their surroundings which is much greater than their size would suggest; for others the most loving and realistic fate is death. *We have no formal way of assessing which is which*, and pastoral visitation committees are encouraged to be affirming and positive in their reports.
- ◆ When there is no (or a tiny) congregation in a local church, but other valuable work is being done *in the name of the Church* (e.g. community support groups, drop-in centres, low-key estate mission), a vacancy is disastrous, and momentum is lost, perhaps for ever.
- ◆ In appointing a new minister, the traditional 'call' is often inappropriate, and Districts are increasingly taking matters of appointment into their own hands. There are no national guidelines for this, and 'the wheel needs to be re-invented' each time this happens.

The group believes that we need to develop a mechanism for supporting these smaller churches and assessing their mission and effectiveness, and suggest that this process could begin through a formal decision of General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 7**The exploitation of children**

General Assembly resolves to continue to bring pressure to bear upon Parliament to eradicate worldwide exploitation and sexual abuse of children, and to this end, encourages each synod, district council and local church to support the work of ECPAT(UK) (End child Prostitution, Pornography and the Trafficking of children for sexual purposes).

Southern Synod

**Proposer:
Seconder:**

Every year a Provincial Women's Link meeting is held. The meeting is made up of representatives from each District who discuss women's work in the Province and wider women's issues.

In September 1996 Mrs Alice Frimpong spoke about women in Ghana and Mrs Sherina Niles about women in Sri Lanka. Sherina invited Link members to go to 'her side of the wall' to see the problems that exist. It was then that they learned about the sexual exploitation that takes place among women and children in order to survive. Sherina's forthrightness, and obvious indignation and concern for these women and children, left much to think about.

Members went back to Districts and local churches, petitions were signed and letters written to Revd Peter Brain for information about United Reformed Church involvement in tackling the problem. In response the meeting was told that the United

Reformed Church is a subscribing affiliate of ECPAT(UK) (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking of children for sexual purposes) and has also been writing letters to Government and lobbying regarding the Sex Offenders Bill.

At March Synod 1997, Mrs Sherina Niles gave a very challenging account of her concerns regarding child prostitution. Throughout the following year individual churches learned more about the subject and contributed money to ACHE (Action on Child Exploitation).

In September 1997 the Women's Link meeting discussion continued regarding the way forward. It was felt that a resolution concerning the important issue of exploitation and sexual abuse of children should be presented at the March Synod 1998 and subsequently at the July 1998 General Assembly. The Resolution was passed unanimously by the Synod.

RESOLUTION 8

A Declaration of Hope, Faith and Love for all people

General Assembly agrees the principle of this Declaration of Hope, Faith and Love for all people and calls on the church to support it by prayer and appropriate action: whilst holding our differing beliefs about God and his way for all people, we commit ourselves to:

- **opening our hearts and minds to understand and respect each other's beliefs;**
- **being ready to learn from each other's tradition and experiences;**
- **working together in the pursuit of goodness and truth.**

To that end we further commit ourselves to work with other individuals and groups of all faiths and none, who are ready to share our commitment to the encouragement of:

- **dialogue and consultation rather than confrontation in politics;**
- **competition in excellence rather than in self-interest;**
- **co-operation in meeting human need and the conservation of the universe;**
- **the establishment of peace, freedom and justice throughout the world.**

West Midlands Synod

Proposer: Revd Gilbert Tate

Seconder:

It is intended that this Declaration of Intent should be signed (and celebrated) by people of all faiths and none, at local, national and international levels.

Synod is conscious of the fact that after 2,000 years there has been no end to man's inhumanity to man in which millions of men, women and children have suffered and died cruel deaths through war, oppression and poverty of many kinds.

Synod believes that the vast majority of people long for a better world of peace, justice, compassion and freedom as outlined in the United Nations Charter.

Synod hopes that this may be a significant time to make a new commitment to the fulfilment of the highest dreams and aspirations of ordinary people and visionaries of all ages and times, and offers this Declaration for consideration as a way of focusing the thoughts of everyone on seeking positive ways of fulfilling those dreams.

Other Resolutions from Synods

Resolutions were received from the Southern, South Western and Wessex Synods inviting General Assembly in 1998 to return to resolution 19 which was agreed in 1997. These resolutions were not accepted because they were out of order under Standing Order 3e(iv) which states:

It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which..... 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 an earlier reconsideration of the matter.

The Moderator, the Revd David Jenkins, the Clerk and the General Secretary met and discussed whether or not there were *changed circumstances or new evidence*.

The main argument making the case for *changed circumstances or new evidence* was that the pain caused to members, elders and ministers and the divisions brought to local churches were not foreseen when the resolution was passed.

The debate on resolution 19 in the Assembly in 1997 revealed quite clearly the diversity of views held within the church. Moreover the votes cast were 324 (63%) in favour and 189 (37%) against; and immediately 69 members dissented from the decision. In the light of the number of votes cast against the resolution and the unprecedented number of members recording their dissent, the three officers do not accept that the resolutions calling for resolution 19 to be rescinded can be described as reflecting *changed circumstances or new evidence*.

Therefore the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary being obliged to interpret the mind of the Assembly as expressed in Standing Orders, decided that there was no justification for *an earlier reconsideration of the matter*.

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



General Assembly 1998

Churches - Changes

New Churches

The Dunston Park Local Ecumenical Partnership, Thatcham

Wessex

1.1 This church began as a church plant in 1990, meeting to the north of the Bath Road. Over the next few years plans were developed for the building of a large new housing estate in which the United Reformed Church was very much a part, with the Anglican denomination. In 1993 a declaration of intent was signed and in 1997 a constitution was signed and approved. There are United Reformed Church members worshipping at the Dunston Park church, enquiries have been made concerning the United Reformed Church input

and we understand that those serving on a council will be ordained United Reformed Church Elders. The District Council and the Province Committees have satisfied themselves that this church, which is likely to be worshipping at a new community centre, will be very much a part of the United Reformed Church. They have already joined in celebrating the 25th anniversary and there are hopes that this ecumenical project will be a great strength to the community in which it is set.

Immanuel with St Marks, Local Ecumenical Partnership, Basingstoke

Wessex

1.1 This church began as a result of initiative from the London Street LTRC in Basingstoke and the Methodist church, and has been in existence for some few years now. The Church of England decided that they would like to be participating in this denomination and have since become active partners in the work that goes on, in this new area on the outskirts of Basingstoke. Those involved in the work include the Clerk to the Assembly,

Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, and with the input of the previous minister of London Street you can be sure that the United Reformed Church side of this LEP is very much to the fore. The District Council and the Province Strategy Group are happy that this is a viable and lively Christian worship centre and I am sure that Assembly would wish to welcome the church as a member church.

WARNDON, Local Ecumenical Project, Worcester

West Midlands

1.1 This Ecumenical Parish of St Nicholas on an estate on the north eastern edge of Worcester was constituted between the Anglican, Methodist and United Reformed Churches in 1992, and the United Reformed Church Minister in Worcester contributes to the provision of ministry. However, through an oversight, Warndon was never formally recognised by District Council, Synod or Assembly.

New Mission Projects

TOMKIN, Staffordshire

West Midlands

1.1 Some months after the closure of Tomkin Church (see Church Closures) the Provincial Officers were approached by a local group who had been associated with the Church previously, expressing concern that Tomkin was closed and asking if it could be kept open. The group had the support of a local minister, and two other ministers in the area also expressed interest.

1.2 After various discussions, it was felt that there was a reasonable possibility of the Church continuing, and that it would best be reconstituted as a Mission Project on the lines of the 1992 Assembly decisions.

1.3 This approach was endorsed by the District Council and Synod Council, and by Synod on 11 October 1997, and the District has appointed a local minister, the Revd Kevin Jones, to exercise oversight. A group of Elders from neighbouring churches has also been appointed as an interim Elders Meeting with the authority to run Tomkin as a local Mission Project. It is planned to review the situation after the Mission Project has been in operation for a year.

Closure of Local Churches

Riddings United Reformed Church, Derbyshire

East Midlands

1.1 Riddings, Derbyshire closed at the end of September 1997 after a several years of decline. Founded as an Independent Chapel in 1821, handsome Sunday School buildings were soon added and also a Caretaker's cottage. An active local congregation flourished for many years and children's work was always a top priority. Church and Schoolrooms were still being well used in the 1970's and the 1973 Year Book records 55 members and a similar number of children. Although the demand for children's work remained strong right

to the end and will be much missed in the immediate locality, the declining adult congregation could not sustain the work and the Church building itself was boarded up and all work concentrated in the re-furbished school rooms. The cottage also became derelict and in spite of efforts by the District Council the remaining 14 members took their decision and closure followed shortly afterwards with all the members transferring to other churches in the village or closer to their homes.

Haydon Bridge United Reformed Church, Newcastle

Northern

1.1 In November 1997 Northern Province Synod approved the decision of the Church Meeting on 23 September that Haydon Bridge United Reformed Church in the Newcastle District should close with effect from 28 December 1997.

1.2 It is possible that Non-conformist worship began in Haydon Bridge as early as the 18th century. The records report a worshipping congregation of 'Independents' in 1817 who had a building by 1818, moving to the present site in 1863.

1.3 The congregation was never large, but former members speak movingly of the vitality of the fellowship and its Christian witness. The current members voted to close rather than unite with the Methodists of Haydon Bridge, as several of them have other church connections, but they have donated much of their reserves to the redevelopment of Haydon Bridge Methodist Church.

Brightmet United Reformed Church, Bolton

North Western

1.1 This church was founded in 1899 as a cottage meeting of members seceding from the local Methodist Church. A building was erected soon afterwards. It has never been a large church but has seen very active days with many youth activities. For a number of years in the 1950's it was a single pastorate. In recent years, however, despite valiant attempts by a loyal and committed group of members

to interest the changing local community, numbers have diminished. The deciding factor was an ominous surveyor's report on the building. The members took the difficult decision and the closing service was held - with a packed church! - in February 1998. The remaining members have mostly joined neighbouring United Reformed Churches at Tonge Moor and Red Lane.

Cross Hill United Reformed Church, Lancaster

North Western

1.1 This church was founded in 1938 and for many years flourished, the membership rising to approximately 150 in the years following the war. There were many church and community based activities and the church was highly influential in the neighbourhood. Latterly, however the congregation

has gradually declined despite sustained efforts by the members and the support for 20 years of the Lancaster North Team to which it belonged. Eventually the 35 remaining members courageously decided to join the Bolton-le-Sands Church as a body. The final service at Cross Hill was held in July 1997.

Long Ashton United Reformed Church, Bristol

South Western

1.1 After some years of declining membership, the elderly congregation could see no potential for future growth. The church buildings were proving expensive to maintain. The Church closed on 20

December 1997 and the remaining congregation now worship with other congregations in the village or in other local United Reformed Churches.

Staple Hill United Reformed Church, Bristol

South Western

1.1 Staple Hill United Reformed Church closed on 29 June 1997 after the small, mainly elderly congregation decided that the struggle with expensive

buildings and falling numbers should cease. Most of the members have joined Mangotsfield United Reformed Church.

Moorland Road United Reformed Church, Weston-super-Mare

South Western

1.1 Following a District Council Consultation, the small, elderly and frail congregation came to realise that the church was no longer financially viable and could not maintain their buildings. There were some joint church meetings with Boulevard

United Reformed Church, Weston-super-Mare and it was decided that Moorland Road would close at Easter 1998 with the congregation transferring to Boulevard United Reformed Church.

Berrynarbor United Reformed Church, Ilfracombe

South Western

1.1 The small elderly congregation decided it could no longer service a church meeting, nor cope with the upkeep of its buildings. The closing service on 3 August 1997 was 'not to admit a failure but to recognise its positive witness in the village over many

years'. The congregation now worship in the Parish Church and the local Methodist Church and, when transport is available, at Immanuel United Reformed Church, Ilfracombe.

1.1 In 1956 Totnes Baptist Church became Totnes United URC/Baptist Church by Act of Parliament, the buildings and funds being vested in the Baptist Church. Under the terms of the Act, if no

infant baptisms were performed for a period of five years, the church should revert to being solely a Baptist Church. This is now the case and the union has been dissolved.

Sandbach United Reformed Church, Cheshire*Mersey*

1.1 The Independents who later became known as Congregationalists were active in the town earlier, but it was in 1807 that regular services commenced. After meeting in several places, the Hope Street chapel was dedicated for worship in 1837. Major alterations were made with the addition of a Sunday School building in 1853. At the conclusion of the Second World War the church joined the Middlewich Federation of Congregational Churches to assist in providing ministry to a number of churches who otherwise would have been without. This arrangement was to last three years and enabled a number of participating churches to survive.

1.2 In 1972, along with other Congregational churches in the area, Hope Street became a member of the United Reformed Church. Again in 1978 the church joined with other United Reformed Churches

in the area to gain access to full time ministry. Although this grouping was to last ten years, a smaller grouping continued ensuring access to ministry. Despite the appointment of a Lay Pastor in 1993 and a stronger grouping of churches in 1995, the Church struggled to maintain its witness.

1.3 A major refurbishment of the Sanctuary was undertaken in 1994/95 and the attached Sunday School building was sold to provide most of the funds. Unfortunately more repairs were needed and the necessary monies were unavailable. The dwindling congregation therefore painfully took the decision to close and join other fellowships in the area. The last regular service was held on 19 April 1998 with a final service of thanksgiving on 7 June 1998 conducted by the Moderator of the Mersey Province, Revd Graham Cook.

Fairfield United Reformed Church, Liverpool*Mersey*

1.1 The Fairfield Presbyterian Church was built by donation in 1864 in an affluent suburb of Liverpool. It was a beautiful stone building with spire, and furnished with a large pipe Organ, Pews and stained glass windows. Under its first ministry of thirty years of the Revd R H Lundie a very out going ministry was maintained. Up to 1914 the church sustained three satellite missions in the area and it is recorded had 1,100 children and 80 teachers in its Sunday School.

1.2 Early this century Liverpool expanded and the affluent suburbs moves two miles further from the centre, leaving Fairfield in an inner city location. Industry moved into the area and its support rapidly diminished.

1.3 A good ministry was continued under the Revd James Jackson until 1949 but maintenance on the buildings became a problem. It became a member of the United Reformed Church at its foundation. It continued a small but happy fellowship but members were scattered and travelled some distance to worship, some as far as 15 miles each way. During early 1997 discussions were held regarding the future but due to the sudden and tragic death of their Treasurer and increased vandalism on the buildings, it was decided to close finally in August 1997. We give thanks to God for faithful Christian witness at Fairfield for over 133 years.

Providence United Reformed Church, Elland, Huddersfield

Yorkshire

1.1 The church at Elland held its final service on Sunday 14 December 1997. The first gathering of Congregationalists in Elland seems to have taken place in 1820 at a house in New Street. After three years, the fellowship had outgrown its accommodation, and a church building was opened in 1823. During the nineteenth century, the fellowship flourished. By 1883, the congregation of 800 - 1,000 could no longer fit into the 1823 building, and an extension was built to serve as the sanctuary, whilst the Sunday School met in the original building.

1.2 The strength of the fellowship waned during the twentieth century. In 1969, the 1883 building was sold, and the 1823 building was re-dedicated as the sanctuary. In the 1970's. Elland became a member of the Highfield St James Group of churches. Its central position, between Huddersfield and Halifax, made it a popular venue for District meetings. The size of its congregation, however, continued to decline, and the decision to close at the end of the year was taken at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 6 May. District Council met at Elland for the last time on 24 November, and gave thanks for the powerful influence that the fellowship had exercised in the past in the local community.

Tomkin, Staffordshire

West Midlands

1.1 Tomkin Church is a small and isolated chapel in North Staffordshire. In late summer 1996 the remaining four members took the decision to close. This was supported by District Council, reported to Synod, and a closing service held on 13 October 1996. (See also New Mission Projects).

Provincial Moderators' Report

Our differences and our unity

1 Sign of the Kingdom

1.1 When Jesus first appeared on the Galilee scene after his Baptism, He came *'proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has come near".'* (Mark 1.14-15). Immediately he called four people to form the nucleus of the community which he would later charge to proclaim that same good news and live the life of that Kingdom. There is enough in the New Testament to indicate that a community, living and breathing the values of the Kingdom, was and is essential to the proclamation. The Church is not in itself the Kingdom, but it is charged to be a sign and embodiment of the Kingdom, so that others can see the Kingdom at work, feel its power and make a response to its appeal.

2 What kind of sign?

2.1 Within that total calling of the whole People of God there is a particular calling for us who comprise the United Reformed Church. Undoubtedly a major part of that particular calling has been our emphasis on Christian unity as one important sign of the Kingdom. Our Basis of Union - our title deed - states specifically that *'as a united church (we) will take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people'*.

2.2 We set out confidently along this road. Essentially, then, we saw ourselves as a movement rather than a denomination, an instrument for change rather than a monolithic institution. Seeking to be true to the Reformed Tradition, we thought we could be both reformed and reforming, as servants of a God who had *'yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy word'*.

2.3 To be fair to ourselves, there was a good deal in our past to suggest that we had already, even in our separation, been used by God in such a way, sometimes amid considerable controversy. For example:

- ◆ we had been the first denomination in these islands to ordain women: eighty years ago;
- ◆ among us the seeds of 'Family Church' had first been sown and much fruit had been harvested;

- ◆ as the 20th century movement towards Christian unity had developed, we had been in the forefront, as witnessed by at least two previous attempts to unite our different strands of tradition before the 1972 breakthrough.

2.4 We can also point to further good things since Union:

- ◆ the unification with the Churches of Christ in 1981;
- ◆ a consequent bringing together of two understandings of Baptism within one Church;
- ◆ a brave experiment in world mission, seen in the coming into being in 1977 of the Council for World Mission, in the way we struggled there to move away from paternalism and to embrace mutuality, and in the effect this venture has had both among its own 32 member Churches and among Christians of other traditions;
- ◆ a continuing process of blending different traditions and experiences, until the United Reformed Church of today, while showing obvious links with its parents, has a recognisable life of its own.

2.5 Looking into the immediate future, we rejoice in the hope of union with the Scottish Congregational Church and are glad to belong to a Church which is beginning to explore what it means to be a Church in three nations: Wales, Scotland and England, with the inevitable and welcome variety-in-unity that this will bring.

2.6 It was disappointing that other Churches, despite early promises, did not find it possible to follow the lead towards organic union which we believed we had been called upon to establish. Yet for many years, and still today in the mind of some, our very existence is seen as a sign of hope and promise by those who yearn for unity. Perhaps the proposed conversations between the Anglicans and the Methodists in England, with, hopefully, some participation from ourselves, will indicate a new way to visible unity. Meanwhile, there are indications that we have followed through at least some of the hopes placed in us 25 years ago, embodying aspects of the Kingdom among ourselves and pointing the way for others.

3 Unity among ourselves

3.1 If we are to be an authentic sign of the unity of the Kingdom, however, we are bound not only to work for unity with and among others but to manifest it within our own Church. Otherwise we nullify our witness. What kind of sign, in this respect, are we?

3.2 From our inception we have been a 'broad church'. We stated our faith in a fundamentally Trinitarian formulation and committed ourselves to the worship and service of the one God, in fellowship with all believers, in the hope of God's renewing and gathering of all things into one in Christ. We did not, and do not, however, bind one another to one interpretation of that faith or to particular ways of expressing it. In our Basis of Union we left a number of loopholes and ragged edges, believing that a movement like ours demanded flexibility and adaptability, and mutual acceptance among people who differed over a number of matters of faith and order. What we said to one another, in effect, was: 'These are the things upon which we base our faith and upon which we agree; we will stand together on these essentials and, from there, we will listen to one another, learn from each other, enrich one another from our different standpoints, in a spirit of unity that is deeper than our differences, enabling us to worship and witness together to the glory of the God who made us all different yet wills us to be one.' Such a unity gave us, on the one hand, a deep assurance of God's call and, on the other hand, the freedom to go on asking questions as we travelled on together. Some thirty years ago the writer Norman Habel wrote a book entitled *Interrobang*. Its symbol was a combination of an exclamation mark and a question mark, united and yet distinct. Such a symbol could well have been placed over us in the United Reformed Church these 25 years: the exclamation mark signifying the things in which we are confidently united; the question mark indicating the freedom we give to one another to question and explore. Such a unity, if we can truly discover and portray it, may have something to say not only to a Church seeking unity but also to a fragmented world.

4 Our unity today

4.1 Sadly, we have to admit that this is an ideal which is achieved not nearly often enough. As Provincial Moderators we are delighted to note, and warmly encourage, local initiatives towards united witness. It is good to note that, in the establishment of local covenants, the United Reformed Church is

nearly always involved, often exercising an influence out of all proportion to its numerical size. On the other hand, as Moderators we also see much inward looking and self seeking, with some churches in disarray and the unity of the fellowship being put at risk. During this past year this experience has been aggravated for the whole Church, both locally and nationally, as people have responded to issues of human sexuality and have with integrity taken stances which have sometimes led to confrontation, both locally and within the wider Councils of the Church. In some places the unity of our Church itself has been threatened and under strain. As we Moderators seek to minister among people who are hurt and affronted on all sides of this debate, as well as among those who are pained by the attitudes of some of their fellow members, we wonder what has happened to the vision and obedience to the Spirit which brought the United Reformed Church into being and what kind of sign of the Kingdom we are becoming.

5 Diversity of belief, unity of faith

5.1 In this report we do not wish to trespass on to ground currently being explored by those who have agreed to serve as members of the working parties set up to examine issues associated with sexuality. This, after all, is but one of several such matters of conscience which have the power to divide us. In 1982 the proposed Covenant between different Churches in England was potentially explosive. So too, in 1983, was the issue of nuclear disarmament when, once again, an Assembly decision was furiously questioned by many within the Church. Here, we seek to address the general concern of how unity and peace in the Church are to be addressed, preserved and developed when members passionately disagree.

5.2 As a Reformed Church, our unity must be based upon the authority of the Bible - *'The Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit'*, which, we declare, is *'the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people'*. In many of our local churches the Bible is carried in with due ceremony at the commencement of worship. Sometimes, however, we wonder whether this is a real symbol of the place held by the Bible in the life of the congregation and its members, or whether it is in danger of becoming a mere formality, a liturgical observance devoid of meaning. A recent survey revealed that almost one third of people who regularly attend church worship have not read the Bible for themselves in the past year. Such a sad statistic is likely to be true in our Church as in any

other. In this 'Year of the Open Book', we would recall our Church to its tradition of the supremacy of the Word of God. Thanks to the witness of our Reformed ancestors, each of us, individually, can read the Bible for ourselves and find God's Word there. This is a privilege we forfeit at our peril. It cannot be denied, however, that throughout our history, and still today, individual reading of the Bible has been and continues to be a source of division among God's people as different individual interpretations clash, sometimes violently. Then it is that we need to remember that the Bible is the Book of the Church and that it is also within the Reformed tradition for Christians to read, discuss and pray about what we read together in fellowship, each being willing to learn from the insights of others as they look for a common mind. Nor must we forget our Reformed heritage of scholarship and translation, helping us to understand the background and context out of which the various writings come. The risk, of course, is that we may find we differ so widely in understanding and interpretation that the common mind eludes us and the supremacy of Scripture is threatened. Then it is that we have to find ways to live with such diversity, based upon our unity in Christ. For he, after all, is the core of Scripture. He, 'The Word', is the supreme criterion for the interpretation of all the words we read. Remember Luther's insistence that the Bible is 'the cradle of Christ'. It is reassuring to know that one of the working parties set up by last year's Assembly is to examine and bring guidance on the vital matter of Scriptural Authority.

5.3 We believe we shall continue to be a Church of considerable variety. We believe that this is both healthy and desirable. Perhaps we need to work at what we mean by this: how is it possible to contain differences of belief, doctrine, understanding of the nature of the Church, forms of behaviour, together in one Church? It is highly probable that a Church on the move will always contain minority viewpoints and have to deal with varied interpretations of ultimate truth. 'We believe we are right' does not have to mean 'therefore you are wrong'. It can mean 'We believe we are right; you believe you are right; let us bring our disagreements together and, as partners, search for the mind of Christ, which is always beyond our grasp, and "grow up into him". (*Ephesians 4.15*)'. In older hymnbooks there was a hymn which has been discarded today as hopelessly outmoded. Yet it contained one line which is worth remembering. The hymn was '*Gather us in*'; the line: '*Each sees one colour of thy rainbow light*'. None of us sees the whole truth. Sometimes the 'colour' one sees seems

to clash with that seen by a fellow member. Wholeness comes as clashing interpretations are brought together and held together, even if the provisional result turns out to be that their proponents merely agree to disagree. This does not mean weak compromise or flabby syncretism. It does mean humility, accepting and affirming one another's integrity, and reverence for Truth which is greater than all our partial understandings. The United Reformed Church has always been such a Church, and we rejoice that it is so.

5.4 We would draw renewed attention to the Reformed principle expressed in our practice of Church Meeting. This principle underlies not only the Church Meeting in the local Church but also our gathering together in District Council, Synod and General Assembly. In such gatherings, at their best, variety can be held together in creative unity as believers gather together around God's Word, seeking in the context of worship, by discussing and listening, to come to a common mind in the hope and prayer that this is God's will for the church in that place. Sadly, very often, the principle is honoured far more in the breach than in the observance, at all levels of Church life, both in the commitment we give to it and in the manner in which we put it into practice. It is, however, a precious part of our heritage which we ignore to the great impoverishment of our life and witness.

5.5 We believe that, with the whole Church, we must not forget that it is the Church's task, not to delineate the Kingdom, but to point to the Kingdom. This, we suggest, is what Jesus meant when he bade us not to judge, lest we be ourselves judged. Those who believe passionately that they are 'in' the Kingdom usually find themselves drawing lines and establishing boundaries. That is the way of pharisaism, the way of sectarianism. Sadly, the history of the Reformed tradition is littered with division arising out of the desire to define: witness the three or more forms of Presbyterianism which still exist in Scotland, or the several different Reformed denominations in South Africa. In this connection, it is pertinent to note the considerable concern expressed in last year's Assembly of the World Reformed Alliance at Debrecen about the world-wide tendency within the Reformed tradition to divide over issues, and the intention, agreed there, to seek for ways of expressing mission in unity. God, let us remember, is judge, not us. 'We make his love too narrow by false limits of our own' (FW Faber). Edwin Martham's ditty also comes to mind:

*'He drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, infidel, thing to flout;
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that drew him in.'*

This does not mean, of course, that there are no boundaries: no forms of belief which are in error; no aspects of human conduct which are not clearly wrong; no philosophy or ideology which should not be questioned. A post-modern 'anything goes' is no more Christian than the narrow judgementalism from which we instinctively shy away. What it does mean is that our task as Church is to live so consistently as God's people, under his authority, displaying both the warmth and the terror of the fire of his love, seeking to redeem those aspects of the life of the world which are patently contrary to his will, in partnership with all others who name his name, that others will see the signs we are displaying and discover the Kingdom for themselves. Our prayer is that the United Reformed Church might continue to be pointing to the Kingdom, not defining it.

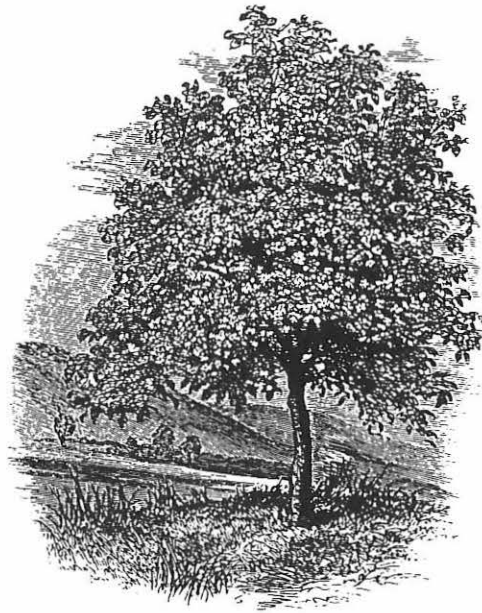
5.6 We believe that our calling as a Church to witness to the unity of the Kingdom has not been abrogated. At its best, the Reformed tradition has always yearned for that. Our ancestors separated from others in the Catholic tradition. That, however, was an unhappy result of a genuine concern to reform and renew that tradition so that it might accord more closely to what they read and understood in Scripture. By and large, they did not choose separation: circumstance and intransigence forced it upon them. John Calvin, after all, wrote to Queen Elizabeth that he would 'cross five oceans to secure the unity of the Church' - and he suffered, we are told, from mal-de-mer! Our plea here is not for unity at the expense of truth; rather, it is for unity in the search for truth. That search may at times be painful. But without pain there can be no gain. We believe that the things that unite us are always stronger than the things which threaten to divide us. And if the Church cannot discover and display unity in variety, what hope is there for a world which so desperately needs to discover it?

5.7 We would recall the United Reformed Church to the one Source of unity. Our Lord prayed that his disciples might discover the unity he himself had with the Father. He had gathered his company of twelve people because he believed that God-given unity must be displayed through the unity of a human community centred upon him. That community, and the enlarged community which came into being following his death and resurrection, was to display that broad, inclusive, renewing love, to proclaim it by word and deed, until others found it for themselves. Sadly, and as a terrible warning, one of the twelve had his own preconceptions of what God required of his people and separated himself from the rest, with the result we know. But at the centre of human hope still stands that Person who came to make it possible. The New Testament Church preached 'Christ Jesus as Lord' and went on to work out the implications for its own day and situation. They had their own struggles, divisions and failures, but through them all they found their unity in him. We would recall that tiny but significant part of the Church to which we belong to the same central point. The time-honoured words of Herbert Butterfield at the end of his 1949 book *Christianity and History* still apply: '*We can do worse than remember a principle which both gives us a firm Rock and leaves us the maximum elasticity for our minds: the principle: Hold to Christ, and for the rest be totally uncommitted.*' Thus our Church might truly become an authentic sign and embodiment of the Kingdom.

6 Personalia

6.1 This year, with much regret, we bid farewell to Janet Sowerbutts after eight significant years as moderator of Thames North Province. We shall miss her company, her thoughtful contributions to our meetings and corporate ministry, her vision, her realism, and her sense of fun which has prevented any of us from taking ourselves too seriously for too long! We wish her well in her future ministry. At the same time we look forward very much to welcoming Roberta Rominger as her successor.

Mission Council



General Assembly 1998

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 All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney. Those with long experience of these meetings have said that during this year Mission Council has found a sense of purpose and a method of working that has been elusive previously.

1.2 The Moderator has made a valuable contribution. In particular he encouraged the Council to listen to the Bible, rather than study it, and to respond in worship. His gentle and sensitive leadership has enabled the Council to handle important and sometimes complex issues in a positive spirit. That work has been undergirded by the contribution of his chaplain, Stephen Thornton, who has used words and music in worship that has been at the heart of the meetings.

1.3 At the October meeting Provincial representatives were asked to say from a local church perspective which particular issues needed to be on the agenda of Mission Council. Care has been taken to ensure that these issues are being taken up in one way or another.

2 Responding to the Assembly

2.1 Report of an appeal to the 1994 General Assembly (Record pp1-4)

The subject of this appeal was an unhappy situation which had arisen in a particular place in the course of setting up a new group pastorate. Events have moved on considerably since and the case is of no further concern to a wider audience. However the Assembly Commission which heard the appeal asked the Mission Council to consider certain questions regarding the creation of group pastorates and the grouping of churches generally.

Over the past two years or so various groups of people have looked at the questions on behalf of Mission Council. What appeared to be simple questions have proved to be very complex and to lead the discussion into several broader areas. Mission Council offers these comments as a rather belated response to the Assembly Commission request, along with the assurance that it has asked its Advisory Group to set up a working group to look at the wider issues of the grouping of churches. This work is seen to be of considerable importance.

2.2 1995 Assembly resolution 50. This resolution asked Mission Council to carry out a review of our present understanding and practice of oversight, and in particular to consider the work and responsibilities of moderators of provincial synods. A lot of work has been done, first by a special task group and then by the Mission Council Advisory Group. This work is being collated into a single paper and then, as a next stage, district councils and synods will be asked to look at the ways in which they share oversight with provincial moderators.

2.3 1996 Assembly resolution 54. This resolution asked Mission Council to review procedures for the discipline of all church members, whether they be ordained or not, and also procedures in the case of pastoral difficulty or breakdown. Work was done on this and the following response is offered to Assembly.

1. ***Discipline of members.*** *After some initial work was done on this, it was agreed that there was a prior need for study on the nature and understanding of church membership. This task has been given to the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee.*

2. ***Discipline of local church officers.*** *It was recognised that some guidelines on this could be helpful and the Thames North Province has agreed to produce some.*

3. ***Procedures in the event of pastoral difficulties or breakdown.*** *This also was looked into with care and Mission Council makes its response as follows:*

3.1 *Dealing with pastoral difficulties and breakdown is primarily the responsibility of elders' and church meetings, together with the district council and provincial moderator in certain circumstances. District councils in particular need to be sure that their procedures are reviewed and publicised at regular intervals, and that available resources of support are also made known.*

3.2 *Provinces are urged to give support and training to those who may be involved in seeking to resolve difficulties. In particular, attention is drawn to the experiment of appointing pastoral consultants in Thames North Province, and the organisation of*

courses in conflict management and intervention in East Midlands, Thames North and Southern Provinces.

2.4 1997 Assembly resolution 18. At its October meeting Mission Council gave a great deal of time to considering how this resolution, calling for more study on human sexuality, would best be implemented. It agreed to the following proposal:

Mission Council should remit responsibility for the implementation of resolution 18 to a core group of 5 of its senior members, plus the General Secretary, who will act as secretary. 'Senior' is intended to describe gifts and experience rather than age.

The core group would work through the conveners of the sub-groups described in paragraph 2 below. It would be responsible for arranging the ecumenical consultation required by the resolution. This requirement must also take account of the position of LEP's and the recognition of ministers of and by other denominations. It would consider and respond to requests for the appointment of co-opted members to each Working Group. It would negotiate the allocation of Assembly appointed staff to any sub groups to be the in-house contact person. This would be considered with due sensitivity with regard to the workload of the staff.

The core group would oversee the work of the following four sub-groups and in due course would report to Mission Council. The sub-groups would be:

*Biblical authority (6 people)
Authority of General Assembly and other councils; and the role of personal conviction (6 people)
Ordination and human sexuality (8 people)
Reflection on wider issues of sexuality (8 people)*

The Core Group, as part of its role, will give consideration to the implications of the findings of the working groups because this work is not an end but part of a process. The Core Group will report to the March 1999 Mission Council with a view to a report being submitted to Assembly.

The core group should be asked to consider the possibility of publishing discussion papers on any or all of the areas of its remit, in order to allow wider discussion of the issues involved so that people can be prepared for Assembly discussion.

The treasurer would be asked to authorise an overspend on the 1997 and 1998 budgets to allow this work to begin. A separate budget figure would be negotiated within the Mission Council budget for 1999.

The names of those appointed to the core group and the sub-groups were printed in *Reform*.

2.5 1997 Assembly resolution 19. This resolution on human sexuality gave rise to a great deal of correspondence and to requests from individuals, church meetings and district councils that it be suspended or rescinded at the earliest opportunity. Mission Council gave time at its October meeting to hear these requests and also to hear comments from those with other and different opinions. A long discussion gave rise to the unanimous acceptance of the following resolution, which was circulated with a covering letter to all members of Synods:

Mission Council

- a) *has received and heard calls from a number of District Councils, churches, ministers and members to suspend or rescind Resolution 19. After careful reflection, Mission Council is of a mind that it is neither appropriate nor within its power to take such action;*
- b) *expresses its continuing concern for the unity, peace and well-being of the United Reformed Church, and reaffirms the vital significance of Resolutions 17 and 18 which emphasise the need for a spirit of unity and for further work to be done;*
- c) *understands General Assembly not finally to have defined the United Reformed Church's attitude to homosexual relationships and sees Resolution 19 as holding options open until the Resolution 18 process is complete;*
- d) *urges all the councils and members of the church to speak and act with that sympathy and compassion to which Christ calls us.*

2.6 1997 Assembly resolution 41. This resolution instructed the officers of Assembly to form a working group to enable sensitive care of district councils, churches and individuals who felt pain and distress as a result of the passing of resolution 19, and asked Mission Council to review the work of the group.

The officers appointed Elizabeth Caswell, Malcolm Hanson, Jim Hollyman, Glyn Jenkins, Lis Mullen and John Waller to this task. Only a very small number of people have sought help from the group. However Mission Council has asked the group to remain in being at least until September 1998 when the position will be reviewed again. This resource remains available.

2.7 1997 Assembly resolution 40. At the time of the preparation of this report, work was not completed on establishing agreed standards for the use of Information Technology at all levels of the denomination. A full report will be made to the Assembly.

3 Actions on behalf of Assembly.

3.1 Minutes Secretary. Mission Council expressed the thanks of the Church to Mrs Christine Hardwick, the retiring minutes secretary, and appointed Mrs Sally Brooks as minutes secretary to Mission Council and Assembly for a period of 4 years, ending with the Assembly of 2001.

3.2 Stipends and pensions. During the year Mission Council acted for the Assembly in passing the following three resolutions:

- ◆ Mission Council, acting on behalf of the Assembly, agrees that, with effect from 1st January 1998, the employer's contribution to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPPF) payable in the terms of Rule 15.2 of the rules of the Pension Fund shall be at the rate of 11.75% of the basic stipend paid to each member.
- ◆ Mission Council, acting for the Assembly, amends the second paragraph of para 6.1.4 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration so that the final sentence reads 'from 1 January 1998, this will be the same percentage of basic stipend as that payable as an employer's contribution to the URCMPF in the terms of para 15.1 of the Rules of the URCMPF'
- ◆ Mission Council sets the basic ministerial stipend for 1998 at £14,820.

3.3 Composition of the Ecumenical Committee. This committee had eight 'core' members (i.e. appointed by Assembly and not by other committees). Of these, the Nominations Committee has made it a practice to propose at least one person from Scotland and one from Wales. Mission Council agreed to increase the size of the Committee to eight 'core' members plus one person appointed by the Synod of Wales and one by the Mid-Scotland District Council, or its successor.

3.4 Moderator of Thames North Provincial Synod. Acting on behalf of Assembly, Mission Council appointed the Revd Roberta Carol Rominger as Moderator of the Synod for a period of seven years from 1 September 1998.

3.5 The attention of Mission Council was drawn to the fact that no provision had been made in the disciplinary provisions for ministers to allow the work of the Disciplinary Commission to continue whenever its Secretary was not available. The following resolution was passed to cover such situations: (Res. 98/16, p7)

In the event of the unavailability of the Secretary of the Commission to carry out necessary duties, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee to act as Secretary.

4 Other actions

4.1 In the previous year Mission Council gave attention to the report of the task group on Authority, but it had not formed any conclusions. However, following the creation of groups under Assembly resolution 18, it was decided that the best way forward was to offer the report as a working document to the groups on the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Councils of the church. Any other group or individual in the Church who would like to have a copy of the task group's report may obtain one from the Deputy General Secretary.

4.2 Following advice from its Staffing Advisory Group, Mission Council renewed the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations for a period of 5 years from 1 September 1998, and also gave approval to the posts of Pilots Development Officer; Church Related Community Work Development Officer; and Centre Minister at Yardley Hastings.

4.3 East Midlands, Mersey and Wales Provinces submitted their proposals for using their share of the CWM gift of grace. These were warmly endorsed by Mission Council.

4.4 The change to Provincial management of Youth and Children's Work Trainers and Youth Leadership Training Officers was completed during the year. Mrs Helen Brown was thanked for her thorough work in managing the change. It was agreed that the oversight of the programme, on behalf of Assembly, should remain the responsibility of the Training Committee.

4.5 Work was done during the year to seek a way to bring the Holiday Forum back within the committee structure of the Church. In recent years it has been run by an independent group. Mission Council was happy to learn that agreement had been reached with the group, and that the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee would give oversight to the Forum.

4.6 Mission Council received a report from the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee on the Theology of Ministry. This was part of the response to the Patterns of Ministry report. It was agreed that there should be a two year consultation period and that more work should be done on certain aspects.

4.7 Roger Whitehead was thanked for his pioneering work as Secretary of the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans when he retired on 31 December 1997. David Lane, an elder in Purley, has been appointed in his place.

4.8 The General Secretary read to the Council a letter he had received from Preman Niles, the General Secretary of the Council for World Mission. (The letter was published in *Reform*.) CWM urged the United Reformed Church to reduce the amount of its annual contribution and to use the money thus saved for mission at home. Mission Council was appreciative of the content of the letter and began a discussion of the implications whilst considering the budget aspects of the Resource Planning Advisory Group report. The letter helped to give mission a high profile in the discussion.

4.9 Mission Council agreed to a proposal that the archives of the Presbyterian Church of England Overseas Mission Committee and those of the Women's Missionary Association be placed on permanent loan to the Council for World Mission, so long as they are kept at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London.

4.10 The Resource Sharing task group is a means of sharing resources between the synods. The particular focus of its work has been to encourage the wealthier provinces to share some of their money with the poorer ones.

The work is now clearly centred in the annual consultation with the synods. As a result of the two consultations in 1997:

- ◆ £75,000 was given and re-distributed in 1997. The poorest synod received £19,000 more than it contributed
- ◆ it has been agreed to share financial resources in 1998 broadly on the same basis as in 1997 i.e. synods will contribute a minimum of 2% of their investment income, which will be distributed in inverse proportion to that amount
- ◆ proposals have been made to the Training Committee and Resource Planning Advisory Group which would ensure that the availability and amount of In-service Training grants for ministers do not depend

upon the resources available to the synod in which the minister serves

- ◆ synods which make personal loans to ministers for the purchase of cars have agreed to allow such a loan to continue on the same terms when a minister moves to another synod
- ◆ the consultation has suggested that the minimum student book grant should be £125 p.a.
- ◆ details of policies for the use of capital and for the provision of grants and loans have been exchanged, and there are indications that synods are seeking to harmonise their policies where appropriate.

Acknowledging that the inequality of distribution of resources between the synods remains a weakness, the Task Group has every reason to be thankful that the Resource Sharing initiative is one of the 'success stories' of the Church. The response of the March 1997 synods was very positive, and signalled generosity and concern for the life of the whole Church. There is now a great deal of openness between the synods, as information about the availability and use of financial resources is shared. Such progress is a cause for celebration.

4.11 The Advisory Group on Grants and Loans is an advisory group of Mission Council. However, because its work has a wide impact on the life of churches and communities throughout the country, this year a full report on the Group's work is being published as Appendix 8.

4.12 A paper from the Mission Council Advisory Group concerning Assembly Moderators' diaries was received and approved. For a trial period of four years beginning in 1999, arrangements will be made for Moderators to visit one quarter of the districts during their year of office. This will ensure that during the period each district will receive one visit from a Moderator, in addition to any that may be arranged independently. The General Secretary will administer this scheme in consultation with each Moderator. It will be reviewed before the end of the four-year period.

4.13 The Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper began her work as the multi-racial, multi-cultural worker at the time of last year's Assembly. After a period of acclimatisation, and the making of appropriate contacts, her work for the remainder of the first year has concentrated on a series of extended visits to each of the synods. At the conclusion of each visit she has sent a report to the synod in order to encourage reflection and reaction. It is too soon to offer any overall assessment of this work but Mission Council

is well aware of the gifts Marjorie has brought to her ministry - penetrating analysis, theological insight, effective communication, an infectious sense of humour and a vibrant Christian faith. A management group works on behalf of Mission Council to

oversee this programme and to give support and encouragement to the person at its heart. The present members of this group are Sandra Ackroyd, Peter Brain, Mia Hilborn, John Macauley, Simon Walking and John Waller.

Millennium Task Group

Millennium Task Group Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Elizabeth Caswell* **Secretary:** *Revd Roger Whitehead*
Revds Peter Brain, Bill Wright, Sheila Maxey, Daphne Beale, Bill Mahood, Joan Grindrod-Helmn, Kristin Ofstad, Peter Southcombe, Chrissy Ross.

1 A threefold commitment

1.1 At last year's General Assembly the United Reformed Church committed itself to a threefold approach to celebrating the Millennium: participation with other churches in national plans which would be focused on the theme of 'A chance to start again'; participation with others in the Jubilee 2000 campaign to tackle international debt; and a call to a year of renewal in 1999.

1.2 During the past year the United Reformed Church has continued to play a full part in the Churches Together in England Millennium Group, increasing our grant to £10,000 per annum until 1999 in order to fund extra staffing. Churches Millennium Enterprises has been founded in order to control and market materials, with Newstart Ltd as its trading arm.

1.2.1 Support for Jubilee 2000 has been considerable and the United Reformed Church has budgeted £5,000 pa for 1999 and 2000. The climax will be at the high level of Christian presence in Birmingham on May 16th for the G7/8 Summit, and the presentation of the petition. It is important to remember that the objectives of this campaign have attracted the support of both the current Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessor. We look for this support to be translated into action.

1.2.2 The churches have also set the pace for giving a proper spiritual dimension to the Millennium celebrations, and the CTE group's ideas have won support from the government. Local churches are involved in the plans for the Dome in Greenwich, and in many parts of the country local Churches Together groups are taking the initiative in planning local community events.

1.2.3 A small group has been writing material for the United Reformed Church's own call to renewal in 1999. We hope that in each Provincial Synod in spring and autumn of that year the themes will be launched, with local churches using the study and worship material between Easter and Pentecost, and in the weeks leading up to Advent. (Such a timetable will allow for ecumenical groups and themes to be shared in during Lent and Advent). The *Prayer Handbook* for 1999 will reflect the national theme which will focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

2 Committees, Task Groups and ecumenical bodies can only go so far in encouraging a positive attitude to the Millennium. The onus for making a spiritual impact, and using the turn of the century positively as a time to think through the nature of our society and the values by which we choose to live, falls on local congregations and Churches Together.

3 *Millennium News* is an excellent publication brimful of news and ideas; many different groups come forward with good ideas which churches would benefit from hearing about. The Task Group would like to direct this information to one person in each District and have asked District Councils to appoint someone who will take responsibility for sharing the information.

RESOLUTION 9**NewStart**

Assembly welcomes ecumenical co-operation in preparations for the Millennium and recommends

- a) the idea of local Churches Together groups giving every home a millennium candle and encouraging the nation to share in the Millennium Resolution on 31st December 1999**
- b) the New Start theme of the Churches' Millennium Group, and encourages local churches to consider how they can advocate a New Start for the world's poor, a New Start at home, and a New Start with God in their own communities**
- c) the idea of churches following the same general themes during the period Advent 1999 to Epiphany 2000 and welcomes the proposed ecumenical publication of worship material.**

1.1 NewStart Ltd will be producing a millennium candle and a copy of the millennium resolution for every household. Local churches are asked to purchase them, and make a gift of them to the homes in their neighbourhood. Obviously there will be a cost in both money and time, as well as a need for inter-church planning, and that planning needs to begin soon.

1.2 It is not often that the church appears on the doorstep to offer a gift. Here is an opportunity to encourage whole neighbourhoods to unite in a non-threatening desire for a better world. The resolution wording will be such that people of different faith, or no faith, may say them with integrity.

1.3 This simple idea is just one example of how churches might reach into their communities. It is hoped that the theme 'New Start' will encourage

serious thought about how to help overcome poverty, and tackle the unease and spiritual hunger in our world. Let's put some effort into using this period for worthwhile reflection and hopeful action: it doesn't have to be just a money-making Theme Park of a celebration.

1.4 Churches which are offering spiritual hope to their local communities will be glad to be able to think and worship following the same themes and using the same materials from Advent to Epiphany. Churches using the revised common lectionary, Partners in Learning, SALT (Scripture Union) and Roman Catholic educational materials will find that for that period they will all be focused on the same themes. There will be supporting worship materials published by the Millennium Group.

RESOLUTION 10**Presidency at the Sacraments in an Emergency**

In 1997 Assembly passed the following resolution:

Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1997 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. Assembly in 1997 fixed 23 March 1998 as the date by which objections to this addition to the Basis of Union could be registered by Synods. No

such objections have been received. The resolution is therefore brought back for a second vote.

RESOLUTION 11**Changes to the Structure**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church (see the procedure for constitutional amendment set out in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure):

- a) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(a) by adding the words: ‘and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a United Reformed Church in that district.’
- b) Amend the existing category at Paragraph 2(4)(h) to read: ‘All retired ministers not covered by clause 2.4.a or clause 2.4.g residing within the province or nation served by the synod, who shall be associate members of the synod having the right to speak but not to vote at meetings of the synod.’
- c) In the existing category at paragraph 2(5)(c) delete the words: ‘departments and’.
- d) In the third sentence of the concluding section of Paragraph 2(5) delete the words: ‘department or’.
- e) In the fifth sentence of the concluding section of Paragraph 2(5) delete the words: ‘department or’.
- f) In the existing category at Paragraph 2(5)(ii) delete the words ‘departments and’.
- g) Amend the existing Paragraph 3(1)(f) to read: ‘If by such date such notice has not been received, a motion to agree the proposed amendment shall come before the General Assembly at its next meeting. Such a motion shall require a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass.’

1 The current Structure is printed as Appendix B to the Proposals for Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland.

2 Part a) ensures that Assembly appointed ministries are automatically members of a district council.

3 Part b) seeks to clarify the category of synod membership of retired ministers who are serving as interim moderators.

4 Parts c) to f) simply deletes out of date references to departments.

5 Part g) permits the Assembly to decide that a resolution to ratify an earlier decision to change the Basis or Structure be not put.

RESOLUTION 12**Changes to the Rules of Procedure**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of the United Reformed Church:

Amend the existing Paragraph 1(1) by inserting the following before the present final sentence:

- a) ‘At the completion of the business of the Annual Meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly is adjourned. The members of Assembly at any time between Annual Meetings of the Assembly remain those who were included on the Roll of Assembly at the constitution of the immediately preceding Annual Meeting of the Assembly.’
- b) Amend the existing Paragraph 1(4) by replacing the word ‘four’ in the third sentence with ‘two’.
- c) Number the existing unnumbered final paragraph of section 1 as 1(5).

1 Part a) clarifies the membership of Assembly between Annual Meetings of the Assembly.

2 Part b) allows and district councils to make necessary changes to their lists of representatives to Assembly nearer to the start of the Assembly.

RESOLUTION 13 **Election of Assembly Officer**

General Assembly, acting under paragraph 2(5) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, elects the Treasurer, for the time being, of the United Reformed Church to be an officer of the Assembly.

1 The current officers of the Assembly are: the Moderator, the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary, the Clerk of Assembly and the

Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee. This resolution would add the Treasurer.

RESOLUTION 14 **Disciplinary procedures**

Assembly resolves to increase the size of the Commission Panel established under the ministerial disciplinary procedures from 25 members to a maximum of 50 members.

1 Under these procedures an Appeals Commission of 5 members, chosen from the Commission Panel, has to be appointed to consider each case. Considerations of balance and of necessary skills have to be considered in setting up each Appeals Commission. What was not realised

in setting the total number at 25 was that it may take a considerable time for a particular case to be heard and that therefore the number of Appeals Commissions in place at any one time could be larger than the present Panel could resource. This resolution enables such a situation to be avoided.

RESOLUTION 15 **Disciplinary Process**

Noting that Mission Council has resolved to conduct a review of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process in March 1999, Assembly authorises the General Secretary, the Clerk and the Convener of the Ministries Committee to oversee the Process on its behalf, at least until such review has been completed.

1 Whilst the disciplinary Process has been set up and is in operation, no group has been given authority by the Assembly to deal with any questions that arise concerning the Process as a whole. Mission

Council has already recognised the need for an early review. This resolution designates certain officers as a group to have oversight of the Process, at least until the review is undertaken.

RESOLUTION 16 **General Secretary**

Assembly re-appoints the Revd Anthony Gerald Burnham as General Secretary for a period of two years, ending on 31 July 2001.

1 Mr Burnham was appointed for a seven-year term beginning July 1992. He will reach the age of 65 in March 2001. Under the powers given to it, Mission Council set up a review group. After discussion, the group was unanimous in bringing

the above resolution to Mission Council. In turn, Mission Council was unanimous in adopting it. Tribute was paid to Mr Burnham's leadership, commitment, energy and vision - as well as to his pastoral support throughout the Church.

RESOLUTION 17**Visit to the Northern Province**

Assembly agrees that in 2001 a visit to the Northern Province will be made on its behalf by a team of 3 people.

1 The background to this resolution is a request from the Synod of the Northern Province to the Mission Council that it should appoint a Pastoral Commission to visit the province in 2001. The Synod further proposed that Mission Council should prepare a programme of similar visits to the other provinces.

2 The objective of the visit is seen as encouraging the Northern synod to consider its life and work, goals and methods; to enable affirmation and critique of the synod's structures and patterns of work; and to promote reflection on the operation of the Synod in relation to other councils of the Church, ecumenical partners, and community organisations.

3 Mission Council believes that any such visit should be made on behalf of General Assembly, as part of its responsibility of oversight. It is therefore advising Assembly on what it believes to be a right response.

4 There was doubt within Mission Council as to the value of such a visit, when measured against the time and resources it would use. The visit to the Northern synod is therefore seen as something of a pilot, with the possibility that in future other synods might want to opt in to such a scheme. It would then be possible to make a judgement as to whether regular visits to synods should become part of the life of the Assembly.

RESOLUTION 18**Use of Colleges**

Assembly resolves to recommend the use of Northern, The Queen's and Westminster Colleges for initial ministerial training for the foreseeable future.

1 At present the United Reformed Church uses Mansfield College, Oxford; Northern College, Manchester; The Queen's College, Birmingham; and Westminster College, Cambridge, in addition to a number of recognised courses, for initial ministerial training.

2 The background to this resolution is a concern of several years' standing that the number of students coming for initial ministerial training was dropping below the level required to supply an adequate number of students to each college. Whilst there is debate about what precisely the required level is, it has to do with having year groups of sufficient size to enable effective learning together and also the need of colleges which are dependent on fee income to have a certain minimum number of students. The question is complicated by the increase in the number of training options open to students now and by the fact that all the colleges operate in ecumenical relationships with the consequence that decisions affecting them may also affect others.

3 This concern caused the Assembly of 1995 to put a limit on the guaranteed future life of Westminster College. It also led to the Training Committee proposing in 1997 that we should cease to use The Queen's College. This proposal was rejected by Mission Council.

4 Uncertainty of this sort does not help any of our training institutions. In the autumn of 1997 the Training Committee set up an independent review group to consider and make recommendations concerning the number of colleges which the United Reformed Church should use in the foreseeable future. The group sent members to visit all four colleges as well as receiving representatives at one of its meetings. In a lengthy report prepared for Mission Council this group concluded that initial ministerial training should be focused at Northern and Westminster Colleges, that The Queen's College should continue to be used in a few instances, and that Mansfield College should no longer be used for initial ministerial training.

5 At the end of a long and difficult discussion Mission Council agreed to put forward the above resolution. It decided to defer any decision regarding Mansfield College for 12 months. This was to allow consultation with all interested parties and to allow the College time to respond to the 1997 inspection report. It was also to allow the colleges named in the resolution to plan ahead with a reasonable degree of certainty. The effect of this resolution, if passed, will be that at least for the academic year 1998/9 initial ministerial training will continue at four colleges. Discussion about the future use of Mansfield will take place at the March 1999 Mission Council to enable a further report to be made to the next General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 19 **Procedure for Union**

The General Assembly agrees that the process of decision on the Proposals for Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland be according to paragraph 3(1) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom

The effect of this resolution is to define the process as being the same as for a constitutional amendment. This means that the matter comes before two Annual Meetings of the Assembly and, in between, will be referred to provincial synods and, in this case, district councils.

This decision, according to paragraph 3(2) of the Structure, requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting to pass.

RESOLUTION 20 **Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland**

The General Assembly gives first approval to the Proposals for Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland (document dated March 1998) including the Amendments to the Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom listed in Appendix C of the document, and refers these Proposals to synods and district councils.

The document containing the Proposals to form the United Reformed Church by a union of the Congregational Union of Scotland with the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom was finally agreed by the Joint Negotiating Group in March 1998. The Proposals build on the earlier Proposals of January 1988 which were given first approval by the Assembly in May 1988. However they were not approved by the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the process ended.

effecting the union of our two denominations as soon as possible'. This approach was welcomed by Mission Council and the action in recommencing negotiations was confirmed by the General Assembly in 1997.

Copies of the document containing the Proposals have been circulated to all representatives with Assembly papers. The Proposals are now presented to the Assemblies of both denominations for consideration and decision.

In 1996 the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland resolved to initiate discussions with the United Reformed Church (UK) 'with a view to

If Assembly agrees to the process proposed in Resolution 19, then this resolution will require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

RESOLUTION 21 **Consultation with other Councils**

General Assembly (1) invites district councils and synods to discuss these Proposals and agrees that should any council or synod wish to pass a resolution 'that these Proposals be not proceeded with' such resolution must reach the General Secretary by 15 March 1999; and (2) authorises the United Reformed Church (UK) representatives on the Joint Negotiating Group to continue with this work.

If more than one-third of the synods or the district councils resolve before 15 March 1999 to oppose the Proposals, the matter will not proceed. If there is no such opposition, the General Assembly of 1999 will be invited to ratify the proposals, a simple majority being required. The views of the Mid-

Scotland District Council will be specifically reported to the Assembly.

The members of the Joint Negotiating Group are listed in Appendix F of the Proposals.

Assembly adopts the budget for 1999 as set out on pages 156 and 157 of Appendix 2

The Resource Planning Advisory Group has spent a lot of time during the year in fulfilling its role of giving advice to Mission Council on the use of resources within the context of an overall strategic plan. A large part of the January Mission Council was allocated to a broad look at the mission and ministry of the church.

It is the intention of Mission Council to look in October more closely at the particular questions of the number, recruitment, deployment and use of stipendiary ministers. This discussion will be preceded by consultation with all the provinces.

Before coming to detail on the budget, it is worth recording that many of the emphases agreed in the Five Year Plan presented to the Assembly in 1996 are now being implemented in particular programmes and in the direction of resources:

- ◆ the emphasis on youth and children's work is reflected in the new Pilots Development Officer post and the renewal of posts at Yardley Hastings
- ◆ the emphasis on local training can be seen in the Training for Learning and Service course and new thinking on local ministry
- ◆ the concern for ministers' ongoing support and training is being tackled by the programme of appraisal and by proposals for continued ministerial education.

The one area where progress has been limited is that of growth. However, challenged by a recent letter from the General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (reprinted in Appendix 4), Mission Council has begun to consider how newly-available resources can best be used to stimulate mission.

A new emphasis which has been developed in the past two years is that of bringing our contacts with the world church closer to our own church life in all areas. This is chiefly focused in the Belonging to the World Church programme, which is described elsewhere in Assembly reports. This will require some funding from the general funds of the church. The same is true of our greater contribution to certain world and European ecumenical bodies.

The budget sees a reduction in the amount of money allocated for ministry, chiefly because the allocation to the Pension Fund has been reduced. The last actuarial valuation of the Fund revealed a much smaller deficit and therefore a reduced need for subvention. The cost of ministry is also kept down by a smaller number of ministers on the payroll.

Training costs, on the other hand, are considerably higher. The reasons for this have largely been explained above. Part of the cost of the developments described is reflected in the increased amount allocated for Assembly-appointed staff.

There is need then to comment on the greatest area of change. The grant to CWM is being drastically cut. CWM insists this should not simply be regarded as a saving: it should still be spent on mission. How that should be done requires careful consideration. A comprehensive look at the situation will be discussed in time for the October Mission Council.

Finally, at a time of such significant change and when the future direction of much of our work is under serious discussion, it seems right to hold the level of the total Ministry and Mission Fund requirement at the same figure in 1999 as in 1998. This is made possible by the below-inflation increase in budgeted expenditure and by the use of some of the unexpended income balance.

***Committees
and
Task Groups***



General Assembly 1998

Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd D Alasdair Pratt*

Secretary: *Mr Hilary Gunn*

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

1 Our first - and very pleasant - task this year is to express our congratulations to the retiring Convener, Wilma Frew, on her election to serve as Moderator of the General Assembly. We acknowledge, with appreciation, the way in which she has led the committee and guided the business of Assembly in recent years. We also wish to thank the immediate past Clerk, the Revd Martin Cressey, for his support and guidance in the committee.

2 We are grateful to the Mersey Province for the invitation to Assembly to meet within its bounds in 1999. It will be non-residential and will be held July 5th-9th at the Theatre and Floral Hall Complex in Southport.

3 Plans are proceeding for the residential Assembly, which will meet July 1st-4th in the year 2000. This will be at the Queen Mary and Westfield Colleges of the University of London.

RESOLUTION 23

General Assembly 2000

Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2000 will be held residentially, July 1st-4th at Queen Mary and Westfield Colleges of the University of London.

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, Mr George Morton, Revd Michael Powell,
with Revd Justine Wyatt (National AIDS Adviser)
to December 1998

1 Introduction

1.1 With the theme of Jubilee uppermost in many minds, we are becoming almost too familiar with Luke 4, 18 - 19, with its reference to *'the year of the Lord's favour'* and the coming of Jesus *'to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to let the broken victims go free'*. In John 10, 10 we find a similar manifesto, almost a soundbite: *'I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly'*. Not a bad basis for assessing our work throughout the church and certainly in Church and Society. Are we life-givers? Are we life-enhancers? From this annual report we hope it appears that our strategy is fairly sound and our style appropriate.

1.2 Of course our direct impact is small. Maybe a few thousand lives benefit directly from *Commitment for Life* sending funds to four overseas partner organisations, a few hundreds from our encouragement of teachers in last year's Assembly resolution which was forwarded to the teachers' organisations, a few dozen directly from the ministry around HIV and AIDS. This limited direct effect is inevitable and perhaps it is as well, since spiritually we are not driven by the pressure to quantify success and achievement by performance indicators. The Christian calling is to side with the Christ-like God in words and actions and to side with those whose side such a God takes. If people notice the good we do, let them 'give praise to the Father in heaven'.

1.3.1 But the stronger, indirect impact of our work is also mission or it is nothing, as we seek to enable the church to think and speak and act on a wide range of issues across society. We take time in committee to reflect on how to live by faith in the world as it is, especially at our annual residential meeting. For instance, we had a serious discussion of how Christians should approach the issue of euthanasia, although we do not anticipate bringing a report in the next few years.

1.3.2 We do ask, by implication if not in so many words, when starting some new work, reviewing a continuing programme or joining in an ecumenical venture: 'Is this life-enhancing?' Our new main emphases, on the environment, on elderly people, on economics, should stand this scrutiny. All three programmes are intended to help church people and society in general to appreciate living in God's world with deeper understanding and awareness, to repent and to make progress towards that Kingdom which is both God's gift and our goal.

1.4 Personalia

We pay tribute to our retiring Convener, Professor Malcolm Johnson, for six years of clear leadership, sensitive chairing and personal support of colleagues and staff. In this he was ably backed up by our Deputy Convener, Mrs Val Morrison, who also finishes this year. Neither would have been able to give the time to fulfil all the duties and expectations of a committee convener. But each did much more than half! So we have been privileged to have both.

2 Programme highlights

2.1.1 The **work on environmental issues** is the subject of our main resolution. We were fortunate in being able to negotiate with Province and District for 50 working days a year during which David Pickering, a minister on Teesside, can deploy his scientific knowledge and experience to serve as our Environmental Issues Adviser. A mixed monitoring group of specialists and 'ordinary people' meets quarterly (not in London) to support this work. Our main aim is to raise awareness in local churches, hence the initiative reported in the resolution.

2.1.2 David has also been able to play an important role in conversations which we hope will lead to the establishment of a stronger body to represent the churches in this area. The current Environmental Issues Network of CCBI is by definition only a network, a sharing of information and ideas; it is not intended to be pro-active in making representations and submissions on behalf of the churches on these vital issues to government or industry or the media. The organisation Christian Ecology Link offers public comment and attracts support from local churches and individuals; but there is no acknowledged ecumenical instrument in this field.

2.1.3 On a related topic, we made a submission to the US government urging them not to allow Dr Seed (yes, that is his name) to start experiments in possible human cloning in Chicago. The danger is still there. In this, as on other scientific matters, we are dependent on the sound advice of the Society Religion and Technology project in Edinburgh and their Dr Donald Bruce who has become the acknowledged church spokesperson in this field.

2.2.1 The **work on ageing and work with older people** is also the subject of a resolution, brought by the joint group formed by ourselves and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee, reflecting the complementary interests of the two committees in this field. In 1997 we commissioned Nigel Appleton, a consultant with relevant experience and a United Reformed Church Elder, to produce a report setting out the background and offering suggestions of what we might do as a church, especially in the UN International Year of Older Persons 1999. Copies of his full report are available on request.

2.2.2 Church and Society is particularly interested in the Millennium Debate of the Age (MDA) and we convened an ecumenical group to

liaise with it. This is a major initiative from Age Concern that has rapidly evolved into a free-standing and very ambitious programme of public consultation, aiming to elicit responses from over half the population. This whole project ties in with our own and other enquiries into values for the next century. It is much more than a survey of how older people think and feel. Now it is up to the members and friends of all our churches to ensure that our views are fed into the MDA, that our Christian vision of wholeness and community, with none excluded on grounds of age, race, gender, disability or whatever, is shared. MDA could be truly life-enhancing. Every possible communication channel will be used by the MDA, so let's not be backward in coming forward. One modest opportunity to contribute is planned for Assembly, when the MDA mobile display should be on site for a day.

2.3.1 The **work on economics** will be our most expensive programme but we trust will produce a video and complementary materials of a high standard. Our aim is to liberate people from their inhibitions about making the connections between money and faith. We are not going to produce another report on why Christians should or should not love the market system. As we signalled last year, the aim of this programme is to challenge the widespread but misguided belief that economics is somehow autonomous, with laws as precise as those of the natural sciences, when it is in fact a human science, akin to psychology or politics. The statement 'you cannot buck the market' is not a truth like '2 + 2 = 4' but more akin to 'profit-conscious businesses seek to cut costs' which is true, but relative.

2.3.2 A monitoring group, with financial and theological expertise, meets regularly (also in the north of England). We are working with Pathway Productions, the audio-visual unit of the Church of Scotland, and The William Temple Foundation. We have appointed a writer who has listened in on the conversations of two very contrasting groups, convened by members of the monitoring group, and whose task is to script a 40 minute drama drawing out the human dilemmas and underlying issues. Once the video is made and the study / action guide written, we plan to have a training programme for would-be users of the materials in early 1999 since we do not intend simply to produce this pack and let it gather dust on the shelves of URC House!

3.1.1 **Support:** It is good to be able to report a clear growth in the number of churches actively participating in the programme, up by over 100 in 12 months to 450. These are spread across the denomination from 67 in Southern Province to 11 in Wales.

3.1.2 During the year we have been in touch with many local churches whose first instinct and practice is to support Christian Aid, to remind them of what the then Director of Christian Aid said at Assembly in 1996, that *Commitment for Life* is the way for URCs to support Christian Aid. It is a partnership. We depend on Christian Aid for several aspects of the programme as the principal ecumenical agency, notably to do with links to the overseas partners. But both Christian Aid and Church and Society still urge local churches to change and join *Commitment for Life*.

3.2.1 **Advocacy:** The energy and dedication of the national Co-ordinator of *Commitment for Life*, Anne Martin, has kept our nationwide team of advocates above 40 and ensured that they are backed up with regular newsletters and other information. Advocates are encouraged to attend the annual ecumenical Swanwick consultation in May; otherwise Anne can meet them in Provincial groups for briefing and training.

3.2.2 Each participating church receives three mailings a year, with news of their partner and campaign updates. The advocates visit participating and interested churches - and would be pleased to visit you!

3.3.1 **Campaigning:** The primary campaigning issues for *Commitment for Life* during the year has been Jubilee 2000, which gets a section of the report to itself, below. We welcomed the positive approach taken by the new Government and the appointment of a Cabinet - level Secretary of State in a new Department for International Development. What was so refreshing in the White Paper, the first on the subject for decades, was the recognition that concern over aid, which is still crucial, needs to be integrated with concern over related policies such as world trade and debt, which can prevent those same poor people from re-establishing themselves within the total human community. The more holistic language of Clare Short needs to be supported by churches and other bodies, to consolidate the grassroots backing for her Department which is already strong according to the opinion polls.

3.3.2 At the same time, we have been protesting to MPs and the Department for Trade and Industry, which at the time of writing has the support of the Prime Minister in pressing for the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Our campaigning partner, World Development Movement, has waged a fierce struggle against this MAI which it regards as the final triumph of multi-national businesses over vulnerable governments.

3.4 **Partners:** Around two-thirds of participating churches have chosen an overseas partner and the *Commitment for Life* materials are all based on these links. Partnership of this kind helps a church identify with those working for development in a very different context without (we hope) relapsing into a patronising attitude towards them, which sadly characterises some twinning schemes. In 1998 we shall sever our direct connection with the Deccan Development Society in India, who were one of the original partners. We shall keep the link with *Olodum*, in Salvador, Brazil, with *Silveira House*, Zimbabwe, and with *PARC*, the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee. And we shall take on a new partner, the *Christian Commission on Development*, Bangladesh, marking this new link with a visit from a FURY group in September.

3.5 **Materials:** 1998 is the year when we publish completely fresh leaflets and posters, based on the work of the four partner organisations and the lives of some people who work with them. It is planned to have these ready in June, so there should be a good display at Assembly. This will sustain us until 2000 when we are due to debate *Commitment for Life* again at Assembly and consider any more serious changes to the programme.

3.6 **Funds:** 1997 income for *Commitment for Life* came to around £310k, a significant increase on £285k in 1996. A breakdown of how this money was disbursed was sent to participating churches in January and is readily available. We kept the WDM grant at 10% of the income and were able to find £5k for Jubilee 2000 as well as nearly £9k for One World Week. This is all life-giving and life-enhancing, especially the funding of campaigning and educational bodies; that way we can be 'tough on the causes of poverty' as well as direct in our help to a few needy communities.

4 More life-giving activity

4.1.1 The momentum of the **Jubilee 2000 Coalition** accelerates month by month. Church and Society has been active in backing the campaign and is a founder member of the Coalition. At the time of writing plans are being finalised for the lobby of the G8 summit in Birmingham on May 16 when we hope for a good URC turnout among the tens of thousands expected. The commitment of the UK government was exemplified by a gathering hosted by Chancellor Gordon Brown for religious leaders, including our own General Secretary. The task now is to convince other world leaders to take the point, that it makes economic as well as moral sense to write off the unpayable debts of some of the poorest countries, albeit with care to prevent recurrence of the problem and with no blind eye turned to possible corruption.

4.1.2 This is a global movement for justice, with spontaneous support in many countries. People simply do not accept that the children of Zaire should repay the money diverted by former President Mobutu to his own ends or that the children of the Philippines should in effect pay for Mrs Marcos' shoes! Jubilee 2000 seems to have caught the imagination of people everywhere - and certainly attracts those in our own country who feel it is a better symbol of a fresh start at the millennium than a Greenwich dome or a commemorative bus shelter in their village (assuming there is still a bus).

4.2.1 Staff responsibility for **work on international affairs** is split between the Secretaries for International Relations and Church and Society, who alternate at the principal ecumenical forum, the CCBI-sponsored Liaison Group. Puckish, we put a girdle round the earth in rather more than forty minutes, with an ever-changing pattern of primary concerns, too many to list here at all usefully.

4.2.2 The Middle East continues to cause acute concern. At the time of writing the world was breathing a sigh of relief at the deal negotiated by Kofi Annan and the Iraqi government. But no deal which ignores the broader issues of regional power structures, the prospects for democracy and human rights, American inconsistency over Israel and the West's coming to terms with Islam will be more than temporary: a welcome cease-fire certainly, but not peace.

4.2.3 The start of the UK Presidency of the European Union was marked by meetings between church representatives and government officials; this led to a meeting between church leaders and the Foreign Secretary at which he expressed an interest in repeating the meeting after the Presidency for 'mutual invigilation' (his phrase). This could mark a new pattern of contacts (though we take the remark with just a pinch of salt); we hope that the British Presidency improves after the first difficult month.

4.2.4 As in previous years the Secretary for International Relations organised a visit to the European Parliament and Council of Europe in Strasbourg for the leaders of the URC, Methodist and Baptist churches in conjunction with Gordon Adam MEP (a URC member) and the Strasbourg office of EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society). In the course of the year EECCS have produced useful discussion papers on enlargement of the European Union and Economic and Monetary Union. Both of these are available from the International Relations office and we would commend them to anyone wishing to explore the major issues facing Europe at this time. As reported by the Ecumenical Committee, our trusted partner EECCS has finally become the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches to the mutual advantage of both bodies. We are giving support through *Commitment for Life* to the North-South group of EECCS which is convening an important conference on the Lomé renegotiations involving developing countries in the autumn.

4.2.5 The concern expressed at last year's Assembly over the situations in **Kenya** and **Myanmar (Burma)** has been followed up ecumenically with our partners here, with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and with our partner churches in both countries. In February the Secretary for International Relations and Aubrey Curry visited Myanmar and learnt about the situation there at first hand.

4.3.1 The **work around HIV and AIDS**, though no longer a 'special category ministry' after 10 years, continues into 1998. Justine Wyatt was asked by the Committee to act as a consultant for perhaps 50 days a year. The Committee restated our appreciation to Justine for her ministry during the past 3 years.

4.3.2 It is important that a new reference group has been established, to be chaired by Welsh Moderator John Humphreys, with a range of people from different agencies with firsthand experience of HIV and AIDS. It is this group which will keep before the attention of the church the continuing agenda of caring and campaigning.

4.3.3 There remains the annual focus of World AIDS Day, December 1 (marked in churches on an adjacent Sunday) when the global dimension of the epidemic is remembered. The 1998 theme will focus on AIDS and young people and we hope there will be several services and events around the country to mark it.

4.4.1 We will not report at length this year on the continuing work done by **specialist ecumenical** bodies to which Church and Society sends representatives. This is in addition to the ecumenical bodies and groups which are attended by staff. Please enquire from our office or from the people mentioned if you want to know what they have been doing. *Churches Peace Forum (Malcolm Compston); Churches Human Rights Forum (Alan Hart); Free Churches Council Education Committee (Graham Hanscomb); Sponsoring Group for 'Unemployment and the Future of Work' (Ruth Clarke); Churches Commission for Racial Justice (Sandra Ackroyd); Christian Aid board (Sandra Dears)*. The Committee receives a report each year from these loyal and effective colleagues.

4.4.2 One item mentioned by the Secretary in his annual review of his work done apart from the agenda of the Committee was the reaction of the Campaign for **Freedom of Information** to the White Paper in January as 'going further than we (*the Campaign*) had thought any British government would be willing to go'. Pressure will be needed to ensure that these welcome proposals are not diluted in a Bill.

4.5.1 We have not much fresh to report on some 'old favourites' reported more fully in past years:

4.5.2 The **baby-milk** manufacturers are proving difficult to get round a table, even with the independent research group run by UNICEF (which published 'Cracking the Code' in 1996) and still less

with their outright opponents, Baby Milk Action. We have stated that if a protocol for inspection of alleged violations can be agreed (which says nothing about whether there are violations or not) that would be sufficient progress for various organisations including the United Reformed Church to lift any boycotts of the companies. But there is sadly no progress as yet. If we seek life for the vulnerable babies and infants we must continue to protest.

4.5.3 Some easing of restrictions and a shift in approach is discernible in the new government's policy on **refugees and asylum seekers**. Two families on whose behalf the URC had campaigned, the Ogunwobis and the Okolos, were allowed to stay which was a cause for rejoicing. But there are still 700+ would-be refugees detained in British prisons or detention centres (which are sometimes worse than prisons), plus as many as 50,000+ awaiting determination of their appeals. The policy of detention really must be ended; some abuse of the system cannot justify wholesale criminalisation of often desperate people.

4.5.4 There are still rumblings over the **National Lottery** and not merely over the unsavoury record of one of the Camelot consortium, G-Tech. We joined the Methodist-led protest over the introduction of an instant game ('Pronto!') to be run in public houses which is likely to impact on the most vulnerable gamblers and were pleased when restrictions were imposed by the government. The returns from the Lottery are still huge with a turnover of £4,723m in 1996/7 (£5,217m in 1995/6), of which the good causes together received £1,531m including unclaimed prizes (£1,453m in 1996) with £287m allocated to charities (£283m in 1996) - and the Treasury taking £567m (£626m in 1996). Perhaps the coming economic downturn will further dampen those figures next year.

4.5.5 The increase in gambling by children is another critical issue which needs firm regulation. But one underlying trend which we anticipated back in when the notion of a Lottery was first discussed is becoming ever more marked, namely that it is becoming an integrated sector of government spending, run by Ministers who are glad to make (and take credit for) savings in more traditional budgets by substituting Lottery funds. There is no joy in saying 'we told you so'; for some projects there is increasingly no alternative to Lottery funding. Lastly, everything to do with the Millennium Commission (for example, its church floodlighting scheme or the Greenwich Dome) is totally funded this way. This is far from life-enhancing, to put it mildly, but the Lottery is not going away.

Assembly

- a) **recognises with thanksgiving and repentance that the care and stewardship of God's creation is an essential part of Christian discipleship;**
- b) **challenges every local church to address its own responsibilities over the next two years, using the pack 'Roots and Branches';**
- c) **in particular, instructs Church and Society in conjunction with other committees, to develop a plan for energy audits of church premises;**
- d) **invites District Councils to consider these matters in their regular visits to churches.**

1 The need for Christians to treat the natural order with more care and reverence has been growing in recent decades. The subtle position of homo sapiens among the various species, at the same time superior to and yet part of nature, is bringing about a fresh appreciation of creation as God's gift and our responsibility. In ecumenical circles this position has been linked to the affirmation of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and the use of that formula by the World Council of Churches and others in a number of programmes.

2 JPIC has long been a **logical and theological framework** for the approach of Church and Society. It encourages us to emphasise concern for the created order, but never at the expense of human justice and world peace. Thus we have been developing a holistic approach which seeks to base our Christian environmental concerns in scripture and the Christian tradition while welcoming the discoveries and heeding the warnings of contemporary science.

3 The pack *Roots and Branches* will be introduced at Assembly and become available over the summer. This pack will be different from others currently available in being much more user-friendly, designed round the needs and experiences of different groups or interests within a local congregation. Thus there will be material for children and young people, for worship leaders, for fabric officers or committees, for house groups, for caterers, etc. - the 'branches' hopefully bearing fruit. Complementing these will be material exploring the 'roots', with some basic statistics, case-studies from churches, Bible studies, glossary of technical terms, passages from distinguished Christian writers past and present, resource lists, etc.

4 **The plan** is for a Church Meeting this autumn to commit itself to working out some policies to 'green the church' over the next two years and to report back to itself and to us in 2000 AD on how the ideas have caught on and are affecting various aspects of church life.

5 One particular environmental concern is **global warming** with its serious impact of rising sea levels and climate change. Global warming is a consequence of the release of certain gases into the atmosphere, the main contribution coming from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas). For what is often a modest capital outlay, significant savings can be made in church fuel bills, while reducing our contribution to global warming. The Church of Scotland has run a 'Better Heating' scheme for 20 years whereby local churches obtain professional advice for improvements to their plant. They claim that in an average church savings of 20% are possible and that their denomination could save £1/2m a year. This is undoubtedly an attractive option and the resolution invites Church and Society to see how a group might be established to explore it.

6 'Greening the church' is not some extraneous or 'new age' notion but a return to fundamental beliefs about God and the creation and our stewardship as human beings. We believe that using this pack will unify different parts and organisations of a church around a common theme (while being useful and relevant in smaller churches) and will do a lot for the perception of the relevance of the church in the community.

RESOLUTION 25 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

Assembly,

Noting that 1998 marks the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights,

- a) Gives thanks for the work and witness of the UN Human Rights Commission;**
- b) Calls upon Her Majesty's Government**
 - i) to ratify the first Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, allowing individuals access to the UN Committee on Human Rights;**
 - ii) to ratify the second Optional Protocol to the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, committing the UK to a complete and permanent ban on capital punishment;**
- c) Welcomes the move of Her Majesty's Government to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation; and**
- d) Invites the Church and Society Committee to study the proposals by the InterAction Council for a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities in the context of the debate on Human Rights and to make an appropriate submission to Her Majesty's Government.**

1 In December the 50th Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights will be marked all around the world. As a visionary statement, drawn up in the aftermath of the Second World War, it has served the world well, exposing abuses of human rights in every corner of the globe. Its strength is that it speaks up for people, against the abuse of power by governments and others who wield considerable power over the rest of humanity. Of itself, it has not surprisingly not prevented such abuses. However, it has had the effect of exposing them to public scrutiny, international comment and censure.

2.1 The resolution welcomes this witness and the work that goes alongside it. We then call upon Her Majesty's Government to ratify two protocols which go alongside the Declaration on Human Rights.

2.2 The first Optional Protocol would allow individuals to petition the UN Committee on Human Rights concerning the violation of rights contained in the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It should be noted that not all the rights in this Covenant are covered by the European Convention on Human Rights, which is to be incorporated in British Law under the Human Rights Bill.

2.3 The second Optional Protocol commits signatories to a complete and permanent ban on capital punishment. The important issue here is that it would commit the UK representatives at the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Commission to vote in favour of the international banning of the death penalty, rather than abstaining as they have done in the past.

3 We broadly welcome the move of Her Majesty's Government to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK legislation. The attempts by some churches to secure exemptions from some provisions of the Convention has drawn critical comment and produced intended reassurances from the Lord Chancellor. We cannot comment further as the legislation is still before Parliament at the time of writing.

4.1 The resolution finally draws attention to the work of InterAction Council, chaired by former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and including 24 former heads of state or government. Their proposed 'Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities' has been the subject of wide consultation, though not all are agreed on the need for such a Declaration to stand, as it were, alongside the Declaration of Human Rights.

4.2 In the preamble to this new Declaration they note: *the exclusive insistence on rights can result in conflict, division and endless dispute; and the neglect of human responsibilities can lead to lawlessness and chaos ... all people, to the best of their knowledge and ability, have a responsibility to foster better social order.* Then, in the first draft article, it is stated: *Every person, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, social status, political opinion, language, age, nationality, or religion, has a responsibility to treat all people in a humane way.* Fifty years on from the Universal Declaration on Human Rights it seems appropriate to be addressing the complementary matter of overall human responsibilities.

Joint working group on ageing and work with elderly people

Church and Society Committee and Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee

1 Introduction

1.1 In the Spring of 1997 the joint group commissioned a short term piece of research and development work in the area of Ageing and related topics from Nigel Appleton. This report to Assembly contains the skeleton of the 24 page report entitled *Respecting the gift of years* which can be obtained from Church and Society. This initiative arose from a long-standing concern that the Church should develop a strategic response to the issues of ageing, not least in preparation for the International Year of Older Persons 1999.

1.2 This report sought to provide:

- a) A briefing on the circumstances of the current generation of older people
- b) A discussion of the place of older people within the church
- c) A review of current developments from church and secular bodies
- d) A set of recommendations - these have been revised and form the basis of the supporting text of the resolution from the Joint Group.

2 The circumstances of older people in the United Kingdom

- a) The present century has seen a **steady increase in life expectancy** for both men and women in all developed countries. The percentage of the population living beyond eighty doubled from 2 % to 4 % between 1961 and 1991 and is estimated to rise to 6 % of the population by 2031.
- b) Retirement is often accompanied by a **reduction in income**
- c) Older people are disproportionately represented among those who do endure **unsatisfactory housing conditions**.
- d) **Health service expenditure** is increasingly dominated by responses to the needs of older people.
- e) Expenditure on **personal social services** is dominated by the costs of providing support to older people, including problems arising from disability
- f) **Access to transport** is a primary consideration for those planning for independence in old age.
- g) Many would identify the provision of an appropriate response to the needs of those older people who experience **confusion and mental frailty** as the greatest challenge. The

number of people with dementia will increase as the number of 'older elderly' increases.

- h) The equation of **women**, old age and relative poverty seems to be common to all the countries of the European Union. The majority of women spent a relatively limited number of years in paid occupation and that for many this will have been in relatively lowly paid work. This provides a multiple disadvantage.
- i) The age profile of most **black and ethnic minority communities** is younger than that of the majority population. However a substantial proportion of people within these populations are now moving into old age and as they do so find that they experience particular problems.

BUT

It is possible to paint too dark a picture. For the first time in our history the majority of our fellow citizens may look forward to completing a full life span into old age. For the majority there is the prospect of twenty and more years after they finish paid employment. Whilst some experience frailty, poverty, ill health, bad housing and limited access to transport this is not the experience of the majority for most of those years of their old age. For many there will be the opportunity to go on growing, learning and extending themselves.

3 The place of older people within the church

- a) The participation of people of all ages within its life has been the traditional aspiration of the Christian Church. Inclusiveness has been a particular emphasis of the United Reformed Church. Whilst some respect continues to be given to the experience of age many older people have felt redundant and marginalised in a congregation in which they may form a majority.
- b) The church adopts and reinforces the negative stereo-types of old age to be found in wider society. There is little emphasis on the celebration of a long life as a gift of God: a gift to the individual and to their community. In the worship of the church old age features most commonly in intercession for those who are 'old, frail and sick'. Little acknowledgement is sometimes given to the positive gifts enjoyed by many through much of their old age.

- c) In its worship, its life and its witness the Church should be challenging the prevailing negative images. To do so effectively it must begin with a re-examination of its theology. Our faith provides also the ability to set our negative feelings about ageing into context. It is important that as people living before God we give expression to our fears and anxieties about getting older. For older people the quest for meaning is as strong at the end of life as it is for younger people as their lives begin. The concerns are perhaps given greater urgency by the sense of finiteness many feel as they move through old age.

4 Actions taken by the churches and agencies

- a) In 1990 the Board for Social Responsibility of the General Synod of the **Church of England** published the Report of its Social Policy Committee on Ageing, chaired by Raymond Clarke. The Report brought together factual material, distinctively Christian perspectives on ageing and an account of many of the issues.
- b) A resolution to the 1997 Assembly of the **Baptist Union** drew attention to this matter.
- c) The Methodist Church, through **Methodist Homes**, has been engaged in work on spirituality in old age. The outputs from this work will be launched and developed through a series of events planned for 1998.
- d) **Roman Catholic agencies** are principally concerned with the issues of service by and to older people. Older people make up a high proportion of the 18,000 members who deliver care and support through the Society of St Vincent de Paul but also a high proportion of

those who receive such service. Inter-generational issues have also been a focus of concern within the Roman Catholic Church.

- e) Resources and experience from the United States of America are listed in the full report.
- f) The **Christian Council on Ageing** is a national ecumenical Voluntary Organisation founded in 1982. Its work is developed from the premise that retired and older people are a resource, in churches and in the community, and not simply recipients of care. The organisation sets itself these aims:
- ◆ To explore the Christian potential and vocation in later years, and to nurture the continuing development of personal faith and growth.
 - ◆ To affirm the contribution of local people to their local church and community and to encourage wider understanding across the generations.
 - ◆ To improve the pastoral care of, and opportunities for worship and fellowship for frail elderly people.
 - ◆ To improve pastoral support and fellowship for those who care for elderly people.
 - ◆ To co-operate with other agencies concerned with ageing, including those of other faiths.
 - ◆ To encourage an educated response to ageism in the churches.

In addition to its quarterly journal the CCOA has produced a variety of publications which deserve to be more widely known within the churches. The life of the United Reformed Church would be enriched by a more structured relationship with the Christian Council on Ageing.

Secular agencies

1 **Age Concern England** co-ordinates and supports the work of around 1,400 local Age Concern groups across the country. A monthly Information Circular is available by subscription to individuals and groups. This provides a comprehensive and accessible source of information which should be available to all those who share the concerns of older people. The subscription (currently £18 per annum) is modest and local churches should consider whether they should subscribe. Similar programmes are run by Age Concern in Wales and Scotland.

2 **Help the Aged**, has taken a number of initiatives to establish links with the churches and to promote a range of activities. Help the Aged have an

officer appointed to develop their work with the churches and have promoted a 'National Sunday for Elderly People' and distributed resource material for this and for other occasions of worship. The 'Church Friend' scheme, developed by Help the Aged, aims to have a representative in every congregation.

3 **Counsel and Care** is a national voluntary organisation providing advice and practical help to older people and their carers. Whilst its primary focus is upon people in residential care and nursing homes it maintains a broad concern for the problems which face older people.

4 The **Centre for Policy on Ageing** is a major resource for those concerned with the issues which affect older people. The Centre initiates and

Resolution 26

publishes research and has within its concerns issues of spirituality in old age. From an initial focus upon spiritual life in residential settings work is being developed to consider broader issues of spiritual life and affiliation in old age.

5 Initiated by Age Concern England the **Millennium Debate of the Age** is seeking to stimulate discussion about the radical changes facing a society undergoing a dramatic shift in its age profile. This is not only a debate about older people, their needs and aspirations and the impact of these upon younger people. Those leading the Debate rightly emphasise that the repercussions of an ageing society will be felt by all members of the community and will impact upon every area of economic, political and social life. Five study groups are already preparing 'Millennium Papers' to provide resources for the debate:

- ◆ Paying for Age: The costs of an ageing society.
- ◆ Ageing and the future of Health and Social Care.
- ◆ The future of the Built Environment as society ages.
- ◆ Work and Lifestyles.
- ◆ Attitudes and values in an ageing society.

The Debate will take place across the United Kingdom in different ways. Among the reasons for mounting the Debate its promoters identify the need to address 'a range of moral and ethical dilemmas related to the ageing of society, looking to the family, relationships, spirituality, life planning and end of life issues.' Clearly the churches ought to be exercising leadership in this area of the Debate.

RESOLUTION 26

Joint working group on ageing and work with elderly people

- a) **Assembly welcomes and endorses the development by this joint working group of a strategy, outlined below, which will:**
- i) **enable the Church to regard older people more appreciatively;**
 - ii) **enable older people themselves, whether members of the church or not, to regard themselves more positively;**
 - iii) **affirm the contributions made by older people.**
- b) **Assembly therefore instructs the two committees:**
- i) **to enable increased access to information on the circumstances and concerns of older people and, through ecumenical action and partnership with appropriate bodies, to encourage study, debate and action on the issues of old age and of an ageing society, with particular reference to the International Year of Older Persons designated for 1999;**
 - ii) **to seek ways in which positive perceptions of old age and older people may be reflected in the life and worship of the church.**
- c) **Assembly authorises the Equal Opportunities Committee to add appropriate references to discrimination on grounds of age (youth or old age) to its policy statements.**

Elements in the strategy:

1 Church and Society will consult with ecumenical partners and with the Christian Council on Ageing to establish a framework for ongoing study and action in relation to the place of older people within the church and within society.

2 Church and Society will consult with ecumenical partners with a view to engaging in - and encouraging the involvement of local churches in - the Millennium Debate of the Age, across the full range of issues which it is raising, as part of a

programme to build contact, mutual understanding and solidarity between the generations in a major contribution to the UN Year in 1999.

3 Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness will bring together a group to prepare material for worship which will reflect the concerns and celebrate the blessings of old age.

4 Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness will prepare guidelines for churches to encourage the active participation of older people in sharing their experiences and insights within the church.

5 The joint working group will consider how an awareness of old age and its concerns may be reflected upon theologically across the church, giving particular attention to issues connected with the end of life.

6 FURY Council will be invited to consider these issues and offer to the church ideas and proposals for action which will give expression to solidarity between the generations in the church and in communities.

7 The joint working group will promote increased access to ideas and relevant information:

- i) by commissioning a 'sign posting' publication to be distributed to local churches, to include a digest of key information, annotated bibliography and contact addresses;
- ii) by engaging in discussion with Help the Aged concerning its 'Church Friends' scheme and by commending to local churches a subscription to the Information Service of Age Concern England.
- iii) by promoting the fruits of the 'Age Awareness' project of Methodist Homes, especially the several publications due to be launched in September 1998.

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 Pat Stannard, Revd Peter Moth, Ms Kirsty Thorpe, Mr John East,
Mr Richard Lathaen, Revd Michael Forster, Revd Paul Brewerton and Revd Roger Hall

1 Publications Board

1.1 The Publications Board meets regularly to advise on all matters relating to publications of the General Assembly and its committees. The Board, which reports to the Communications and Editorial Committee oversees all matters relating to publishing.

1.2 In addition to the annual publication of the Year Book, the Diary and the Prayer Handbook, nine new titles were published in 1997. Two of these *Let's Discover the URC*, the pack for schools launched at General Assembly 1997 and *A Choice of Hymns*, a thematic index to *Rejoice and Sing*, are now reprinting. Of the others *Reign Dance*, *Setting Up Signs* and *Getting to Know You* have been particularly well received.

1.3 The titles planned for 1998 include *Under God's Good Hand - a history of the Reformed Tradition* by David Cornick, *Table Talk - looking at the Communion Table from the outside* by Donald Hilton, a new series of booklets on training for the Ministry of the United Reformed Church, and some updated versions and new titles in the *They've asked me to be* series. The long awaited *Companion to Rejoice and Sing* is to be published by Canterbury Press and should be available in time for the meeting of General Assembly.

1.4 As in previous years sales of the URC Diary and Year Book have been high. However, the sales of the Prayer Handbook seem to be declining and the editorial and planning group have been asked to address this.

1.5 The URC Catalogue for 1997/8 has been sent to all ministers including those of the Scottish Congregational Church and to local church secretaries. For the first time a trade catalogue has been produced jointly with the Methodist Publishing House and trade orders are mainly dealt with from their distribution centre in Peterborough.

2 Reform

2.1 The year has seen further minor improvements to the format of *Reform* and the reactions of readers continue to be overwhelmingly positive. After the balancing out of losses and gains, subscriptions at the time of renewals for the year 1998 were at almost precisely the same level as at the same period in 1997 despite a small rise in price. This continues - for another year at least - the stabilisation of circulation after the downward trend of the previous few years.

2.2 One of the highlights of the year was the successful pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine undertaken in November. The event was oversubscribed and those who shared in the experience have been unstinting in their appreciation.

2.3 Focus is being placed this year on promotions, with particular attention to ensuring that those coming into membership of the Church for the first time are encouraged to take up a subscription to *Reform* as an effective means of keeping themselves informed on the life and witness of the United Reformed Church. The Committee is intensely aware, however, that by far the most important influences on circulation are the degree of diligence exercised by ministers, elders and distributors at the local level. It remains difficult, otherwise, to account for the wide variations in levels of subscriptions between churches of similar size and ethos.

3 URC Bookshop and Distribution

3.1 The bookshop continues to provide material for Provincial Days, Synods and other special events. In 1997 the bookshop at the Assembly of the Scottish Congregational Church at St Andrews was provided by the United Reformed Church, and was very well received.

3.2 The discount scheme for Ministers and Students, now extended to Ministers of the Scottish Congregational Church, continues to be well used. Again the variety of titles requested continues to be of interest, and often presents the staff with challenges to trace titles from a minimum of information.

3.3 The number of titles stocked grows regularly as new sources of material are found. As the bookshop specialises in resources for worship and preaching these areas are constantly growing. However, the sections on pastoral care and theology have also expanded recently. The freewill offering sequi envelope scheme continues to be operated in conjunction with John Thomlinson and Sons of Glasgow. During 1997 several new items bearing a United Reformed Church logo were added to the range of church requisites available. These include pens and pencils, notepads and, as requested at the last Assembly, a Baptismal Register will be added to the catalogue in time for Assembly.

3.4 The bookshop and offices are due to be relocated within United Reformed Church House in May.

3.5 The target of turning all orders round in 48 hours or less is being met on most occasions.

3.6 The bookshop and distribution operations are run with a minimum of staff. The customers are asked to take this into account and co-operate with the 'cash with order' system which can be operated without extra personnel.

4 Design and In-house Printing

4.1 As new equipment is introduced so expectations and requirements for material continue to rise. Items printed in-house now regularly include colour work whilst larger items and books sent to outside printers are of a consistently high standard.

5 Press and P.R.

5.1 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.

5.2 The decisions taken by the 1997 Assembly with regard to the debate on human sexuality have raised the profile of the Church on this issue and the effects of that increased attention continue to be felt. Considerable effort has been devoted at times to defusing or correcting over-sensationalised reports. As always with such work it is the failures which are

noticed but they disguise a greater number of reports which were either considerably improved in accuracy or, in some cases, withdrawn when the inaccurate assumptions on which they were based were challenged.

5.3 Sadly the attention drawn to the Church in this one area has not altered the overall judgement of those who control the national media that the affairs and statements of a relatively small and clumsily-named organisation such as the United Reformed Church do not merit report to a wider audience.

6 Information Service

6.1 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 United Reformed Church is indebted to the volunteers who collate and pack the Information Service.

7 Video

7.1 The number of loans of videos has risen over the past year. A list of videos is available on request.

8 Copyright

8.1 The number of local congregations now participating in the URC/Christian Copyright Licensing Scheme has enabled a discount of 20% to be given. The CCL Scheme for an additional licence to cover the copying of music is scheduled to begin in April 1998. As yet, not all music publishers have consented to join the scheme, but all churches currently participating in the current URC/CCL scheme will be sent detailed information by CCL.

9 Christian Resources Exhibition

9.1 The United Reformed Church will again be at the Christian Resources Exhibitions both in Esher and in Birmingham. This year the theme will be based on *Textures of Tomorrow*. Whether the Church will continue to be present at future exhibitions is under discussion.

10 Media Consultation

10.1 A 48 hour consultation entitled 'Local Churches and the Media' was held at Swanwick, in February 1998. Those participating took part in workshops on Local Broadcasting (led by James Rand), Writing for the Media (led by Jean Sylvan-Evans), Media Awareness (led by Claire Laland of the

Resolution 27

Media Awareness Project) and Information Technology (led by David Lawrence). There were also open sessions led by Mike Sassi, the Deputy Editor of the Derby Evening Telegraph, Carolyn Oldershaw, a freelance reporter with BBC Radio Leicester and a United Reformed Church member, and Rob Ellis of the Churches Advertising Network. It is hoped to organise similar events in the future and the Secretary would be glad to receive names of any interested in participating.

11 Ecumenical Links

11.1 CACLB

The Revd Peter Moth now represents the United Reformed Church at meetings of the Churches Advisory Council for Local Broadcasting.

11.2 MAP

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

11.3 Church Publishers Network

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

RESOLUTION 27

Churches Advertising Network (CAN)

Assembly commends the work of the Churches Advertising Network to local congregations, and asks the Secretary to arrange for provision to be made in the Communications and Editorial Committee budget to make funds available for the future work of CAN.

1.1 The Churches Advertising Network (CAN) is an ecumenical project which, seeing as its target audience are those who do not go to church, aims to bring to their attention the 'rumour of God' in an increasingly hostile world through a series of topical and relevant radio advertisements, poster and leaflet campaigns.

1.2 CAN is a professional organisation using some of the best names in advertising and yet is economical in that most of the expertise, time and equipment used is donated. As yet there is little financial input from most denominations and the network operates within an extremely tight budget.

RESOLUTION 28

Sharing of information

Recognising on the one hand the increasingly diverse ways in which information can be disseminated by electronic means, and on the other the need to protect the privacy of individuals, Assembly authorises those responsible for the gathering of personal information to allow, under the guidance of the Communications and Editorial Committee, other Christian organisations access to information on

- (i) the location of local churches**
- (ii) the details of a contact person for each local congregation who will normally be the minister in pastoral charge but may be an officer who has agreed to their name being so used**

(iii) relevant contact information for Provincial and District Offices and furthermore instructs the Communications and Editorial Committee to discourage the commercial use of information contained within the Year Book of the United Reformed Church.

1.1 The Communications and Editorial office is constantly asked to provide labels or mailing lists to other organisations. The present policy is to provide a limited list of ministers to Christian Aid and to the Free Churches' Council for particular mailings.

1.2 The URC Year Book, published annually, gives personal details on all ministers of the United Reformed Church, names and details for ministers of other churches serving the denomination and names and full addresses of church secretaries.

1.3 It is apparent that despite the copyright notice printed in the book many commercial organisations purchase the Year Book and compile mailing lists from the information therein. It is also possible to buy a United Reformed Church mailing list through a commercial organisation specialising in the compilation of lists from a wide variety of sources. The information on such lists is often inaccurate. There has been concern expressed by ministers and church officers at the amount of unsolicited mail which is constantly received.

1.4 There has now been a request from a commercial publisher to publish the information contained within the Year Book on the Internet. The Committee are of the opinion that if such information

is to be published in this way it should be by the Church using its own site, where it can be regularly updated. It is hoped to publish on the United Reformed Church website, a list of those ministers in pastoral charge who have agreed to their names being included, in the near future.

1.5 Churches Information for Mission, an organisation set up under the aegis of CTE has plans to provide a central data base of all church information including details of ministers and officers. The United Reformed Church is a member of CIM and has a seat on the Board. The Committee welcomes the work already done by CIM in this area, especially in mapping projects as a tool for mission.

1.6 For CIM to develop further and to become a fully effective tool for mission, the Project has apparently to rely for some funding on the sale of mailing lists to commercial organisations. Although reassurances have been received that each denomination may determine how its own material is used, the Committee have expressed unease at such a Project being funded in this way and seek guidance on how much material should be made available and how privacy can be safeguarded.

Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

The purpose of the Discipleship, Stewardship & Witness Committee is:
to enable the local church to capture the 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 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

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell **Secretary:** Revd Bill Wright
Convener of Stewardship Sub-committee: Revd Julian Macro
Mrs Jean Antcliffe, Miss Tina Arthur, Mr Jim Wilkinson, Revds Bob Day,
David Tatem and Roger Whitehead.

1 Membership

1.1 The Committee has been strengthened this year by the addition of Tina Arthur, and by the presence of Julian Macro. Unfortunately Jean Forster had to resign part way through the year because of family responsibilities. At this Assembly we say farewell to Jim Wilkinson and Roger Whitehead who have both given freely of their time and enthusiasm. In particular the Committee wishes to place on record its indebtedness to Roger who was secretary until our autumn meeting. His tremendous knowledge of the ecumenical mission scene, and his sheer hard work will be sorely missed.

2 Staff

2.1 It was not possible to appoint a new staff secretary to succeed Muriel Garrow, but we were delighted to accept Bill Wright's offer to fill his existing Advocacy post and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness staff post at the same time. We hope to make a new appointment before Bill's term of service finishes in March 1999.

3 Meetings

3.1 The Committee has met three times since last Assembly, and has also organised a residential conference. Our main concerns have been to complete work undertaken on behalf of Mission Council on Local Leadership, and to organise and follow-up a conference on District Visits to local churches. The convener and secretary have also been involved in running the Millennium Task Group.

4 Fulfilling the Remit

4.1.1 In September a conference on **District Visits** was held at Willersley Castle in Derbyshire. Over half the district councils were represented, and it proved to be a useful time of reflection on the varied styles and purposes of such visits.

4.1.2 A leaflet summarising the discussion has been produced and may help districts which are wanting to re-think this aspect of their work. In particular it is interesting to see how some districts see a visit primarily as a means of exercising oversight and expressing pastoral care, whilst others have moved to a position of using such visits to encourage the development of mission strategy. We are grateful to East Midlands Province for helping to organise the conference, and for sharing their Provincial strategy.

4.1.3 Another help to the district in its exercise of care may be the work done on the subject of **Interim Moderators**. A substantial piece of research and advice has been drafted, and will be available on request; a summary leaflet has also been produced in the 'They've asked me to be...' series.

4.1.4 **Refreshing the Elders Meeting** comes from the pen of Peter McIntosh, and we warmly commend this new publication to all who value the work of the Elders Meeting.

4.2 The Committee's concern for people of all ages has focused this year on our joint project with the Church and Society Committee on **Ageing**. A digest of the research done is now available and further work has begun on worship materials, which a small group is undertaking on our behalf.

4.3 It is a matter of disappointment that thus far very few districts have used **the District Vision Workshop**. There are people in each Province prepared to visit Districts to assist in running such a workshop.

5 We support the work of the Windermere Centre by participation in the Windermere Advisory Group and the work of the Rural Consultant by participation in the Rural Strategy Group.

5.1 Report of the Windermere Centre

5.1.1 The work of the Windermere Centre continues to thrive. With the departure of Sue Wilkinson (formerly Kendall) as Administrator in 1997 after eleven years of valued service, the Centre staff and the Advisory Group undertook a thorough review of the organisation and staffing of the Centre. A part-time Treasurer/Book-keeper was appointed and the post of Locum Director was created within existing budget. The Revd Denise Megson was appointed part-time to this post in October 1997, and the benefit is already apparent in ensuring cover at the Centre and freeing the Director to concentrate more on pastoral ministry, wider contacts and policy matters.

5.1.2 Occupancy at the Centre in 1997 was satisfactory with a total of 4,880 bednights, and financial targets were met. A further two rooms were converted to provide en-suite facilities, and two other rooms have been modified to improve facilities for the physically-disadvantaged. Planned refurbishments have included new lighting and re-carpeting.

5.1.3 A key objective of the Centre remains the equipping of congregations and their members to minister effectively to and with our rapidly-changing communities and society. The programme reflects this in a spectrum from theological discovery and analysis to skill training where this cannot be appropriately provided at Provincial or District level. Opportunity is provided for congregations to devise and affirm local church priorities. An emphasis on reflection, healing and reconciliation provides for the vulnerable in our churches and society - people who are often the victims of change, either personally or institutionally. The Hannah Fund continues to make it possible for financial assistance to be provided for visitors, and we are grateful to the many individuals and organisations who continue to provide donations to the Fund. The Centre continues a role which provides a forum outside the formal structures of the Church for key contemporary issues to be examined in depth, and has been the setting for the formation of a number of informal networks.

5.1.4 The Directory and Advisory Group are working within the framework of a Development Plan for the second decade of the Centre's life, and seeking new opportunities and ways of further serving the Church in all its rich diversity. Yet we recognise that none of this would be possible were it not for the dedication of our staff and the loyalty of our visitors old and new to our 'Home in the Lakes'. To them, and the increasing number of Windermere Contact people in local congregations, we say a heartfelt 'thank you'.

5.2 Report of the Rural Consultant

5.2.1 **The Rural Consultant**, the Revd Michael Cruchley, continues to serve the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church through his work.

5.2.2 **The Countryside today**. People living in rural Britain are experiencing a rapid rate of change to their community. Government plans to devolve a good deal of responsibility to the Regional Development Agencies will mean that rural areas no longer have 'ring fenced' support through the Rural Development Commission. The RDC has been a great champion of rural life and has exerted great influence for good in pressuring successive governments to take rural issues seriously. In future it appears that support for rural life will need to be fought for in the debates in the regions, and there is need for churches, and especially their leaders, in the regions to share together vision for rural life and press for it to be taken seriously. We will need to develop closer links with others who share a 'kingdom agenda' even if they do not have a theological content to that concept.

5.2.3 **Housing**. Over the past year or so various statements have been made about the need for a large number of new houses to be built. One estimate suggests 4.4 million new residences, and many of these will probably be in rural areas, and the church(es) need to be alert to considerable population growth in rural areas.

5.2.4 **'Culture'**. In 1997, and in March of this year, large rallies and marches have been held in London about the changes being 'forced' on rural lifestyle. Whilst the organisers have portrayed the 'threat to our way of life', much of the debate has been about hunting. However, alongside this there have been many serious points about the apparent 'suburbanisation' of our countryside. It seems that many of those moving into rural areas want the countryside to look like a suburban park and not to see it as a place of work as well as a place of residence. The Arthur Rank Centre is arranging an International

Conference on the twin themes of Rural Culture and Rural Spirituality. Michael is co-ordinating this conference, and it is hoped that the report of the Conference will give indicators of action that the churches might follow as they address rural issues in the future.

5.2.5 Visits. Michael Cruchley continues to be available to visit churches, District Councils and Synods to share in consultations on the mission of the church in rural communities.

5.2.6 'Briefing' papers. In the last year, Michael has been involved in the production of a series of briefing papers about BSE and its impact on farmers and about the 'Beef crisis'. These have concentrated on the pastoral issue of care for those directly involved in the farming industry, but further work is being done on the scientific issues. Some guidance notes for those leading Harvest Festival services were also offered. They were made available in late August through District Councils, and it is intended that a sheet will be available again this year. It will look at prospects for the harvest and address some of the urgent issues about agriculture. It will be sent to District Secretaries at the end of August, but individuals may like to contact Michael direct to get a copy. (phone him at the Arthur Rank Centre - 01203 696969 ext. 393).

5.2.7 Statistics. Each year Michael reviews the statistics of the rural churches, as defined for him by District Secretaries several years ago. The 1998 Year Book statistics indicate that there is a decline in membership in our rural churches, but that it is at a lower rate than elsewhere. It appears to be a feature of small and rural churches that they have a level of continued commitment that is an example to the whole church.

6 Holiday Forum relates to Assembly through the Committee and the secretary will attend at least one planning meeting each year.

6.1 The theme for 1997 was 'Mind the Gap' - looking at gaps in our church and personal life from all angles. We were helped in our thinking by two Peters - the lively Peter McIntosh who so ably took the role of theme leader, and Peter Poulter who led the worship. Attendance was again up - 220 this year. The working sessions, so well organised by their leaders, were diverse, ranging from discussion to art, from Bible study to needlework. The input from the children's groups was appreciated by all. The week also included trips to Dovedale and a National Trust property, a visit from John Waller (and David Jenkins as a bonus!), Scottish dancing

(held inside due to the inclement weather) and a quiz evening. Warm fellowship and good food, work as well as play, were characteristics of the week.

6.1.2 With the committee structure and membership now evolving, we thank those whose vision and leadership ensured the continuance of this conference week where people can relax, share their problems and find renewed spiritual strength to enable them to return to their churches to carry on the work of spreading the good news.

6.1.3 This year, from 15th to 21st August 1998, the theme will be 'Taking the Strain'. Led by Janet Wootton, we will look at how the Bible helps with the pressures of daily life. Worship will be in the hands of Philip Nevard, with his wife, Lythan, taking care of the music.

6.1.4 Plans for 1999 are well in hand. We shall celebrate the 50th anniversary of Forum - both by what we do and in the form of an exhibition for which we welcome memorabilia from former Forum-goers. Our theme leader is Murdock McKenzie.

7 Ongoing Work

7.1 The Committee is grateful to the Revd John Hall who is acting as a consultant on Mission Projects. Over the next few months he will be updating information on mission projects and church 'plants' in the United Reformed Church.

7.2 The United Reformed Church is a denomination of small churches, and the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee are concerned about how support is offered to them. A consultation at Windermere did not prove to be the right way forward, and so the Committee is hoping to hold some 'pilot' consultations in conjunction with Provinces. The Revd Stuart Scott from Birmingham has just completed a sabbatical study on this subject and is sharing his insights with the committee. The Revd Michael Cruchley is co-ordinating this work for the committee and he would welcome comments and reports on work already done in different areas.

7.3 Discussions are taking place with the Ministries Committee and the Training Committee on the Theology of Ministry.

7.4 We hope to share in some further exploration of the concept of church membership, especially as it relates to faith development, young adults and the church, and the reluctance of people generally to make long-term commitments.

8 An end

8.1 The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women has now drawn to a close, and the life of SPIN, which was this denomination's response to the Decade, also ends at this Assembly. We wish to celebrate the achievements of SPIN in raising awareness, supporting positive change and encouraging the Church to face difficult and controversial issues.

8.1.1 Although much has been achieved it would be foolish to be complacent. The Committee will seek to ensure that the Church remains aware of those issues that threaten to diminish people - women or men, younger or older.

9 A beginning

9.1 1998 is the year of the launch of the '**Open Book**'. A series of Roadshows has informed people of the thinking behind this attempt to engage the Bible with contemporary culture, and culture with the Bible. Churches (and individuals) can register their interest and obtain a pack with ideas for different ways of exploring the major themes of Identity, Justice, Freedom, Forgiveness and Hope.

Stewardship Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Julian Macro **Secretary:** Revd Bill Wright
Miss Janet Turner, Revds David Netherwood and Stephen Thornton, Messrs Tom Hamilton,
Geoff Wood, Marshall Wood and Keith Webster.

1 Introduction

1.1 Though we have ceased to be a Task Group of Mission Council and become a sub-committee of Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness the focus of our work remains unchanged. We seek to enable local churches to capture a vision of what God is calling them to be and do and to help them release the resources to turn the vision into reality. The Vision Workshops, *TRIO* and *GEM* have been central to that task.

2 Vision Workshops

2.1 Although what actually takes place is a 'workshop' we have encouraged churches to find a more attractive name. 'Discovering God's Purpose' has been used by some while others have borrowed the title 'Dare to Dream' which CWM used to celebrate 200 years of the London Missionary Society. An increasing number of workshops has been led by Provincial Officers, but where this has not been possible the Secretary has led them. It has been gratifying to see the life of churches take on a greater sense of purpose and to see enthusiasm renewed.

3 *GEM (Giving Enables Mission)*

3.1 *GEM* is a full Stewardship programme which is designed to challenge members of the

congregation to release the resources of Time, Gifts and Money so that churches can begin to realise the vision captured in workshops. The programme costs £25 which includes copies of the necessary literature and the acetates for the presentation. The fact that the Assembly time table in 1997 did not allow time to make a *GEM* presentation lessened the initial impact the programme has had and consequently the uptake has been slow. However, as churches have begun to use the programme so news of its existence has begun to spread. *GEM* is intended for churches which have had a Vision Workshop, or carried out a similar exercise to capture a clear sense of purpose. Churches which only want to improve their financial situation should use *TRIO*.

4 *TRIO (The Responsibility Is Ours)*

4.1 *TRIO* continues to be in demand, with a number of churches using it for a second time after a gap of some years. We cannot over emphasise the need to challenge congregations on an annual basis after using *TRIO*. The *TRIO Follow Up* (price £2.50) is designed to make congregations aware that just as the cost of living increases year by year for families and individuals, so too does the cost of running the church.

5 Legacies - A Place In your Will

5.1 The leaflet, designed to encourage individuals to give serious consideration to the church when making a Will, has been well received and further copies are available from the Bookshop at Tavistock Place.

6 They've asked me to be Church Treasurer

1.1 We have re-written this pamphlet which is designed to help people who are considering becoming the Treasurer of their local church and among other things have taken account of the changes brought about by the Charities Act 1993.

RESOLUTION 29

Local Church Leadership

Assembly encourages synods and district councils in consultation with local churches to identify forms of local church leadership to explore ways in which these may be recognised, affirmed and developed using the Guidelines.

1.1 For several years the United Reformed Church has been thinking about how best to provide local leadership of churches. In some Provinces ideas floated in the 'Patterns of Ministry' report have been tried; others are keen to explore new forms of leadership but would like a sense that the Church is acting as a whole rather than piece-meal.

1.2 There are clearly many questions raised by the thought of 'local leaders':

- ◆ How would they differ from elders?
- ◆ How would they relate to ordained ministers?
- ◆ Doesn't 'local leadership' describe precisely what we expect of non-stipendiary ministry?
- ◆ Is this a 'back-door' into ministry for people who would otherwise not be accepted?
- ◆ Will this lead to a change in role for ordained ministers?
- ◆ Isn't the church secretary usually regarded as the lay leader in the local congregation?
- ◆ Would we be thinking about this at all if there were not a shortage of 'real' ministers?
- ◆ What are the implications for ecumenical situations?

1.3 We often quote the phrase in the Basis of Union which refers to 'the ministry of the whole people of God'. Perhaps we need to reflect on those words, and what they mean. Ministry is service, and we are all called to it, for every church member has a ministry to exercise. In the local setting we discover among the members of the church many different gifts, and the church is enriched as more and more people are enabled to use their gifts in a creative and satisfying way.

1.4 One gift, among many, is the gift of leadership: this may include the ability to be a focus of the church's unity, to represent and arbitrate, to

discern and draw out other people's abilities, to bring order and mutual respect. Down the centuries the church has recognised that though there may be many spiritual and pastoral leaders acting together (the eldership) nevertheless it is a human instinct to look for one person who will personify that oversight, and that person has usually been the local minister.

1.5 But what do we do when the local minister lives ten miles away and is looking after four churches? We do one of two things: either we expect that minister and the elders somehow to carry on regardless; or we begin to think about personal leadership in a more flexible way. We stop worrying about titles and status, and we think about the job that needs doing and the gifts that are available. We stop thinking that it's either ordained ministry or local leadership, and we start to practice teamwork. We stop hankering after a pattern of ministry which, if we are honest, has often disabled the majority of believers in their own spiritual growth, and we look for an appropriate model of leadership for today - true to our Biblical understanding, and true to our needs.

1.6 Suppose, then, we simply give ourselves permission to experiment, and see what happens

And suppose we agree some guidelines which will help us to experiment without hurting too many people in the process

And suppose we remember that the wider leadership offered by ministers of the word and sacraments will still be there, a key part of the whole process, and a vital calling to which we should ask the Lord to draw people....

2

**So
let's look at
local leadership.**

2.1 The task in general is to be a focus for the unity of a particular local church. The specific tasks of the local leader will, however, vary according to local circumstances, personal gifting, and other gifts present in the life of a congregation.

2.2 The team in any situation will include the elders, worship leaders, children's and youth workers, and others in leadership. There will be an ordained minister who relates to the team, offering support and oversight.

2.3 The ordained minister may relate to several congregations, but will be available to assist the prophetic and sacramental ministry which keeps the local church within the church universal.

2.4 The wider church through the District Council will help to identify local needs and appropriate leaders, and will manage a simple system of appointment and review, and a job description.

2.5 The job description will clarify what is being asked of this particular local leader at this time, and will set out realistic expectations and demands. It will list such practical details as the tasks to be undertaken, the support offered, expenses paid, and training to be done.

2.6 The training will be tailored to suit the individual and the local context. It will be organised by the Province, and will not take the local leader away from the sphere of ministry.

2.7 The ministry will be seen as belonging to the whole people of God, among whom some function in particular forms of leadership for a time, as part of the whole.

2.8 These are the key elements of our understanding of local leadership. Below are the guidelines which may help during the process of experimentation and development.

GUIDELINES

Affirming the United Reformed Church's commitment to the ministry of the whole people of God, Assembly determines that local church leadership will be exercised:

- 1 in conformity with the Basis of Union,
- 2 according to needs and gifts identified by Church Meeting and District Council,
- 3 by those who are members in good standing of their own churches, whose gifts have been recognised and who have been appointed by the local church and District Council,
- 4 for an agreed period of service, according to a clearly defined Agreement and Job Description, approved by all parties,
- 5 under the authority of the District Council which, in consultation with the Province, is ultimately responsible for all aspects of local leadership including training, support and review,
- 6 with a title chosen in relation to the work being undertaken,
- 7 in partnership with those exercising ordained ministry,
- 8 rooted in the local eldership, and in collaboration with others exercising lay ministries in the local church,
- 9 by those who have made a commitment to take part in in-service training,
- 10 by those who have been affirmed in a Service of Recognition conducted by the District Council.

RESOLUTION 30

Evangelism after the Decade

Assembly encourages

- a) **local churches to engage actively in evangelism and evangelisation, using those with appropriate gifts**
- b) **district councils to hold Vision Workshops**
- c) **the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee to explore ecumenically the possibility of establishing a College of Evangelists**
- d) **the idea of a mission enabler/development worker being used in every Province, to help local churches engage in God's mission.**

1.1 Churches in England are observing the 1990's as a Decade of Evangelism. There are two more years to go, but already there is an emerging consensus about some fundamental perceptions;

- ◆ the local church and its members are universally seen as the primary agent of faith-sharing,
- ◆ faith-sharing cannot be separated from other parts of Christ's mission (e.g. caring, nurturing believers),
- ◆ evangelism and particular evangelising projects can often bring together Christians of different denominations and theological traditions; this is true at national and local level,
- ◆ the tasks of evangelism and evangelisation are inextricably linked, the individual and the social cannot be separated.

2.1 The ways in which we use words can be confusing; for the purpose of clarity we offer the following definitions of how terms are used in this document:

As Christians we are called to

<i>service</i>	we seek to speak 'the silent language of love' alongside other people,
<i>witness</i>	Christians should be able to explain 'the hope that is within us' by telling their own personal faith stories,
<i>evangelism</i>	sharing the good news of Jesus in such a way that people are able to respond in faith and commitment,
<i>discipleship</i>	growing in understanding and practice of faith, usually through relating to other Christians,
<i>evangelisation</i>	discerning spiritual truths relevant to the contemporary world and in partnership with others engaging those forces which dehumanise and destroy,
<i>mission</i>	all of these are facets of God's mission: God who gave himself to the world in Jesus Christ seeks to reconcile all things to himself.

3.1 **The principle agent for mission is the local church and its members;**

gathered as a community for worship,
caring for one another,
serving in the world individually and as a fellowship,
actively challenging all that dehumanises and destroys.

3.2 **An evangelising church;**

listens to the Holy Spirit and the community in which it is set,
grows in understanding and practice of the faith,
shares the gospel story, which has the power to transform individuals and institutions,
provides an opportunity for response.

3.3 The Committee invites local churches to consider the implications of the above by:

3.3.1 developing personal and corporate prayer life which interacts with the community;

3.3.2 reflecting on the care and service of individual Christians and local churches and on

- ◆ how far such service should and does make Christ visible
- ◆ how far it provides opportunities for speaking about Jesus
- ◆ how far it helps Christians to discern the good news of Jesus Christ, and so leads us on to an informed critique of our lives, the church's priorities and community values;

3.3.3 contemplating what growth in Christ means in practical ways for the Christian fellowship;

3.3.4 finding ways in which Christians can learn to speak comfortably about their faith, learn to share together their experiences of Christian discipleship and can be provided with occasions for faith sharing;

3.3.5 examining how the worship of the church reflects the experience of the worshippers and the community and engages with issues of concern to them so that God's voice may be heard;

3.3.6 identifying those within the fellowship who have the gift of helping others to faith in Jesus, and encouraging them in this; and finding ways in which they can learn and develop their gift.

4.1 Many churches have found 'Alpha' courses have helped church members and enquirers to develop their understanding of the Christian faith, and their readiness for commitment. 'Emmaus' is a similar course with a greater emphasis on the church community.

4.1.1 There are other materials available including *Hitchhikers Guide to the Gospel*, *Developing Discipleship*, *Let's explore the United Reformed Church*, and particular parts of *Training for Learning and Service*. The Open Learning Centre provides a unit of study on Evangelism.

4.1.2 Southern Province and Wessex Province have both developed their own courses which could usefully be shared across the denomination.

5 The wider church

5.1 The task of the wider church is;

- ◆ to stimulate, encourage and enable the local church to evangelise,
- ◆ to share stories of what has been done,
- ◆ to encourage theological reflection about the gospel and ways of enacting and proclaiming it,
- ◆ to reflect on trends in society and their implications for evangelism,
- ◆ to support regional and nation-wide evangelistic initiatives, both denominational and ecumenical,
- ◆ to remind the churches that the United Reformed Church at every level is committed to work with other churches and Christian agencies wherever possible.

5.2 Provinces can help churches to think about evangelism into the next decade by;

- ◆ encouraging the use of good quality training materials,
- ◆ making an evangelism enabler or development worker available.

5.3 District Councils can help churches by;

- ◆ having a District vision workshop,

- ◆ encouraging churches to identify people with the gifts of evangelism and evangelisation, and providing training, support and opportunities,
- ◆ developing District visits as occasions for stimulating mission planning,
- ◆ providing opportunities to exchange experience of faith sharing,
- ◆ considering networking members in similar occupations/situations to talk together about living an authentic Christian life at work, leisure or in other particular circumstances.

5.4 The Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee can help by;

- ◆ evaluating mission projects and exploring ecumenically new forms of being church,
- ◆ considering ecumenically what 'growth' and 'success' mean for mission,
- ◆ thinking through what discipleship will mean in the next decade, and so how Christians can be helped to grow in Christ, and what the implications are for the local church,
- ◆ exploring whether membership is a useful concept in an age in which people do not join or belong,
- ◆ learning from the experience of those on the frontiers (e.g. CRCWs, industrial missionaries, Christians in the Media and Science),
- ◆ discerning through 'the Open Book' how the gospel can speak to areas of economics, politics and corporate ethics,
- ◆ talking to other denominations about a College of Evangelists which would authenticate and support those with a gift of evangelism.

6 Beyond 2000

6.1 **Evangelism is not a method: it is Believing, Belonging, Becoming.**

6.1.1 **Believing** in Christ so that He shapes every part of living; so the evangelist needs to be evangelised too,

6.1.2 **Belonging** to Christ's people in order to share, help, learn and grow; so the church needs to be evangelised too,

6.1.3 **Becoming** what Christ wants us and all humanity to be; so the structures of our society need to be evangelised too.

7 SHOULD THE URC HAVE AN OFFICE OF EVANGELIST?

7.1 The Committee has considered several requests and studied several papers suggesting that the United Reformed Church ought to recognise those with the gift of evangelism through some sort of Order or Commissioning of Ministry.

7.2 The Committee's understanding is that every local church should be seeking to identify those within its fellowship who have the gift of talking about Jesus. They need to be encouraged to use their gift in ways that evoke a response of faith. It will be appropriate to help them learn and reflect on their own faith; there are courses, books and programmes available to help them.

7.3 It may be that some Christians could suitably exercise their gift of talking about Jesus in a wider context. They should be offered training which would not take them away from the work they are doing, and they should be offered relevant on-the-job development of appropriate skills including biblical training and how to work collaboratively. A number of suitable courses already exist (such as the Open Learning Centre's evangelism unit) and individuals should be encouraged to use them.

7.4 The Committee has heard many pleas from local churches for help with outreach, and surveys in three provinces have shown conclusively that a person is preferred to a 'pack'. However, there has been no indication that churches would like there to be more evangelists available to conduct services and missions and engage with local people outside the church. The committee therefore does not consider it opportune to recommend the creation of an order of

evangelists as an additional category of ministry at this time. However, it will explore the idea of 'Apologists'. These would be elders or members who would receive some training in theology, contemporary issues, inter-personal communications skills, storytelling and parables; they would be available to districts for use in churches at meetings to talk about the Christian faith.

7.5 The Committee points out that it is possible for a serving minister or a lay person to be freed by the councils of the Church to use his/her gifts of evangelism in the wider church, and encourages Districts and Provinces to experiment in this way. This has the advantage of providing a framework of accountability; it uses existing schemes of training; and it does not typecast or marginalise those who are appointed.

7.6 The Church of England is in the process of establishing a 'College of Evangelists' to recognise and oversee those seeking to exercise their gift of evangelism nation-wide. The Committee, with equivalents in the Baptist Union and Methodist Church, is talking with the Church of England about whether this might become an ecumenical College, recognising those with a calling to evangelise beyond their own local church. This would go a considerable way to recognising evangelists within the United Reformed Church.

7.7 Although the Committee is not at present recommending the recognition of the ministry or office of the evangelist as a separate or distinct ministry, it values evangelists exercising their call within our own and other traditions; many local churches testify to how the Holy spirit has used such people to bring others to faith.

RESOLUTION 31**Baptismal Records****General Assembly**

- a) **charges all churches with keeping a Baptismal record and recommends using the United Reformed Church Baptismal record book**
- b) **requests district councils to discover what provision each local church makes for recording Baptisms and recommends that, during pastoral oversight visits, visitors ensure that the Baptismal records are kept up to date.**

1.1 The Committee's attention had been drawn to the failure of many local churches to keep adequate Baptismal records. Random enquiries suggest that many congregations might not keep proper records,

yet church secretaries and ministers are often asked to certify that a person has been baptised. The committee agreed that it is vital that local churches keep an accurate record of Baptisms

RESOLUTION 32**The Community of Women and Men in the Church**

General Assembly (1) thanks God for the ten-year witness of Sharing People in Network (SPIN) as the United Reformed Church's response to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women; (2) commits itself to ensuring that the issues that primarily diminish women are tackled effectively by the 'Community of Women and Men in the church'; (3) supports this new network in the United Reformed Church as the continuing response to these issues, and requests the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee to facilitate this process, working with the Women in Ministries Network and the Women's Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland to achieve these tasks, and will review its work in consultation with Mission Council.

1.1 As the life of SPIN comes to a close it is important that the United Reformed Church's commitment to this area of work is not lost. The Church also needs to take account of the very different way in which women's issues have been taken seriously through the women's Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland.

1.2 We therefore propose setting up a network which will continue to relate to the General Assembly through the Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee, and will also work with the Women in Ministries Network and the Women's Union of the Congregational Union of Scotland. Mission Council will be involved in reviewing the Network's work, and in recommending further developments in the light of changing circumstances.

1.3 The network will be called 'The Community of Women and Men in the Church', as this is the chosen title for this area of work within the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, and using the same description will keep us in step with our ecumenical partners.

2. A full report from the last SPIN AGM will be found in the Information Section of this book of reports.

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: Revd Dr Colin Thompson Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks

Staff Secretary: Revd John Waller

*Revd Jean Black, Revd Wendy Baskett, Revd Stephen Brown, Mr Anthony Cheer, Miss Fiona Gow,
Revd John Hall, Revd Fleur Houston, Revd William Mahood, Revd Dr Donald Norwood,
Revd Philip Nevard, Revd Michael Playdon and Revd Janet Tollington.*

1 The Committee held 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
Resources for worship
Ecumenical issues
Spirituality
Committee and the Church

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

2 Theology of ministry

2.1 The Committee has continued its work on the theology of ministry. Mission Council agreed to circulate the paper 'Theology of Ministry' as an agreed draft among Partner Churches and Provincial Synods for discussion and comment. The Committee welcomes responses and comments and will be working with the Ministries Committee, Training Committee and Ecumenical Committee, during a two year consultation period.

2.2 The eldership is an area of ministry that has been raised in response to the 'Theology of Ministry' paper. The Committee plans to explore eldership further and in particular ordination and

its justification in this context. It is at present gathering material from a number of sources, in order to prepare a paper on this aspect of ministry.

2.3 The Committee also recognises the importance of the relationship of the ministry of the whole people of God and of those ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament. It plans to explore further the Conciliar nature of Apostolicity within our church tradition.

3 Church Membership

3.1 One of the concerns raised at a joint meeting of representatives of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, the Discipleship and Witness Committee and the Youth and Children's Work Committee in 1996, was that of Church Membership. It was suggested that, among some local churches, there was a negative view of membership and even that young people had been discouraged from becoming Church members, for reason of finance.

3.2 In response to this concern, the Committee felt it to be right to address the areas of Church Membership and the doctrine of the Church. It recognised the ecumenical work being done in this area, but considered that a United Reformed perspective on this matter would be useful. At the

Committee's January meeting, Janet Tollington circulated a discussion paper on Church Membership, which considered both doctrinal and practical issues. In discussing this paper, the Committee raised many more issues, and is at present carrying on further work on models of church membership. A series of positive affirmations about church membership are also planned.

4 Statement of Faith

4.1 To enable proper use and discussion of the alternative version of the Statement of Faith adopted at last year's Assembly, the Committee has produced a commentary on the process which led to the Assembly decision, together with the commentary on the Statement itself.

4.2 The Committee is also working on a number of papers to help introduce the Basis of Union and Manual to Church Officers and members, in order to help people have a better understanding of the nature of the United Reformed Church.

5 Holy Living

5.1 It is hoped that the statement on 'Holy Living', noted at last year's Assembly, has been a useful basis for discussion. At its July meeting in 1997, the Committee recorded that the statement was not intended to be used in disciplinary procedures, a fact also later noted by Mission Council.

RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP

6 New Service Book

6.1 Given that stocks of the existing 1989 *Service Book* are likely to run out in the next few years, the Committee has begun preparations for a new service book. Its aim is to publish by 2002, giving time before production for the circulation of draft services for trial in local churches.

6.2 The Committee's starting point has been to outline the general principles underlining the Service Book and worship within the Reformed tradition. A discussion paper on such principles is to be produced in due course, in order to help the whole church reflect on its offering of worship to God, in response to God's gracious initiative.

6.3 Correspondence, in relation to the new service book, has been and continues to be welcomed. Hearing of the experience and needs of local churches and worship leaders is important as we prepare for worship in the new Millennium.

7 Prayer Handbook

7.1 *The Prayer Handbook* is a valued resource for personal prayer and in corporate worship. The 1998 book *Active Power* follows the Lectionary year, beginning with Advent Sunday 1997, and this is to be the pattern of future handbooks. It also contained a full list of Revised Common Lectionary readings in order to help the Church become more familiar with this ecumenically agreed Lectionary.

8 Rededication Sunday

8.1 Following the resolution agreed by last year's Assembly, asking local churches to observe the first Sunday in October (or other convenient date) each year as a rededication Sunday in the United Reformed Church, the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has been preparing material for use in the churches this autumn. The material will celebrate our common baptism in Christ, giving thanks for our diversity within the one body of Christ.

ECUMENICAL ISSUES

9 Theological Research Initiative

9.1 The first conference of the Theological Research Initiative was held in January 1998 at The Queen's College, Birmingham. It brought together church representatives and academics from a wide range of backgrounds. They considered how churches could make better use of theological research undertaken in universities and how academics can become more aware of the churches' needs. The United Reformed Church and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee were represented by Revd Dr Colin Gunton. The conference agreed to establish a permanent representative body to continue and facilitate the work of the Theological Research Initiative.

10 Theological Consultation with the Church of the Pfalz

10.1 The Theological Consultation with the Church of the Pfalz has been an established part of the Church's life for many years. It now involves the joint support of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and the Ecumenical Committee. This year's consultation (22 - 26 June 1998 at Klingenstein) has taken as its theme 'The Authority of the Bible'.

11 Ecumenical Conversations

11.1 The Committee continues to be represented at discussions nationally and internationally. Revd Dr Donald Norwood is its representative on discussions arising from the Leunberg Fellowship of Churches. Revd Fleur Houston is its representative on conversations between the British and Irish Anglican and French Lutheran and Reformed Churches, which plan to issue a report in October 1998.

11.2 The Committee has considered the World Council of Churches report *Confessing the One Faith* which encourages all the churches to explore again the Nicene Creed. In responding to the report it recognised both that 'we accept with thanksgiving the witness borne to the Catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds' and that we are more accustomed to singing our faith than reciting creeds. The report is widely available for discussion in local churches and ecumenically.

11.3 The Committee has provided comments for the Ecumenical Committee on a number of national discussions, in particular 'Commitment to Mission and Unity' and the Scottish Initiative for Union. It is represented on the Theology and Unity Group by Revd Dr Donald Norwood.

12 Representation of other Denominations on the Committee

12.1 The Methodist Faith and Order Committee has been represented on the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee by Mary Wetherall and her contribution has been very valuable. The mutual relationship between the two committees has been a fruitful one and there has been much to learn from the Methodist Church's preparation of its new service book, soon to be published. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is represented on the Methodist Faith and Order Committee by Revd Fleur Houston.

12.2 The Committee has invited the Church of England to also appoint a representative to the Committee. The Faith and Order Advisory Group has appointed Revd Canon Dr Joy Tetley to represent it. This is an important and valuable ecumenical development.

SPIRITUALITY

13 Silence and Retreats Group

13.1 The Silence and Retreats Group continues to be represented on the Committee by Michael Playdon and it is good to hear of its continued and developing work.

14 Churches Together in England Spirituality Co-ordinating Group

14.1 The Group formed in 1997 to support and monitor the Ecumenical Spirituality Project, whose director is Ruth Harvey. Fiona Gow continues to be the Committee's representative on the group.

COMMITTEE AND THE CHURCH

15 Correspondence

15.1 The Committee welcomes correspondence from churches and individual members in all areas of theology, prayer and worship.

16 Membership

16.1 This year the Committee says farewell to Fiona Gow, Tony Cheer and Wendy Baskett, together with Mary Wetherall, our Methodist representative. We thank them for their valuable and positive contributions.

RESOLUTION 33

Isaac Watts Anniversary

Assembly gives thanks to God for the contribution of Isaac Watts to the hymnody of the Church and encourages local churches to mark the 250th anniversary of his death and to make imaginative use of his hymns in worship and Bible study in the following year (25 November 1998 - 25 November 1999).

1.1 25 November 1998 is the 250th anniversary of the death of a man whose influence on hymnody in the English-speaking world has been profound. Isaac Watts (1674 - 1748) was born into a Dissenting family and had direct knowledge of the persecution of Dissenters after the Act of Uniformity of 1662, since his father spent two periods in prison for his beliefs, just before and just after Isaac was born.

1.2 Watts grew up in an age when hymns were almost entirely paraphrases of the Psalms, in accordance with the belief that 'man-made' words were inappropriate for use in divine worship. Watts found them dull and crude in expression and lacking in any proclamation of the Gospel. Persuaded that paraphrase alone was not sufficient, he began to write his own original hymns, beginning with his *Horae Lyricae* of 1705, 'christianizing' the Psalms of David. Nevertheless, his hymns rarely depart from Biblical language and imagery. Many of them are no longer singable, but at their best they are among the greatest ever written.

1.3 Watts' hymns are marked by their strength, simplicity and directness. He deliberately wrote in popular metres. His theology celebrates the creation and the great purposes of God in redemption, beginning with his Reformed belief that God's grace, not human effort, takes the initiative in salvation. His hymns also express a deep sense of divine providence, of the Creator who rules and guides his creation, yet touches the lives of individuals. The Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection are central themes, as his hymns encourage each believer to enter into and be changed by their mystery. His language is vivid and memorable. He had the gift of expressing profound theological truths with great economy and clarity, and with an abiding sense of wonder at the grace of God. These qualities are not always present in later hymn-writers.

1.4 Local churches are encouraged to mark in some way the 250th Anniversary of Watts' death and his influence on the Church's hymnody. The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee is producing materials to enable churches to rediscover some of the riches of Watts' hymns and to explore the Biblical references and imagery contained within them. Study notes are being produced, for use by worship leaders and Bible study group leaders. As well as giving some historical background to Watts, they will give examples of Watts' hymns, tracing their Biblical references.

1.5 The Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee announces a competition for the best new hymn text, which seeks to do for Christians at the end of the twentieth century what Isaac Watts attempted to do for his fellow Christians of the eighteenth century. Full details of the competition, together with resource material will be available in the autumn. The competition is open to all and it is hoped to publish the best entries in some form. There will be a prize awarded to the best entry from someone who has not had a hymn published previously and a separate prize for the best entry of children and young people under 16. The closing date for entries is 28 February 1999.

Ecumenical

The role of the Ecumenical Committee is to foster ecumenical development in the life of the United Reformed Church:

- 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 Bob Andrews

Secretaries: Revd Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations)

Revd Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations)

Members: Revd Dr Peter Arthur, Revd David Fox, Ms Bethan Galliers, Mrs Jackie Marsh, ,

Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd John Rees, Revd Elizabeth Welch,

Revd Barrie Scopes (Convener of the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee)

Representatives of other committees: Revd Peter Brain, Revd Jonathan Dean, Dr Iain Frew,

Revd Fleur Houston, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Revd Tony Ruffell, Revd David Tatem

Representatives of other churches: Canon David Goldie (Church of England),

Revd Keith Reed (the Methodist Church), Revd Gabrielle Ellis (Presbyterian Church of Ireland)

1.1 The Ecumenical Committee works with a broad understanding of partnership in mission. The partners range from the other United Reformed Church committees represented on the Ecumenical Committee to our partner churches in the Council for World Mission, in the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland and other such bodies. The partners also range from the networks of United Reformed Church World Church representatives and Ecumenical Officers to the other churches in our three nations with whom we are in close conversation about what hinders and what enhances more effective partnership.

1.2 Unity is basic to this committee's understanding of partnership in mission - that unity in diversity to be found at the first Pentecost. The Church and the world are crying out for that unity in Christ which can hold different cultures and confessions together in love and trust and respect. This committee's work is a small contribution on behalf of the United Reformed Church to that unity in reconciled diversity

1.3 One of the challenges facing this committee is the constantly changing pattern of these many kinds of partnerships in mission. The committee's work is to respond to the changes, sometimes initiate the changes, and always to watch out for the implications and the opportunities.

2 Partnerships within the three nations - but not forgetting Ireland

2.1 **The Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland** is undergoing its first major review. The United Reformed Church response supported the devolution of many areas of shared work, such as youth work, home mission and some social responsibility work, to the ecumenical instruments in the three nations. However, as a church in three nations with strong links with Northern Ireland, it also bore witness to the value of the four-nation partnership with its diversity of inter-church dynamics. Raymond Clarke, a United Reformed Church elder, was the reviewer and is to be congratulated for his careful listening, shrewd analysis, and sheer hard work.

2.2 **Churches Together in England**, at their 1997 Forum, committed themselves to a whole range of ways of *Moving on as One* (the title of the video, available from CTE, at £8.50 plus £1.50 p&p). These included;

- ◆ recognise and affirm together, in word and deed, the faith we share,
- ◆ campaign for the remission of debt of the poorest countries,
- ◆ work together on youth work, theological education, strategic planning of mission and deployment of ministry,
- ◆ pray for the other churches as part of the regular Sunday intercessions,
- ◆ develop relationships with the New Churches,
- ◆ discuss the question of establishment ecumenically

In April, at their bi-annual consultation, the United Reformed Church ecumenical officers discussed with Revd Bill Snelson, the new General Secretary of Churches Together in England, how the United Reformed Church could play its full part in this *moving on as one*. In January, Churches Together in England published an excellent handbook for local churches working together, entitled *Together Locally* (£4.95 plus p&p from our bookshop). Revised Constitutional Guidelines for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) have also been produced.

2.3 **Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)**, as a result of review, is appointing a Development Worker for Local Ecumenism.

2.4 The United Reformed Church as a member of **ENFYYS (the Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales)** is involved in discussions to create an ecumenical bishop in East Cardiff. Under the ENFYYS umbrella, the United Reformed Church is an observer in the Church of Wales - Methodist talks.

2.5 The United Reformed Church also continues to support the work of the **Free Church Council of Wales** and especially its setting up of English Language, Welsh language and bilingual Community ministries. It is now an active observer, both in plenary sessions and in committees, at the discussions to set up one United Free Church.

2.6 **The Scottish Congregational Church / United Reformed Church Liaison Committee** has encouraged the two churches to get to know each other better by attending each other's various councils, sharing resources, meetings of staff and some pulpit exchange. Members of the Mid-Scotland District visited Scottish Congregational Church Area Councils to talk about the United Reformed Church (the proposals for union are in the report from Mission Council).

2.7 **The Scottish Churches Initiative for Union (SCIFU)** has produced its interim report (see Appendix 3) which includes a common statement of faith, an account of the various ministries in a united church, and the structures proposed. Church meeting, the eldership, episcopacy and the Methodist circuit have all been honoured in this report. The Ecumenical Committee in consultation with the Mid-Scotland District will respond to the report.

2.8 **Action for Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS)** has received the Congregational Federation into membership.

2.9 **The Free Churches' Council** is the new name (with a new logo) of the old Free Church Federal Council. The Ecumenical Committee is delighted to report that the United Reformed Church General Secretary, Revd A G Burnham has been elected Moderator of the Free Churches' Council and will take office in March 1999. This means that he will also then become one of the presidents of Churches Together in England.

2.10 **The United Reformed Church - Methodist Church partnership** continues to grow. Because of the developing nature of all our ecumenical relationships over the last few years, the committee recommends that the annual meeting of staff from the two churches be discontinued (see Resolution 34). At the same time, in consultation with the Methodist Committee for Local Ecumenical Development, it has redefined the remit and greatly strengthened the composition of **the Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee**. The Liaison Committee's work is mostly in response to demand.

It has produced;

- ◆ a *Getting to Know You* pack (£1.25 including p&p) for Methodist and United Reformed Church local churches. It is hoped to add a Baptist section to the next edition.
- ◆ *Making it Work*, an update of the 1990 edition of *Patterns of Sharing*. This offers guidance to Methodist - United Reformed Church LEPs.
- ◆ *Quickstep*, the annual broadsheet for such churches, was circulated in the Autumn.

Two provinces have held induction courses for ministers in such LEPs. The doctrine committees of the two churches have set up a working group on ecclesiology. The Liaison Committee continues to try to formulate helpful financial advice.

2.11 United Reformed Church - Church of England relations were deepened by two years of informal conversations which reported in Autumn 1997. It was decided not to pursue these conversations until the future of Methodist - Church of England talks and our part in them was known.

2.12 The Church of England - Methodist partnership.

2.12.1 At its November General Synod the Church of England overwhelmingly supported the proposal contained in the report *Commitment to Mission and Unity* that it enter into formal conversations with the Methodist Church. The view of the Methodist Church will not be known until Conference meets in June 1998. The report sees this as a partnership in mission within the wider partnership of Churches Together in England and alongside the many other partnerships, some of which are particularly close. Those close relationships with the United Reformed Church, the Moravian Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Union are recognised in the proposals by inviting each to send an active observer to the conversations. The United Reformed Church's special position is also recognised in an invitation to tri-lateral informal talks on the two issues we raised - the shared ministry of the elders and the apostolicity of the whole Church.

2.12.2 The Ecumenical Committee was disappointed that the request made by last year's General Assembly that the United Reformed Church be a full participant in any formal talks was not granted. It agreed, however, that the United Reformed Church would play as full a part as it could if the Methodist Conference supported the above proposals.

2.13 United Reformed Church - Presbyterian Church of Ireland partnership is expressed in this committee through the attendance of a representative once a year. The committee would like to pay tribute to the representatives who have attended over the years and to welcome Revd Gabrielle Ellis who is currently the representative. She has already brought us fresh insights into her context and contributed to our discussions.

3 Guidelines, advice and information

3.1 Besides the regular leaflets *News from the Ecumenical Committee*, and *Ecumenical Filings*, which are sent to the appropriate District and Synod office holders, the Ecumenical Committee produced;

- ◆ *Reformed expectations* - guidelines on what Reformed elements the United Reformed Church would expect to find in any LEP (congregational partnership) in which it was involved.
- ◆ *Inductions* - guidelines for when a minister not from the United Reformed Church is being inducted into an LEP (congregational partnership) in which it is involved.
- ◆ *When United Reformed people move to an English village where there is no United Reformed Church* - a paper of advice and guidance.
- ◆ *When the United Reformed Church is the only church in an English village* - this includes a Declaration of Ecumenical Welcome.

All these are available, free, from the Ecumenical Committee display or from the office.

4 Partnerships across the world

4.1 Council for World Mission

4.1.1 In June 1997 the Council for World Mission held its biennial Council meeting in Botswana under the theme 'Community of Blessing'. There we were challenged by our theological resource persons to see that our actions matched our words. As Mercy Odyne put it 'How does your God walk match your God talk?' - referring to Micah 6:8. This challenge takes on practical effect for the members of the Council for World Mission as we prepare to share with each other our mission strategies at the next Council meeting in Samoa in 1999 and submit ourselves to much greater mutual scrutiny.

4.1.2 In January we received a letter from Preman Niles, the Council for World Mission General Secretary (see Appendix 4) acknowledging that the United Reformed Church contributed out of all proportion to the other members to the Council for World Mission budget and informing us that the Council for World Mission Executive Committee;

- ◆ expressed their appreciation 'for all that the United Reformed Church has done over these many years to keep alive the vision and partnership of the Council for World Mission',
- ◆ recognised that the time was right for the United Reformed Church to reduce its financial contribution to the Council for World Mission,
- ◆ reiterated the partnership principles of the Council for World Mission and 'asks the United Reformed Church not to be timid in asking for support from the common pool of the Council for World Mission's financial and personnel resources for its work of ministry and mission at home and abroad.'

This represents a significant opportunity for us to equip ourselves for the work of God's mission in this age.

4.2 **World Alliance of Reformed Churches**

4.2.1 In August 1997 the 23rd General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches was held in Debrecen, Hungary. Over nine hundred Reformed Christians from around the world gathered for the event, representing the 211 member churches in 104 countries. Together they explored the theme, 'Break the Chains of Injustice' (Isaiah 58:6), reflected on the last seven years work of the Alliance, and prepared the groundwork for the next seven years. In the elections the United Reformed Church was honoured when the Revd Elizabeth Nash was elected as Moderator of the Department of Co-operation and Witness, one of the honorary officers of the Alliance who will oversee the development and execution of its programmes.

4.3 **World Council of Churches**

4.3.1 In preparation for the World Council of Churches Assembly, to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe in December 1998, the committee responded to a draft of *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*, a seminal paper which will set the future direction of the World Council of Churches.

4.3.2 In September the World Council of Churches marks its 50th Anniversary and local churches around the world are being encouraged to celebrate the event with a service of ecumenical recommitment on Sunday 20th September. Material for this has been circulated through the United Reformed Church Provincial and District World Church network. At the same time congregations are requested to take up a collection for the World Council of Churches Jubilee Fund which will be used for 'the important tasks of reconciliation, healing and community-building'. The committee encourages all United Reformed Church congregations to support both these initiatives, wherever possible ecumenically.

4.4 **World Convention of the Churches of Christ/Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council**

4.4.1 Since union with the Churches of Christ it has been the practice to leave the maintenance of our relations with the wider Churches of Christ/Disciples family to those former members of the Churches of Christ. However, it is the whole of the United Reformed Church that belongs to this wider family which, quite naturally, includes other united churches. To that end the decision was taken in 1996 that, along with the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ, we would host the four-yearly World Convention of the Churches of Christ here, in Brighton, in 2004.

4.4.2 In August 2000 the World Convention will be held in Brisbane, Australia. Unlike other international church gatherings this event, which attracts upwards of 4,000 people, is aimed at congregational level participation - a unique opportunity for any church member to experience the thrill of a world church event at first hand. Preparations are in hand to organise a group to attend from the United Reformed Church. Perhaps you could sponsor someone from your church or district to attend?

4.4.3 In line with this new approach the committee has also agreed that the United Reformed Church should make a modest annual financial contribution to the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council as an expression of our support for their work in bilateral dialogues with the world's main Christian confessions.

4.5 **Second European Ecumenical Assembly**

4.5.1 Held just before last year's General Assembly, this event in Graz, Austria, brought together over ten thousand Christians of all

traditions (Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox) around the theme 'Reconciliation: Gift of God and Source of New Life'. It was a bold, even prophetic initiative, for Europe's peoples and churches are far from reconciled with each other. However, our mission is to proclaim a gospel of hope and throughout the event stories were told of people working for healing and reconciliation in their communities. British participants in the event took part in a follow-up meeting in Coventry in September.

4.6 Conference of European Churches

4.6.1 Straight after the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, the Conference of European Churches held its own Assembly in Graz and began to apply the lessons and insights learnt to its own work for the next six years. The event was somewhat marred by tensions between large state churches and smaller minority churches reminding us that ecumenical work is more than just addressing theological differences, or discovering the will to engage in God's mission together, but also about taking on issues of power and privilege. In September, the Revd Dr Keith Clements (a British Baptist) took over as the General Secretary of the Conference of European Churches and later in the same month the **European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society** voted at its Assembly to merge with the Conference of European Churches Church and Society Commission.

4.7 Leuenberg Church Fellowship

4.7.1 1998 marks the 25th anniversary of the Leuenberg Agreement which brings together 98 Protestant churches in Europe. Through the Agreement Lutheran, Reformed, United and Hussite churches grant one another 'pulpit-and-altar fellowship' and are committed to common witness and service in the world. The United Reformed Church is one of the founding churches and participates fully in the life and work of the Fellowship. To mark the anniversary the Leuenberg Church Fellowship organised a symposium in Strasbourg in March on the theme 'Protestantism as a Force Characterising Life and Society in Europe.' Increasingly the Leuenberg Church Fellowship is seeking to be the voice of Protestants in Europe.

5 Promoting our European and World church involvement in the local church

5.1 In March the annual consultation of Provincial World Church Secretaries and European Link Co-ordinators took place in Windermere. Lessons learnt from the development of the European Link Co-ordinators network are now being applied to our network of provincial and district World Church contacts. Through these networks are circulated information on our European and World church involvement and in particular *URC Eurolinks* and *URC Worldlinks* which are designed to be photocopied for wider circulation throughout the church. After major international church gatherings we produce a one-page report which is similarly circulated and we are actively promoting *Inside Out*, the Council for World Mission's successor to *News Share*. The office maintains a speakers list of all the people who represent the United Reformed Church at international meetings or otherwise have shared in the life of the church outside this country.

6 Belonging to the World Church

6.1 From an initial discussion on how we might improve the promotion and advocacy of our involvement with the world church, and picking up concerns and ideas from other committees of the church, the 'Belonging to the World Church' proposals (see Resolution 35) began to take shape. They are the product of much work in the committee and consultation with others, including the Council for World Mission. The committee is pleased to offer them to the church for consideration and action.

7 St Andrew's Hall

7.1 Founded as a college to train missionaries, St Andrew's Hall has increasingly been used by the United Reformed Church as a resource for offering scholarships to our overseas partners to send people here to learn English, or undertake a short course in either mission studies, Christian education or church management. The college is jointly sponsored by the United Reformed Church, the Council for World Mission and the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1997 the Council for World Mission announced its intention to end its block grant to the college at the end of the 1998/99 academic year and to move the Training in Mission Programme which it runs at the college each autumn to another venue outside of Europe. The Baptist Missionary Society regularly fails to fill all

its places at the college and is reviewing its long-term involvement. Currently it is only committed to funding St Andrew's Hall up until August 2000.

7.2 In April 1998 a new principal, the Revd Dr Chris Wigglesworth (from the Church of Scotland), and a new Director for Educational Programme Development, the Revd Pat Nimmo (United Reformed Church) take up appointments with a brief to determine whether there is a future for the college or not. Mindful of the situation both appointments are time limited to the end of the 1998/99 academic year.

7.3 In light of these circumstances, whilst filling all our places through our scholarship programme, it was felt that the United Reformed Church should also examine its involvement. To that end, in conjunction with the Training Committee, a small group has been asked to review our needs in respect of our use of St Andrew's Hall

and to report back by September so that decisions might be taken about our continuing involvement with the college.

7.4 The committee, however, is keen to maintain the scholarship programme. Recognising that this is what our block grant to St Andrew's Hall primarily funds it has been agreed to end this grant in 1999 and allocate an equivalent sum for the funding of scholarship places.

8 Welcome and Farewell

8.1 The committee was pleased to welcome the Revd Bob Andrews as their new Convener, recognising the enormity of the task given the breadth of the committee's agenda. At this Assembly we say farewell to Revds David Fox and Elizabeth Welch, both of whose periods of service come to an end. We will miss their thoughtful and incisive contributions.

RESOLUTION 34

Methodist / United Reformed Church Relationships

The General Assembly agrees to release the General Secretary from the direction of the 1992 General Assembly to arrange an annual meeting between Methodist and United Reformed Church central staff and the President and Vice-President of Conference and the Moderator of General Assembly.

1 The Next Steps

1.1 In 1992 the Methodist Conference and the United Reformed Church Assembly agreed on a number of steps to take as the relationship between the two churches developed. (See Conference Agenda p.633ff and General Assembly Reports p.87ff).

These steps were:

- a) to encourage the birth of more local partnerships and Joint Areas and to facilitate their life and witness;
- b) to monitor and assist the process through the Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee;
- c) to urge District Synods and Provincial Synods to consider a wide range of models of co-operation;
- d) to direct the Secretary of Conference and the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church to arrange a meeting at least once a year, which would include President, Vice President, Secretary of Conference and Divisional General Secretaries; Moderator, General Secretary and Departmental

Secretaries. The purpose of these meetings was to spend time in prayer, to share information, and to consider things in which further joint work at national level would be desirable and should be undertaken remembering the Lund dictum that we should not undertake separately what could be done together.

2 During the last five years, there have been many developments in the relationship which now make it appropriate to review these steps. Among these developments have been:

- ◆ a variety of forms of co-operation through CCBI, ACTS, CYTUN and CTE;
- ◆ in Scotland involvement in multi-lateral talks (SCIFU);
- ◆ in Wales, participation in ENFYs (The Commission of Covenanted Churches) and in The Working Group for one United Free Church;
- ◆ in England, the conversations of both the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church with the Church of England.

Resolution 35

The ecumenical instruments have developed a great deal of inter-departmental co-operation and staff from both churches regularly meet together, in common interest groups, with their colleagues from the churches.

3 With this background, the appropriate committees of both churches have reviewed the work of the Liaison committee. It is proposed that it be strengthened to take responsibility for encouraging greater co-operation at all levels between the churches, in particular those mentioned above in a) and c) and any matters to be carried forward from d) (see below paragraph 4).

4 The meeting of officers of the two churches in the formal way described in d) is no longer necessary. Both churches have undergone reorganisation ending the offices of Methodist

Divisional General Secretaries and United Reformed Departmental Secretaries. The Secretary of Conference and the General Secretary meet frequently at a variety of ecumenical meetings and, whenever necessary, privately, consult over matters affecting the two churches. The Ecumenical Secretaries also meet frequently and are themselves the officers of the Liaison Group. The meeting which has taken place every year has become a formality, covering ground already well known to those who take part. Conference and General Assembly are therefore invited to release the Secretary of Conference and the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church from the direction to arrange this meeting, in the assurance that its purpose is now fulfilled in other ways and that the relationships between the two churches will not be impaired in any way by its discontinuance.

RESOLUTION 35

Belonging to the World Church

This Assembly receives the *Belonging to the World Church* programme proposals and encourages the Ecumenical Committee to implement them.

INTRODUCTION

1 The United Reformed Church is part of the world church in many ways. Through our membership of the Council for World Mission (CWM), the World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the World Convention of the Churches of Christ (WCCC) and the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council we both give to and receive from the global Christian community. However, this rarely impacts local congregations. This is especially true since we ceased having missionaries on furlough undertaking speaking tours. That those days have passed reflects our contemporary understanding of world mission. Together with other churches around the world we are partners in God's global mission. To this end we send and receive personnel, share together our financial resources and learn from one another fresh insights into God's missionary calling. However, we have still to grasp fully the new opportunities this presents us and exploit the potential that exists for enriching local church life and witness through our belonging to the world church.

2 The Need

2.1 For centuries Christians from this country took the gospel to foreign lands. Today the striking missionary challenge is to present the gospel confidently and meaningfully here. Many of our overseas partners are steeped in the tradition of being 'missionary' churches. Alive and vital they display a self-confidence that is sadly lacking in much of the church in this country (witness the comments of those who have served with us from our overseas partners outside of Europe). We should be learning from them that we might rediscover our missionary calling and, interpreting what we find, seek fresh approaches to God's mission here. We need to be challenged by our Christian sisters and brothers from other cultures on attitudes that we take from society which are not gospel or Kingdom values and which hinder our mission. At very least, we should allow their enthusiasm, commitment, courage and vision to inspire us and energise our sense of purpose.

2.2 Alongside this is another contemporary challenge - globalisation. The church being both global and local is uniquely placed to speak to this phenomenon. The increased control of wealth and power across the world by a few individuals and large corporations needs challenging, most especially where the needs of people are ignored and the environment is mercilessly exploited. Working with our church partners, sharing stories and experiences, we can make connections and begin to try and understand the forces that are at work behind the term 'globalisation'. As the Christian community, we too can be global players, but we need to learn from one another and to work much more closely together. Our world church partnerships make this possible.

2.3 For both these reasons we need to raise our awareness of the world church so that we might;

- ◆ stretch the imagination and vision of people in the United Reformed Church by exposing them to churches whose life, witness and circumstances whilst markedly different from ours, offer much to be learned about being the church engaged in God's mission today,
- ◆ take seriously the global challenges facing us and find ways of responding together as Christians called to care for God's world.

3 The Vision

3.1 God's purposes are global. They encompass the world, seeking to bring healing to the nations, reconciliation and peace with justice. They speak to our sin and failure, offering love and forgiveness; liberation from the past and new opportunities for tomorrow. They offer a vision of wholeness, of shalom - people at one with God, with each other and with the creation. They call us into partnership, to be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

3.2 Each generation has to make these purposes their own. To see in the signs of the times where God's mission lies for them. To interpret afresh Jesus' understanding of the kingdom and in their own words and actions to witness to these things that others might believe and share in the new life they offer.

3.3 The fruits of previous generations' missionary activity provide the foundations for our response to today's challenges. Partnerships transcending the world enable us to think and act globally; to make connections; to link local and international experience; to learn from and share with one another; to challenge others and to be renewed ourselves.

3.4 We live in a global culture. Our cities are international centres with communities drawn from many ethnic groups, cultures and faiths. Our rural communities now compete with rural communities across the world for markets which not so long ago could have been taken as granted as theirs. Around the world we are partners in God's mission with churches whose own life reflects the individual strands of the multifaceted society in which we minister. Together we face the common challenge of a global economy and global news and entertainment media. *Working together and learning from one another we can gain the perspective and form the networks that help us understand God's purposes in this age and enable us to proclaim and live a gospel that speaks to our time.*

3.5 What follows are programme proposals aimed at building into the life and witness of the United Reformed Church a new awareness of belonging to the world church that we might better fulfil our calling to be witnesses to the ends of the earth, partners in God's mission, responding to the challenges of today.

PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

4.1 In these proposals there is a presupposition that these developments should be organised on a reciprocal basis so that our partners might also draw more fully on our experiences and understand better the challenges facing churches in the post-industrial world.

4.2 The proposals are ambitious. Equally, the challenges are great. To that end these proposals are aimed at raising our awareness, vision and confidence that we might be emboldened to respond with the same zeal that sent our forebears across the world to proclaim the 'glorious gospel of the blessed God.'

5 Overseas Training Opportunities for Ordinands and Church Related Community Workers

5.1 Ordained ministers and Church Related Community Workers have a central role in shaping the life and witness of the United Reformed Church. It is therefore essential that in their training they be exposed to experiences that might enlarge their understanding and vision of what the church can be. In particular they need an understanding of what it is to be a missionary church, engaged in the life and concerns of society and making manifest God's reign in word and deed.

Our partners in the Council for World Mission outside Europe are steeped in this tradition. It is therefore proposed that everyone training for the United Reformed Church ministry (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) or training to be a Church Related Community Worker should be offered the opportunity of a placement overseas outside Europe in conjunction with our Council for World Mission partners. The overseas placement might be constructed as follows:

- ◆ Three weeks in a theological college.
- ◆ Four weeks on a placement.
- ◆ One week concluding seminar.

6 Lay Training Opportunities

6.1 Seeking to enrich the whole life of the church through our world church partnerships we would initiate with the Council for World Mission events that bring together lay people from the United Reformed Church and our partner churches to learn from one another and experience at first hand the richness and variety of the world church. Such events might be aimed at elders, choirs and church musicians, youth and children's workers, Bible study leaders, etc. Ideas for such events could be developed bilaterally with our Council for World Mission partners around the world. Over time this could be built up into an annual programme of world church lay training opportunities.

7 Opportunities for Young People and Children

7.1 In recent years the United Reformed Church has experienced difficulty in recruiting young people for some of the international opportunities which are available to them. We need a new approach.

7.2 The exact details should be worked out with FURY Council, the Youth and Children's Work Committee and the Youth Secretary. However, a useful starting point might be the creation of a FURY international reference group, whose tasks would include:

- ◆ The preparation and promotion of international opportunities within FURY; and
- ◆ Ensuring that there was a world church dimension in other aspects of FURY's work, including the FURY Assembly.

7.3 To encourage the development of international opportunities for young people it would be helpful to create a budget line to this effect in the youth budget.

7.4 The main vehicle for raising children's awareness of and sense of belonging to the world church is Pilots. The creation of a full-time Pilots Development Officer post with, amongst other things, the responsibility for developing 'new projects which will involve and interest children in development issues, in their membership of the world-wide church, and with their partnership with other young people in CWM' will open up new opportunities for children.

8 Visiting Speakers

8.1 Each year, through the Council for World Mission, we would invite visiting speakers for each province from our partners outside Europe to pursue the following programme:

- ◆ Ten days orientation at the 'Introduction to Church life in Britain' course.
- ◆ One week in a pastorate in their host province.
- ◆ Three weeks travelling around the province speaking, preaching, leading Bible studies, etc.
- ◆ Participation in a concluding consultation.

8.2 Wherever possible the local programme would involve our ecumenical partners in this country, many of whom have the same overseas partners as us and would welcome the opportunity to hear and learn from our visiting speakers.

9 In-service Training Opportunities

9.1 To encourage understanding of the significance of our world church partnerships we would also give opinion formers within the life of the church an opportunity to experience this at first hand. Each year there would be an exposure visit to one of our Council for World Mission partners outside Europe for *newly appointed* Provincial Moderators, Assembly-appointed staff, Provincial World Church Secretaries, and Conveners of some if not all Assembly Committees. Part of this experience would include organising a return visit by the partner church.

9.2 Similarly to extend these opportunities to those already serving the church we would adopt and promote a policy on overseas travel during sabbaticals and in other areas of in-service training (including for lay staff). A simple policy might be that where the sabbatical or other training programme has received the support of the Provincial Training Officer or other relevant person and it includes overseas travel it would automatically be eligible for an additional grant to take account of the extra costs involved.

10 Research Fellowships

10.1 We should consider offering a research fellowship in each of our theological colleges, for study of an aspect of contemporary UK church life in the world context, with a view to developing our understanding and practice of mission here. Insights gleaned through these studies would be shared in such ways that might influence the development of the church's life and witness.

11 Scholarship Programme

11.1 We would review our scholarship programme whereby we invite people from our overseas partners to study here, with a view to integrating it more with our own training programmes and offering more opportunities for sharing in United Reformed Church life.

12 World Exchange

12.1 The United Reformed Church belongs to a volunteer programme for all ages over eighteen known as World Exchange. As we have encouraged local churches to consider European partnerships, similarly we would promote World Exchange, encouraging districts and local churches to sponsor someone to give a year as a volunteer to a church overseas. Through the volunteer such districts and churches could reasonably expect to receive news of local church life, etc. and thus develop a more personal world church dimension in their own programmes for a couple of years (from just before the volunteer departs and into the year after s/he returns). Ideas of how this might be done are already available.

13 General Assembly

13.1 Having defined a policy for our European visitors to Assembly (1996) we should now consider a more intentional approach to our visitors from outside Europe. This might include a willingness to pay the travel costs of those who would otherwise be unable to attend. However, if we take such a step we should also consider how such visitors could be better used during the Assembly.

13.2 As now we can count on the International Relations office to arrange at least one fringe meeting. To this should be added two slots in the Assembly programme where we can hear from one partner outside Europe and one of our European partners.

13.3 Additionally, consideration should be given to according our official international visitors speaking rights, to encourage them to contribute to Assembly debates, sharing insights from their own church's experience.

14 World Convention of the Churches of Christ

14.1 Through the World Convention of the Churches of Christ there are opportunities for congregational level participation in an international church gathering. The Conventions occur every four years and bring together some 4,000 members of Disciples, Churches of Christ and United congregations from all around the world for a varied programme of workshops, visits, keynote speakers and worship. The next one is in Brisbane, Australia in August 2000, and the following one we are hosting in Brighton in July/August 2004. These events are an exceptional opportunity for ordinary church members to encounter the excitement and thrill of a world church gathering. Preparations are in hand to recruit a group to go to Brisbane and as with World Exchange we will be proposing that this is an opportunity where congregations and districts might sponsor someone to attend and report back on the experience. In 2004, of course, it is hoped that even more people will avail themselves of this opportunity and thereby introduce awareness of and continuing participation in this event across a wider section of the United Reformed Church than is the case at present.

15 Promotion and Advocacy

15.1 Existing work in this area would still continue. Working with Provincial World Church Secretaries, District World Church Secretaries and Provincial European Link Co-ordinators we will continue to develop promote and distribute:

- ◆ *URC Worldlinks.*
- ◆ *URC Eurolinks.*
- ◆ *CWM Inside Out* (the successor to *News Share*).
- ◆ Information about the annual *Window on the World* conference at Swanwick (an existing opportunity for people to learn about the world church at first hand).
- ◆ Speakers lists.
- ◆ Other relevant material as it becomes available.

16 Finance and Administration

16.1 A more serious engagement with the world church will, of course, require considerable financial support. Funds for this are available to the United Reformed Church. Essentially they lie in two areas;

- ◆ CWM grants,
- ◆ the United Reformed Church's world church unexpended income fund.

16.2 In developing its approach to supporting the mission programmes of its member churches, the Council for World Mission is laying increasing stress on personnel exchange. Through the short-term exchange of people ideas can be shared, good practice learnt and existing challenges seen in a fresh light. Accordingly, CWM is increasing the funds available to support experience enlargement programmes which involve exposing people to the life and work of the church in other countries.

16.3 Since the inception of the United Reformed Church, funds related to the work of the English Presbyterian Mission have been used by the World Church and Mission Department and its successor, the Ecumenical Committee, to support our involvement with the world church. However, it has become apparent that the funds have grown much faster than our use of them, to the extent that we have now accumulated around £1 million of unexpended income. From the outset a proportion, currently around £40,000, has been used as an annual subvention to the Committee's budget and in the years 1997-1999 a further £50,000 is being remitted annually to the general funds of the church. The World Church and Mission Fund (as it is known) is dedicated to 'any purpose connected with the United Reformed Church, dealing with its relationships with the Church overseas, under the direction of the Ecumenical Committee.'

16.4 It is anticipated that the total cost of these programme proposals when everything is fully up and running will be around £200,000 per annum, most but not all of which will be new expenditure and some of which will be receivable in Council for World Mission grants. This includes the provision of additional support staff in the International Relations office who will be responsible for implementing these programmes. It is clear that from the world church unexpended income fund and with the grants that are available from CWM, we can support the development of this programme.

17 Next Steps

The Ecumenical Committee have considered a more detailed paper which gives preliminary estimates of the costings involved and information on how the programmes would be administered. At their meeting in January they enthusiastically endorsed these proposals and forwarded them to Mission Council who warmly commended them.

17.2 If approved by General Assembly the Ecumenical Committee would begin implementing these proposals this autumn with a view to the first pilot programmes being run in 1999/2000.

17.3 These proposals represent a significant change in our approach to raising and sustaining world church and mission awareness. They will clearly take time to implement and assess for effectiveness. Accordingly, if agreed, it is suggested that each individual programme be reviewed within five years of the time it is up and fully running. In the meantime the Ecumenical Committee will report on progress in its annual report to General Assembly.

Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee

The Overseas Exchange Sub Committee is responsible for the selection training and caring of missionaries for service here and overseas, and for overseeing the exchange of personnel, including the World Exchange volunteer programme.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes

Secretary: Revd Philip Woods

*Revd David Helyar, Revd Ken Graham, Revd Mia Hilborn, Mrs Muriel Sleigh,
Mrs Virginia Becher, Revd Bob Andrews (Convener, Ecumenical Committee),
Revd Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations).*

1 The Overseas Exchange Sub Committee has continued to care for people who go from and come to the United Reformed Church.

2 Missionaries to the UK

2.1 **Revd Andrew Midian** and his family returned to Papua New Guinea in December 1997. They spent the autumn term at St Andrew's Hall reflecting on their experience in Britain and preparing for their return to work in Papua New Guinea. Andrew gave a very thoughtful report to the Committee concerning his service at Estover, Plymouth. **Mr Johnson Jesudoss** returned to South India after completing his three year term in Milton Keynes where he made a challenging contribution to the work of the Peace and Justice Centre.

2.2 **Revd John Samuel Ponnusamy's** work as a theological educator in Northern College is being appreciated. **Revd Emmanuel Frimpong** has continued to serve as Ghanaian Chaplain and **Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper** has already begun challenging the United Reformed Church as the Church's Multi-racial/Multi-cultural Development Worker.

2.3 A new appointment is being made in May when the East Midlands Province will welcome **Revd Prince Dibeela** from the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa's Botswana Synod as its Mission Enabler for three years.

2.4 One of the five posts which we have for bringing people from other Council for World Mission member churches to help us in mission is vacant. Here is an opportunity for a province or district to identify a need and use a person in an imaginative way.

3 Scholarship holders

3.1 During the year the United Reformed Church has provided scholarships to enable the following people to pursue Selly Oak College courses at St Andrew's Hall:

Revd Do-Hyeong Lee, Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea.

Mr Rondinho Antonio Bento, Presbyterian Church of Angola.

Revd Laszlo Kallay, Reformed Church of Romania.

Ms Borbala Medveczky, Reformed Church in Hungary.

Revd Helge Klassohn, Evangelische Kirche der Union (EKU).

Revd Milos Vavrecka, Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB).

Mr Jaroslav Kolafa, ECCB.

Revd Christa Heinke, EKU.

Revd Jarmila Reznickova, ECCB.

Revd Andreas Schorlemmer, EKU.

4 World Exchange

4.1 The United Reformed Church is a sponsoring body of Scottish Churches' World Exchange, which now goes by the name World Exchange. Offering opportunities for short-term service overseas (usually one year) World Exchange will consider any adult, young or old for its placements. Some United Reformed Church people are being considered for service this year, and the connections which the United Reformed Church had with churches in Europe through its own former volunteer programme are being maintained.

5 Short-term volunteers in Britain

5.1 The following volunteers from abroad have been serving the United Reformed Church:

Chao-Wen Chen, Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, at Yardley Hastings.

Aiky Ralison, FJKM, at Penrhys.

6 Missionaries of the United Reformed Church

6.1 The number of missionaries serving through the Council for World Mission continues to decrease. **Revd David Vincent** returned at the end of 1997. **Revd Derek Kingston** and his family are returning in the summer of 1998 to settle in Britain. **Martin and Ta'ara Vickerman** are expecting to remain only one more year in Samoa. **Alison Gibbs** has been settling into a new post in Zambia. There are opportunities for service in CWM member churches, but hardly any United Reformed Church people are enquiring about them.

7 Review of the Ghanaian Chaplaincy

7.1 The Overseas Exchange Sub Committee is carrying out a review of the Ghanaian Chaplaincy. Various organisations in Britain have been consulted. A consultation with representatives of Thames North Province and Southern Province is planned for early May. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana are being fully involved in the review both through correspondence and in discussions with the Secretary for International Relations when he visited both churches in October 1997. A further round of talks with both churches is proposed as part of the final stage of the process.

Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Committee was formed in 1994 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.

Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand **Secretary:** Revd Simon Walkling
Revd Wilf Bahadur, Mrs Daphne Beale, Mr Hilary Gunn (staff link), Revd Nanette Head,
Ms Lucille King, Revd John Macauley, Ms Georgette Margett.

1 Multi-Racial, Multi Cultural Development Worker

1.1 We have been very pleased to welcome Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper to our meetings whenever she has been able to 'touch base' between her visit the Provinces. We look forward with anticipation to her conclusions and to learn from her experiences. John Macauley and Wilf Bahadur serve on the management committee for the post

2 'A Church For All' - Multi-Racial Network Day

2.1 'A Church For All' - Multi-Racial Network Day was held in November at the Arthur Rank Centre. It was attended by people from all over the country with an interest in multi-racial issues. Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper gave a theological perspective, Revd Michael Cruchley (United Reformed Church's Rural Consultant) spoke on Rural Racism and Revd John Macauley (United Reformed Church minister in Upper Clapton) spoke on The Urban Setting and The Vision of an Integrated Church. Following workshops in the afternoon a number of people expressed a willingness to form a core group to further the work of a multi racial network. The Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper is convening the initial meetings. We were very grateful to Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin (Officer for Black Concerns in the Anglican Diocese of Lichfield) for being our Observer and for the report that she produced. Copies of a report of the day and the Observer's comments can be obtained by writing to our secretary.

3 BUild

3.1 It is clear that there is a concern and interest about ministry by and for people with learning difficulties. The committee hope to do more work in this area. BUild is a specialist group of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and has been in existence since Autumn 1984. Since then it has developed a nationwide and international network of contacts. This brings together people from a variety of Christian denominations. One of their aims is to 'develop the awareness of Christians and churches and their ability to respond positively to the presence, gifts and needs of people with learning disabilities'. We hope to look into ways that we can work together. To find out more about BUild contact the secretary, Revd Siôr Coleman, 12 Barford Crescent, Birmingham B38 0BH.

4 Training

4.1 It is important that everyone involved in assessment, placing and movement and training of ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers should be trained in equal opportunity issues. To this end we are in conversation with the Training Committee about the provision of such training. We hope that we will be able to report more to Assembly 1999.

5 Thanks

5.1 The Committee wishes to thank Daphne Beale and John Macauley for all their work on the committee and looks forward to welcoming their replacements.

RESOLUTION 36

Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches

Assembly welcomes the report 'Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches' and encourages local churches to study it and to ensure that appropriate policies are in place throughout their life.

1.1 For some time the committee has been looking at ways of developing detailed equal opportunities policies. Work has already been done by other committees on the employment of ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. As we have received a number of requests from local churches for detailed guidance on equal opportunities issues we decided to start there. We believe that we are all important to God, that God loves us all and that as Christians we try to follow God's will. However, as humans beings with human failings, we often organise our lives, practices and institutions in such a way that barriers are put up. This is not usually

on purpose and they are difficult to identify unless we happen to be the person who has to jump the extra hurdle or shout louder to get their voice heard. This is why it is important to have a set of guidelines to help us avoid erecting unconscious barriers to those around us.

1.2 We want to make the document as widely known as possible and would welcome suggestions as how to do this without increasing the mountain of paper sent to church secretaries. The report 'Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches' is reproduced in this book of Reports as Appendix 1.

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) **Secretary:** Mr Clem Frank (Financial Secretary)
Mr Desmond Davies (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust), Mr Bill Grieve, Mrs Edwina Rockey,
Miss Catriona Waterson, Revd Richard Wiggins, Mr Tegid Peregrine (Church Buildings Secretary)

1 1997 Accounts

1.1 The 1997 accounts are set out in Appendix 2 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31st December 1997.

2 The Retired Ministers' Fund

2.1 The Committee have noted the wish of the Pensions Executive to further improve the pensions payable to ministers with pre-Union service to the former Congregational Church and Churches of Christ. The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee report on page 106 expands on this topic. To provide for this, the Committee have agreed an appropriation of £1 million from general funds to the Retired Ministers' Fund, which has been shown in the 1997 accounts.

3 The millennium and computers

3.1 The potential computer problems which may arise on 1st January 2000 have been the subject of much press comment.

3.2 Most of the computer equipment and programmes used in the Finance Office have been acquired since the millennium problem has been

recognised and the Committee believes that no difficulties will arise. However, it is planned to seek independent professional advice to confirm that all reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the dawning of the 3rd millennium is not clouded by computer failures.

4 Church Buildings Fund

4.1 As reported last year, the Committee has agreed that grants can 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 in any one case. Since this additional facility has been introduced, 32 applications have been approved, and 16 paid at a cost of some £66,000 (to the end of February 1998). The Committee continues to receive applications for Feasibility Study grants, and 7 such grants were paid in the sum of £9,500 during 1998.

4.2 The Committee continues to be prepared to consider applications for financial assistance for the purchase or improvement of church property. Guidelines on the conditions for assistance can be obtained from the Finance Office.

RESOLUTION 37

Accounts

Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31st December 1997.

RESOLUTION 38

Ministry and Mission Fund

Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 1997 to the Ministry & Mission Fund.

Methodist/URC Health and Healing Development Group

Committee Members

Chairman: Revd Ward Jones **Secretary:** Revd Jim Hollyman
Mrs Jackie Ballard, Dr Ivan Cox, Revd Robin Hine, Revd Jim Needham,
Dr Margaret Moore, Revd Malcolm White, Dr Janet Wigley.

1 Open Learning Centre Study Course

1.1 A Christian Studies Diploma course on Health and Healing will be available either in the Autumn or Winter of this year via the Methodist Open Learning Centre. The standard will be HE Level One.

2 Health, Healing and Worship

2.1 A conference with this theme is to be held at Willersley Castle, Derbyshire from 16th-19th November, 1998 (with an option of an additional day). Details and booking forms have been circulated to Advisers. Subsidies available; please ask the Secretary.

3 50th Anniversary of the founding of the NHS

3.1 50th Anniversary of the founding of the NHS - 5th July, 1998: Worship material produced by the Free Churches' Council and some hospital chaplains will be available for use in churches.

4 Training

4.1 Opportunities for training for the ministry of healing continue to be made available by the Anglican Acorn Trust. The joint development group continues to co-operate in this work so that it is increasingly an ecumenical venture.

5 *The Health and Healing Bulletin*

5.1 *The Health and Healing Bulletin*, a joint Methodist and United Reformed Church publication may be ordered from the Revd David Owens who handles subscriptions and distribution at 66 Barnes Way, Worcester WR5 3AP.

RESOLUTION 39

Health and Healing Strategy

Assembly

- ◆ endorses the strategy of the Joint Health and Healing Development Group for its work until 2000AD as set out in Annex 1;
- ◆ welcomes the publication by the Methodist Church and the Churches' Council for Health and Healing of 'Guidelines for Good Practice for those involved in the Christian healing ministry', including a code of conduct;
- ◆ welcomes the appointment and support of Health and Healing Advisers in some provinces and urges the other provinces to ensure that these matters are actively dealt with;
- ◆ welcomes the revision of *In Hospital* and the plan to revise and publish other booklets to aid the pastoral ministry;
- ◆ notes the resolutions on mental health passed overwhelmingly at FURY Assembly (as set out in Annex 2) and encourages links between the Joint Group and FURY Council in raising awareness and understanding throughout the Church.

Health and Healing Strategy

Annex 1: The Health and Healing Joint Group strategy has two main goals:

- 1 The promotion of the normality of this aspect of ministry;
- 2 The development of good practice.

Action to achieve the first goal:

- a) Production of position paper in a popular format on health and healing.

(agency for action: the Joint Group with the Churches' Council for Health and Healing - CCHH)

- b) The inclusion of prayers for healing in the service books of both denominations and, specifically, the inclusion of the calling 'to heal' in the final version of the Methodist ordination service.

(agency for action: the Methodist Pastoral Care and Christian Education committee, the URC Doctrine Prayer and Worship committee)

- c) Training programmes for theological colleges and courses to be encouraged to include health and healing in the curriculum.

(agency for action: denominational committees and CCHH)

- d) Promotion of the Church's relationship with the world of medicine.

(agency for action: CCHH primarily)

- e) Developing the role of the Connexional Secretary for Health and Healing in the Methodist Church.

- f) Further co-operation with other Methodist and URC staff members, where work overlaps.

Action to achieve the second goal:

- a) Promotion of the publication *Guidelines for Good Practice in the Ministry of Healing*

(agency for action: bookstalls and similar opportunities)

- b) Continuing the role of (Methodist) District and (United Reformed Church) Provincial Advisers in Health and Healing, servicing and supporting them.

(agency for action: Joint Group, Bulletin, joint training with ACORN)

- c) Using the open Learning Centre course.

- d) Stimulating local contacts with medical practitioners.

(agency for action: Connexional Secretary, Free Churches' Council Hospital Chaplaincy Secretary)

Annex 2: Resolution passed at FURY Assembly:

FURY Assembly recognises that many people suffer from mental health problems such as anxiety, stress, depression, schizophrenia and obsessive behaviour.

FURY Assembly believes that the Church requires a greater understanding of mental illness to be able to respond helpfully to the needs of people with mental health difficulties and their families and carers.

FURY Assembly requests the FURY Council to raise the issue in the following ways:

- a) Produce new resource material for young people, in conjunction with and promoting existing material already available, about mental health, themselves and the Church;

- b) Publish an article about these issues in FURY National;

- c) Work with the Equal Opportunities committee, Church and Society committee and other appropriate councils of the church to raise awareness of these issues;

- d) Take the issues to General Assembly with a view for positive action;

- e) Provoke discussion of the issues within ecumenical youth organisations.

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

Consultants:

Revd Dr David Bowen (Hinduism and Islam), Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism), Revd Ron Lewis (Judaism),
Revd Elizabeth Brown (New Religious Movements)

1 Millennium Celebrations

1.1 The Committee's report last year ended with a reference to the Millennium celebrations. A great deal of our time continues to be spent on this issue. We would want to affirm that the Millennium is, or should be, primarily a marking of two thousand years of Christian faith and witness. Within this statement there is ample cause for both celebration and for repentance. This combination will ensure that our celebrations will not be triumphalist nor paralysed by guilt. We have been happy to co-operate with other committees of the church in preparations for the Millennium and we have contributed to the critique of the Government's plans and preparations for this event. It is certain that there are a great number of criticisms that can be made of the ways in which the Millennium is going to be celebrated. Many people feel that an essential Christian event has been hijacked by the combined forces of the State and the media. However, it is important that people of faith are represented on all groups that are responsible for events both local and national.

2 Multi-Faith Context

2.1 However we choose to celebrate the Millennium it will be important to remember that all of life in Britain today is set within a multi-faith context. And we are affected by our context, whether we welcome it or resent it. For many people everyday life is obviously multi-faith and multi-cultural. This is the make-up of their

neighbourhoods and they find themselves enriched by it. But for many others their immediate context has changed very little. It is a single culture and the result can be that they are the victims of misinformation and fear. Problems can be compounded when people, whose attitudes and ethos are predominantly mono-cultural, have power to make decisions that affect the lives of thousands of people living, for example, in inner city areas that are now multi-faith and multi-cultural. The church can play an important role in fostering the sense of being one community and that its diversity is a cause for celebration.

3 Inter-Faith Dialogue

3.1 During the past year the committee has continued to sponsor opportunities for discussion with people of other faiths. We are concerned to maintain our initiative in enabling Jews, Muslims and Christians to meet and explore in depth the issues that we have in common and also those on which we clearly differ. We are all people for whom faith is important. We each hold a doctrine of revelation. There are issues in society on which we can, and should, speak with a common voice. In learning to trust one another we will gain confidence for still greater exploration of faith. In the autumn we held a conference for Christians and Sikhs and we hope to repeat this in the near future. In early July we will be hosting a Reform/Reformed dialogue. Jews and Christians together will explore what it means to be part of the radical wing of our faiths.

4 Facing the Questions

4.1 Questions raised by our context must not be pushed away or privatised. The United Reformed Church Committee for Inter Faith Relations is there to help in this process. In its membership there are those who have a great deal of experience in working for the Church in other countries, often where Christianity is a small

minority of the population. Most members of the committee are closely involved with other faith communities in this country and some are involved in teaching and academic research. In other words there is a wide variety of experience and this is available to help individuals and congregations to face the important questions for people of faith in this country as we approach the Millennium celebrations.

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.

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.

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.

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.

RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING

Works in association with the United Reformed Church Retired Minister's Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

*Convener: The Revd Graham Long
Secretary: The Revd Christopher Baker*

1 Ministerial accompanied self-Appraisal

1.1 The implementation of the scheme of ministerial accompanied self-appraisal is underway following the 1997 Assembly resolution. The scheme already operates in the West Midlands and has begun in Southern province. Other provinces plan to begin the scheme during 1998 or early in 1999. The training consultation for the provincial administrators and trainers takes place in March 1998.

2 Lay Preachers support

2.1 At the time of writing this report no national Lay Preaching Commissioner has been appointed. Graham Long has taken on the role of temporary convener of the lay preaching support group in order that necessary plans for the lay preaching commissioners consultation for 1998 could be made by those who had been elected members of the support committee at the 1997 annual consultation. Plans are also underway for a residential lay preaching commissioner's consultation in 1999.

2.2 Those elected to serve on the Lay Preaching Support Committee by the Lay Preaching Commissioners are;

Mr Hugh Barlow, Nottingham District, East Midlands Province; Dr Berta Doodson, Liverpool District, Mersey Province; Dr Robert Pettigrew, Wirral District Mersey Province and Mr Les Phillips, Devon East District, South Western Province

2.3 The United Reformed Church remains dependent on lay preachers for the leading of a large proportion of its Sunday worship. We continue to need to add to the number of our lay preachers and increase the number of younger lay preachers. Advocacy of the lay preaching vocation has its greatest impact within local churches and District Councils and the Ministries committee asks that in local churches and District Councils the ministry of lay preaching should be given every encouragement.

3 Higher and Further Education Chaplaincy

3.1 The Revd Graham Sweeney acts as Higher Education Chaplains adviser for the Ministries Committee. The Revd Kevin Swaine remains adviser on Further Education Chaplaincy

3.2 The Ministries Committee agreed that in future a sum of £500 would be earmarked from the committee's budget to assist Chaplains who wished to attend the Chaplains Conferences and who are not funded for attendance at these conferences from another source. Our Methodist and Baptist colleagues are already supported in a similar way. Requests for in service training grants should continue to go to the training committee

3.3 In 1997 there was an increased response to the student link up notice and the names of 85 young people were sent to university and college chaplains. Other names may have been sent directly to the particular institution. Young people moving to university or college should be encouraged by their local church to become involved with the chaplaincy in the institution they will attend and the neighbouring United Reformed Church.

3.4 The United Reformed Church works alongside the Methodist Church and Baptist Union, through the Free Churches' Council, to co-ordinate Free Church Higher Education Chaplaincy. Professor Howard Marratt acts as the Free Church Adviser on Higher Education and we record our gratitude for the work he has done in this respect and for his role as secretary of the of the Advisory group. During the last year that work resulted in agreed procedures on the deployment and appointment of Free Church Chaplains in Higher Education and the production of guidelines for the local management and support of Free Church Chaplains.

4 The United Board

4.1 Through the United Board the Baptist Union, United Reformed Church and Congregational Federation recruit and support chaplains to the forces. In 1997 the United Reformed Church had five chaplains. Copies of their annual reports can be found alongside the Ministries Committee display.

5 Special Category Ministries

5.1 Special Category Ministries (SCM's) were established by General Assembly in 1977 to allow District and Provinces to place ministers at the sharp end of mission. The agreed number of ministers who could be so placed was 30. In recent years Mrs Mary Stacy has administered the scheme and the Committee is very grateful for the care she has given to this important task. It is grateful also to the many others who have acted as assessors and visitors when projects have been proposed or reviewed.

5.2 The SCM provision has enabled some splendid work to be undertaken in a wide variety of situations. Perhaps, inevitably, because the initiative for SCM's lies with the District and Provinces, the spread of such ministries across the country has been patchy. The impression is that some Provinces have been quicker to see the possibilities the SCM scheme opens up and to take advantage of it. But it is a source of satisfaction that some Provinces have used SCM's to open up new areas of mission and have found SCM's an invaluable aid within their mission strategies.

5.3 SCM's were never intended to be a way of supplementing deployment figures, or of dealing with difficult situations that sometimes arise. Their function was clearly set out in the original Assembly report. 'Such ministries are those to which ministers are appointed by the District or Synod, as distinct from those to which ministers are called by the local church. Such special ministries include industrial and educational chaplains, ministers to new towns and special mission situations. Some 'special' ministries may be half scope and the other half being taken up by the oversight of a small church or by secular employment.'

5.4 From the outset SCM's have been administered nationally. This has caused few problems so long as the take-up has been within the 30 posts agreed. With more Provinces now seeing the opportunity for SCM's, the Committee has a problem identifying the relative importance of the various projects put forward.

5.5 At the present time the Committee considers the current basis of national administration to be right. It is aware, however, that, if this is to be maintained in the face of increasing demand, it must establish criteria for assessing the priorities to be applied. In addition, it is likely that annual or twice yearly application deadlines will have to be applied. The seeming option of increasing the number of SCM's is not considered feasible given the number of ministers available for normal pastoral deployment.

5.6 An alternate approach would be to devolve the administration of the programme largely to the Provinces. This could be done in a variety of ways. For instance, each province could be allocated 2 SCM's to assist mission development in its area. Or the Moderators meeting could be given the responsibility for distributing them among the Provinces. Or the Provinces could be granted the funding for 2 full time posts and be given discretion about precisely how the funding is used to promote new initiatives in mission.

5.7 We would suggest that six posts, for chaplains and particular projects should be left for the Ministries Committee to allocate.

5.8 Overall responsibility for SCM policy would remain with the Committee, as would the ongoing review and monitoring of projects.

5.9 The Committee will welcome the views of Provinces and Districts on the future administration of the SCM programme. These should be sent to the Executive Secretary for Ministries not later than 30th October 1998.

6 The Ministry in retirement

6.1 Part of the oversight required of the committee covers matters to do with the retirement of ministers. Aspects of this have been well covered by the work of the Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee, the Pensions executive and the provision of annual pre-retirement courses. But other aspects have been addressed as individual enquiries have been received.

6.2 In order to form a better overview the Ministries Committee has invited the Revd Nelson Bainbridge to lead a small working party. In the first instance the working party will report to the Committee. Its remit covers preparation for retirement, the situation and needs/problems of ministers in retirement; care for retired ministers and spouses and the place of retired ministers in the life of the church.

6.3 The working party will welcome submissions covering these or related matters as soon as possible. Contributions should be sent to the Secretary for Ministries not later than 30th October 1998.

7 Reports to Assembly

7.1 The Ministries Committee intends in future to report to Assembly on the work that it has undertaken during each calendar year prior to that in which Assembly meets. Most of the business of the committee is long rather than short term. Working on this timetable for reports the Committee can plan an eighteen months programme. Urgent matters raised at Assembly can be considered during the period from August to December of the same year.

7.2 The lists of those added or deleted from the list of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and those nationally accredited as Lay preachers will continue to be updated until the Assembly Book of Reports production deadline as is the case at present.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Robert Way

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell

The present report covers only the period from the last Assembly until 31st December 1997. During this period the Committee met on 6th November.

1 The Committee's Work

1.1 Much of the Sub-Committee's work concerns the assessment and accreditation processes within the United Reformed Church, enabling those who seek to serve us as Ministers or Lay Preachers to be aware of the preparation and qualities that are required of them. This not only serves the confidence of the people concerned, but also earns the confidence of the rest of the Church in them. Other aspects of the Sub-Committee's work concern the enabling of change in the type of service which Ministers or Lay Preachers may propose.

2 Changes in type of service

2.1 Changes in the type of service given by our Ministers are under the guidance of the sub-Committee. The pack on 'Training for Change', though still on the stocks, is being designed to help those changing from one type of ministry to another.

2.2 The Welcome Pack for ministers transferring from other Churches to the United Reformed Church will have been updated by Assembly 1998 and it will complement the Induction conferences at Windermere which are designed for such recruits to our ministry.

3 The National Assessment Board.

3.1 The National Assessment Board has met once during the period covered by this report. It has pointed out to the sub-Committee that the number of those who are being accepted for training falls below the number of those retiring from service, and that this trend can only be reversed by a larger number of people, especially young people, offering themselves to the Church. We intend to consider this information in the context of wider discussion taking place within the church on deployment and the number of ministers.

4 Roll of Ministers

4.1 Admissions to the Roll

(from 20th February 1997 to 30th March 1998)

4.1.1 By Ordination - Stipendiary:

Marilyn Allen, Delia Bond, Janet Calderley, Peter Clarkson, Diana Cullum, David Dones, John Du Bois, David Featonby, Simon Franklin, Richard Goldring, Geoffrey Haigh, Keith Hulse, Michael Meachin, Nadim Nassar, Philip Nicholas, Kathryn Price, Margaret Robb, Raymond Stanyon, Jeffrey Tunningley, Jane Wade, Michael Whitfield, Kathleen Wilson

4.1.2 By Ordination - Non-Stipendiary:

Raymond Anglesea, Barry Drake, Thomas Grant, Angela Hughes, Tjarda Murray, David Parkin, Susan Litchfield, Rosemary Smith, Marion Thomas

4.1.3 By Transfer from other Churches:

Janet Berry (Baptist Union), Linden de Bie (Reformed Church USA), James Coleman (Church of Scotland), Richard Edwards (Baptist Union), Helen Matthews (Baptist Union), Gerald Munro (Unitarian - including Ordination), Donald Pines - NSM (Baptist Union), John Ponnusamy (Church of South India - CWM), Alexander Roger (Church of Scotland), John Scott (Presbyterian Church of Ireland), John Waghorn (Baptist Union) Marjorie Lewis-Cooper (United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Isles), Neil Riches (Baptist Union)

4.2 Deletions from the Roll

(from 20th February 1997 to 30th March 1998)

4.2.1 By Resignation:

Paul Baker, Alison Brooks, Ian Kenna, Andrew McLuskey, Andrew Newman-Williams, John Forrest, Alan Summers

4.2.2 By Resignation and/or Transfer to other Churches:

Paul Barratt (New Frontiers International Church), Peter Philips (Scottish Congregational Church), Margaret Dodds (USA), Richard Dodds (USA), Mark Dunn (Australia), Cecil Geyer (Australia), Charisa Hunter-Crump (USA), Andrew Midian (South India), Peter Stevens (USA)

4.3 Changes within the Roll

4.3.1 Non-Stipendiary to Stipendiary:

Jacqueline Knight, Edward Landon, Julie Martin, Christine Willis

5 Roll of Church Related Community Workers

5.1 Admissions to the Roll

(from 20th February 1997 to 30th March 1998)

5.1.1 By Commissioning:

Christopher Lawrence

6 Transfer of Ordinands from other Churches

6.1 Camilla Frid (Swedish Mission Covenant Church) transferred her membership to the United Reformed Church and is completing ministerial training at Northern College.

7 Lay Preachers

The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been Nationally Accredited.

Northern Province:- Alexander Dobie, Wilbur Hanvey, Bernard Lee, Maurice Taylor

North Western Province:- Thomas Birch, Barrington Charters, Joan Ollerenshaw

Mersey Province:- Fiona Gow, Olive Tweed

East Midlands Province:- Malcolm Fife, Jonathan Heard, Ray Parker, Christine Watson

West Midlands Province:- Rosemary Allman, Christopher Kemp, Doreen Rammell, David Sheldon

Eastern Province:- Susan Foakes, Janine Havell, Cyril Mowles, David Pennicott

South Western Province:- Valerie Atkinson, Derek Barks, Josie Carpenter, Hazel Starritt, Judith Stewart

Wessex Province:- Jeanne Keene, Derek Finch, Brenda McGarrow, Keith Whyte

Thames North Province:- Dulcie Ashdown, Elizabeth MacLeod

Southern Province:- Joan Cocks, Peter Goodwin, Raymond Hagley

Wales Province:- Ian Ledgard

7.2 Accreditation of Lay Preachers

7.2.1 Following a request from the Studies Panel which received support from the Lay preaching Support Committee, the Accreditation Sub-Committee considered the possible confusion created by the use of the description 'accredited' lay preachers both for those accredited nationally and those accredited by their Districts.

7.2.2 The Committee suggests that the term 'accredited' should be applied to those who have been given national accreditation.

7.2.3 The names of those lay preachers who are nationally accredited will appear in the Year Book and District yearbooks.

7.2.4 The Committee suggests that those lay preachers who receive District (or Provincial) accreditation should be distinguished from the nationally accredited lay preachers by the use of the description 'recognised'.

7.2.5 The names of 'recognised' lay preachers will be listed in District yearbooks.

National Assessment Board

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Mr Brian Evans

Secretary: The Revd Christine Craven

1 As anticipated in the Report to General Assembly last year, in the light of the new Criteria for Assessment, guidelines have now been issued for candidates, ministers, Church Meetings, District Councils and Provincial Ministries Committees. At the same time, assessment procedures at Conferences have been amended to take note of the new criteria.

2 During 1997, there were four Assessment Conferences and two meetings of Re-Assessment Panels. We had hoped, by bringing the Conference normally held in May forward into April, to give both candidates and Colleges more time during which to make preparations for the new academic year. However since some candidates were not ready for national assessment by April an additional Conference was held in June. This is a little late for some candidates to make preparations in time for the next academic year and so for 1998 the Board scheduled the spring conferences for February and April with a possible fourth conference in May.

3 In 1997 42 candidates attended the National Assessment Conferences; 23 were candidating for stipendiary service, 19 for non-stipendiary. Of these candidates 36 were finally accepted for training as a result of assessment conference recommendation and provincial decision. 21 of these will train for stipendiary service and 15 for non-stipendiary service.

4 In November, there was held at Windermere a training course for new assessors, and for representatives of Provincial Ministries Committees. This course had originally been planned for 1996. Its success was such that we hope to make it an annual event, which could help to make the whole assessment process the 'seamless robe' to which we aspire.

5 We continue to use the annual September meeting of Board members partly for training purposes, looking particularly in 1997 at the contribution made to the Assessment procedure by our personal development advisers.

6 1997 saw the completion of the term of service of our Convener, Raymond Clark, who had made a major contribution to the developments in our procedures over the previous four years. John Humphreys also completed his four-year term. We offer our thanks to both of them, and our greetings to Reginald Rooke and Derek Wales, who, in addition to those named last year, joined the team of assessors in 1997; and to Flo Humes-Dixon, Alison Davies, Margaret Compton, Janine Lawley, Denise Megson, Alan Small and Christopher Whitehead, who join us in 1998.

Church Related Community Workers Management Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: The Revd Vaughan Jones

Secretary: Mr John Boddy

1 With many Districts and Provinces now encouraging their churches to focus on mission, it is no surprise to report that the number of enquiries about church-related community work has increased significantly in the past year. There have been more than twenty enquiries from Districts and churches keen to develop their work in and with the community and it is anticipated that some of these enquiries will lead to the accreditation of new Church-Related Community Worker posts.

2 Until recently the number of CRCW posts and CRCWs available to fill them has been kept in balance so that the majority of vacant posts have been filled rapidly. As the number of accredited posts increases, it is likely there will be more long-term vacancies unless more CRCWs can be recruited. This then is the most serious challenge currently facing the CRCW programme.

3 During the year Revds Graham Cook and Bob Day have been reviewing the Church-Related Community Work ministry in order to decide on its future direction and on the remit for a development worker should such a post still be needed. The

reviewers met with all those involved in the programme and received submissions from other interested parties. In an interim report they recommended the extension of the development worker post for a final five-year term. During that period the development worker would be expected to advocate for church-related community work within the United Reformed Church and would work more closely with Provinces and Districts to enable them to take more responsibility for the development of the CRCW programme locally. Mission Council accepted these recommendations.

4 Since September the training of United Reformed Church Church-Related Community Workers has come under the auspices of the Manchester Christian Institute within its Faith in Living Programme. The new training package includes six extended study weekends in Manchester a year; so candidates unable to move to Manchester will no longer be excluded. Those who finish this course will receive a Diploma in Theology and a Diploma in Youth and Community Work by accreditation.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Revd David Hannen* **Secretary:** *Mr Clive C Willis*
Mr Martin Ballard, Revd Janet Sowerbutts, Mr Graham Stacy, Mrs Margaret Waller and Mrs Sheila Woodcock

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 There was an easing in the number of retirements in 1997 where housing assistance was sought. Help was given to 13 ministers and, in addition, 2 tenants were re-housed into properties more suited to their needs. With sales of property continuing at the same level as last year, our total stock of properties increased by only one.

<u>Number of Properties</u>	
As at 1st January 1997	311
Purchased in 1997	15
Received as Legacies or gifts	1
	327
LESS Properties sold in 1997	15
Number of properties as at 31st Dec. 1997	312
Of which:	
Unoccupied	NIL
For Sale	5
Occupied by -	
retired ministers	191
ministers' widows	107
non-URC tenants	6
Freehold ground rents	3
	312

At the year-end 3 properties were in the process of purchase and 6 applicants were 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.

5.1 In 1997 the standard rent was £60 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.

5.2 For 1998 the standard rent has been set at £65 per calendar month.

6 Rental income for 1997 was £198,000 (as compared with £184,000 for 1996). This sum was credited to Property Management Account, from which all costs relating to maintenance, repair, insurance and administration are taken. In 1997 these costs totalled £185,000, thus giving a surplus for the year of £13,000 on Property Management Account. However, General Revenue Account, which

includes grants, donations, legacies and profits on sale of properties, showed a surplus of £674,000, thus enabling our Reserves to increase by £687,000 from these sources.

7 The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year. These amounted to £409,000. In addition, the Officers of the Yorkshire Province secured for the General Funds a number of properties shown in the books at cost or valuation at £320,000 and the sum of £250,000, formerly held to their order, and administered on their behalf.

	1996	
	£	£
8 During the year we spent on 15 (1996 - 21)		
new properties	891,000	1,235,000
We sold 15 (1996 - 15)		
properties, not now required for	<u>640,000</u>	<u>734,000</u>
which made a net investment in property of	251,000	501,000
We received legacies, donations, net rents etc of	<u>620,000</u>	279,000
and thus we were able to reduce borrowings by	<u>369,000</u>	<u> </u>
but in 1996 we had to borrow, in order to balance the books, a further		<u>222,000</u>

9 It is anticipated that during 1998 assistance will be required for 20 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.

10 During 1997 visits were made by the officers of the Society to approximately 30 applicants, tenants or other properties.

11 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.

12 Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre under the auspices of Ministries. One course was held in May 1997 and one 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.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Mr Michael A B Harrison **Secretary:** Revd Peter Grimshaw
Miss Margaret Atkinson, Mr Victor Hughff (Convener, Pensions Executive), Mrs Barbara Martin,
Mr Graham Stacy, Revd Tony J Wilkinson

1 Review of Ministerial Remuneration

1.1 The Review Group, convened by Mr Howard Bridge, has been gathering information and opinions from a wide range of people. It is hoped that the findings of the Group will be ready for presentation to General Assembly in 1999.

2 Stipends

2.1 It is anticipated that any decisions arising from the review of ministerial remuneration will not be implemented before the year 2000. Therefore, in order to keep approximately in line with national earnings, it is recommended that for budgetary purposes the 1999 stipend level should be taken as the relevant RPI figure (3.706%) + 1.5% above the 1998 level, this would make the 1999 stipend figure £15,600.

3 Pensions

3.1 During 1997 we had the results of a Triennial Valuation of the Pension Fund. The deficit of three years earlier had been more than halved to £4.5 million by the injection of £2.5 million from the United Reformed Church reserves, by a very prosperous three years in our investments and by smaller increases in stipends than had been assumed in the previous valuation. Reduced annual subventions from the Ministry & Mission Fund of £750,000, (instead of approximately £1.2 million) will continue to be paid.

3.2 The normal contribution to the Pension Fund from the United Reformed Church as 'employer' has been stepped up from 10.65% to 11.75% of stipends. This rise has been caused partly by the increased longevity of members and partly by the expectation of a lower long-term real rate of return on investments. In the event this was quickly absorbed by the removal of Tax Credits on dividends in the May 1997 Budget.

3.3 Some six years ago we noticed the escalating effect on pension costs of the increasing number of people entering the ministry in middle

age. As at that time there was no upper age limit for entry to the ministry, a maximum entry age of 50 for new members of the Pension Fund was introduced; ministers excluded by this decision from membership of the Fund were given a payment equivalent to the 'employer's' contribution to supplement their own contribution to a private personal pension plan of their own choosing.

3.4 In 1997 General Assembly brought in a maximum age of 55 for entry to the ministry. It seems wrong in principle to maintain a difference between these two maxima. Therefore, the 1998 General Assembly is asked to amend the Pension Fund rules and the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration to permit entry up to age 55. The cost of this has had to be estimated on scant data, but the annual extra cost to the United Reformed Church is expected to build up to £25,000 to £30,000 per year. In the interest of equity and against the background of the improved situation in the actuarial position noted in 3.1 above such expenditure seems justified.

3.5 In order to effect the above changes the Sub-Committee commends Resolutions 40 & 41 to Assembly.

4 The Retired Ministers Fund

4.1 This Fund is used mainly to supplement the pensions of ex-Congregational and Churches of Christ ministers in respect of their years of service prior to Union, but the current level of supplement still results in a pension significantly below the pension paid to former Presbyterian ministers. The Sub-Committee has accepted a recommendation from the Pensions Executive that, with effect from a date no later than 1 January 1999, these grants should be increased to bring the pensions of all ministers to at least 95% of the ex-Presbyterian level. The increase in the Retired Ministers Fund required for this proposed improvement is estimated at £1 million and a transfer of this amount has been made in the 1997 accounts.

5 Officers

5.1 As usual the Officers have spent much time in applying the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration and other decisions of General Assembly to the circumstances of individual ministers, CRCWs and local churches. In 1997 the special cases of some 20 ministers were considered, 9 being concerned with the operation of the Pension Fund, 4 with long-term sickness and the consequent possibility of early retirement, 7 with

entitlement to various grants, allowances and other benefits; often it is necessary to review and reconsider a case several times as it develops; in addition District Councils, Provinces and Moderators raised matters of principle and practice in all these areas. The Officers also dealt with three applications for short-term ecumenical grants. Cases of peculiar difficulty or involving a change in operating principles are brought to the full Sub-Committee for decision.

RESOLUTION 40

Plan for Partnership

Assembly amends paragraph 6.1.4 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by replacing '50 years' with '55 years' in each of its first two sub-paragraphs.

RESOLUTION 41

URC Ministers' Pension Fund

Assembly amends paragraph 14 of the Rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund by the replacement of the word 'fifty' with the word 'fifty-five' in paragraphs 14.1.1 and 14.1.2 of the Rules.

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 United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for provincial moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Glyn Jenkins [2002]**

Secretary: Mr Desmond Curry [2001]

Provincial Representatives:

I	Revd David Jenkins	VII	Revd Elizabeth Caswell *
II	Revd Geoff Tolley	VIII	Revd Ray Adams
III	Revd Angus Duncan	IX	Revd George Thomas
IV	Mr Brian Evans	X	Revd Adrian Bulley *
V	Revd Christopher White	XI	Mrs Christine Meekison
VI	Mr Simon Rowntree	XII	Mrs Barbara Willis *

together with the immediate past Moderator.

The committee records with gratitude the service of Revd Jessie Clare. As Convener since 1993, Jessie has given wise and firm leadership throughout a period of change which presented the committee with new challenges and its officers with extra work.

1 CENTRAL STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 The Review Group for the Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness has recommended that the appointment of Revd Bill Wright should be extended, with revised Terms of Reference, until 31st March 1999.

1.2 The Review Group for the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations has recommended that the appointment of Revd Sheila Maxey should be extended until 31st August 2003.

1.3 The following appointment and review groups have been convened:-

- 1.3.1 Northern - Provincial Moderator Review Group
Convened by Revd John Johansen-Berg
- 1.3.2 North Western - Provincial Moderator Review Group
Convened by Revd Angus Duncan
- 1.3.3 East Midlands - Provincial Moderator Review Group
Convened by Mrs Ruth Clarke
- 1.3.4 Southern - Provincial Moderator Review Group
Convened by Revd Sandra Lloydlangston
- 1.3.5 Secretary for Training - Review Group
Convened by Revd David Helyar

- 1.3.6 Director of Windermere - Review Group
Convened by Revd Dr Jack McKelvey
- 1.3.7 CRCW Development Officer - Appointment Group
Convened by Revd Graham Cook
- 1.3.8 Pilots Development Officer - Appointment Group
Convened by Revd Chris Baker
- 1.3.9 Centre Minister at the National Youth Resource Centre - Appointment Group
Convened by Mr Simon Rowntree

2 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES and Sub-COMMITTEES

Notes:

- 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 1997 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 1998 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.
- 4 Many committees have cross-representation [e.g the Ecumenical Committee has representatives from Doctrine, Prayer & Worship, Church and Society, Youth and Children's Work etc.] These are internal appointments and are not listed here.

2.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Revd Alasdair Pratt [2001]*

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

2.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Ms Gabrielle Cox [2002]**

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Revd Michael Powell [1999]

Mr George Morton [2001]

Revd Hazel Barkham [1999]

Dr Sue Brisley [2002]**

Revd David Fraser [2000]

To be advised [2002]**

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Mr Chris Wright [1999]

Secretary: Secretary for Communications

Mrs Pat Stannard [2000]

Mr Richard Lathaen [2001]

Mr John East [2001]

Revd David Coleman [2000]

Ms Kirsty Thorpe [2001]

Revd Peter Moth [2001]

Revd Paul Brewerton [2001]

Revd Michael Forster [2001]

Revd Roger Hall [2001]

2.4 DISCIPLESHIP, STEWARDSHIP and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Caswell [1999]

Secretary: Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

Revd David Tatem [1999]

Mr David Williams [2002]**

Revd Bob Day [2000]

Revd Peter Ball [2002]**

Miss Tina Arthur [2001]

2.4.1 DISCIPLESHIP, STEWARDSHIP and WITNESS - STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Julian Macro

Secretary: Secretary for Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness

Miss Janet Turner [1999]

Mr Tom Hamilton [2000]

To be advised [2002]**

Mr Keith Webster [1999]

Mr Geoffrey Wood [2000]

To be advised [2002]**

Revd David Netherwood [1999]

To be advised [2002]**

2.5 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Colin Thompson [2001]

Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks [2000]

Revd Fleur Houston [1999]

Revd Jean Black [2000]

Mr Edward Butlin [2002]**

Revd Stephen Brown [1999]

Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2001]

Mr Colin Ferguson [2002]**

Revd Donald Norwood [1999]

Revd John Hall [2001]

To be advised [2002]**

2.6 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Bob Andrews [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

Revd Peter Arthur [1999]

Revd John Rees [2001]

Revd Elizabeth Nash [2002]**

a representative of the Wales Province

Ms Bethan Galliers [2000]

Revd Mary Buchanan [2002]**

Revd Richard Mortimer [2001]

Mrs Jackie Marsh [2001]

Revd Philip Jones [2002]**

2.6.1 ECUMENICAL - OVERSEAS EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Barrie Scopes [1999]

Secretary: Secretary for International Relations

Revd Ken Graham [1999]

Revd Keith Forecast [2002]**

Mrs Virginia Becher [2001]

To be advised [2002]**

Mr Peter Bryant [2002]**

2.7 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Mrs Susan Rand [1999]

Secretary: Revd Simon Walkling [1999]

Mrs Lucille King [2000]

Revd Wilf Bahadur [2001]

Ms Georgette Margrett [2001]

Miss Stella Salmon [2002]**

Revd Nannette Lewis Head [2001]

Revd Derek Hopkins [2002]**

2.8 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: The Chief Accountant

Revd Richard Wiggins [1999]

Ms Catriona Waterson [2001]

Convener of United Reformed Church Trust

Mrs Edwina Rockey [1999]

Mr Alan Duncan [2002]**

Mr Bill Grieve [2000]

2.9 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Bill Mahood [1998]

Secretary: To be advised

Mrs Linda Hopley

Revd Molly Kenyon

Ms Sarah King

Revd Jonathan Dean

2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Graham Long [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mr John Ellis [1999]

Revd Graham Sweeney [2000]

Ms Sally Abbott [2002]**

Revd Sandra Lloydlangston [1999]

Revd Martha McInnes [2001]

Convener of National Assessment Board

Revd Tony Ruffell [2000]

Revd Brian Jolly [2001]

2.10.1 MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Robert Way [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mr Bert Worrall [1999]

Mrs Julie McLaren [2001]

Revd John Humphreys [1999]

Revd Graham Robson [2001]

Mrs Frances Caldwell [2002]**

2.10.2 MINISTRIES - CRCW Management Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Susan Flynn [2002]**

Secretary: Mr John Boddy

Mr Simon Loveitt

Revd Clifford Wilton [2002]**

Revd Alison Hall [2002]**

Revd Peter Crutchley Jones [2002]**

2.10.3 MINISTRIES - LAY PREACHING Sub Committee

Lay Preaching Commissioner: Revd Sandy Mailer [2002]**

And four members elected by the Lay Preacher Commissioners Consultation

2.10.4 MINISTRIES - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Michael Harrison [1999]

Secretary: Revd Peter Grimshaw [1999]

Revd Tony Wilkinson [2000]

The Hon. Treasurer

Mrs Barbara Martin [1999]

Miss Margaret Atkinson [1999]

2.10.5 MINISTRIES - RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING - Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Simon Swailes [2002]**

Secretary: Mr Clive Willis [1999]

Mrs Margaret Waller [2001]

Revd Graham Cook [2002]**

Mrs Sheila Woodcock [2001]

The Hon. Treasurer

Revd John Pugh [2002]**

Note: Properties are managed by a Company viz: the **UNITED REFORMED CHURCH RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY LTD** Details of the Members of the Board etc may be obtained from the Secretary: Mr Clive Willis at Church House

2.10.7 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission Panel

Convener: Revd Donald Hilton

Deputy Convener: Mrs Helen Brown

Secretary: Revd Alasdair Walker

Members:

Miss Ina Barker

Revd Alison Davis

Revd Brian Johanson

Revd Ted Marley

Mr Nicholas Pye

Revd Brenda Stevenson

Ms Kate Breeze

Mr R Forsyth

Revd R M Jones

Revd Denise Megson

Mrs Sally Quilter

Dr David Thompson

Mr Keith Brooks

Mrs Wilma Frew

Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC

Sir James Nursaw

Revd Michael Rees

Miss Sheila Tweed

Revd K Chippindale

Mr Alan Hart

Revd Julian Macro

Mrs Sheila Pratt

Revd John Slow

2.11 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Brian Evans [2001]

Retiring 1999 Mrs Shirley Moss, Revd Elizabeth Scopes, Revd Graham Cook
Retiring 2000 Mrs J Barraclough, Revd Ivor Rees, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Revd Reginald Rooke, Revd Howard Starr
Retiring 2001 Revd Derek Wales, Mrs Flo Humes-Dixon
Retiring 2002 Mr Alan Small, Revd Denise Megson, Miss Margaret Compton
Revd Alison Davis, Mrs Janine Lawley, Dr Christopher Whitehead
Retiring 2003 Mr David Coaker**, Ms Elaine Gentles**, Mr Monty Helm**, Revd Lythan Nevard**

2.11.1 PANEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES - CRCW - Sub-Section

Mrs Daphne Beale Revd Peter Loveitt Revd Kate McIlhagga
Revd Vaughan Jones Mrs Ann Sutcliffe

2.12 PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd John Johansenberg

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Revd John Humphreys [1999] Revd Jean Forster [2000] Mrs Joan Staples [2000]
Dr Anthea Kaan [2001] Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee The Hon. Treasurer

2.12.1 WELFARE -Sub-Committee

Convener: Mrs Shirley Patton [1999]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

2.13 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Sutcliffe [1999]

Secretary: Secretary for Training

Dr Jean Butler [1999] Revd Chris Warner [1999] Revd Sandra Dears [2000]
Dr Iain Frew [2000] Revd John Proctor [2001] Dr Tony Jeans [2001]
Mrs Helen Brown [2002]** Revd Roy Lowes [2002]** Revd Ruth Ball [2001]
To be advised [2002]**

2.14 WINDERMERE - Advisory Group

Convener: Revd David A L Jenkins [2001]

Secretary: Revd Peter McIntosh

Revd Frank Cochrane Revd Alan Gaunt Revd Elizabeth Casewell
Revd Angela Hughes [2000] Revd Jean Mortimer [1999] Revd Stephen Thornton [2001]

2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Derek Lindfield [2002]**

Secretary: Mrs Jean Antcliffe [1999]

Miss Kathryn Swift [1999] Revd Ron Forster [1999] Revd Brenda Plenderleith [1999]
Mr Simon Loveitt [2000] Revd Philip Nevard [2000] Mr Gareth Curl [2001]
Revd Margaret Collins [2001] Mrs Caroline Chettleburgh [2002]**
FURY Chair FURY Council Member

3 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Provincial Moderators and three representatives from each Province together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees

Northern Province	Revd Peter Poulter, Dr Peter Clarke, Mrs Wilma Prentice
North Western Province	Revd Bob Day, Mrs Ann Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Ollerenshaw
Mersey Province	Mrs Barbara Martin, Dr Donald South, Revd Peter Roche
Yorkshire Province	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr Steve Wood, Mr Brian Evans
East Midlands Province	Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Graham Maskery, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Province	Mr Simon Rowntree, Mrs Erica Young, Revd Tom Bayliss
Eastern Province	Revd Michael Burrell, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
South Western Province	Revd John Rees, Mrs Mary Eden, Mr Geoff Lunt
Wessex Province	Revd Julian Macro, Revd David Williams, Mrs Sue Brown
Thames North Province	Dr Jack Gow, Revd Rachel Poolman, Revd John Edwards
Southern Province	Mrs Christine Meekison, Revd Lesley Charlton, Dr Graham Campling
Wales Province	Dr Jean Sylvan Evans, Mr Denis Earp, Mr Peter Devaney

4 TRUST BODIES

4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Mr Desmond Davies

Secretary: Mr Clem Frank

Revd Tony Burnham

Mr Ron Masser

Mrs Christine Meekison

Dr Brian Woodhall [2004]**

Mr David Marshall-Jones [2004]**

Mr Clem Frank

Mr William McVey

Mr Graham Stacy

Mr John Squires [2004]**

Mr Robert Hardie

Revd Richard Wiggins

Mr Clive Willis

Ms Valerie Ham [2004]**

4.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD - BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Revd Dr Arthur Chadwick

Secretary: Revd John Martin

Members of the URC:

Ms Valerie Ham

Mr Tom Swan

To be advised [2002]**

Mr Desmond Davies

Mr Ray Chambers * [2001]

Members of the Fund:

Revd Pam Ward

Revd John Martin

Revd Alasdair Walker [2001]

Revd Tony Spring

Revd Dr Arthur Chadwick

Revd Jessie Clare [2002]**

[Ex Officio - Mr Clem Frank, Mr Graham Stacy, Mr Victor Hughff, Revd Michael Harrison]

4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp

Mrs Mary Stacy

Mr Graham Stacy

Mr Hartley Oldham

Mrs Christine Meekison

Mr Robert Hardie

Mr Arthur Smith

Revd Peter Grimshaw

Revd Maurice Husselbee

Revd Geoffrey Satchell

Revd David Hannen

Revd John Taylor

5 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland

General Synod of Church of England

Methodist Conference

General Assembly of Church of Scotland

Scottish Congregational Church

Presbyterian Church of Wales

Union of Welsh Independents

Congregational Federation

Revd David Jenkins, Mrs Rosemary Johnston

Revd Murdoch McKenzie

Revd Sheila Maxey

Revd David Jenkins, Revd Stephen Thornton

Mrs Wilma Frew

Revd David Jenkins

6 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH on ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as URC representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of other representatives to ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, is available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

6.1 World Council of Churches

Assembly 1998

Revd Tony Burnham

Mrs Wilma Frew

6.2 Council for World Mission

Revd Pat Nimmo **

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid **

To be advised

Revd Philip Woods

6.3 Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - Assembly 1999

General Secretary

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

9 other members *To be advised*

Convener of the Ecumenical Committee

6.3.1 Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland - Church Representatives Meeting

General Secretary

Mrs Ruth Clarke

6.4 Churches Together in England - Forum 1999

The General Secretary, Convener Ecumenical Committee,
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, A Provincial Moderator
8 other members *To be advised*

6.4.1 Churches Together in England - Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.5 Action of Churches Together in Scotland - Central Council

Revd David Taylor

Mrs Kathleen Ziffo

6.6 CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales)

Assembly

The Provincial Moderator (Wales), Provincial Ecumenical Officer
Revd Simon Copley, Revd John Joseph, Revd David Wilkinson

Council

The Provincial Ecumenical Officer, Mrs Jackie Yeomans, Mr John Rhys

6.7 FREE CHURCHES' COUNCIL

Council

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Mr Desmond Curry, Revd Janet Lees

Executive

General Secretary

Women's Council

Revd Janet Lees

7 URC Representatives at formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees.

7.1 SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH / UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Negotiating Group

Co-Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard

Co-Secretary: Revd Tony Burnham

Revd James Breslin

Revd Mary Barr

Miss Felicity Harris

7.2 ENFYS (The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales)

Provincial Moderator (Wales)

Provincial Ecumenical Officer

Revd Susan Roberts

Revd Geoffrey Ward

Mrs Ann Shillaker

Revd Henry Gordon

7.3 Council for Wales Consultation on Forming a United Free Church in Wales

Provincial Moderator

Provincial Ecumenical Officer

Mr John Rhys

Revd James Breslin

Revd Mary Davies

7.4 SCOTTISH CHURCHES INITIATIVE FOR UNION [SCIFU]

Revd Peter Arthur

Revd James Breslin

Revd Sheila Maxey

Revd Fleur Houston *

7.5 METHODIST/URC Liason Committee

Revd Susan Henderson

Revd Geoffrey Clarke *

Revd Joe Clemson

Miss Betty Vickerton

Mr David Butler *

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

7.5.1 Health and Healing Development Group - Joint Committee

Revd Jim Hollyman

Mrs Jackie Ballard

Dr Margaret Moore

Dr Ivan Cox**

8 URC Representatives on Governing Bodies of Theological Colleges etc.,

8.1 Mansfield College:

Ministerial and Educational
Training Committee

Revd Graham Robson**

Revd Dr David Peel

Revd Janet Sowerbutts

8.2 New College London

Foundation Trustees

Mr John Smethers, Mr Graham Stacy, Revd John Pugh

8.3 Northern College

The Secretary for Training, Revd John Marsh

Mrs Helen Brown, Mr Jim Wilkinson

- 8.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors
Convener: Dr David Thompson
Clerk: Mr Andrew Armour
Mr Don Taylor, Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
Mrs Valerie Burnham, Revd Sandra Lloydlangston
- 8.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation
Mr Desmond Davies, Revd Michael Dunford
- 8.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation
Joint Academic Committee
Convener Westminster College Governors
Secretary for Training
The Secretary for Training
- 8.5 Homerton College Trustees
Mr John Chaplin, Lady Sally Williams **
Mrs Elisabeth Jupp, Dr David Thompson
- 8.6 Queen's College, Birmingham
Revd Elizabeth Welch, Revd Ken Chippendale
Secretary for Training in attendance
- 8.7 St Andrew's Hall Selly Oak
Mrs Mareke Arthur *, Mrs Haro Horsfield
Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee, Revd Philip Woods*
- 8.8 Aberystwyth (Memorial College)
Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris, Mr Leslie Jones
- 8.9 Westhill College
Foundation Governor: Dr Richard Jurd
Foundation Trustees: Mr J E Payne
To be advised

9 GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the URC is associated

- 9.1 Caterham School
9.2 Eltham College/Walthamstow Hall
9.3 Milton Mount Foundation
9.4 Silcoates School
9.5 Taunton School
9.6 Wentworth Milton Mount
- Revd David Helyar
To be advised
Mrs Gwen Hall
Revd George Thomas
Mr David Butler
Dr Clyde Binfield
Mr John Gilbey
Mr Brian Herbet
Revd Ray Adams
Revd George Thomas
- Revd Peter Grimshaw
Revd Erica Beglin
Dr Peter Clarke
Revd Arnold Harrison
Revd Brenda Hill

10 Miscellaneous:

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

- Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund
Christian Education Movement Council
Church Hymnary Trust
Churches Commission on Overseas Students
Churches Consortium on Industrial Mission
Churches Council for Health and Healing
Churches' Group on Funeral Services at
Cemeteries and Crematoria
Churches Main Committee
Congregational Fund Board
Guides' Religious Advisory Panel
International Bible Reading Association
Media Awareness Project
National Christian Education Council
National Council of Voluntary Organisations
- Mr Ken Meekison (Hon. Treasurer),
Revd Geoffrey Satchell,
Mr Laurence Macro
Mrs Margi Jenkins **
Mr G R Barr, Mrs Fiona Smith
Revd Kevin Swaine
Revd Michael Diffey
Revd Robin Hine, Revd Jim Hollyman, Mrs Connie Bunker
Revd Dr Peter Jupp, Revd Sally Thomas
Mr Clem Frank, Mr Hartley Oldham, Mr Tegid Peregrine
Revd Cyril Grant, Revd Dorothy Havergal-Shaw
Revd Aubrey Lewis, Revd Eric Allen
Mrs Susan Walker
vacant
Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd Keith Forecast, Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Revd Peter Brain

National Ecumenical Agency for
Further Education
Scottish World Day of Prayer
Scouts' Religious Advisory Group
Society for the Ministry of Women in the Church
United Reformed Church History Society

URC Boy's Brigade Companies Council
Wharton Trust
Widows Fund of the Three Denominations

Women's World Day of Prayer

Secretary for Ministries, Revd Kevin Swaine
Mrs Molly Glen
Mr D Marshall-Jones
Revd Florence Frost-Mee
Mrs Mary Davies, Revd Peter Jupp, Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd Eric Wollaston, Dr David Thompson
Revd Michael Rees
Mr Norman Fabb
Mr Ken Meekison, Revd Geoffrey Satchell
Mr Laurence Macro
Mrs Josie Pinner

RESOLUTION 42

Nominations

Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 108 to 115 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*
Revd Tony Burnham, Revd Jean Forster, Revd John Humphreys, Dr Anthea Kaan,
Mrs Joan Staples and the Convener of the Welfare Sub-Committee.

1 The Committee has continued its work with individual ministers as need has arisen. It seeks on behalf of the Assembly to respond to each situation with sensitivity and pastoral care. Assembly is well aware of the confidential nature of the work so it will expect no more than a general reference to this aspect. The committee continues to commend to your prayers all those ministers and their families who face pressures in the home and work situation.

2 The Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service continues to be helpful in certain cases and it is good to have this confidential resource.

Close co-operation with provincial Moderators, the Welfare Sub-Committee and the Counselling Service enables us to have a positive role in complex situations.

3 Time has been spent considering the remit of the Committee in the light of the new disciplinary procedures and it is likely that a revised remit will be presented next year.

4 Thanks are expressed to the Revd John Waller for his work as Secretary and to Shirley Paton who convenes the Welfare Sub-Committee.

Welfare Sub-Committee

Convener: *Mrs Shirley Paton* **Secretary:** *Mrs Judy Stockings*

1.1 This is a sub-committee of the Assembly Pastoral Committee and as such carries out its duty in accordance with the remit as laid down by that Committee.

1.2 The welfare work of the Church has continued and the committee has been able to give assistance to ministers and their families, especially those who fall outside other areas of Church's care.

1.3 In consultation with the Trustees, the sub-committee has been permitted to rationalise the funds in its care into two main groups, those concerned with ministers' welfare and those concerned with schooling.

1.4 **Ministers Welfare** Gifts from this fund of some £11,406 have been made to ministers and their dependants and to ministers' spouses following their

bereavement. The Christmas gifts to widows/ers have been increased from £60 to £65 and from £30 to £35 in respect of dependant children. In total, at Christmas 1997, gifts of £34,950 were made.

1.5 **Assistance with schooling** From the group of funds available in this area, gifts totalling some £22,769 have been made towards the cost of school uniforms, equipment and school fees.

1.6 There is a small fund which is available to lay persons from which gifts totalling £5,000 have been made.

1.7 The guidance and support of the Provincial Moderators to this sub-committee has been greatly 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 development of resources. It gives direct support to, and acts in partnership with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship; Discipleship, Stewardship 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*
Revd Ruth Ball, Mrs Jean Butler, Revd Sandra Dears, Dr Iain Frew,
Revd John Proctor, Revd Chris Warner, Dr Tony Jeans
Staff Secretary: *Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee*

1 Introduction

1.1 Last year the Training Committee's Report drew attention to the training of lay preachers, entry qualifications for ordained ministry, minimum qualification for ordination and the course paths of training. Once again much of our Report is concerned with ordained ministers. It is important, therefore, that we emphasise that this particular cycle of our work is being undertaken within an overall vision which includes the whole church. Our prayer is that the whole people of the Church will be better equipped to celebrate, live and share their faith. Being 'equipped' is not simply a matter of knowledge and skills, it has to do also with spiritual awareness, the grounding and depth of faith, gratitude to and confidence in the one God of the one household. No one word such as training, education, learning, formation, conversion, describes the processes involved. We are speaking about a subtle collaboration between the people of God and the Spirit of God working together to create the new future into which, we believe, God is calling us.

2 Training for Learning and Serving

2.1 The Training for Learning and Serving programme continues to grow. From its start with 24 students three years ago, there are now 94 students on the Foundation Course (comparable with numbers in Scotland). 14 students are on the Worship and Preaching Course which is running for the first time; most of these will apply for national accreditation as Lay Preachers. We are glad that since the programme began in England and Wales, 20 Certificates of Completion of the Foundation Course have been awarded and that already some eight students have engaged in various stages of candidacy for Ministerial training.

2.2 We are planning for further growth in the academic year starting in September 1998. Four centres will be used for Foundation weekends and two will be used for Worship and Preaching weekends. The preparation of the specialist courses, *Life of Prayer* and *Pastoral Care* is well advanced and these courses should be available during the academic year 1998/99.

2.3 We remain extremely grateful to the voluntary staff (the National Co-ordinator the Revd David A L Jenkins, Regional Organisers, Local Tutors and Lay Preaching Commissioners) who give willingly of their time and skills, and to the 400 support group members and the congregations which help students with their practical work.

3 Regional Groupings

3.1 During the year the training officers and college staffs have met in three regional groupings, north; east and south; west and south. The purpose of the meetings was to look for ways of collaboration, sharing resources and avoiding duplication of effort.

4 The Ecumenical Strategy Group for Initial Ministerial Training

4.1 The Ecumenical Strategy Group for Initial Ministerial Training meets about four times a year. It is a group where denominational officers can share information and discuss issues and concerns in confidence. It also consults with regional groups. It can advise and urge, but not compel. The denominations have not been able to agree that it should have delegated authority or that a comparable

group dealing with finance issues should be established (as originally envisaged). Decision-making therefore remains the sole responsibility of the appropriate denominational bodies, but will be informed by the work of the Ecumenical Strategy Group for Initial Ministerial Training. To this end, some meetings will include Conveners/Chairs of Boards etc., as well as the relevant officers. It has been proposed that the Ecumenical Strategy Group affiliate to Churches Together in England. Meetings are usually attended by staff secretaries, or the equivalent, from the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Union, the Congregation Federation, the Moravian Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army.

4.2 During the past year the group has had extensive discussions with the Roman Catholic Church and has initiated regional meetings of theological colleges in the West of England, the North of England and the Oxford area. This has helped theological institutions understand one another better. Although many groups of theological institutions are working together ecumenically in an excellent way, the group hope that these regional meetings lead to even better co-operation.

4.3 The group has also been concerned with issues arising out of *The Dearing Report on Higher Education* and the Government White Paper '*Life Long Learning*' which may, (if published), have a significant effect on training for Ministry.

5 Training Board at National Assessment Conferences

5.1 In the past, representatives from the four colleges involved in full-time training for Stipendiary Ministers, formed the Training Board at National Assessment Conferences. The task of this Board is to advise on suitable training for those applying for Ministry within the United Reformed Church. This arrangement was seen by some candidates as competitive. For this reason, the composition of the Board has been changed to include one representative from a College, one representative from the Training Committee and an officer (such as the Secretary for Training). This smaller group makes fewer demands on busy College Staff, and is able to provide full advice for prospective ordinands.

6 Youth and Children's Work Training Officers

6.1 On 1st January 1997, the greater part of the management of Youth and Children's Work Officers passed to Provincial Management teams. At its January meeting, the Committee accepted its part in the management structure which has to do with appointments, reviews of staff, discipline and grievance procedures and with overall policy. Members of the Committee believe that it is important that links are maintained with the Provincial Managers as well as with the Youth and Children's Work Training Officers. Helen Brown is to be thanked most warmly for all the preparatory work involved in establishing the new structure and for working on a new *Youth and Children's Work Training Officer Development Policy*. This has involved wide consultation and much re-drafting.

6.2 It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Wendy Walker, Youth and Children's Work Officer for Southern Province. Wendy brought cheerful enthusiasm to her work, and was greatly respected by all who knew her, especially for the way in which she carried on despite regular dialysis treatment for diabetes and kidney disease. Sandra Ackroyd, Youth and Children's Work Trainer for Thames North Province finally completed her work after many years of service. We offer our grateful thanks for all that she has given to the Province and the National Church. As we say goodbye to Wendy and Sandra, the Committee welcomes Mick Maskell as Youth and Children's Work Officer for Yorkshire Province. His presence is already greatly appreciated by the Team.

7 Inspections of Colleges

A. Mansfield College, Oxford

Report of the Inspection conducted on behalf of the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation 1996-8

7.1 The Inspection Team:

A joint Inspection team was established by the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation in autumn 1996. The United Reformed Church Training Committee and the Congregational Federation appointed the following inspectors:

- ◆ Revd Michael Durber (Convener) - Congregational Federation Training Co-ordinator [Congregational Federation]
- ◆ Revd Dr David Peel - Principal, Northern College, Manchester [United Reformed Church]

- ◆ Ms Heather Walton – Lecturer in Applied Theology, Westminster College, Oxford, and Methodist Local Preacher
[Congregational Federation nomination]
- ◆ Revd Dr Lesley Husseelbee – Secretary for Training, United Reformed Church
[United Reformed Church]
- ◆ Ms Beryl Knotts – Elder, Summertown United Reformed Church
[representative of a local church]
- ◆ Revd Ruth Ball – United Reformed Church minister
[former student]

7.2 The Remit

7.2.1 The remit of the team was to assess the standard and appropriateness of the training and education for the churches provided through Mansfield College and to make such constructive suggestions and recommendations as it deemed appropriate.

7.2.2 The Inspection comes at a time when many institutions involved in theological education have been challenged by developments in society, in theology and in educational methodology. All are having to find ways of responding to new situations and demands. The team was concerned to stress that it saw its role as essentially constructive, in seeing how Mansfield had risen to these challenges and offering a chance for dialogue on possible future development. It was also aware that it was answerable primarily to the Church bodies that had appointed its members. It seemed right, therefore, that, throughout the inspection process, staff and students should be as closely involved as possible and that their response to the team's initial views should help inform the report.

7.3 How the Remit was implemented

7.3.1 In December 1996, a detailed questionnaire, asking for information about staffing and courses, was sent to Mansfield College.

7.3.2 The Inspection team met for a preliminary meeting at Mansfield College on Friday 24th January, 1997. It had an opportunity to meet members of staff and representatives of the students from the Ministerial Training Course.

7.3.3 At the invitation of the college, the Inspectors sent two questionnaires to 64 students who had taken part in the Ministerial Training Course over the last ten years (1986-1996).

7.3.4 The team visited the College for a concentrated period from Friday 28th February to Friday 7th March, 1997. Some members of the team were able to make additional visits on other occasions. Members were able to observe teaching in a wide range of sessions covering the Mansfield Training Course, including the BTh, and the MTh. They were able to share in worship with members of the College community. Individual and group discussions were arranged with staff and students, with the Principal and the Bursar, and with placement and internship supervisors. Written submissions were received from the students.

7.3.5 Subsequently, the team met to consider and draft its report. The draft version was then considered jointly by the inspection team and Mansfield's Ministerial Education and Training Committee. Further submissions were received from the staff and students, and a final version of the Report was written, (dated 12th September, 1997) which included ten recommendations.

7.3.6 The United Reformed Church Training Committee discussed the Report at its meeting on 10-11th September 1997, and the Congregational Federation Training Board discussed the Report at its meeting on 12th September 1997. Both Committees asked that Mansfield College draw up a plan of how they were to meet the recommendations and report to the Inspectors by January 1998.

7.3.7 The Mansfield Ministerial Education and Training Committee and staff met to discuss the Final Report and ways in which they might meet the recommendations. A response was submitted to the Inspection team at a meeting on 19th January 1998, when members of staff met the Inspectors.

7.3.8 What follows is the Inspection team's response.

7.4 Report of the Inspectors

7.4.1 The Inspection team is very grateful to the staff and students of the College for their hospitality and welcome to the team, and congratulates the College for the way in which they have attempted to meet the recommendations.

7.4.2 The team recognises these are times of great change for all institutions of adult learning. These include increased external assessment of teaching quality and greater attention to desired learning outcomes for students with a wide variety of previous academic experience. With such changes come new challenges and opportunities for a diverse college community in a post-modern world,

where the element of choice is held in high esteem. The team were pleased to see that within the aims of the ordination course great importance was placed on the attempt to be contextual (i.e grounded in experience), collaborative and integrative. We would want to see any ordination course offering a sense of commonality, mutual accountability and consistency.

7.5 Recommendations:

7.5.1 The Mansfield Education and Training Committee should inaugurate a thorough review of the Course of training provided for ministerial education by the College. The review should be completed by 1st January 1999. The College is to be congratulated for the way in which it has set up a group to institute a review. Work is due to begin in April/May 1998 and we commend the whole of the inspection report dated 12th September to them.

7.5.2 Clear goals should be produced for each course based on the aims and objectives as a whole. The College is to be commended for the way in which it is attempting to meet this requirement. We encourage the College in its efforts to persuade Oxford University and the Oxford Partnership for Education and Theology to produce aims, objectives and learning outcomes for all courses of the BTh and MTh degrees.

7.5.3 Thought should be given to the use of educational methods better suited to the various needs of ordinands and other participants, and course should be revised to take account of these methods. We are pleased to hear that the BTh and the Certificate in Theology are being revised by the twelve participating colleges, that the College is open to the use of a variety of educational methods, and that those concerned are happy to visit other institutions to find ways in which teaching can be improved.

7.5.4 Due recognition should be given to the existing provision of chaplaincy to church-related students whereby one of the chaplains is outside the teaching and assessment structure; the availability of pastoral care and support from this and a number of other sources should be drawn to the attention of students; professional counselling should be made available when appropriate; and the effectiveness of the provision of such care and counsel should be monitored. We are pleased to hear of the appointment by the College of a Chaplain to Ordinands and that Ordinands are advised of the provision by the University of a free professional Counselling Service.

7.5.6 Placement and Internship Supervisors should be helped to develop skills in theological reflection and supervisory technique through sessions arranged annually for this purpose. We are pleased to hear that two meetings with placement supervisors are now held each year. We encourage the College to assure Placement and Internship Supervisors of the importance of all concerned taking such training in theological reflection seriously, and that attendance at sessions should be a condition of having a student placed with them.

7.5.7 The models of worship implicit in both chapel services and the teaching of worship and preaching should be rethought and a more collaborative approach adopted. We welcome the attempts that the College has made to make worship more collaborative, and we encourage them to continue to struggle (as are other Colleges and Churches) to meet the needs of ordinands with differing theological and liturgical viewpoints, alongside the worship needs of a secular undergraduate community.

7.5.8 A high priority should be given to fostering ordinands' spiritual growth both individually and in community, through regular discussion with tutors. This could include an encouragement to develop a confidential relationship with a person equipped to offer guidance, support and challenge. We also encourage the College to continue to offer a wide range of spiritual resources and methods. We look forward to seeing that Mansfield (and the other United Reformed Church-related colleges) respond to the important needs which underlie this recommendation.

7.5.9 Mission should be a key focus for those pursuing church-related Courses and all ordinands should undertake a course in Mission and Evangelism. We are pleased to hear that the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies will be holding a Pastoral Studies Week on the theme 'Developing a Mission Strategy for the Local Church' and hope that this (or its equivalent) will be made available for future generations of students.

7.5.10 The Inspection team concurs with decision to discontinue offering the MTh as a course option at Mansfield. We encourage the College, however, to provide adequate teaching, financial and library resources, so that a suitable further degree in pastoral theology can become available to Mansfield students.

7.5.11 Ecumenical co-operation and commitment, especially within OPTET and between the Non-conformist Colleges, should be enhanced. We are pleased to hear of the interchange of teaching and of the annual service for ordinands, but while we recognise the geographical and theological difficulties, the inspectors encourage the College in their struggle to provide greater opportunities for ordinands from differing denominations to meet with and discuss with one another. The inspectors believe Mansfield can help make a distinctive Non-Conformist contribution to the ecumenical scene within the University.

7.5.12 A clear vision for lay training should be developed. We welcome what the College is already doing among the undergraduate community, and, despite the shortage of staff time and the uncertainty concerning what the denominations are asking of the colleges in this matter, we encourage the College to struggle to work out a clear and sustainable future policy concerning lay education.

7.6 College Staff

7.6.1 Throughout the period of the Inspection, the team was very conscious of the absence, through illness, of the Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, Associate Director of Ministerial Training. We rejoice in her recovery and share in the hopes and prayers for Catherine's full recovery to health.

7.6.2 We were also sorry to hear that the Director of Training, the Revd Charles Brock, is to retire at the end of August 1998, from the post which he has held at the College for the past 35 years. We take this opportunity to thank him for all that he has done over the years for Congregational and United Reformed Church ordinands, and to wish him well in his semi-retirement.

7.6.3 On behalf of the Training Committee, we record our thanks to Dr Elaine Kaye, Chair of the Ministerial Education Training Committee for all her support during the inspection, and to thank her for all that she has done for the Ministerial Education and Training Committee during her period of office, which ends in June 1998.

7.6.4 We would also like to record our thanks to other members of staff: Revd Dr John Muddiman, Revd Tony Tucker, Dr Donald Sykes, Revd Robin Pagan and all others who work with United Reformed Church and Congregational students.

7.7 Conclusion

7.7.1 The inspection team is glad to be able to report that the College staff have shown themselves prepared to listen to our observations and recommendations in order to develop the education and training offered to ordinands. It is to be hoped that through the work of the review team and the on-going role of METC, Mansfield will continue to make a distinctive and valuable contribution to ordination training within the United Reformed Church. We wish the College well in their appointment of a new director of ordination training for the next millenium.

B. South East Institute for Theological Education

7.8.1 The inspectors raised a number of critical points about the course and its administration. The Committee's assessors also spoke of apparent weaknesses in the areas of integration, flexibility in relation to students needs, weaknesses in adult education methodology and in practising and teaching collaborative ministry. The Training Committee recognises, nonetheless, that there has been much improvement in the course since the appointment of the present Principal. It will await the follow-up visit of the Inspectors with interest.

8 Northern College and Manchester Christian Institute

8.1 The Committee read with interest a Review of Northern College, 'Enhancing Effective Ministry: The Next Steps' and warmly welcomed the direction of its recommendation. Many of these will come to fruition through the participation of the College in the plans formulated by the future of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry (see the Report of Northern College).

8.2 In brief, a new very broad ecumenical body will come into being on the 1st September, The Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester. The Partnership, made up of churches, colleges and courses, will have a commitment to lay education, initial and post ordination training and to continuing ministerial education. John Sutcliffe has been nominated to serve as President of The Partnership from 1998-2000. The Committee noted that there would be no change in the course taken by ordinands.

8.3 The mission statement for The Partnership will be:

'The Partnership, working together to embody the good news of God through Christ, is committed to:

- (i) learning through engagement with scriptures, past and present Christian traditions, the world church, other faith communities and contemporary experience and thinking,
- (ii) building communities of learning, justice and liberation which provide opportunities for all to explore theology, discipleship, Worship and spirituality, including the preparation of some for accredited forms of ministry,
- (iii) sharing theological resources with and among local churches and communities, and the wider networks to which its partners belong'.

9 St Andrew's Hall

9.1 The Council of the College have been much exercised about its financial viability and role. CWM has indicated its preference for using mission colleges and courses in other parts of the world. The block grant given by the United Reformed Church is to be withdrawn after 31st August 1999 and the other partner in the College, the Baptist Missionary Society, is already critically reviewing its participation. The Council have appointed the Revd Dr Chris Wigglesworth as Principal with particular responsibility for advocacy and external relations, and the Revd Pat Nimmo as Director for Educational Programme Development and for European relations. Both have been appointed from 1st April 1998 to 31st August 1999. They will both serve with the Revd John Burgess from Easter 1998 until the summer of 1999 when further decisions about the future of the College will be taken.

9.2 The Revd David Grainger, the previous Principal of St Andrew's Hall, left at the end of August 1997, and the Revd Fei Taule'ale'ausumai, a tutor from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, returned to Auckland to continue with her PhD studies at the end of November, 1997. The Committee wishes to record their grateful thanks to both for their enthusiastic work for the college. We are especially grateful to the Revd John Burgess who has been serving as Acting Principal from 1st September 1997 until 30th April 1998, not least because he worked as the sole tutor (with help from others) during the Spring term.

10 Lay Leadership Course

10.1 The course written by Mersey Province has been tested with a group of 17 participants in the ten weeks before and after Christmas 1997. It was extremely well received. A number of amendments will be made to the text, and if the evaluation of the programme proves to be successful, it may be available for further use in the Province and in the Church generally. The Committee congratulated the Province both on the Course and on its collaborative approach to leadership in the churches.

11 Publications

11.1 We commend the following recent or forthcoming United Reformed Church publications:

- a) ***Developing Discipleship***
A post confirmation course for groups within the local church. This course has been developed by the United Reformed Church and has since been adopted by the Methodist Church.
- b) ***Settling In***
An induction booklet for Elders, Church Secretaries, Interim Moderators and Ministers to help Ministers settle in to a new pastorate.
- c) ***Under God's Good Hand - A history of the traditions which have come together in the United Reformed Church***
By the Revd Dr David Cornick, Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge. This is an important text for those who wish to understand the history of the United Reformed Church.
- d) ***Reviewing Eldership***
By Peter McIntosh - a book for elders.
- e) ***Becoming a Minister - Entry Qualifications for starting Training***
A booklet giving details about educational requirements needed before beginning training for the United Reformed Church Ministry.
- f) ***Becoming a Minister - Financing Your Training***
A booklet giving details about grants which are available for those training for Ministry of Word and Sacraments.

12 The Studies' Panel

12.1 The Studies' Panel is a sub-committee of the Training Committee which meets twice a year, and its convener is the Revd David Jenkins. Its task is to act as a Board of Studies for courses within the United Reformed Church which do not have their own decision-making powers. The Panel oversees, for example, the whole programme of courses used to train Non-Stipendiary Ministers, Lay Preachers, Church Related Community Workers. It considers the validation and inspection of courses and particular student concerns which arise from time to time. The Studies Panel issues Certificates of Completed Study to Non-Stipendiary Ministers, and records the completion of courses taken by Lay Preachers, which the Ministries' Committee later accredits.

13 The Training Finance Sub-Committee

13.1 The Training Finance Sub-Committee, which meets about three times a year, oversees any financial issues concerned with people undertaking training. The Sub-Committee advises on the Training Committee's budget. It also advises on the level of grant to be awarded to stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry ordinands and those training to be Church Related Community Workers. It oversees the awarding of grants for the in-service training of ministers and for lay training. In addition, the Committee considers special cases of hardship and special financial requests from ministerial and lay students. The Convener of the Sub-Committee is the Revd Elizabeth Nash, and the committee is advised by the Chief Accountant and the Treasurer of the United Reformed Church.

14 Personnel

14.1 We should like to record our grateful thanks to all those who have served the Training Committee over the past year, but our especial thanks go to the Revd Dr Catherine Middleton, who has faithfully and efficiently served as Committee Secretary over the last four years. Despite serious illness, Catherine, has contributed greatly to the committee's work. We rejoice that she is much better now, and we will miss her presence with us. We should also like to thank Kay Alberg for her contribution to the Committee as student representative.

15 Continuing Ministerial Education

15.1 The Training Committee believes that the time has come to re-launch and enlarge a new programme of Continuing Ministerial Education (formally known as In-Service Training) for the United Reformed Church. [The term, '*Continuing Ministerial Education*' (CME) is used in other Churches. Its use by the United Reformed Church will make ecumenical recognition and collaboration easier than the use of another term. *Continuing Ministerial Education* is an umbrella term which includes both Post-Ordination Education and Training and other In-Service Learning opportunities for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers.]

15.2 Why is Continuing Ministerial Education important?

Continued enrichment of mind and spirit is vital for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers and for the Church. Only by such enrichment will Ministers and Church Related Community Workers continue to be equipped to participate in the Mission of God, to address the needs of individuals, and to engage with the issues that shape a plural and changing society.

15.3 The Committee believes 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, excited and inspired by new insights, and may take up the challenges that come to those willing to discover the ever new things that God is doing. We believe that over a period, participation in the proposed scheme will help them to be better Ministers both in their personal development and in preparing them for specific ministries, and that it will increase the effectiveness of Ministers and give them a greater sense of their fulfilment in their discipleship and outworking of their calling. It will lead to members of the Church being better equipped to relate their faith to the demands and decisions of daily life and to speak about their faith.

15.4 The Committee has worked hard to prepare the foundations for a new programme of Continuing Ministerial Education. During the preparation of these proposals a representative of the Committee has had discussion with the Resource Planning Advisory Group and has taken cognisance of the report of the Church of Scotland's Committee on the Maintenance of the Ministry, May 1987, which addresses the topic of 'Ministry Development' and of the in-service scheme operated by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

15.5 Aim:

The aim of Continuing Ministerial Education is to help ministers be more effective both in their personal development and in preparation for specific ministries.

15.6 Objectives for Continuing Ministerial Education:

- (i) To help ministers reflect theologically on their ministry, so that theory and practice are brought together.
- (ii) To help ministers appreciate the creative relationship between personal appraisal and continuing ministerial education.
- (iii) To enable ministers to keep abreast of Biblical, theological and other learning relevant to ministry in a rapidly changing world.
- (iv) To assist ministers to continue to develop appropriate specialisms and skills as the emphases of their ministry change.
- (v) To encourage ministers to have a thirst for learning, continued spiritual growth and informed flexibility in ministry.
- (vi) To help ministers take seriously their role as teaching elders, to share good practice and to learn from growth points in the Church.

- (vii) To renew ministers in their tasks of caring for and enabling people to develop and express their discipleship.
- (vii) To encourage, as an extra to normal continuing ministerial education, the provision of induction courses for all new work.

And, during the Post-Ordination period to:

- (ix) Provide a consistent and co-ordinated programme for ministers in their first three years of ministry.
- (x) Provide a programme which is earthed in practical ministry.
- (xi) Offer support.

15.7 In order to achieve this, we propose the development of two already existing programmes:

- A.** Post-Ordination Education and Training – (POET)
- B.** Continuing Ministerial Education (previously known as In-Service Training for Ministers)

A. Post-Ordination Education and Training – POET

Post-Ordination Training – what we have at the moment

- i) Post-Ordination Training is compulsory for all ministers and takes place during the first three years of their ministry. Until now, the responsibility for organising Post-Ordination Training has lain with the Province who have generally laid on a number of pastoral /support/ skill learning days; and Districts have appointed a pastoral adviser for each new minister. At the end of the first three years in ministry, ministers have been invited to a refresher course at either Westminster College or at the Windermere Centre. Ministers have also been invited to a 24-48 hour visit to The United Reformed Church House to learn more about the work of the United Reformed Church committees and of the House.
- ii) Post-Ordination Training is needed because not all training needs can be covered prior to ordination and because some needs only emerge during the practice of ministry.

- iii) **The need for new proposals**
- a) So why are we introducing new proposals? Currently, the quality and quantity of Post ordination training is variable. Some Provinces have produced admirable guidelines and run excellent courses. Some ministers have worked very hard in this area. But this is not, unfortunately, true throughout the Church. The intention is that the programme of Post-Ordination Education and Training described below will be an obligation for all ministers. The arrangements for Post-Ordination Education and Training are to be made part of the settlement agreement for each new minister.
- b) The Training Committee’s aim is to introduce a programme of continuing ministerial education for all serving ministers. Post-Ordination Education and Training is a very important part of these plans, because it introduces both ministers and local churches to the idea that the minister will continue to learn and develop, so the learning becomes a habit, integral to ministry.

B. Continuing Ministerial Education for More Experienced Ministers

Continuing Ministerial Education – what we have at the moment

i) All those in ministry – (Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers, Church Related Community Workers, Youth and Children’s Work Trainers and Lay Preachers) are encouraged to take part in In-Service Training. Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers are expected to take one week each year (including Sunday) off from their pastorates, in order to take time apart to study and reflect. Ministers, Church Related Community Workers and Youth and Children’s Workers are invited to apply for In-Service Training grants supported by the national Church and Provinces. Then, every ten years, both Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers are encouraged to take up to three months off for study and reflection, again supported by grants.

ii) **The need for new proposals**

a) We find, however, that barely ten percent of ministers apply for the In-Service Training grants that are offered, and even if Ministers apply for support from other sources, or personally fund their training, we suspect that perhaps only about twenty percent of

ministers take the opportunity to take time out to develop their spiritual and personal skills for ministry. If this is true, then this is a great cause of concern. We are living in what many describe as a post-modern, secular age which calls all local churches to new challenges of mission within their local community. Ministers have an important opportunity to initiate new ideas and visions which will help the church grow. If Ministers are stuck, educationally and spiritually, in the period in which they initially trained for ministry, then the Church itself may also become out of date and irrelevant to current needs. In addition, continuing ministerial education may help ministers respond more effectively to the ‘Belonging to the World Church’ proposals.

b) The following three Resolutions offer proposals for ways forward which will enable all ministers to grow and develop their ministry.

RESOLUTION 43 The proposed model for Post-Ordination Education and Training

The General Assembly endorses the programme for Post-Ordination Education and Training of Ministers set out below:

1.1 The programme will consist of three strands: theological reflection, personal / spiritual development and the acquiring of further skills, knowledge and understanding information. All three strands will be provided by each of three different sources:

(a) **Locally – through one to one work with a pastoral adviser.**

The Province will, having consulted with the new minister and with the relevant District Pastoral Committee, appoint a Pastoral Adviser. This will happen as soon as possible, and in any case within three months of ordination. The task of the Pastoral Adviser is to offer support, opportunities for theological reflection and encouragement of spiritual and personal development. The minister and Pastoral Adviser will meet every six weeks.

Guidelines regarding the role of the Pastoral Adviser will be made nationally in collaboration with Provinces, but training opportunities will be delivered provincially. Further guidelines and training opportunities for Pastoral Advisers will be made available.

(b) **Provincially – through work with a group of new ministers in their first three years of ministry.**

At least three training days a year will be provided by the Province. The programme for these should be fairly flexible in order to meet the needs of each group of new ministers. It is important for new ministers to identify with their Provincial group, which will consist of ministers in at least their first, second and third year of ministry. Guidelines for Provincial Directors of training will be issued.

(c) Nationally - through residential weekends.

New ministers will attend two 48 hour residential weekends in each of the three years of the programme. These will be run using a syllabus such as the one suggested below so that a variety of areas of skill and experience can be developed. Courses timetabled at weekends are important because they provide an opportunity for all new ministers to attend, and they provide a Sunday free of leading worship and the preparation involved. Arrangements will be made for defraying essential costs.

1.2 Further detail

- a) The oversight of the programme will be carried out nationally.
- b) It is proposed that this new Post-Ordination Education and Training programme begins for all newly-ordained ministers in September 1999. In order to make Provincial groups more viable, ministers ordained in 1997 and 1998 will be invited to join these groups.
- c) There will need to be a 24 hour consultation for Provincial Post-Ordination Education and Training co-ordinators and Provincial Moderators in Spring 1999.
- d) Training for Pastoral Advisers should begin in Spring 1999.
- e) Initial training colleges and Courses will be asked to provide suggestions about the training needs of each new minister as initial

training is completed. The Provincial Director of Training, or some other similar person in the Province, could encourage new ministers to work on these suggestions during the Post-Ordination Education and Training.

- f) The refresher course year would move from the third year after ordination to the fourth year, followed by the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, etc...

1.3 Suggested syllabus for residential weekends

Nine courses will be offered (three in each year of Post-Ordination Education and Training), from which the new ministers will choose six (two in each year).

The topic for these could be :

- a) Worship
- b) World Church
- c) Working in groups
- d) Time Management
- e) Theological Reflection
- f) Spirituality
- g) Social Analysis
- h) Post-modernism and its significance for mission
- i) Ministry and identity
- j) Ministry in context
- k) Handling conflict
- l) Ecumenism
- m) Continuing Bible Study
- n) Contextual Missiology
- o) Communication
- p) Administration

RESOLUTION 44

Continuing Ministerial Education

The General Assembly endorses the programme of Continuing Ministerial Education set out in the Book of Reports.

1.1 Ministers and Church Related Community Workers are strongly urged to devote two weeks per year to Continuing Ministerial Education. [Post Ordination courses, refresher courses and sabbatical leave will count as Continuing Ministerial Education in the year in which they are taken. Ministers may opt, if they wish, to nominate Provincial summer and spring schools for ministers as one of their weeks or part of one of their weeks of Continuing Ministerial Education depending on the length of the school. It will be possible for some courses to be planned as first or higher degree modules. To make this possible it

will be best, as far as stipendiary ministers are concerned, to think of 'week' meaning Monday 9.00am until Friday lunch-time. Ministers attending a week long course should not be expected to lead worship on the following Sunday, thus allowing time for time off and for the family. For non-stipendiary ministers who, because of other work cannot attend a mid-week course, a 'week' means two weekends each lasting from Friday evening until Sunday teatime. Alternatively, a 'week' may be calculated at 40 hours.]

1.2 The development of the Continuing Ministerial Education programme will take place in two stages:

- a) September 1999 to August 2000: At this stage, all ministers in active service of the United Reformed Church and Church Related Community Workers will be expected to devote one week per year to Continuing Ministerial Education.
- b) September 2000 onwards: After this initial period, it will be expected that all ministers and Church Related Community Workers should normally devote two weeks per year to Continuing Ministerial Education.

1.3.1 District Councils and local churches are strongly urged to ensure that an agreement requiring the minister to take one week's Continuing Ministerial Education in the academic year beginning in September 1999 and two weeks Continuing Ministerial Education in the academic year beginning in September 2000 and in subsequent years. A statement beginning such agreements should be included in all settlement agreements made after the 1st September 1998

1.4 All ministers should keep a record/portfolio of continued learning.

1.5 Continuing Ministerial Education may be provided via two routes:

- i) a programme of approved courses, including ecumenical courses, from which ministers may select *or*
- ii) an agreed programme of reading, writing or other activity suggested by the minister and approved by a Continuing Ministerial Education Provision sub-committee

1.6 In any year where a new ministry is being taken up, an opportunity for Continuing Ministerial Education of up to four weeks should be available as part of the induction into a new post. This time should be used for the direct benefit of equipping the minister for the work ahead.

1.7 Resource Planning Advisory Group are asked to include the cost of Continuing Ministerial Education in the budget of the Church.

1.8 The Training Committee is requested to set up a Continuing Ministerial Education sub-committee, composed of representatives of the Colleges recognised by the United Reformed Church's Training Committee, representatives of Provincial Training Officers and of the Training Committee.

1.9 The brief of the Continuing Ministerial Education Provision sub-committee is to:

- a) prepare a programme of learning opportunities which may be taken in the colleges recognised by the Training Committee, the Windermere Centre and any other hired venue. [This could be an additional source of income for Colleges]
 - i) list learning opportunities provided by other bodies which may be used as examples of the courses for which funding will be provided,
 - ii) assess proposals from ministers for in-service learning and the funding required and to be provided.

RESOLUTION 45

Staffing arrangements

Assembly, having approved a policy for Continuing Ministerial Education, asks Mission Council to consider the appropriate staffing arrangements.

1.1 The programmes for Continuing Ministerial Education and Post-Ordination Education and Training will require considerable energy, administration and co-ordination with Provinces, District Councils and ministers themselves. The Training Committee believes that it will be necessary for an additional staff post to be created

if this programme is to succeed, especially as the work of the Training Committee is already over-stretched. The Committee therefore asks Mission Council to discover how the existing staff post together with additional staff support, might be organised to effect the programmes outlined in the Book of Reports.

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', 'Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness' Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: *The Revd Stephen Thornton* **Secretary:** *Mrs Jean Antcliffe*
Revd Margaret Collins, Mrs Liz Crocker, Mr Gareth Curl, Mr Stuart Eteson, Revd Ron Forster,
Mr Lewis Mackenzie, Mrs Georgette Margrett, Revd Phil Nevard,
Revd Barbara Plenderleith, Miss Kathryn Swift.

1 THE FULL MONTY!

1.1 It is said that Montgomery, Sir Bernard Law, First Viscount of Alamein, required a full English breakfast before he could get down to a hard day's work, and this breakfast became known as 'The Full Monty'. It means, everything. Here, then is the full Monty about the work of the Youth & Children's Work Committee, which seeks to support, resource, and give leadership to a very great number of people who work in this sphere in the churches.

2 TITANIC!

2.1 A vast amount of our time this year has been spent on the struggles, challenges, and windows of opportunities which our staffing situation has presented to us. It has been hard, but with the support and help of many people we have not sunk, but are moving forward into an increasingly exciting future.

2.2 Last Assembly, we said farewell to Paul Franklin as National Secretary for Youth Work knowing that he would come to the end of his appointment at the close of the year. The procedures were in place to make a new appointment. Much work has been done to this end, but as I write we have not yet been able to fill the post, though toiling hard at it. We therefore asked Paul if he would serve us for an extra two months, which he generously did, and we are very grateful again to him for all that he has given to the church, and for this extra service.

2.3 The vacancy has meant extra strain on many people. We are grateful to the Revd Michael Davies, National Youth Secretary in the 70's for helping in the office for part of each week since

February; to Rosemary Johnston, the Children's Advocate, and her personal assistants Vivienne Thorne and Sylvia Paine and Joy Sykes, personal assistant on the Youth Desk, for all that they have done to keep the work going.

2.4 The Children's Advocate has continued to resource, support and inform the whole church concerning our ministry with children in just the way envisioned when the post was conceived. Paul and Rosemary together, developed the Youth & Children's Work Office into an efficient centre which services the work whether they personally are in the office or not.

2.5 At Assembly also, we welcomed Revd Erica Beglin as half time Pilot Development Officer to spearhead the key work of Pilots, the children's organisation of the United Reformed Church and the Congregational Federation which is so vital to our future work and mission. Sadly, for personal reasons, Erica stepped down in September, which again put more pressure on our office. After much consultation, plans to make a full-time appointment have been brought to Mission Council and we look forward to them being put in place as soon as possible. This is in response to one of our Church's Mission priorities. Structures for Pilots have been tuned. We have a Management Group and Publications Group. Excellent material is resourcing our Companies and we look for significant growth in the future.

2.6 The Revd Martin Nicholls, Chaplain at Yardley Hastings resigned from his post in the autumn. The contribution which Martin has made to the establishment of the Centre and its early years has been immense, and young people all over the country have been greatly influenced by his work and the work of all the Centre. Deeply

grateful for his work, we had then to proceed to make plans for the future. With two vacancies now in the youth scene, the Committee found an opportunity to explore afresh the best way to structure leadership at the Centre and its relationship with the National Youth and Children's Work office. New job descriptions have been agreed and as I write we are actively seeking to fill the post at Yardley Hastings, the post holder to be known as The Centre Minister.

2.7 Since Martin left, Heather Whyte has been working as Acting Director, and, supported by the other staff, and the Centre Management Committee, they have done sterling work. The Centre continues to inspire, develop and challenge young people and we commend it to the churches as a major and unique resource.

3 AMISTAD

3.1 Our sister church, The United Church of Christ in the USA has an Amistad day, when people are reminded that at a particular point in history, their Congregational ancestors came to the defence of a group of slaves who needed urgent support and solidarity. Among the vulnerable groups today are the children who come into our churches. We look for good practice in all our work, and last Assembly passed a resolution asking provinces and districts to monitor *Good Practice - Safeguarding Children and Young People in the churches*. We have written to the Synods to see how they fare in this matter, and many have responded. It is our intention to keep on monitoring what Synods and Districts are doing, to ensure that all are safe from harm in our congregations.

3.2 Another aid to improving our work with children and developing those who work with them is the *Kaleidoscope* ecumenical training material. We are glad to report that the 10,000th copy has been sold.

4 SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET

4.1 Not quite, but the Jamaica/Guyana exchange has enabled young people to explore life in other places and we are grateful to all who have worked to organise these expeditions through the years. They have now come to an end, but other opportunities emerge. Connected with *Commitment for Life*, three provinces are being given the opportunity for their young people to visit Bangladesh and then come back and speak to the churches about projects there.

5 THE POSTMAN

5.1 The youth and children's work network is serviced by some fine publications full of thoughtful articles and practical suggestions. The FURY Information Service and *FURY National* make good reading, and *URCHIN*, (United Reformed Children's Information Network) available via Church House, is always stimulating. We commend these resources, to all those who do not know or use them.

6 DO THE RIGHT THING

6.1 FURY Council grapples with many issues and is evidence of many gifted young people playing their part in the life of our church. FURY Assembly is a delight to all who share in it and I for one would wish that all our people could be flies on the wall to see how young people wrestle with faith, national and world issues, and fun. This year we were delighted to have with us a contingent from the Scottish Congregational Church, who made their presence felt in a very positive way. The FURY Review, which seeks to advise on the development of FURY into the future, is almost ready to report and by next year we shall have suggestions to make for youth work into the next century.

6.2 In both children's and youth work, we are very active ecumenically, playing our part in CGMC (Consultative Group on Ministry Among Children), JCYS (The Joint Churches Youth Service), and many other spheres. We are also represented on other assembly committees, and some of our concerns arise in their reports, e.g. Our relationship with Partners in Learning, the new Service Book, Children and Communion, and Church and Society matters.

6.3 We are very grateful for the service of the Youth and Children's Work Training Team, and with their help we have been able to support the Assembly Resolution which requires that Ordinands get training in work with children and young people in the church.

7 IN AND OUT

7.1 As convener of the committee and previously in other ways, I have been closely involved with children's work and youth work in the churches for decades, and have deemed it a great privilege. Statistics will tell us that the number of young people involved with the churches during this time has declined, but nevertheless I am aware of a great army of dedicated workers, who give themselves unstintingly to this service, to

Resolution 46

whom we owe a very great debt. This Committee will continue to seek to support and resource their work into the future.

7.2 Welcome and good wishes to my successor and I am sure the future holds great opportunities for all as we share together in this vital area of church life.

8 FAIRYTALE AND TRUE STORY

8.1 One of my dreams was that at the end of this particular sphere of service I would have helped the church to move away from calling work with children 'Sunday School' or 'Junior Church' and that everyone would just talk about The Church and see everyone having their own distinctive contribution to make. We have made great strides towards this end, but the dream is still to be fulfilled. Watch this space

RESOLUTION 46

Young people in the Councils of the Church

General Assembly believes that young people have a valuable contribution to make to the decision-making councils and committees of the church and expects all councils and committees of the church to make meetings more accessible to young people by

- a) using more weekends for meetings**
- b) taking full account of travel constraints facing many young people**
- c) setting up and publishing dates of meetings as far in advance as possible**
- d) encouraging and urging young people to take advantage of the opportunities to participate in and contribute to the councils and committees of the church**
- e) offering the *They've asked me to be a member of a committee* leaflet as a resource, to be used by young people and councils and committees of the church, to prepare people for the implications of fuller involvement.**

1.1 For a number of years many people have agreed with the principle of involving young people in the councils and committees of the church. This resolution is intended to press this development and offer some encouragement about the method by which some much-needed progress can be achieved

Appendices



General Assembly 1998

Appendix 1

Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches

- 1 Theological Basis
- 2 Equal Opportunity Policy
- 3 The Law
- 4 Policy on Employment
- 5 Policy on Church Activities
- 6 Membership, Churches, Committees and Councils
- 7 Monitoring

CHECKLISTS

- A Legislation
- B Recruitment and Employment
- C Church Activities
- D Membership
- E Monitoring

Produced by the URC Equal Opportunities Committee

1 THEOLOGICAL BASIS

We believe that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God.

We believe that in his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

We believe that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church needs to show the same openness to all people in our own day.

2 GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 1994

- a) The Church affirms in its Basis of Union that 'all ministries shall be open to both men and women'. At Assembly in 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 therefore 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.

3 THE LAW

Over the years legislation has been passed making discrimination on grounds of race, gender or disability unlawful in certain circumstances. Breach of this may result in a liability to pay compensation to someone who has suffered discrimination.

The Church as an employer needs to comply with such legislation unless it has claimed specific exemptions.

(See Checklist A)

4 POLICY ON EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Non-discrimination

As an employer, of whatever number of employees, the local Church accepts the responsibility to ensure that, at all stages (including recruitment, selection for employment, promotion, pay and conditions and access to training) no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, gender or disability.

4.2 Person specification

In designing jobs and recruiting we will take care to ensure that no potential applicant will be placed at a disadvantage by requirements that are not necessary. (See recruitment checklist for some guidance on this.)

4.3 Access to employment

We accept the responsibility to enable all people to have access to buildings and facilities and as far as possible to have equipment available to allow people with disabilities to be employed.

4.4 Positive action

Within the limits allowed by the law we will take positive action to redress imbalances in employment with regard to race, gender or disability.

(See Checklist B)

5 POLICY ON CHURCH ACTIVITIES

5.1 Non-discrimination

We accept responsibility, in all services provided to the public, not to give less favourable treatment to anyone on the grounds of race, gender or disability.

5.2 Church worship

We accept responsibility to make it possible for all who wish to join in the public worship of God to feel welcome to do so regardless of race, gender or disability.

5.3 Other activities

We accept responsibility to be open, not only for church members, but for all who may need what we have to offer, or be able to offer what we need.

(See Checklist C)

6 MEMBERSHIP, COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS

6.1 Non-discrimination

We accept responsibility to welcome people into membership in accordance with the affirmation of faith as defined in Schedule A of the Basis of Union. All those who love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and want to serve him through membership of the church, should be welcomed regardless of race, gender or disability.

6.2 Eldership and Committees

We accept responsibility to ensure that all members, regardless of race, gender or disability, are enabled to respond to the call of God to participate in decisions affecting the life of the church through eldership or committee membership and to examine carefully situations where any group appears to be under-represented.

6.3 District Councils, Provincial Synods & General Assembly

We acknowledge responsibility to encourage people, regardless of race gender or disability, to take a full part in all our Councils.

(See Checklist D)

7 MONITORING

7.1 Effectiveness

We acknowledge that if this equal opportunities policy is to be effective we must look to our practice in all our church's life and check our performance regularly.

7.2 Responsibility

We acknowledge the responsibility to be more aware of whether or not ethnic minorities, women and people with disabilities are reasonably represented in the many different facets of the life of the church. Sometimes this can be done informally but in other situations formal monitoring will be needed.

7.3 Records

For formal monitoring purposes we acknowledge the need to keep records of all job applicants and employees showing their gender, ethnic origin and any disabilities, these records to be assessed annually.

We acknowledge the value of keeping such records for church membership, committees and representation on other bodies.

7.4 Report

There will be an annual report to the Church meeting on the operation of this policy.

(See Checklist E)

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ARE GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR YOU TO USE TO CHECK YOUR OWN PRACTICE.

A LEGISLATION (As at March 1998)

The most important Acts currently available are:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944, 1988
- Equal Pay Act (1970) and Amendment Regulations (1983)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Other Acts useful to know about are:

- Charities Act 1993
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978
- Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981
- Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1992
- Companies Act 1948, 1989
- Data Protection Act 1984

There may also be minimum wage legislation in operation, together with any European Community legislation or directives.

You will also find useful the following Codes of Practice:

- 'Code of Practice for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity in Employment'
- 'Code of Practice for the Elimination of Discrimination on the Grounds of Sex and Marriage and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity in Employment'
- 'Code of Practice on the Employment of Disabled People'

Literature and guidance can be obtained from:

- The Commission For Racial Equality
Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Street,
London SW1E 5EH 0171 828 7022
- Equal Opportunities Commission
Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester
0161 833 9244
- Church Action on Disability
50 Scrutton Street, London EC2A 4PH
0171 452 2085

B CHECKLIST ON GOOD PRACTICE IN RECRUITMENT & EMPLOYMENT

B.1 Job description

This needs to be accurate and clear and should be prepared in consultation with those who will work closely with the appointee.

If any restrictions on who can do the job are suggested, scrutinise the reasons very carefully to ensure that a restriction really is necessary. Be sure that the Job Title fits the Job Description.

B.2 Person specification

This needs to list the skills and qualities needed to do the job. Be careful to include only what is necessary. You can add skills that would be an advantage but are not essential as long as you do not treat them as essential when shortlisting.

In drawing up the specification look at any equal opportunities implications, eg asking for particular working hours when a degree of flexibility could be built in, asking for specific qualifications that are not essential, or expecting people to be church members if this is not strictly necessary.

B.3 Advertising

Look for methods of reaching a wide range of people. Try to think outside the traditional and cheapest options to ensure that those capable of doing the job hear about it. As an equal opportunities employer you should never rely only on word of mouth advertising.

B.4 Application form

This should clearly ask for the information you need, should not ask for anything you do not need, and should give space for the person to say why they think they are suitable for the post.

Personal details and equal opportunities monitoring should be on a separate sheet so as not to influence the selection panel. It is also useful to ask how the person heard about the post.

B.5 Information for applicants

The following should be sent to each applicant:

- the application form
- the job description
- the person specification
- the equal opportunities statement

- a few words about your organisation
- date of interview if possible
- information about what will be needed at the interview
 - eg a typing test or a presentation: this is particularly necessary if disabled people need to bring equipment to enable them to carry out the test
- a named person or persons from whom they can get more information about the post.

B.6 Shortlisting

The small selection panel should meet to choose those to be interviewed on the basis of how well they meet the person specification. This should happen as soon as possible after the closing date for applications.

The panel should agree the issues on which questions at the interview will be asked, based on the person specification, and who will ask each question. Every applicant should be informed immediately as to whether they have been shortlisted or not and the time of interview where appropriate.

B.7 The interview

The interview panel should be a small group, normally between two and five, with a balance of members appropriate to the post as far as possible.

This should be done on the basis of the agreed issues with any extra questions only being used to clarify questions or answers. Each member of the panel should have a form based on the person specification to assess each applicant.

At the end of all the interviews the successful candidate should be chosen based on those assessments. All interviewees must be told when they will hear the result of their interview. This should be as soon as possible after the interviews when the successful candidate has accepted the post.

B.8 References

References can be taken up at any stage. They can be helpful in compiling a short list, and in this case referees should be asked to write in relation to the person specification. However, references can vary in style and depth, depending on the referee, and care is needed to avoid prejudice because of inadequate references. For this reason they are sometimes used only as a check, once the preferred candidate has been selected.

The purpose of the references should be clear from the start of the process, and the candidates should be advised when references will be taken up.

B.9 Induction

A period of induction, properly organised, should be given to every new employee as soon as possible after they take up the post and that should include any plans for training.

B.10 Contract

A written contract of employment should be drawn up and agreed as soon as possible, preferably before the commencement of the employment and certainly within 2 months. (This is a legal requirement).

B.11 Supervision and Support

Members of staff should be clear as to who is responsible for supervising their work. They should also have at least one person they can turn to for support who they are happy with.

B.12 Discipline, grievance and appeals procedure

This should be clearly laid out and in the hands of all employees. It should include guidance on how to deal with discrimination and harassment immediately and effectively.

NB If the person on the receiving end of certain such behaviour does not see it as a joke then it is not a joke.

Please Note

If you are responsible for making an appointment and any of this is new to you please contact the Citizens Advice Bureau for more information.

C CHECKLIST ON SERVICE PROVISION

C.1 Buildings

Are they accessible, usable and attractive? Think about wheelchairs, pushchairs, induction loops, those who are frail. Are toilets accessible to all users of the building? Are printed materials also available in large print and braille?

Ask these questions about all the premises not just the worship area. People should not have to fight for the right to be able to share in church activities.

C.2 Hirings/lettings

Do people in the area know the premises are available for use? Do you use these contacts as opportunities for widening the church's contacts? Do you welcome hirings from all groups or would you treat some with suspicion.

C.3 Church activities

Do you encourage visitors and members from outside the church circle? Think about how you advertise and where, what links members of your congregation have with other groups, whether there are groups with particular needs where the church could offer support eg groups for the disabled, Asian lunch clubs, women's or young people's groups.

C.4 Worship

Are worship services accessible and welcoming to all? Are there ways you can improve this?

C.5 Mission Audit

How well do you know your catchment area? Look at who is around and see if there are any new ideas for offering your resources in the name of Christ.

D CHECKLIST ON MEMBERSHIP: CHURCHES, COMMITTEES, & COUNCILS

D.1 Welcome

Making people feel welcome without overwhelming them is important. Open invitations to membership of the church are sometimes easier to handle than personal invitations but should always be followed by a personal invitation to those worshipping with you. Look for people in your congregation able to handle such matters sensitively.

D.2 Awareness

Are there members of your congregation who are skilled in working with people with disabilities without being patronising? Are members of your congregation aware of the different cultural backgrounds (social as well as ethnic) of people in your area and are they sensitive to them?

D.3 Committees and councils

Do look round the whole congregation when seeking members or representatives for committees etc. We need insights from many different backgrounds if we are to be truly open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and using the full variety of God given gifts.

D.4 **Training**

Do look at the possibilities of training people to be on committees. Many meetings can be very intimidating for the uninitiated. Training does not need to be formal but structures can be explained and participation encouraged.

D.5 **Participation**

Are the structures used for meetings encouraging for everyone to take part?

- * Is the layout of the room a help or a hindrance to this?
- * Do people know when comments are welcomed?
- * Is sufficient time given for those who react more slowly to propositions?
- * Do a good proportion of those present join in or is it just a few who do all the talking?
- * Are the issues made clear enough for people to follow the discussions and know what propositions are being made?
- * Are people with hearing or visual impairment able to take a full part?
- * Are people whose first language is not English able to follow the discussions and take part?
- * Does the meeting make a special effort to understand those with a speech impairment or a pronounced accent?
- * Are people encouraged to come to meetings?
- * Is transport provided for those who need it?
- * Are expenses given to everyone who holds an office whether they need it or not? (Those who do not need it can put it back in the plate, those who do should not be embarrassed by having to ask.)

NB These are only a few of the questions you could ask.

E **CHECKLIST ON MONITORING**

E.1 **Keeping records on employment**

You should keep records of all applicants, interviewees and successful candidates including race, gender and any disability.

These records should be checked annually to how they compare with what you might expect in your area.

E.2 **Looking at membership**

How does your church membership reflect the make up of your catchment area? Are there gaps? How could you fill them?

E.3 **Eldership, committees etc**

Does membership of these groups reflect the membership of the church, or the membership of your catchment area? If not, why not?

E.4 **Area profile**

You should be able to find out the ethnic make up of your catchment area and get some idea of the proportion of people with disabilities. The proportion of women in the community is usually just over 50%. It might also be useful to check on numbers of young people in the area.

Appendix 2

Accounts

The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom

86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT

Assembly Officers

Moderator of the General Assembly (1997/8) - Revd David Jenkins
General Secretary - Revd Anthony Burnham
Clerk of the General Assembly - Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee - Revd Alasdair Pratt
Deputy General Secretary - Revd John Waller

Other Officers

Moderator Elect - Mrs Wilma Frew
Immediate Past Moderator - Dr David Thompson
Honorary Treasurer - Mr Graham Stacy FCA

Trustee

United Reformed Church Trust
(Chairman of Board of Directors - Mr Desmond Davies)

Bankers

Midland Bank Plc
Newgate Street Branch, 31 Holborn, London EC1N 2HR

Legal Advisers

Dawson & Co
2 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, London WC2A 3RZ

Towns, Needham & Co
6/8 Albert Road, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 3PJ

Auditors

Robson Rhodes
186 City Road, London EC1V 2NU

Investment Manager

HSBC Asset Management Europe Limited
6 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7QP

Actuaries

Aon Consulting (formerly Alexander Clay)
Carnegie House, Peterborough Road
Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AJ

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997

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.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR

1997 was a quite exceptional year in the financial affairs of the Church. The Statement of Financial Activities on page 5 shows that there was a net increase in funds in the year of £4,646,000 which must be the highest ever increase in our 25 years' existence.

This increase in funds can be broken down into a number of separate parts:

Increase in market value of investments	2,497,000
Surplus for the year on Ministry & Mission and the other funds covered by our annual budget	877,000
Surplus for the year on other restricted funds	<u>1,272,000</u>
	<u>£4,646,000</u>

Investment value increase - £2,497,000

The increase in market value of our investments reflects the fact that the UK stock market rose in value very significantly in the year. Although values have risen in each of the last three years, it should be remembered that in 1994 our investments went down in value by over £2.5 million; investment values can go down as well as up so we should not expect this year's performance to be a regular event.

Surplus of £877,000 compared to budget deficit of £140,000

The surplus of £877,000 on Ministry and Mission and other funds covered by the budget compares with a deficit of £140,000 shown by the budget adopted by General Assembly in 1996. The main reasons for this large turnaround are a reduction of about 27 in the number of stipendiary ministers compared with the budget which reduced costs by £486,000, and a reduction of £380,000 in the subvention paid to the Pension Fund.

Estimating the number of ministers is far from straightforward especially as the budget is prepared nine months before the start of the year to which it relates. At that stage there is a natural tendency to be cautious in estimating numbers and there are many changes that are extremely difficult to predict. Over-estimating minister numbers has been a recurring feature in our budgets for many years but the Resource Planning Advisory Group and Ministries Committee are endeavouring to improve the accuracy of this number used in our budgets.

The reduction in the subvention paid to the Pension Fund was made possible by the fact that the actuarial valuation of the Fund at 1st January 1997 showed a deficiency of only £4.5 million, a vast improvement on the valuation three years earlier which showed an £11 million deficiency. The improvement was due to very good investment performance, a lower increase in stipends than the actuary had assumed in the previous valuation and the exceptional contribution of £2.5 million paid to the fund in 1996 out of our reserves.

Restricted funds surplus - £1,272,000

The restricted funds are listed on page 8 and include the Retired Ministers' Housing Society, the Retired Ministers' Fund, which pays ex gratia additional pensions, and the Church Buildings Funds. The funds which showed the largest increase were those for housing retired ministers, which benefited from legacies of £303,000 and a transfer of £570,000 in respect of houses and funds formerly owned by the Northern Congregational Ministers' Housing Society Limited. The need to purchase more retirement houses in the future will create a substantial financing requirement for which legacies are an invaluable help.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CONTINUED**Transfers between funds**

The transfers between funds shown towards the bottom of the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5 contain some important amounts.

The largest transfer is £1 million to the Retired Ministers' Fund from unrestricted income funds. The Retired Ministers' Fund is used mainly to supplement the pensions of ex-Congregational and Churches of Christ ministers in respect of years of service prior to Union but the present level of supplement still results in a pension significantly below the pension payable to ex-Presbyterian ministers. The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee has agreed a recommendation from the Pensions Executive to increase this supplement so as to bring pensions of all ministers to at least 95% of the Presbyterian level. The increase in the Retired Ministers' Fund required to enable this proposed improvement is estimated at £1 million and a transfer of this amount has been made in the 1997 accounts.

The other large transfer is the release of a "major repairs reserve" amounting to £593,000. This reserve was established many years ago and has been credited with annual transfers which have not exceeded £3,500 in any recent year. Over the years, the accumulation of dividends and investment appreciation has brought this reserve to the remarkable amount of £593,000. The Finance Committee and the Resource Planning Advisory Group have agreed that it is not appropriate to retain this reserve as a separate amount because the Church should be able to meet repair costs as they arise.

The other transfers comprise a number of smaller amounts. The impact of these transfers on individual funds can be seen in the Movement on Funds statement on page 8 in the column headed 'transfers'. Some of these transfers have been made as a result of the continuing review of the numerous separate funds we have. Many of these funds have been inherited from the past and their original intention has not always continued to match current needs. As the research continues we expect to be able to release other funds that have become dormant or under-used so that they too can better serve the current needs of the Church.

Conclusion

In this brief report it is possible to mention only the most significant features of the 1997 accounts. The Treasurer and the Financial Secretary will be pleased to respond to requests for further information or explanations on any aspect of the accounts at General Assembly or at any other time.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee.

GRAHAM STACY
Convener

24th March 1998

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1997

1996 £'000		Notes (pages 12 & 13)	1997 £'000
	FIXED ASSETS		
	Tangible assets	2	
11,619	Houses for retired ministers		12,512
3,480	Houses for serving ministers		3,348
1,729	Other properties		1,846
16,828	Total properties		17,706
307	Cars and equipment		380
17,135			18,086
17,362	Long term investments	5	18,347
662	Loans and advances	3	550
35,159			36,983
	NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	Current assets		
71	Stock		65
3,038	Short term investments	5	5,633
993	Debtors	4	960
1,539	Bank balances and money on call		1,089
5,641			7,747
4,935	Less: Current liabilities	6	4,219
706	Net current assets		3,528
35,865	TOTAL NET ASSETS		40,511
	Representing:		
9,131	Unrestricted income funds		9,951
22,312	Restricted income funds		25,241
4,422	Capital funds		5,319
35,865	TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 8 & 9)		40,511

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered for the benefit of the Church nationally. It includes, in particular, the assets and liabilities of The United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society Limited

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997**

1996 Total funds £'000		1997 Total funds £'000	--- Income funds ---		Capital funds £'000
			Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
INCOME					
16,462	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,763	16,763		
1,409	Investment income	1,229	522	707	
880	Grants received	981	911	70	
579	Legacies	388	59	325	4
589	Sundry income	1,372	204	1,153	15
387	Profit on sale of properties	370	35	335	
20,306	Total income (see page 6)	21,103	18,494	2,590	19
EXPENDITURE					
17,026	Ministry	13,979	13,384	595	
1,370	Training	1,492	1,386	106	
546	Assembly appointed staff	593	581	12	
1,069	Mission	1,596	1,133	463	
151	Assembly related costs	193	192	1	
177	Communication and editorial	194	194		
719	Administration	907	747	150	10
21,058	Total expenditure (see page 7)	18,954	17,617	1,327	10
(752)	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers	2,149	877	1,263	9
Transfers between funds					
-	Repairs reserve to unrestricted	0	593	(593)	
-	Unrestricted to Retired Ministers' Fund	0	(1,000)	1,000	
-	Other	0	140	(230)	90
-		0	(267)	177	90
(752)	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources	2,149	610	1,440	99
Gains and losses on investments					
149	Realised gains	315	36	277	2
963	Unrealised gains	2,182	174	1,212	796
1,112	Total gains on investments	2,497	210	1,489	798
360	Net increase in funds in the year	4,646	820	2,929	897
35,505	Balances brought forward at 1st January	35,865	9,131	22,312	4,422
35,865	Balances carried forward at 31st December	40,511	9,951	25,241	5,319

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered on behalf of the Church nationally. The total for 1997 is then divided between "Unrestricted income funds" which are available for the general purposes of the Church, "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

1996 Total funds £'000		1997 Total funds £'000	--- Income funds ---		Capital funds £'000
			Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS					
Provinces					
1,075	Northern	1,088	1,088		
1,538	North Western	1,511	1,511		
1,100	Mersey	1,120	1,120		
1,100	Yorkshire	1,135	1,135		
1,060	East Midlands	1,071	1,071		
1,220	West Midlands	1,260	1,260		
1,462	Eastern	1,462	1,462		
1,105	South Western	1,150	1,150		
1,831	Wessex	1,831	1,831		
1,940	Thames North	2,000	2,000		
2,445	Southern	2,565	2,565		
586	Wales	570	570		
16,462		16,763	16,763	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME					
1,034	Dividends	806	156	650	
375	Interest	423	366	57	
1,409		1,229	522	707	0
GRANTS RECEIVED					
518	Memorial Hall Trust	616	546	70	
225	New College London Trust	235	235		
78	URC Insurance Company Limited	71	71		
-	Council for World Mission	8	8		
59	Department for Education & Employment	51	51		
880		981	911	70	0
LEGACIES					
For					
74	Ministry and Mission Fund	59	59		
270	Housing Retired Ministers	303		303	
235	Other	26		22	4
579		388	59	325	4
SUNDRY INCOME					
152	Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	181	181		
-	Transfer of retired ministers' housing funds from Yorkshire fund	570		570	
158	Donations	372	9	348	15
279	Other	249	14	235	
589		1,372	204	1,153	15
387	PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	370	35	335	
20,306	TOTAL INCOME	21,103	18,494	2,590	19

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 5.

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

1996 Total funds £'000		1997			Capital funds £'000
		Total funds £'000	--- Income funds --- Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
MINISTRY					
11,615	Stipends - local and special ministries	11,874	11,834	40	
133	Stipends - Church Related Community Workers	146	146		
873	Pension grants	555		555	
415	Resettlement and other grants	279	279		
390	Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	375	375		
1,100	Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	750	750		
2,500	- exceptional	0			
17,026		13,979	13,384	595	0
TRAINING					
660	College training for stipendiary ministry	813	707	106	
72	Other training for stipendiary ministry	74	74		
81	Training for non-stipendiary ministry	71	71		
360	YLTO/YCWT programme	363	363		
29	Support for Westminster College	(3)	(3)		
27	Support for Windermere Centre	37	37		
51	Support for Yardley Hastings	36	36		
12	Lay training costs	20	20		
78	Scholarship programme	81	81		
1,370		1,492	1,386	106	0
ASSEMBLY APPOINTED STAFF					
237	Salaries/stipends - executive staff	245	241	4	
181	Salaries/stipends - support staff	231	223	8	
128	Housing and expenses	117	117		
546		593	581	12	0
MISSION					
614	Council for World Mission	647	647		
75	Missionaries	92	92		
258	Grants for national and local mission	725	262	463	
122	Ecumenical councils	132	132		
1,069		1,596	1,133	463	0
ASSEMBLY RELATED COSTS					
71	General Assembly	94	94		
58	Assembly committees/conferences	72	71	1	
22	Mission Council committees/conferences	27	27		
151		193	192	1	0
COMMUNICATION AND EDITORIAL					
143	Salaries	141	141		
34	Other costs	53	53		
177		194	194	0	0
ADMINISTRATION					
245	Personnel and finance - salaries	273	273		
9	- other costs	37	37		
168	Premises costs	168	168		
83	Professional fees	89	77	12	
214	Miscellaneous expenses	340	192	138	10
719		907	747	150	10
21,058	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	18,954	17,617	1,327	10

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 1997

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance 1st Jan 1997 £'000	Income £'000	Expenditure £'000	Transfers £'000	Investment value change £'000	Balance 31st Dec 1997 £'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	310 6,536	18,094	(16,732)	90 (274)	174	400 7,798
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital Unrestricted	543	37	(37)		71	614 0
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital Unrestricted	126 580	345	(848)	7	17 36	143 120
Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund	Capital Unrestricted		18				0 2,033
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	917 1,068	253	(108)	11 39	103 173	1,031 1,425
Church Buildings Funds	Capital Restricted	184 3,114	120	(82)		386	184 3,538
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	355 1,337	5 8		9		360 1,354
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted		1,272	(31)			0 8,490
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	109 287	30	(36)	18 57	15 40	142 378
Retired Ministers' Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	147 674	45	(52)		19 85	166 752
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted		226	(356)	1,101	508	0 5,597
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	214 1,186	81	(1)	(123)	26 143	240 1,286
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted		1				0 345
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted		4				0 554
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	1,517 2,385	14 550	(10) (661)	(29) (906)	547 154	2,039 1,522
Totals (see page 5)		35,865	21,103	(18,954)	0	2,497	40,511
Comprising:	Capital	4,422	19	(10)	90	798	5,319
	Restricted	22,312	2,590	(1,327)	177	1,489	25,241
	Unrestricted	9,131	18,494	(17,617)	(267)	210	9,951

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 1997**

Balance 31st Dec 1997 £'000	Property £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Investments £'000	Loans £'000	Net Current assets £'000	Inter- -fund balances £'000	Fund
400	310		90				Ministry and Mission Fund
7,798	1,973	280	3,627	131	3,721	(1,934)	
614			614				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
143			143				Ministerial Training Fund
120						120	
0							Memorial Hall Trust Grant Fund
2,033						2,033	
1,031	612		419				Westminster College Funds
1,425		13	1,281			131	
184			184				Church Buildings Funds
3,538	1,461		1,514	390		173	
360	360						Retired Ministers' Housing Funds
1,354	1,300					54	
0							Retired Ministers' Housing Society
8,490	10,853				(193)	(2,170)	
142			142				Welfare Fund
378			357	14		7	
166			166				Retired Ministers' Aid Fund
752			738			14	
0							Retired Ministers' Fund
5,597			4,549			1,048	
240			240				World Church and Mission Funds
1,286			1,245			41	
0							Windermere Centre Fund
345	304	29				12	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
554	482	47				25	
2,039			2,039				Other Funds
1,522	51	11	999	15		446	
40,511	17,706	380	18,347	550	3,528	0	Totals (see page 4)
5,319	1,282	0	4,037	0	0	0	Capital
25,241	14,451	100	10,683	419	(193)	(219)	Restricted
9,951	1,973	280	3,627	131	3,721	219	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.

**CASHFLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1997**

1996 £'000		1997 £'000
	RECONCILIATION OF NET (OUTGOING)/INCOMING RESOURCES SHOWN IN THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES TO THE ACTUAL CASH (OUTFLOW)/INFLOW FROM GENERAL ACTIVITIES	
(752)	Net (outgoing)/incoming resources (see page 5)	2,149
(19)	(Increase)/decrease in stock	6
(7)	(Increase)/decrease in debtors	33
(43)	Decrease in creditors	(245)
(66)	Decrease in sums held for provinces and congregations	(471)
(387)	Profit on sale of properties	(370)
91	Depreciation	159
76	Amortisation of gilts	65
(28)	Interest added to loans	(25)
(1,135)	Net cash (outflow)/inflow from general activities	1,301

**STATEMENT SHOWING DISPOSITION OF CASH
RESOURCES IN THE YEAR**

(1,135)	Net cash (outflow)/inflow from general activities (above)	1,301
	Net amount of cash received from/(applied in) investing activities	
941	Fixed assets sales	1,046
(2,106)	purchases	(1,786)
3,706	Long term investments sales	2,067
(1,770)	purchases	(582)
-	Net change in short term investments	(2,633)
771		(1,888)
	Cash received from a net decrease in loans and advances to congregations and ministers	
(193)	Loans made	(146)
364	Loans repaid	283
171		137
	Bank balances and money on call	
(193)	Decrease in balances	(450)
1,732	Balances at beginning of year	1,539
1,539	Balances at end of year	1,089

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 decrease our cash balances by £450,000.

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 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

Unrestricted income funds may be spent generally for furthering the religious and charitable work of the Church.

Restricted income funds are funds whose use is restricted to specific purposes according to the terms on which the funds were received. However, if the purpose is one that forms part of the Church's regular expenditure and the income of the funds could therefore be fully spent each year, the restriction has no practical effect and funds with such restrictions are treated as unrestricted.

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 Church subject, in certain cases, to specific restrictions contained in the original endowment.

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 40 years or more	0 %
Properties deemed to have a useful life of less than 40 years	2½%
Cars	30 %
Computers	25 %
Photocopiers	20 %
Other furniture and equipment	10 %

(vi) Investments

Listed securities, investment properties and units in the United Reformed Church Trust Investment Pool are included at market value at the Balance Sheet date. In previous years, investment properties have been shown at an original valuation. Unlisted securities 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 mainly of books in the 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					
At 1st January 1997	11,619	3,480	1,935	754	17,788
Additions during year	1,211	212	172	191	1,786
Disposals during year	(318)	(344)	(261)	(99)	(1,022)
At 31st December 1997	12,512	3,348	1,846	846	18,552
Depreciation					
At 1st January 1997			206	447	653
Charged during year			55	104	159
Written back on disposal			(261)	(85)	(346)
At 31st December 1997			0	466	466
Net book value					
At 31st December 1997	12,512	3,348	1,846	380	18,086
At 31st December 1996	11,619	3,480	1,729	307	17,135

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 1997 were £198,000 (1996 - £184,000) and maintenance costs were £159,000 (1996 - £170,000). All properties are considered to have a remaining useful life exceeding 40 years.

At 31st December 1997 312 (1996 - 311) houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 29 (1996 - 30) 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

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Loans and advances comprise:		
To churches	405	520
To ministers	145	142
	<u>550</u>	<u>662</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

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	56	85
Prepayments and accrued income	410	457
Other debtors	494	451
	<u>960</u>	<u>993</u>

This page and the following two pages set out additional information about various aspects of the Church's finances.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 5 - INVESTMENTS

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Long term investments		
Investments held for the longer term comprise the following:		
Units in the Investment Pool at market value	15,287	14,730
Other listed securities at market value	2,341	2,308
URC Insurance Company Limited shares at cost (see note 13)	73	73
Other unlisted securities at cost	24	24
Investment properties at estimated market value (1996 - at cost)	622	227
	<u>18,347</u>	<u>17,362</u>

All investments are in UK companies or properties.

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Short term investments		
Short term investments comprise:		
£3 million 8.75% Treasury Stock 1997 at market value	-	3,038
Money market term deposits	5,633	-
	<u>5,633</u>	<u>3,038</u>

NOTE 6 - CURRENT LIABILITIES (Amounts falling due within one year)

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Current liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for provinces and congregations	2,384	2,855
Advance contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	374	525
Other creditors	1,461	1,555
	<u>4,219</u>	<u>4,935</u>

NOTE 7 - REMUNERATION

During the year the following remuneration was paid to:

		1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Ministers: 731 (1996 - 740)	Gross	10,503	10,264
	Social security costs	962	954
	Pension contributions	1,018	991
		<u>12,483</u>	<u>12,209</u>
Lay staff: 94 (1996 - 85)	Gross	1,127	1,021
	Social security costs	98	90
	Pension contributions	97	87
		<u>1,322</u>	<u>1,198</u>

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and staff working for part of the year are included at the appropriate proportion.

NOTE 8 - AUDITORS 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:

	1997 £'000	1996 £'000
Auditors' remuneration	<u>37</u>	<u>38</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED

NOTE 9 - ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS

At 31st December 1997 United Reformed Church Trust held investments with a market value of approximately £21 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 accounts (see note 1(i)).

NOTE 10 - THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS PENSION FUND

Pensions for most 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.

During 1997 the Church contributed 10.65% (increased to 11.75% with effect from 1st January 1998) of basic stipend in respect of members and makes further payments towards the actuarial deficit, as recommended by the consultant actuary.

A valuation of the Pension Fund was undertaken by the consultant actuary as at 1st January 1997. The valuation used the attained age method, and indicated that the shortfall on the long-term valuation basis is £4.5 million. At that date the funding level was 90%, and the scheme assets were valued at £49.5 million. Following advice from the actuary the subvention has been reduced to £750,000 per annum. This should eliminate the deficit within nine years. These contributions will be reviewed at the time of the next actuarial valuation. 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 Church also operates a number of other defined benefit schemes for a relatively small number of office and other staff. These schemes showed actuarial surpluses at the time of the most recent actuarial review.

NOTE 11 - COMMITMENTS

At 31st December 1997 the URC Retired Ministers' Housing Society had commitments for the purchase of properties amounting to £500,000 (1996 - £312,000), but no contractual liabilities for the purchase of properties (1996 - £118,000). At 31st December 1997, the Church had a commitment amounting to £100,000 (1996 - NIL) to make a grant towards the cost of building a new church, but no contractual liabilities for the purchase of properties (1996 - £63,000).

NOTE 12 - INTERESTS IN TRUSTS

The Church 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 1997 the Church received income of £616,000 (1996 - £518,000) from this trust. In addition, 23 (1996 - 24) properties owned by the trust are occupied by retired ministers or their dependants.

New College London Trust - This trust holds assets relating to the former New College London on behalf of the URC and non-uniting Congregational churches. The Church's interest amounts to approximately 82%. In 1997 the Church received income of £235,000 (1996 - £225,000) 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 13 - URC INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED

The Church owns the whole of the share capital of 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 Ecclesiastical Insurance Group who also provide management services. URCIC entered into a deed of covenant to pay to the Church 95% of its pre-tax profits; in 1997, this amounted to £71,000 (1996 - £78,000). The accounts of URCIC are not included in the accounts of the Church on the grounds that its activities are not considered comparable with the main activities of the Church and are not material in the context of these accounts.

NOTE 14 - UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL

United Reformed Church Trust operates an Investment Pool for funds it holds as managing trustee and for funds of other trusts and churches. The financial statement of the Pool is shown on page 15. Of the total investment in the Pool, valued at £36.3 million (1996 - £32.6 million), only £15.3 million (1996 - £14.7 million) is held for central funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 5).

During 1997 the Charity Commissioners have indicated that the Pool should be restricted to the investment of funds belonging to United Reformed Church Trust as managing trustee. The Board of the Trust is exploring with investment advisers and the Charity Commissioners alternative ways of regularising this situation before 31st December 1998.

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1997**

CAPITAL	1997		1996	
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 Units	£'000
Units in issue at 1st January 1997	602,645	32,569	641,095	32,107
Units issued in the year	26,013	1,501	39,905	2,058
Units cancelled in the year	(33,908)	(1,967)	(78,355)	(4,113)
Management fees		(73)		(70)
Increase in value of investments during the year		4,314		2,587
Units in issue to central funds	250,172	15,287	272,559	14,730
Units in issue to other funds	344,578	21,057	330,086	17,839
	<u>594,750</u>	<u>36,344</u>	<u>602,645</u>	<u>32,569</u>

REPRESENTED BY

	Cost £'000	Market value £'000	Cost £'000	Market value £'000
Investments				
British Government				
Gilt-edged securities	10,123	10,572	9,611	9,556
Other British fixed interest stock	906	1,025	906	976
British equities	16,776	24,328	15,606	20,480
	<u>27,805</u>	<u>35,925</u>	<u>26,123</u>	<u>31,012</u>

Cash and short term deposits 344 1,291

Sundry debtor
The United Reformed Church 75 266

36,344 32,569

Based on the underlying market value of investments and uninvested cash, the value of each unit was 6.11 pence 5.40 pence

During the year distributions were made in respect of all income received as follows:

3 months ended	Rate per unit		Rate per unit	
	pence	£'000	pence	£'000
31st March	0.0729	442	0.0383	246
30th June	0.0802	490	0.1511	984
30th September	0.0788	470	0.0840	548
31st December	0.0529	317	0.0648	390
	<u>0.2848</u>	<u>1,719</u>	<u>0.3382</u>	<u>2,168</u>

The policy for accounting for income is as follows:

- 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.

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

24th March 1998

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 1997, and of its financial activities for the year then ended.

186 City Road
London EC1V 2NU

ROBSON RHODES
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditor

24th March 1998

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.

Budget

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DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1999

	Actual 1996 £'000	Actual 1997 £'000	Budget 1997 £'000	Estimate 1998 £'000	Budget 1999 £'000
EXPENDITURE					
Ministry					
Stipends - local and special ministries	11,615	11,834	12,320	12,180	12,693
Stipends - CRCWs	133	146	157	160	169
Resettlement and other grants	354	279	301	308	309
Provincial moderators - stipends & expenses	390	375	369	395	411
Pension Fund additional contributions - normal	1,100	750	1,130	750	750
- exceptional	2,500				
	16,092	13,384	14,277	13,793	14,332
Training					
College training for stipendiary ministry	637	707	763	757	809
Other training for stipendiary ministry	72	74	79	78	266
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	81	71	79	90	90
YLTO/YCWT programme	360	363	432	376	392
Support for Westminster College	29	(3)	58		
Support for Windermere Centre	27	37	37	39	40
Support for Yardley Hastings	51	36	45	47	59
Lay training costs	12	20	12	32	39
Scholarship programme	78	81	80	83	85
	1,347	1,386	1,585	1,502	1,780
Assembly appointed staff					
Salaries/stipends - executive staff	237	241	249	265	270
Salaries/stipends - support staff	181	223	205	235	244
Housing and expenses	128	117	112	125	134
	546	581	566	625	648
Mission					
Council for World Mission and missionaries' support	689	739	715	204	167
Grants for national and local mission	186	262	191	195	202
Ecumenical councils	122	132	123	188	197
	997	1,133	1,029	587	566
Assembly related costs					
General Assembly	71	94	102	156	95
Assembly committees/conferences	56	71	73	79	88
Mission Council committees/conferences	22	27	29	33	34
	149	192	204	268	217
Communication and editorial					
Salaries	139	141	112	164	171
Other costs	27	53	33	54	58
	166	194	145	218	229
Administration (support for the church nationally and locally)					
Personnel and finance - salaries	245	273	267	283	295
- other costs	9	37	29	27	42
Premises costs	171	168	152	210	173
Professional fees	79	77	66	73	76
Miscellaneous expenses	191	192	152	193	235
	695	747	666	786	821
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	19,992	17,617	18,472	17,779	18,593

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 1999

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	Actual 1996 £'000	Actual 1997 £'000	Budget 1997 £'000	Estimate 1998 £'000	Budget 1999 £'000
INCOME					
Investment income					
Dividends	304	156	190	159	171
Income from World Church & Mission Fund			50	50	50
Interest	308	366	190	250	300
	612	522	430	459	521
Grants					
Memorial Hall Trust	448	546	475	476	476
New College London Trust	225	235	225	245	245
URC Insurance Company Limited	78	71	66	78	75
Department for Education & Employment	59	51	50	54	55
CWM towards cost of multi racial development worker		8		8	8
	810	911	816	861	859
Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,462	16,763	16,797	16,712	16,700
Legacies and major donations	74	59	50	50	50
Other income					
Sundry income	99	23	44	8	22
Provincial contributions to YLTO/YCWT programme	152	181	195	183	190
	251	204	239	191	212
Profit on sale of properties	85	35			
TOTAL INCOME	18,294	18,494	18,332	18,273	18,342
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) IN YEAR	(1,698)	877	(140)	494	(251)

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS PENSION FUND

	1997		1996	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME				
Contributions from ministers and central funds	1,370		1,345	
Transfer values received	63	1,433	44	1,389
Investment income	1,945		1,689	
Underwriting commission	0	1,945	3	1,692
Allocation toward Actuarial Deficit	768		3,610	
Donations	51	819	1	3,611
		4,197		6,692
EXPENDITURE				
Benefits paid	3,078		2,935	
Transfer values paid	0		3	
	3,078		2,938	
Management expenses	156	3,234	134	3,072
NORMAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR				
		963		3,620
Realised profit on sale of investments		1,429		3,088
Increase in unrealised surplus on investment revaluation		5,975		1,535
TOTAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR				
		8,367		8,243
Balance of resources at 1st January		49,514		41,271
Balance of resources at 31st December		57,881		49,514
Represented by:				
Investments		57,657		48,195
Net current assets		224		1,319
		57,881		49,514

This account should be read in conjunction with note 10 on page 14

This account is a summarised account of the full accounts of the Pension Fund

The full accounts of the Pension Fund have been audited by Robson Rhodes, who have given an unqualified audit opinion

The full audited accounts of the Pension Fund are available from the Central Office of the Church

Appendix 3

Scottish Church Initiative for Union

INTERIM REPORT

Why is it that for too many churches the division of the Church of Christ is no longer a scandal and an aberration, a constant opposite to witness? How have people become accustomed to, and satisfied with, a more or less peaceful co-existence between confessions and denominations? How is one to come back to the one source of new life if not by real conversion to Christ who reconciles?

(Jean Fischer, Address to the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, June 1997.)

1 Introduction

1.1 Among the significant ecumenical events of the twentieth century in Britain was the 1964 Nottingham Conference on Faith and Order. Writing about it in 1982/3 in a paper entitled 'Four Nations, One Church' (page 2) Martin Conway recounted:

At that Conference, a Scottish delegate put forward at a late stage an amendment to the resolution asking the churches to 'covenant together to work and pray for the inauguration of union ...' which specified that this should be done 'in appropriate groupings, such as nations'. Because of this, separate Church union conversations, each involving several churches, have been pursued in each of the four nations, each with its own unique constellation of hopes and fears and problems.

1.2 In Scotland in 1968, at the invitation of the Church of Scotland, there began three decades of doctrinal discussions, known as The Multilateral Church Conversation. Six Churches participated: the Church of Scotland, the Churches of Christ (later to become part of the United Reformed Church), the Congregational Union of Scotland (now the Scottish Congregational Church), the Methodist Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the United Free Church. The Baptist Union of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland were observers.

1.3 The original goal had been to draw up a Basis and Plan of Union, but it was recognised that, before this could be done, the doctrinal ground had to be cleared. This was done in a series of reports.¹ In 1985 the

Conversation published what it hoped was its final report in which it requested permission to proceed to the drawing up of a Basis and Plan of Union. This report, *Christian Unity - NOW is the Time*, recommended to the Churches that there was significant agreement on all points of doctrine and that where disagreement persisted it was not sufficient to justify the continued separation of the Churches.² However, the Church of Scotland and others wanted more work done, particularly on Episcopacy. This led, in 1992, to the final report *Who Goes Where?* This report recognised the changes that had taken place both within the Churches and within the ecumenical movement within the past 30 years. It contained a number of important Caveats including the following:

It is clearly insupportable to have any form of reconciliation of ministries which implies that hitherto non-episcopal ministries require validation from episcopal ones, as if hitherto they lacked either effectiveness or authenticity. The introduction of episcopacy where it has not previously existed can only be in the context of a mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministry for common service together within the wider jurisdiction of a united church.

(*Who Goes Where?* The Saint Andrew Press, 1992, page 17 Section IV: 9)

It sought new directions from the participating Churches, stating the task that remained:

Our task is clear. We are to discover how to bring our churches together, so that members and ministries are reconciled and mutually recognised, in order to pursue effective common witness and service within the wider jurisdiction of a united church. We believe that the present levels of shared commitment and understanding beckon us to walk further in this enterprise engaging in vulnerable, intimate and mutually trustful conversation as we go.

(*Who Goes Where?* p.7)

1.4 In response to *Who Goes Where?* the Scottish Episcopal Church indicated their willingness to proceed to a Basis and Plan of Union. In a paper entitled *Who Goes Forward with Us?*³ they indicated how they felt they had changed in ways that removed some of the remaining

1 *Controlling Principles for a Basis and Plan of Union Among Scottish Churches* 1969; an *Interim Report* 1972; *Worship and Sacraments* 1974; *The Faith of the Church* 1978; *Christian Unity - NOW is the Time* 1985; and *Who Goes Where?* 1992

2 *Christian Unity - NOW is the Time*, The Saint Andrew Press, 1985, pp 9-10

3 *Who Goes Forward with Us?* General Synod, Scottish Episcopal Church, 1994

obstacles to union outlined in *Who Goes Where?*⁴ They had developed a permanent Diaconate as a separate order of ministry. Ordination of women to the priesthood had been agreed. Reassurances were given concerning the role of bishops. It was made clear that the episcopal succession of bishops was a sign, but not a guarantee, of the unity and continuity of the Church. There was also reassurance given of movement towards a more conciliar structure of church government in which bishops served in council. It was specifically stated that no Church could enter a union which denied the fullness of the grace of God in its own previous experience of worship, fellowship, evangelism, service and ministry. In the light of these changes and the reassurances, the Scottish Episcopal Church issued an invitation to the other participating Churches 'to set up direct negotiations for union'. The representatives on the Multilateral Conversation asked that the Churches discharge them, thus bringing the Conversation to a close. This left the Churches free to accept or reject the new invitation from the Episcopal Church on the specific question of union.

1.5 Thus the new initiative began in 1994. By 1995 five of the six participating Churches had accepted the invitation to draw up a Basis and Plan of Union. Only the United Free Church declined the invitation. They were invited, along with the Roman Catholic Church, to be observers of the new Initiative for Union. The talks began in January 1996.

1.6 The Churches are represented as follows:

The Church of Scotland: Ms Moyra McCallum (Deacon), Rev. Duncan McClements, Rev. Prof. George Newlands, Mrs Sheilah Steven

The Methodist Church: Rev. Alan Anderson, Rev. John Dolling, Mrs Jenny Easson, Mrs Jean Peacock

The Scottish Congregational Church: Rev. John Arthur, Rev. Fiona Bennett, Rev. Alan Paterson, Pastor Linda Rice

The Scottish Episcopal Church: Prof. David Atkinson, Rt. Rev. Robert Halliday, Rev. John McLuckie (to March 1997), Rev. Ian Thompson (from June 1997)

The United Reformed Church: Rev. Peter Arthur, Rev. James Breslin, Rev. Sheila Maxey, Rev. Fleur Houston (alternate for Sheila Maxey September to December, 1997 and member from January 1998)

The Initiative is chaired by Rt. Rev. Michael Henley, Bishop of St. Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane and Convener of the Scottish Episcopal Church's Committee on Inter Church Relations. The secretary is Rev. Sheilagh Kesting of the Church of Scotland's Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

Observers: Roman Catholic Church: Rev. Philip Kerr; United Free Church: Rev. Graeme Bruce

Consultants in 1997: Rev. Dr. Colin Davey, Church Life Co-ordinating Secretary of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland; Rev. Prof. Peter Stephens, Professor of Church History, Aberdeen University, Rev. Dr. Will Storrar, Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies, Glasgow University. Rev. Gethin Abraham-Williams from the Covenanted Churches in Wales also shared in a meeting which looked at the church and national identity.

Relations with ACTS: Rev. Rodney Matthews, Associate Secretary of ACTS with responsibility for Local & Regional Unity, has been invited to some meetings. Otherwise the Unity Faith and Order Commission of ACTS and the Committee on Local and Regional Unity are kept informed of progress through participants who are also appointed by their Churches to these parts of ACTS.

2 Some Defining Principles

2.1 From the beginning of the talks, some guiding principles have become clear which provide the context for the discussions.

2.1.1 A united church will be a missionary church. The Church is understood to be an agent of God's mission, serving and demonstrating the love of God in the community. The group has still to explore a more precise understanding of 'mission'. Such an exercise will examine the calling of the Church and how mission follows from the Church's primary task of offering worship to God. The focus of worship is the meeting with God, enacted in rituals and liturgies which reach their climax in intercessions, blessing and sending. In exploring the nature of mission more closely, it will be related to the ministry to which the whole people of God is called. That ministry is based on the ministry of Christ and within it more specific ministries can be identified. As well as relating ministry to mission, the structure of a united church must also be related to mission. A structure that facilitates the Church's participation in God's mission to God's world will be one in which the worshipping communities are related to existing sociological and geographical realities rather than imposed unnatural or unwieldy community boundaries.

2.1.2 A united church will be in continuity with the past while being adaptable to changing circumstances. While recognising the apostolicity of each tradition, it is also recognised that change is part of life. Change is also part of Church life. The Church has been 'on the move' since it began. The current popular metaphor for the Church as a pilgrim church, a travelling people, catches something of this image of movement. It will be important to show how some of our most treasured features, e.g. elders, bishops, etc. have themselves evolved over the years and are still evolving. It is clear from historical analysis that some of the developments within the Church were an accommodation to secular society. There is usually an interplay of belief, tradition and pragmatism. Continuity and adaptability are necessary to each other. If there is no adaptability, there is only fossilising. Although the heritage of faith is not transmitted uncritically from generation to generation, there is also a perpetual state of what might be called 'traditioning the Gospel'. Therefore, in proposals for a united church, people will need to see affirmed what they have already known. Names and models will be important, but it will be in the negotiation of how different names and models are put alongside each other that evolution will take place.

⁴ *Who Goes Where?* p.17

2.1.3 A united church will maintain and protect the greatest possible degree of diversity at local level. It is recognised that already within each of the participating churches there is a wide variety of practice at local level. Divisions within the Church today often exist across the denominations, rather than between them. Therefore, there is a call to ensure that in a united church diversity will be recognised, respected and accepted. Within this diversity it will be important for conflicting opinions to be respected. It is envisaged that within any one church building there might be offered more than one form of worship. Training would be offered to those leading worship in order that they could understand and, where necessary, adopt the practices of a tradition other than their own. Particular issues of conscience would need to be faced. A provision similar to that found in the United Reformed Church could prove helpful:

The United Reformed Church, believing that it is through the freedom of the Spirit that Jesus Christ holds his people in the fellowship of the One Body, shall uphold the rights of personal conviction. It shall be for the Church, in safeguarding the substance of the faith and maintaining the unity of the fellowship, to determine when these rights are asserted to the injury of its unity and peace.

(The Basis and Structure of the United Reformed Church, Article 10)

2.1.4 Authority. It has been recognised that the ecumenical movement has moved away from seeking authority in one place. The concern now is to find the appropriate place, closest to the people, where the Holy Spirit can enable decisions to be made. The group continues to work on this area, making use of the categories defined in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*⁵ of personal, collegial and communal aspects of ministry.⁶ Though we do not regard the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* formulations as definitive, we have found them particularly helpful in approaching these issues. The group is also asking itself the question of how power can be appropriately shared.

3 Common Statement

3.1 The participating churches receive the Word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments. These, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, provide the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people. It is the responsibility of the Church to interpret the Scriptures afresh to every generation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3.2 The central affirmations of the Gospel are set out in a particular way in the early credal statements, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which continue to be used in

the context of the life of faith; in particular that Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human and that God is One God in Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In churches where the ancient creeds are not regularly used in worship, the faith to which they bear witness is confessed and lived.

3.3 Other confessional documents which themselves reflect the classic creeds, express the close link between faith and order. In these, order is always subordinate to doctrine. Formularies are culturally conditioned and vary in the extent to which they are legally binding on the denominations.

3.3.1 The Church of Scotland is defined in the terms of its own constitution as 'a national Church representative of the Christian Faith of the Scottish people'. (Article III of the Declaratory Articles). Its basic constitutional document *The General Constitution of the Church of Scotland* (1929) incorporates two earlier documents, *The United Free Act anent Spiritual Independence* (1906) and the *Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland in Matters Spiritual* (1926) (usually referred to as the Declaratory Articles) which are contained in the Schedule to the Church of Scotland Act, (1921). Article I, 'The truth which is in Christ', is fundamental and cannot be changed, but all other Articles are expedient and can be changed by modified Barrier Act procedure.

The Church of Scotland is the only one of the participating churches to have a 'subordinate standard.' The Westminster Confession is a doctrinal statement enacted by Church and State. The Preamble to the 1929 Basis and Plan of Union states:

The Church of Scotland holds as its subordinate standard the Westminster Confession of Faith, recognising liberty of opinion on such points of doctrine as do not enter into the substance of the Faith, and claiming the right, in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, to formulate, interpret or modify its subordinate standards: always in agreement with the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the said Confession - of which agreement the Church itself shall be sole judge.

3.3.2 The position of the Scottish Congregational Church is set out clearly in the Statement of Belief as approved by the Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland of 1949. The Preamble reads:

5 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, known also as the Lima Report, was published by the WCC Faith & Order Commission in 1982. This text incorporates areas of agreement between Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic traditions.

6 The ordained ministry 'should be *personal* because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should be *collegial*, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a *communal* dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.' (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Ministry section 26)

This brief statement gives expression to that faith in the Gospel of Christ which is common to the Churches of the Congregational Faith and Order in Scotland. We claim for the Church, in loyalty to the revelation of God contained in Scripture and under the guidance of the Spirit, the duty and right to set forth this unchanging Gospel in the language of our time; but we recognise that neither this nor any other statement can fully define it or exhaust its riches.

The Epilogue emphasises that 'no formulation of the Christian Faith can be made binding upon the conscience of a Christian man,' and concludes with the hope that 'this statement may serve to make God's loving purposes clear and thus reinforce the faith of those who accept the whole statement and those who welcome it in substance, but claim the liberty to disagree with some of its detail.'

3.3.3 The Methodist Church Deed of Union, 1932, contains a fundamental section on Doctrinal Standards (Section 2:4-5)

The doctrines of the evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice. These evangelical doctrines to which the preachers of the Methodist Church are pledged are contained in Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and the first four volumes of his sermons....

The Conference shall be the final authority within the Methodist Church concerning the interpretation of its doctrines.

3.3.4 The Scottish Episcopal Church expresses its faith and order in the Scottish Book of Common Prayer and the Canons of the Scottish Episcopal Church. The General Synod has no judicial power (Canon 52 Section 16), but in it is vested the power to alter the canons by which the church is ordered (Section 17) and by this means it controls the church's ways of worship, its discipline and its teaching.

3.3.5 The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 by a union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales. In 1981, the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland joined the Union. A confession of the Church's faith at the date of its formation is set out at paragraph 17 of the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church.

In paragraph 18, the Church acknowledged its duty 'to be open at all times to the leading of the Holy Spirit' and therefore affirmed its right 'to make such new declarations of its faith and for such purposes as may from time to time be required by obedience to the same Spirit.'

It accepted with thanksgiving 'the witness borne to the Catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds' and recognised as 'its own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Presbyterians, Congregationalists and members of Churches of Christ as stating the Gospel and seeking to make its implications clear.'

3.4 In this century, churches have been increasingly aware of God's desire for the unity of the Church. The participating Churches in this conversation committed themselves to the Faith and Order and Life and Work Movements and were founder members of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

3.4.1 Within the broader ecumenical movement, they sought to overcome divisive issues. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Confessing the One Faith, and Church and World*, reports of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, illustrate significant progress at the multi-lateral international level. The network of bi-lateral conversations is complementary to these; the most significant of those dialogues in which our churches have been involved is *God's Reign and our Unity*, Report of the Anglican-Reformed Commission, 1984.

3.4.2 In all of these, there is fundamental consensus on the understanding of the Gospel and confession of faith, and a high degree of agreement on the understanding of Church and Ministry.

3.4.3 The reception of these international dialogues is witnessed to by the following Agreements which have led to changed relationships: *The Leuenberg Agreement*, 1973 (Lutheran, Reformed & Union Churches⁷). *The Meissen Agreement*, 1988 (Church of England, the Evangelical Church in Germany and the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR). *The Porvoo Common Statement*, 1992 (British and Irish Anglicans and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches).

3.4.4 The number of united and uniting churches formed since 1947 with the birth of the Church of South India, amongst them the United Reformed Church, have shifted the debate about Church unity, setting people free in an all-embracing community of faith to develop and contribute their gifts and to challenge and equip each other for involvement in God's mission.

7 Union Churches are the Waldensian Church, the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, some of the German Landeskirchen and the United Reformed Church. The *Leuenberg Agreement* was also signed by the Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed and Methodist Churches in Latin America and in 1995 by the Methodist Churches in Europe, including the British Church.

3.5 Unity should not be confused with uniformity. Unity and diversity are grounded in God's perfect communion in diversity. Our churches have a high degree of unity in faith and doctrine. While this does not require each tradition to accept every doctrinal formulation characteristic of the distinctive traditions, it does require them to face and overcome the remaining obstacles to closer union:

- ◆ How do we find ways of looking at history that involve the reconciling of memories?
- ◆ How do we give appropriate recognition to Scotland's distinctiveness?
- ◆ What theological and historical issues are raised by Church-State relations?
- ◆ And by the relationship between majority and minority churches?
- ◆ How is the ministry of the whole people of God made effective in Church government?
- ◆ How is this related to personal episcopé, particularly that exercised by a bishop?
- ◆ How does ordination relate to all particular ministries within the life of the whole Church?

4 Ministry

The ordained and lay ministries of the Church are differing forms of the one ministry of Christ that is shared by the whole People of God

(*The COCU⁸ Consensus*, 2nd ed., 1991, chapter VII section 21).

4.1 Ministering Christians

4.1.1 'Before we turn to the study of any particular form of ministry,' says the Multilateral report, *Deacons for Scotland?*, 'there is a fundamental question of perspective to be settled.'

Relatively very few of the Christians are ordained, and they are ordained in order to serve, build up and equip the whole community of the baptised for its mission..... It is all followers of Christ, not just the tiny minority of them who are ordained, who are charged by Christ to be salt to the world, light to all the world, yeast to leaven the whole lump of dough.

(*Deacons for Scotland?* p.36)

4.1.2 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, begins its section on Ministry with 'the Calling of the Whole People of God'. Only then does the document turn to the Ordained Ministry. In expressing its view of ordained ministry and its unity and diversity, BEM presupposes the life of the Church and the mission of all Christian people.

Though the churches are agreed in their understanding of the calling of the people of God, they differ in their understanding of how the life of the Church is to be ordered. In particular, there are differences concerning the place and forms of the ordained ministry. As they engage in the

effort to overcome these differences, the churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God. How, according to the will of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the life of the Church to be understood and ordered, so that the Gospel may be spread and the community built up in love?

(*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Ministry section 6)

4.1.3 In the first place, therefore, there is the ministry of the whole Church, sent both to preach the Gospel to all nations and to be, in the quality of its life, the product of the Gospel. 'The Church is sent into the world as sign, instrument and first-fruits of a reality which comes from beyond history - the Kingdom or reign of God' (*God's Reign and Our Unity*, Section 29). The priesthood of all believers is one of the Biblical images depicting the corporate responsibility of the Church to stand before the face of God as representative of all humanity and to speak to the human race from God:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, a people claimed by God for his own, to proclaim the glorious deeds of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

(I Peter 2:9)

4.1.4 In the second place, there is the ministry given to every individual member of the Church, none being without gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7). Agreement on this was a feature of the negotiations for Church union in North India and Pakistan:

The Church of North India/Pakistan recognises that it is the duty and privilege of every member to share in that service of God which is the Church's ministry. This ministry includes the worship of God both in private and in public, Christian loving service both within the family of the Church and to the community at large, and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism... It is a prime concern of the Church that all its members should contribute fully to its life of worship, witness and service.

(*Plan of Church Union in North India and Pakistan*, 4th Rev. Ed. 1965, chap. VIII.A.1)

4.1.5 In the very passage in which St Paul asserts that 'in each of us, the Spirit is seen to be at work for some useful purpose,' he goes on to give nine examples of gifts of the Spirit which are given, not to all Christians, but to particular individuals - ministries which are to be exercised for the sake of all, not in rivalry but in complementarity, just as the variegated organs of a living body function interdependently for the health and efficiency of the whole body. (I Corinthians 12: 8-30). So, in the third place, there is a great variety of distinctive ministries not common to all members of the Church but committed to some. All such

8 Consultation on Church Unity - USA negotiations since the early 1960s, including African-American, Disciples, Episcopal, Methodist, Reformed and United Churches.

ministries are gifts of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon the Church by the risen and ascended Christ, 'to equip God's people for work in his service, for the building up of the body of Christ ...' (Ephesians 4:12). Throughout the history of the Church, as at the present, the gifts of the Spirit abound throughout the whole People of God, and the gifts are exercised, in the vast majority of cases, by Christians who are not ordained. This perspective needs to be kept in all study of the ministering done by ordained Christians.

4.1.6 It is not to be deduced from this perspective that the ordained ministry is a later development within the Church, an invention of the early Church, nor that its authority is totally derived by delegation from the Church.

The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.

The Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility... The very existence of the Twelve and other apostles shows that, from the beginning, there were differentiated roles in the community.

As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry.

(*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Ministry sections 8-11).

This understanding has been adopted, and strongly argued, in the report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and Our Unity*, sections 73-77.

4.1.7 The group unanimously endorses the principle set out in the following statement from the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Particularly in terms of the Christian community, Scripture reveals God's intention in Christ to include all people. Entering into the fellowship of the body of Christ, all persons become one in Christ. The Reformed tradition has always affirmed that each member (male and female) of Christ's body is endowed by the Holy Spirit with gifts for the use and upbuilding of the whole body. Although the implications of this affirmation have not always been fully practised, this affirmation calls for full participation of women and men in the leadership of that community, through all offices of ministry (elder, pastor, teacher, deacon), in accordance with the spiritual gifts which each woman or man has received.

(*Eldership in the Reformed Churches Today* Editor Lukas Vischer, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1991 p.16)

4.2 The Ministry of the Eldership

4.2.1 The eldership is to be recognised in a united Church as a gift of God to the whole Church. It would be recognised as part of the heritage of faith of the united church. Elders would exercise a particular ministry of leadership and service in the local church. There would be great freedom to delegate. The eldership would exist 'for the sake of the Church as a whole and ... its task (would be) to release the talents and the possibilities of all God's people.' (*Reports to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 1990 p.196)

4.2.2 It is recognised that there has been, and still is, a variety of models of eldership which have evolved within the Reformed family of Churches from the time of the Reformation onwards.⁹ Something of this variety is reflected in two of the participating Churches which have elders, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church. The Church of Scotland has elders who are ordained for life and who serve, if not for life, then at least indefinitely. Presbytery responses in 1990 indicated that for the majority of elders, ordination was of paramount importance.

The United Reformed Church also ordains elders for life, but in many churches elders are not expected to serve on the Elders' Meeting without a break or indefinitely. In an article produced to explain the essential gifts of the Elders' Meeting for Churches engaged in Local Ecumenical Partnerships with the United Reformed Church, the Eldership is described thus:

The heart of the matter for us is that there should be a group of people, chosen by the congregation for their Christian maturity, who share with those ordained to [the ministry of] Word and Sacrament in the leadership of the local church and from whose numbers the representatives of the local church to the wider church are chosen.

Non-serving elders can be called on for advice and may signal their office by occasionally distributing the elements at communion and may continue to represent the local church in the wider work of the Church. What is critical in the United Reformed Church is the relation between the Elders' Meeting and the Church Meeting, with final authority resting with the Church Meeting which takes decisions having received the advice of the Elders' Meeting and the minister. As in the Church of Scotland, many of the common duties of elders are, in some churches, carried out by others e.g. stewarding, preparing communion, counting the offering.

4.2.3 In both Churches the ministry of the eldership is still evolving in response to the needs of today's Church. Because of this, it is recommended that the united church should not be tied down to one form of practice. Also, since the eldership is to be seen as a growth point still in the process of developing, union could take place ahead of

9 Reports to the General Assembly, 1989, page 198f.

solving all the issues surrounding the eldership. Remaining issues should be seen as theological, rather than legal, and should be carried forward into the united church for continued reflection and discussion.

4.2.4 Further work will be done on the theology of the role and function of the eldership once the areas of authority appropriate to the various councils of the Church have been more closely defined. In pursuing this, the Churches will need to be sensitive to the perception of some who see the eldership as disempowering those who are not ordained in the exercising of their ministry. A strong emphasis on varieties of ministry within the Church will help to counteract this.

4.3 The Ministry of the Diaconate

4.3.1 There has been little discussion to date within the group about the Ministry of the Diaconate. All the participating churches recognise diaconal ministries, but not all have a diaconate. Of those that do, some ordain, others commission; some have a specific relationship to the liturgy, others do not. It is recognised that work needs to be done towards reconciling the ministry of the diaconate and its role and function within the wider scope of diaconal ministries. To this end the proposed ecumenical study by member Churches of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland will have specific resonance within the Initiative for Union. Meantime, the Initiative shares the view that the uniting Churches should not demand fuller agreement on the Diaconate as a prior condition of union, but should 'plan for the retention of a variety of kinds of Deacon in the united Church in the initial period, leaving the way fully open for the Church, after union, to discover what the office of a Deacon in the Church of God is to be' (*Deacons for Scotland?* p.69)

4.4 Ministry of Word and Sacrament

4.4.1 From the Multilateral Church Conversation we have inherited 'A Scottish Consensus on the Presbyterate' recording agreement on the seven-fold role of the Presbyter.¹⁰ The Initiative, in re-affirming this consensus, wishes to make an additional item the first of all: the Presbyter's role of serving the Church in leadership in mission.

4.4.2 There is widespread agreement on the nature and function of the ordained ministry as has now been reiterated in successive ecumenical documents. For example, the text of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* states:

The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission, and its caring ministry.

These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way. Since the ordained ministry and the community are inextricably related, all members participate in fulfilling these functions. In fact, every charism serves to assemble and build up the body of Christ. Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfils these functions in a representative way, providing the focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community.

(*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* Ministry section 13).

4.4.3 Since 1984, those churches participating in the Multilateral Church Conversation, with the exception of the Scottish Episcopal Church, agreed a Joint Statement on Mutual Recognition of Members and Ministries which permitted ministers of each Church to 'exercise all aspects of their ministries, including the celebration of the sacraments, in any of these Churches, when invited to do so and in accordance with the recognised procedures of these Churches.' A similar provision is now also available through Canon 15 of the Scottish Episcopal Church which permits someone who has not been episcopally ordained to celebrate the Eucharist in a Local Ecumenical Partnership, in recognition of the reality of unity in these particular situations. It is, however, hoped that at the point when the churches first agree to unite, this latter provision would be extended throughout all the participating churches involved as a sign and expression of that commitment to union at national level.

4.5 The Ministry of the Bishop

4.5.1 Each church has developed its own pattern of *episcopé*, the ministry of oversight. These models vary considerably in the extent to which the emphasis is placed on the personal, the collegial or the communal aspects of ministry. Part of the reconciliation of ministries required for a united church involves ensuring that each of these aspects is present in a recognisable and balanced way. In the Scottish Episcopal Church this ministry of oversight is exercised through the episcopate - the ministry of the bishops. Paramount in the personal dimension of this ministry of oversight is the need for pastoral care and leadership in mission in a way that brings cohesion. Such an emphasis picks up on the emphasis on pastoral oversight which has always been the primary emphasis of the episcopate in the Scottish Episcopal Church. The newer emphasis on the bishop's role in mission comes from the wider Anglican Communion, in particular from Africa. This role is not to be seen as an alternative to the pastoral model, but rather as complementary to it.

¹⁰ 'As we stated in our Interim Report in 1972, our Churches are already in fundamental agreement with regard to the various roles of the ordained minister - or the presbyter as that Interim Report describes him or her:In our Churches, people are ordained to a multiple role including the following: •Sacramental •The Ministry of the Word •Liturgical •Pastoral •Pioneering •Universal and •Reconciliation.' *Christian Unity - NOW is the Time* p.16f.

4.5.2 In the Scottish Episcopal Church bishops serve in collaborative ministry with each other, other ministers and the councils of the church at all levels. For the discharge of their duties they are answerable to the church. They have a constitutionally defined role alongside others in the governance of the Church and are placed in the context of the ministry of the whole people of God. They can therefore be said to have a conciliar role, in that bishops do not function on their own, but within the councils of the Church to which they are accountable. The 'college' of bishops exists for mutual support and exchange of views. This would continue in a united Church but it is not anticipated that the college would vote separately in a national church council. The description of bishops in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry summarises clearly the role of bishops.

Bishops preach the Word, preside at the sacraments and administer discipline in such ways as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the Church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church and the universal Church to their community. They in common with the presbyters and deacons and whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.

(Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Ministry section 29)

4.5.3 The ministry of the bishops can be compared with the ministry of the eldership. Just as the eldership is to be seen as a gift of God to the whole Church, so the ministry of the bishops is to be seen as a gift of God to the whole Church. To date, discussion in the group has concentrated on the distinctive role of the bishop. There is general agreement that there are three primary areas: pastoral care, leadership in mission and administration. Specific responsibilities have been identified e.g. in the councils of the Church, as a teacher and custodian of the faith, as servants of unity, as one who looks out for needs to be met and opportunities to be grasped and who encourages such a looking out in others. All of these are undertaken in collaboration and co-operation with others in the councils of the Church at all levels. However, it has been agreed that further work on the role of the bishop needs to await the defining of the specific functions and responsibilities of the councils of the Church. An early suggestion that the bishop should be placed at community, rather than regional level, has been abandoned in favour of a regional model where a region will generally represent an area smaller than the present Church of Scotland presbytery (see para 5.3 below).

5 Structures

Note: in the following section names of councils are descriptive, and may not be the final designation. The use of such terms allows greater freedom in exploring the possible roles and functions of the united church structure, without the distraction of names which carry particular denominational baggage. Comment is invited in all the areas set out below.

5.1 The Local Church

5.1.1 Just as consideration of the Church's ministry began with the affirmation that the ministry of Christ belongs to the whole Church as the body of Christ and is therefore to be located in the ministry of all Christians, so the setting out of the structure for a united church begins at the point where the church member participates in the life of the Church. If it can be said that the ministry of the eldership is a gift to the whole Church from the presbyterian tradition and the ministry of bishops is a gift from the episcopal tradition, so it can be said that the local church meeting is the gift from the congregational tradition. The local church meeting is not just a business meeting, but is the place where theological issues are tackled and faith is worked through together in policies worked out locally. This aspect of congregational polity would be received in the united church as part of its structure. In the Methodist Church local churches have been gathered into circuits to facilitate their individual lives. This contribution from the Methodist Church has helped the group to develop its thinking on the maxi-parish outlined below. The structure of a united Church would therefore need to facilitate and encourage the development and practice of all such patterns. From the local church meeting local leaders would be elected to serve on the local church council. This council would ensure the on-going life of the local worship centre community.

5.2 The Maxi-Parish

5.2.1 In exploring the need for a Church equipped for mission, a Structures Working Group has been setting out a possible model which would take account of recognised communities in which there might be more than one existing worshipping community. The idea has been shared with people in different parts of the country to gauge initial reaction. It is presented here in some detail in order to encourage further exploration and discussion at local level.

5.2.2 The maxi-parish would refer to a designated area, recognised by the local people as a definable community in which geographical and sociological factors are taken into consideration. Generally speaking, it would be the area of a sizeable town and those surrounding areas which focus in on it. The area would have within it a number of church buildings, which are referred to in this report as worship centres, in that the building indicates the focus of a worshipping community. The area cannot be so large as to make administration and management unwieldy. In major cities several maxi-parishes could be identified. Ideally there would be no more than seven worship centres in a maxi-parish.

5.2.3 The maxi-parish would be administered by a parish council whose primary function would be the planning of missionary strategy, the oversight of pastoral care and the co-ordination of fund-raising for local and wider church needs. People would be elected to the maxi-parish council from the local church councils. The staff, full time and part time, would form a ministry team. Questions still have to be answered about how the team leader is appointed. Should it be by rotation, or someone specifically called because of recognised gifts of leadership? Could a lay person be team leader? How would the leader relate to the bishop in council? The Working Group is presently engaged in drawing up some leadership models. In order to allow the greatest amount of flexibility, it may seem prudent to offer a choice of models so that each maxi-parish would choose the one that best fitted its situation. The choice would be intimated and agreed with the regional church council which would have the task of encouraging and nurturing maxi-parishes.

5.2.4 The maxi-parish would allow the continuance of different worship traditions. Small fellowships have a contribution to make, but where financial or human resources would make an ordained minister of their own inappropriate, they would contribute as part of the maxi-parish. In many cases too, this model would deal constructively with readjustment issues in a united church, since the continuance of worship traditions does not imply that a building must continue. Two traditions can flourish in one building. Local management practices and terminology may also be preserved within such a model, diversity being one of the touchstones of this initiative.

5.2.5 It is possible that such a model of local unity could begin to be introduced ahead of union. It is equally the case that it would continue to be a model that would be commended, but not imposed, after union.

5.3 Regional Church Council

5.3.1 The group is only now turning its attention to the role and function of the regional and national councils of the united church. The intention is to produce a regional structure of councils which would comprise roughly 15-30 existing worship centres. Parishes, whether maxi or not, would be represented on the regional council in proportion to their size. Working towards a harmonising of regional boundaries could begin immediately, since this does not depend on union and would in any event greatly facilitate ecumenical co-operation throughout Scotland.

5.3.2 It is envisaged that the bishop would be located within the regional council of the united church. Parallels can be drawn between the role of the bishop in the regional council and that of Provincial Moderator in the United Reformed Church and of District Chairs in the Methodist Church. Each has particular pastoral responsibility for local churches and their ministers, exercising leadership in relation to worship and mission.

It will be important in a united church that the bishop should be elected by the ordained ministers and representatives from the local churches that make up the council in which the bishop will serve. The precise procedures will need to be worked out. Questions that remain to be answered relate particularly to the role of the bishop in the regional church council. Would the bishop chair the council? Would there be bishops and moderators? Could the council be chaired by a lay person, and if so, does that have implications for chairing of the local church and maxi-parish councils? The practices differ among the participating churches. The solution will depend on how the functions of the councils and of specific ministries are related to the ministry of the whole Church.

5.4 National Church Council

5.4.1 Again detailed consideration is only now beginning. Some of the detail will need to take into account the status of the Church of Scotland as a national church. As in the case of the regional church council there will be questions to be answered about who would be eligible to chair the national church council. There will also be questions relating to composition. For example, present practice varies. Some churches appoint to their national body for one year, some for several years. Some churches restrict membership to particular groups within the church, for others church membership is the only qualification for election. The benefits of enabling the greatest number of members to participate in the national church council will need to be balanced with the benefits of continuity. Some participating churches seek to ensure appropriate representation of gender, age and ethnic background.

5.4.2 The relation of the church to the nation will need to be articulated in a way that is appropriate for the 21st century, with a recognition that the relationship between church and state has been constantly changing throughout history as the nation changed its sense of national identity or the church has changed and reformed itself. With the decision to have a devolved parliament in Scotland, once again the relationship of church to state is bound to change. What is important is that the united Church would be constitutionally rooted in the Scotland of the present, where Scottishness is defined in terms of citizenship and the pluralist nature of the nation is accepted. In such a context, the role of the church as a national church, through the decisions of its national church council and the encouragement given by that council to local churches, will be to show the concern of a loving God for the people of Scotland through its own love of its people, exercised with humility and in suffering service, a missionary and evangelical relationship. Furthermore such a commitment to Scotland must be clearly worked out within the context of the wider, global community.

6 Challenge to the Churches

6.1 In presenting this interim report, the Scottish Church Initiative for Union group wish to challenge the churches at all levels to become involved in the process of union. It offers four particular areas of challenge.

6.1.1 Education. In preparation for union, the group believes that church people need to participate in the process. This requires both education about their own tradition and contact with people from the other traditions involved. The discussion group has already produced one leaflet on the union talks and intends to produce others. It is proposed that a second one might look at patterns of worship. These should receive the widest possible attention, preferably on an ecumenical basis. It is vitally important that voices from more than one tradition are heard, so that the issues are viewed from angles other than our own.

6.1.2 Boundaries. Co-operation at local level is hampered throughout Scotland by the fact that each church has its own set of regional boundaries. Harmonising boundaries would go a long way to facilitating joint regional work, quite apart from being a step towards the union of these structures in a united church. We therefore challenge the churches to set up a boundary commission with a view to producing a map of harmonised boundaries.

6.1.3 Maxi-parishes. The churches are challenged to respond to the concept of the maxi-parish proposals. Where these proposals are broadly welcomed and where local conditions allow, voluntary pilot schemes could be set up to test the model.

6.1.4 The Interim Report. This report itself is offered as part of the process towards union. It is therefore important that it receives the fullest consideration in local churches and regional bodies, remembering the value in studying it ecumenically. Responses and reactions to any aspect of the report are invited by 30th June, 1999.

6.2 While the Interim Report is being discussed by the Churches, the group will continue to work on three themes: the whole people of God, the checks and balances of conciliarity and the function of the bishop in relation to the people. It will also do further work on leadership in a maxi-parish, on mission and how we understand it, and it will begin work on the central administrative structure of a united Church. Between 1999 and 2000 the responses from the Churches will be considered. Depending on the nature of these responses, the earliest specific proposals for union could be presented to the churches would be 2001.

Appendix 4

Letter from Dr Preman Niles, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, to the United Reformed Church - January 1998

Greetings in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ!

In the context of reviewing contributions from CWM Churches to the common work of CWM, the Executive Committee of CWM (Lusaka, 1-8 December 1997) discussed the matter of the financial contribution of the United Reformed Church. The Executive Committee asked that I write a letter to the United Reformed Church to communicate the important points that were made in that discussion.

1. It was noted that, in the formation of CWM, financial and other material resources outside Britain, belonging to LMS and the other missionary societies which came together in CWM, were handed over to the churches that were using them. The resources in Britain were not handed over to the British churches, but were left for CWM. Consequently, the United Reformed Church, along with other British churches in CWM, did not gain from the initial sharing of common financial and other material resources.
2. The United Reformed Church has supported CWM by putting almost all of its financial resources for mission at the disposal of CWM. Between 1977 and 1997, the URC has annually contributed five to six times more than the next biggest financial contributor in CWM. Not once during this period has the United Reformed Church asked that it be represented on the bodies in CWM which would decide how this money is to be spent.
3. The Executive Committee noted that over the years the membership of the URC has declined by almost 50%. It needs to pay greater attention to its mission at home. The URC also needs resources to sustain the partnership in mission relationships it has formed outside the CWM family.

Twenty years after the formation of CWM, and especially with the new financial resources that have come to CWM, the Executive Committee felt that it is time CWM asked the URC to reconsider its level of financial support for CWM.

So, the CWM Executive Committee has asked me to inform you

- ◆ that the CWM family is grateful for all the United Reformed Church has done over these many years to keep alive the vision and partnership of CWM;
- ◆ that the Executive Committee recognises the fact that the URC may reduce its financial contribution to CWM beginning 1998;
- ◆ that the Executive Committee reiterates the partnership principles of CWM, and asks that the URC not be timid in asking for support from the common pool of CWM's financial and personnel resources for its work of ministry and mission at home and abroad.

I end this letter with what the Moderator of CWM, the Revd Nove Vaillau, said to me in a personal conversation which captures the mood of discussion.

It is like the elder brother in a large family that has lost its parents carrying the burden of the family. Now that the younger brothers and sisters have grown up and become strong, the elder brother wants to take care of his own wounds and hurts. The younger brothers and sisters must gratefully agree, and in turn support the elder brother.

May the United Reformed Church with its vision of unity in mission continue to be a blessing to the nations!

Yours in Christ's service,

Dr Preman Niles, General Secretary

Appendix 5

Reports from Colleges

Mansfield College

1 The academic year began well with Associate Director Revd Dr Catherine Middleton fully back in post after lengthy and severe medical treatment for cancer. We had an 8 day Induction Session for the 8 new ordinands. They fitted in quickly with little difficulty. We are very pleased with them. The usual round of courses, activities, placements, personal sessions, group meetings, coffees and bar-time took place. Academic work is often daunting but we are privileged to be part of a world class university with exciting people and developments all around us. We use hospitals and community development projects for placements and we are also blessed with good urban and rural as well as suburban churches for experiencing ministry. There are 19 United Reformed Church ordinands, 1 student sponsored by the Congregational Federation, 1 Erasmus scholar from the Swiss Reformed Church, 15 undergraduates reading theology, 6 MTh students, and approximately 300 students in the college in total. There are 9 teachers of theology in the college [not all for ordinands but around when needed], and a University Theology Faculty of 100 that we call upon for special subjects. There are 35 college teachers in total at Mansfield. There are 4 leaving ordinands for United Reformed Churches this year.

2 The Revd Charles Brock is the Chair of the Oxford University BTh Revision Committee involving the 12 theological colleges in the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training Scheme. Some 300 ordinands are involved and we hope to make the degree and Certificate in Theology more in line with current methods of teaching and reflection. We still retain the tutorial system at great expense, but we believe it enhances students at all levels. The University is planning wider access to the UK; Mansfield has always believed in this policy.

3 The tradition of the College has been highlighted by the new Religion and Democracy Programme that has the enthusiasms of the Principal, Senior Tutor, Bursar, Professional Fellow in Politics, and Fellow in Oriental

Studies, who are all on the Committee. In addition we have the enthusiastic help of the Gladstone Professor of Government from All Souls College. To date we have four well-known speakers this year and we plan workshops for next year with a view toward publications. We were very pleased to welcome the first speaker in the series. Dr Alex Boraine, an old college member, who is currently Deputy Chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

4 Our Associate Chaplain, Revd Flora Winfield, left in April 1997 to take up a position at Church House, Westminster. The Revd Dr John Muddiman, our New Testament Fellow, has taken her place. We have also appointed David Elliott, a United Reformed Church graduate student, as Junior Chaplain, two undergraduate chapel assistants. Revd Dr Susan Durber, Minister of St Columba's Oxford, has been appointed as Chaplain to Ordinands. We have begun an Inter-faith Meditation keeping silence together for a half hour each week.

5 A personal note from Charles Brock:
Having been home in the USA during the past summer, we noticed that my mother [age 92] is failing, and missing us a lot. That is a burden of being an only child I suppose, but it did bring a lot of benefits. It was a tough decision, but we have decided to go back for three-quarters of the year each year. We bought a little place in Oxford close to the college [oh, poor souls] and will help with the Religion and Democracy Programme and teach a few courses, and in the Autumn start up a religion and ideology project at Penn State that I have been asked to do called Institute for the Analysis of the American Dream. It will be really painful to give up Wheatley, my Fellowship, and the Chaplaincy. It has, however, been going swimmingly for 35 years. And at last I will have a chance to write some books that have been on the boil for 25 years and do a bit of new intellectual explorations. Pray hard for me.

Northern College

1 There are twenty-seven students on our roll, twenty-five of whom are preparing for stipendiary ministry in the United Reformed Church. Of the eight who joined us last September six were under thirty years of age thus making it the youngest intake for many a long year. They have brought with them a great deal of enthusiasm as they have displayed a high level of capability and a refreshing openness to questioning and critical enquiry.

2 The Revd Frances Ward left the staff at the end of the 1996-97 session to add to her family and return to her ministry in the Church of England. She had made an excellent contribution to developments at Luther King House, particularly concerning placement learning and the End of Session Student Review process. In her place, we have welcomed the Revd Jan Berry from work in chaplaincy at Sheffield Hallam University. She is already making an impact in our teaching programme in the areas of counselling and liturgy.

3 Our overseas student for 1997-98 was the Revd Johnson T Arue who came to us from the Kiribati Protestant Church to study for the MA in Contextual Missiology. I use the past tense since Johnson had to return home shortly before Christmas due to the tragic death of his wife. We are trying to find a way of enabling him to complete the degree via some form of distance learning.

4 The 'Faith in Living' course once again generated an excellent set of results. In comparison with the undergraduates I teach in a University setting I am continually impressed by the commitment and motivation the course generates in our participants. Our results when compared with the standard of work I have seen from other institutions suggest that few of our participants under achieve. We feel affirmed in what we are doing by the excellent reports we have received from our External Examiners.

5 Our two taught MA courses in Contextual Ministry and Missiology have attracted good year groups. Three United Reformed Church ministers are reading for these degrees as part of their programmes of continuing ministerial education, hopefully blazing a trail for others to follow. One important feature of these courses is the vast amount of Christian and ministerial experience at home and overseas which is on display in the year groups. Amongst the twenty-five or so participants we have people who have experienced work for the church in nine different countries.

6 Perhaps the single most significant development during recent months has been the outcome of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry's review process. The Federation is to be disbanded and replaced by the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester. This new body will be made up of the

existing Federation members augmented by others involved in theological education in the churches and beyond. The aim will be to become a focus for theological education at every level - lay, ministerial (full time / part-time, stipendiary / non-stipendiary) and continuing ministerial - in the north of England. The new Partnership will be an ecumenical response to the challenge to churches to equip themselves for mission and ministry at a time of great upheaval but also tremendous opportunity. We need to develop in all our members those gifts and graces God has given them for being the Church today; that will involve a focus on lay education beyond what we have hitherto envisaged. We also need a stipendiary ministry equipped to lead and serve the Church in these times; that will involve thorough and stretching foundational and continuing ministerial education programmes. Northern College, through the new Partnership, is committed to playing its part in making these things happen. Luther King House soon will be managed by a new ecumenical Trust body. The stake-holders in the Luther King House Trust will be developing the buildings and site into a teaching-conference facility that will enable the far reaching aims of the new Partnership to be met.

7 The report of the 1996-97 Northern College Review Group, *Enhancing Effective Ministry - The Next Steps*, was presented to the Board of Governors in the Autumn. Its proposals dovetail neatly into the plans for the new Partnership, with a renewed emphasis upon diversifying the role of Northern College. In collaboration with those already involved we want to try to put more of emphasis and resources upon lay-education and continuing ministerial education - without in any way compromising our commitment to prepare able stipendiary ministers. A further thrust of the report is a commitment to enable all involved at Northern College to gain an enhanced understanding and experience of the wider world church family. We warmly support Belonging to the World Church as one means of fulfilling that commitment.

8 Preparing people for stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministry is a partnership between the College and the churches. Throughout their courses participants are not only involved in learning at college but also engaged in reflection upon their work in local churches. We are grateful for the members and ministers of those churches who are prepared to devote precious time to our ordinands in their period of foundational preparation for ministry.

9 As a lot of our recent thinking and plans suggest we are trying in the Federation to respond to the emphases on life-long learning emphasized by the Dearing Report on Higher Education. Other innovations in Higher Education to emerge from the new government are awaited in a spirit of guarded optimism given the approach to which we are now committed.

Appendix 5

10 Dr Elaine Kaye has now finished her work on the history of the college. We hope that it will be published in early 1999.

11 The speaker at the College Lunch at the 1998 Assembly will be the Revd Dr John Harrod, the Principal of the Hartley Victoria Methodist College. John will speak about the recent developments which have given rise to the plans to create the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester and the Luther King House Trust.

12 The College wish to congratulate two of its former students who have recently been recognized by the Victoria University of Manchester: The Revd Dr Alan P F Sell, now Professor of Systematic Theology at the United Theological College, Aberystwyth, was awarded a DD for work submitted and the Revd Alan Gaunt has received an honorary MA for his services to hymnology.

Westminster College, Cambridge

1 College news

1.1 Last year we were in the throes of change – new staff appointments, new structure of government. This year has been a time of ‘bedding down’. The Board of Governors and their committees have been grappling with the ways in which they must exercise their responsibilities, particularly in areas of financial management and stewardship of resources. The new staff have been growing in friendship, theological understanding and collegial ministry. These two processes are, of course, essential to the creation of college community life, and they have deserved our energy. This has been a year of laying foundations. We hope that much will be built on them in future years.

1.2 We have welcomed two new sub-committee conveners – Mr Don Taylor to the Management Committee, and Mrs Valerie Burnham to the Board of Studies. That, of course, means that we have said farewell to two friends who have served us with dedication and faithfulness over many years – the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard from the Board of Studies and Mr Des Davies from the Management Committee. Mr Davies has been involved with the management of the college for over twenty years. The college, and the rest of the church, are indebted to those who give of their time and gifts with such generosity. We have also said farewell to the Revd Elizabeth Brown, who serviced the Board of Studies with singular efficiency as its secretary.

1.3 We congratulate Peter McEnhill on his election by the Church of Scotland to give the Kerr lectures in the University of Glasgow 1997-2000. It is a great honour to be invited to give these lectures – the rest of us are basking in reflected glory!

1.4 The college community is in good heart. There are 28 UR ordinands / non-stipendiary ministers transferring to the stipendiary ministry amongst our 32 students. It is our hope and our prayer that eleven of them will proceed to ministries within the United Reformed Church at the end of the 1997/8 academic year. As usual, we have been enriched and enlarged as a community by students from overseas, and by ministers taking sabbaticals through the generosity of the Cheshunt Foundation.

1.5 Our Commemoration of Benefactors had a Celtic flavour in 1997 – rightly so as British Christians gave thanks on the 1400th anniversary of the death of Columba on Iona and the arrival of Augustine at Thanet. The Commemoration lecture, ‘Columba in contexts’, was given by Professor David Dumville, Professor of Palaeontology and Cultural History at Cambridge. We were also delighted to welcome the incoming Eastern Province Moderator, the Revd Elizabeth Caswell, as our preacher.

1.6 Westminster confounds the computer acronym ‘wysiwyg’ – ‘What you see is what you get.’ Our students see Westminster, but what they get is the magnificent resources of the ecumenical Cambridge Theological Federation. This has been another year of growth for the Federation which has offered ‘Associate Institute’ status to

the Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations. This new centre is unique in Britain, and we look forward to working with them. Elsewhere in the Federation, Ridley Hall are partners in a new course for the training of professional Christian youth workers. This is available to all denominations, and adds yet another dimension to the resources the Federation offers the churches.

2 The Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies

2.1 Some dreams eventually become reality. 1997 saw the launch of the ‘Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies’ at Westminster – the realisation of a dream which began more than five years ago. Dr David Thompson gave a paper entitled, ‘United or Reformed? Twenty-five years of the United Reformed Church’ to a pleasingly diverse audience drawn in equal numbers from the church and our university partners. Dr Peter McEnhill acts as the Centre’s Director, and an exciting programme of lectures and conferences are being planned. This year’s programme has also included a paper by Professor John Hick, one of Westminster’s most distinguished alumni.

2.2 The Institute’s first major conference will be in September 1999, entitled ‘Whither the Reformed tradition?’ when the keynote speakers will be Professors Jurgen Moltmann, Brian Gerrish and Colin Gunton. More detailed information is available from Dr McEnhill at the college.

2.3 The United Reformed Church History Society Library and archive are being moved to the Institute at Westminster as these reports are being prepared. We are now well on our way to establishing the Institute as a significant international centre for the study of the Reformed tradition.

3 And into the future...

3.1 As one dream becomes a reality, others begin to take shape, as the Governing Body turn their eyes to look at the college building and begin a process of reflecting about how it might best be used in the service of the church into the new millennium.

3.2 This year’s leavers were Delia Bond to Hythe, David Dones to Clare and Wickhambrook, David Featonby to Ross on Wye and Newent, Simon Franklin to Portslade, Geoffrey Haigh to the West Sussex Group, the Revd Jacqui Knight to Heavitree, Exeter and Pinhoe, the Revd Ted Landon to the Dartford Group, Kathryn Taylor, Michael Whitfield to Taunton and Bishops Hull and the Revd Chris Willis to Hertford.

3.3 We also said a partial farewell to Dr Robert Pope who left us to take up an appointment in the School of Theology at the University of Wales, Bangor. We are, however, delighted to be sharing with the Province of Wales in Robert’s continuing preparation for ministry.

Queen's College, Birmingham

The Ecumenical Foundation for Theological Education

1 Development of the Foundation

The full-time training of ordinands in the College is now taking place in the wider context of the Foundation, in which part-time training (the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course) and Research are equal partners. This year the total number of students in the Foundation has risen to 114. While full-time student numbers (60) have remained on a par with last year, there has been a significant increase in part-time students. Only two United Reformed Church ordinands are in training this year: events and developments in the United Reformed Church at large during the course of 1997 did not make it easy to recruit new students.

For the first time the College has recruited part-time students (seven in all) to its BA and Postgraduate Diploma/MA programmes, most of these are experienced ministers and priests, one being a United Reformed Church minister. This means that the Foundation is beginning to play a significant role in clergy in-service training. Anyone interested in completing honours degree studies part-time or taking a part-time postgraduate course in Applied Theological Studies is encouraged to contact the College for details.

The satisfactory conclusion of recent validation agreements with the University of Birmingham for the West Midlands Course and for the College's part-time programmes means that the Foundation now has a coherent structure for academic programmes, running from Undergraduate Certificate to Postgraduate MA. At each level these qualifications can be gained by part-time or full-time study. The heart of theological education lies neither in the course structures nor the qualifications, but it can be helpful to have a skeleton as well as a heart.

2 Staff and Visiting Scholars

Appended to this Report is a copy of the current Foundation Staff list for the information of Assembly members. The policy pursued by the Council in creating a tri-partite institution can be seen to have born fruit in the creation of an exceptionally strong and varied team of academic staff. The Foundation does more than simply consolidate the staff of its constituent parts; it also affords a net in which 'divers kinds of fish' may be caught. We were fortunate this summer to land Nicola Slee (completing her doctorate in feminist theology after seeing the Aston Scheme to its sad conclusion, as Director of Studies) and Philip Sheldrake (fresh from the staff of Westcott House, and engaged on further writing in the field of Spirituality). Both are contributing to the life and teaching of the Foundation.

Friends may note that Andrew Chandler is now acting as history tutor in the College, in addition to his research responsibilities. This means that we can maintain the professional teaching of church history after David Butler's departure.

The Revd Dr Neil Messer has joined the staff at the beginning of 1998: his role combines half time work as United Reformed Church and Ethics Tutor in the Foundation with the half time post of Training Officer in the West Midlands Province. At his Induction Service, conducted by the Provincial Moderator, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, the preacher was Neil's one-time College Principal, the Revd Martin Cressey. We are thrilled to have Neil with us, and to welcome his wife, Janet and family.

3 Chapel Refurbishment

The amount so far received and promised for the Appeal now exceeds £12,000. I am in correspondence with a number of Charitable Trusts to which I have made application in the light of advice and help from friends and supporters of Queen's.

4 Domestic Matters

Mr Brian Cottrill, the caretaker-gardener, continues to win our admiration and respect by the way in which he maintains the grounds and sees to the day-to-day maintenance of the premises, while never seeming to run out of patience courtesy or energy. The good quality of our regular catering in the dining room has been commented on by many people this term; Mr Marlon Brown has quickly settled to playing an effective part as senior cook.

5 Nuptials

The chapel was more than usually employed during last summer vacation as the setting for a clutch of weddings. Altogether seven present or recent members of Queen's were married earlier this year, but a number of these were wedded to each other, thus reducing the demand on friends' diaries. I would particularly like to congratulate Paul Smith, Old Testament Tutor, on his marriage to the Revd Magdalen Thornton, one time student of the College.

St Andrew's Hall

1 Celebrations of Mission

The Academic year 1996-1997 spanned two important anniversaries in the life of St Andrew's Hall Missionary College, both of them being celebrations of mission. The first in 1996 saw the celebration of 30 years of the foundation of the college bringing together the important heritage of Carey Hall (founded in 1912) and St Andrew's College (founded in 1945). This was both a celebration of Christian Mission and the world Church in general and a thanksgiving for the place of the Baptist and Reformed traditions within the ecumenical movement. The second celebration was one that was shared with the whole church in the British Isles, being the 1400th anniversary of the death of Columba the great Scots missionary and the arrival of Augustine as the instrument of Gregory the Great's vision to convert the Anglo-Saxon people of this dark land. Both of these anniversaries celebrated events that were forward looking and momentous for the mission of the Church in Britain and throughout the world and perhaps marked also a turning point in the history of St Andrew's Hall's contribution to this task.

2 Staff Changes

Revd David Grainger completed eleven years as Principal of the College in August 1997, but has continued to make a contribution to the college throughout his appointment as the Vice President of the Federation of the Selly Oak Colleges for the academic year 1997 – 1998. On the 6th July many people gathered in the College chapel for an occasion of farewell to David, Elidia and the family. Set within the framework of worship the opportunity was taken to look back over David's life and contribution to the college and many greetings were received. During his time as Principal, David has seen many changes in the life and structures of the Selly Oak Colleges and the School of Mission and World Christianity and has encouraged St Andrew's Hall to be fully part of these changes.

It was with sadness that the college accepted the resignation of Fei Taule'ale'auamai in December 1997, but we all sympathise with her in her heart-searching over the illness of her father, and we understand her concern to be near her family at this time. We are sorry to lose Fei, who has made an important contribution to the college, and the wider community of Mission education and the Church with her particular skills and her 'coconut theology'. Finally, Martin Conway also completed his term of office as President of the Selly Oak Colleges in August after many years of leadership in a period that has seen major changes in the provision and expectations of higher and further education in this country. He goes into semi-retirement.

But losses led to gains, and it is with great anticipation and hope that we look forward to the new staff appointments. Michael Taylor has been appointed the New President of the Selly Oak Colleges and his new broom will be sweeping very efficiently soon. Also we will be welcoming the new staff members of St Andrew's Hall in 1998. The Revd Dr Christopher Wigglesworth of the Church of Scotland is the new Principal of the College and will bring with him a wealth of experience in World Christian Mission and

theological education. The Revd Patricia Nimmo will draw on her European and inner city mission experience for her work as Director for Educational Programme Development.

3 The Residents

Every continent of the world, with the exception of Antarctica, was represented at the College during the year, so the community was not only multi-cultural but global. This feature of the college's life is central to its educational policies and continues to be a major source of inspiration and learning for all residents. The United Reformed Church, through their scholarships enabled persons from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia to make good use of the colleges resources and facilities. Marcos Macarmo from Mozambique obtained his MA in Mission. Antia Sipos from Hungary and Huda Nassar from Syria completed studies in English and Mission which enabled them to continue their theological training. Paul Ssemwanga from Uganda and Clementina Panda from Angola returned to their churches with qualifications in Church Education, while others completed English courses enabling them to be more effective in their work in ecumenical and mission related posts.

4 Library Developments

The Orchard Learning Resource Centre opened in September, to replace the old Central Library and Library of Westhill College. But this was no simple replacement. This £5.4 million project for the Federation provides a modern library and information technology centre, second to none. Together with the provision of a computer network it also houses the Mingana collection of Syriac Manuscripts, the Harold Turner Collection of documents relating to New Religious Movements, and the most comprehensive libraries of Missiology in Britain today, together with a superb collection on theology, Contextualised theology, Christian education, World Faiths, Development Studies and Regional Studies. St Andrew's Hall has created its own computer centre as an annexe of the library, providing twenty four hour on-line facilities for all its residents. These new developments enable the college to offer much better facilities for sabbatical and private study.

5 The Future Outlook

Being situated in Birmingham, a very multi-cultural and multi-faith city, there is easy access to the college from all parts of Britain making it a very convenient place for courses, conferences and committee meetings. The United Reformed Church together with other churches is making use of this facility, and we expect an increasing use in the future. All these developments enable the college to look forward with new vision to the new millennium, and the many changes that will be taking place. Alongside our traditional role as a multi-cultural learning community enabling people to work in cross-cultural situations throughout the world in various aspects of mission, we expect to add new dimensions of courses and training programmes for local congregations and to develop new networks and programmes for the European context.

Appendix 6

Students in Training 1997 - 1998

NORTHERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Kay Alberg (Northern), Anthony Haws (Northern), Christopher Parker (Northern), Jane Rowell (Northern), David Salisbury (Westminster), Alistair Smeaton (Mansfield), Kirsty-Ann Wallace (Mansfield)

NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Carole Allison (Northern), Jane Barron (Northern), Valerie Davies (Northern), Robert Heathcote (Northern), Jason McCullagh (Westminster), Craig Muir (Northern),

Non-Stipendiary

Mark Houghton (MCI)

MERSEY PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Elizabeth Blair (Northern), Gary Gotham (Northern), Martin Hardy (Northern), Christopher Ray (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Christine Davies (MCI), Alan Poolton (MCI), Glenys Wilkinson (MCI),

YORKSHIRE PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Georgina Brotherton (Mansfield), Louise Franklin (Westminster), Pauline Parkin (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Heather Pollard (MCI), Peter Sharp (MCI)

EAST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Jason Askew (Westminster), Trish Davis (Mansfield), Malcolm Fife (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Ruth Allen (Westminster), Neil Eldridge (MCI), John Hayton (EMMTC), Jeremy Phelps (EMMTC), Sallyann Phelps (EMMTC), Edward Rawlins (MCI), Elaine Sutherland (EMMTC)

WEST MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Barbara Bennett (Queens), Mary Burgess (Queens), Edward Cox (Northern), Camilla Frid (Northern), Pauline Rate (Westminster)

CRCW

Adella Pritchard (MCI)

EASTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Yolande Burns (Westminster), Jim Dagleish (Westminster), Steven Faber (Westminster), Karen Knight (Westminster), Tim Lowe (Northern), Jon Morgan (Westminster), David Rees (Westminster), David Sebley (Westminster), Helen Wood (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Geoffrey Wright (EAMTC), Deborah McVey (EAMTC), David Thompson (Northern)

SOUTH WESTERN PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Sian Collins (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Susan Kirkbride (SAOMTC), Hazel Starritt (STETS), Yvonne Stone (SWMTS)

CRCW

Susan Lincoln (MCI)

WESSEX PROVINCE

Stipendiary

Janet Adamson (Northern), Nicholas Adlem (Mansfield), Philip Burroughs (Mansfield), Christopher Coe (Mansfield), Sarah Hall (Mansfield), Owiny Laber (Northern), Stuart Nixon (Northern), Michael Shrubsole (Westminster), Jill Thornton (Northern), Alan Wickens (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Jackie Hillier (STETS), Rosemary Pullen (STETS)

CRCW

Alison Micklem (MCI)

THAMES NORTH PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Sam Ansa-Addo (Westminster), Susan Chapman (Northern), Hugh Graham (Mansfield), Anthony Howells (Westminster), Iain McDonald (Mansfield), Anne Sardeson (Westminster), Anne Stokes (Westminster), Nigel Watson (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

June Colley (Mansfield), Clare Davison (EAMTC), Deborah Hodge (SAOMTC), Derek Ilines (SAOMTC), Ann Jack (MCI), Alan Kirkcaldy (SAOMTC), John Mackerness (MCI), Bridget Powell (SAOMTC), Edward Sanniez (MCI), Erna Stevenson (Mansfield), Martin Wheadon (MCI)

SOUTHERN PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Clare Downing (Westminster), David Downing (Westminster), Harry Goodchild (Mansfield), Catherine Hare (Westminster), Roger Jones (Mansfield), Michael Perrott (Northern), Robert Pickering (Westminster), Peter Stevenson (Westminster), James Thorneycroft (Mansfield), David Varcoe (Mansfield), Kathy White (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Leena Knowles (MCI), Barbara Pearson (SAOMTC)

WALES PROVINCE**Stipendiary**

Jackie Gavin (Northern), Richard Pope (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

David Marshall-Jones (MCI), Robert Pope (Special)

Appendix 7

Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training			Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 1996	Feb 1997	Feb 1998	1998	1999	2000	2001
Full Time Courses							
Mansfield	19	16	18	5	6	4	3
Northern	21	25	26	11	6	3	6
Queen's	6	3	2	2	-	-	-
Westminster	27	29	27	10	6	7	4
Salford Urban Mission*	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	74	75	73	28	18	14	13
Part Time Courses							
EAMTC	2	2	3	2	-	1	-
EMMTC	8	6	4	4	-	-	-
MCI	11	12	17	3	2	6	6
NEOC	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
SAOMC	1	6	6	-	5	1	-
SEITE	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
STETS	5	5	3	1	1	-	1
SWMTC	1	1	1	-	1	-	-
WMMTC	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
URC*	3	2	1	-	1	-	-
Sub total	35	37	35	10	10	8	7
Total	109	112	108	38	28	22	20

EAMTC East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
 EMMTC East Midlands Ministry Training Course
 MCI Manchester Christian Institute
 NEOC North East Ordination Course
 SAOMC St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course
 SEITE South East Institute Theological Education
 STETS Southern Theological and Education Training Scheme
 SWMTC South West Ministry Training Course
 WMMTC West Midlands Ministry Training Course
 URC URC Non-Stipendiary Ministry Training Programme

* *These courses have been discontinued*

Appendix 8

Grants for the work of Mission

1 Introduction

1.1 Questions are raised by many concerning the future of the United Reformed Church. Much less is made of examples of success. It is some of these latter that are celebrated here by detailing some of the grants paid through the Mission Councils Advocacy group on Grants and Loans.

1.2 The stories told below concern situations where an apparently small amount of money given from Assembly funds has been able to make a surprising difference: struggling projects have suddenly taken off, an initial grant demonstrating the church's faith in a development has enabled those involved to obtain other, often much bigger, grants to secure the future of the work.

2 General grants

2.1 Some of the grants are to support general areas of work, such as for County Ecumenical Officers (CEO) and educational chaplaincy. For example, 22 CEOs receive support, and 16 education chaplaincies, mostly in higher education establishments. In the latter, grants are often given to situations where the chaplain is being provided by another Church, but the United Reformed Church is a partner in the work.

2.2 Grants also help the development of ecumenical ministry in Orpington, Swindon and Weston-super-Mare. There has also been a recent pastorate grant to a rural group of churches in the Brecon area of the Mid Wales District to support an inter-denominational team ministry.

2.3 There have also been grants to cover the expenses of Church Related Community Workers, Special Category Ministers, and a major contribution over five years to the Birmingham Inner City Mission Council. This Council was established by the District to help and co-ordinate projects particularly in the inner city churches, and it is the only instance where a block grant is made to an organisation, rather than to individual projects. The Council also receives substantial matching funds from local churches and the West Midlands Province. The variety of projects involve work at the Balsall Heath, Bloomsbury, South Aston, and Lodge Road and Winson Green Churches, and cover nurseries, work with women, lunch clubs, a day centre for the elderly, and youth groups.

3 Specific projects

3.1 The following are a sample only of the projects supported across the Provinces. Please note that grants are annual ones, normally given for up to three years.

3.2 £3,000 has gone to Woodhouse Park Family Centre in Wythenshawe, Manchester, to help fund a Family Worker to provide support and play opportunities for children and families in the areas through an After School Club, Contact Sessions, and a Pre-school Drop-in Group.

3.3 The ecumenical Old Trafford Community Development Project has received, £2,300 towards the training costs of a Development Worker. The Project is helping ensure local residents have a voice and the opportunity to play a full part in local life, and is working with the local council to regenerate the area. The Project also receives support from the local authority, the Health Authority, the churches Urban Fund, and the local TEC agency. Locally, Kelloggs has already promised an additional £5,000 a year for five years. Future plans include the production of a local newspaper.

The Synod Clerk comments, *'Both projects are imaginative and appear to be successful in meeting genuine needs in the community.'*

3.4 £3,000 has gone to the Kings Cross Project in inner Widnes towards a Counselling and Advice Worker. The Project has been going for five years working with a wide range of groups, and providing a large number of services to the local community. It is supported by several of the churches and receives funds from trusts and the local authority.

NCH Action for Children, which works with the project, reviewed it recently and wrote, *'We ... believe that the Kings Cross Project is listening to local people and working with them. Professionals in other towns in the North West like what they see at Kings Cross and are talking to us about setting up similar projects elsewhere.'*

3.5 The Children and Family Project at Shiregreen URC, Sheffield, part of the Sheffield Inner City Ecumenical Mission, has received £3,000. Since 1993, the Project has run an increasing range of activities for under 11s, over 11s and parents on a 1930s council estate. The Project has been able to employ a Project Worker and, as well raising funds itself, also receives support from the Yorkshire Province, Children in Need, the Church Urban Fund, the City Council and various local trusts.

The 1994-1997 Report states that *'The development of the project has been successful, and other funders have helped develop the project further, but the committee, and others within the URC, are convinced of the appropriateness of the URC continuing to commit a modest amount of funding for the project... Now the project has reached maturity, we are seeking to ensure its long-term survival... Certainly without this funding, the project will have to re-trench from July 1998.'*

3.6 The Bridge Centre is part of the Boulevard Community Ministry in the urban priority area of Hyson Green, Nottingham. It has received £3,000 for the placement of a 'Time for God' volunteer and is a drop-in centre offering affordable meals, clothing and toys, art and keep fit groups, etc. It is planning to set up an alcohol treatment centre.

3.7 Friary URC in West Bridgford, Nottingham, has had £3,000 towards the costs of its drop-in centre for the homeless and unemployed. Local Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches support the Centre and, among the many services provided, there is now a GP surgery.

The Centre report states, *'The grant proves invaluable both in supporting the work and in demonstrating that the URC nationally does care about the work.'*

3.8 £3,000 was given towards the expenses of the Justice and Peace Worker from South India at the Milton Keynes Peace and Justice Centre, and £4,650 for the expenses of a CRCW at the Ortons, Peterborough.

The Ortons report that *'the URC funding [which includes the CRCW's salary] has... in the first year stimulated a total financial input by others of £11,468, plus the provision free of charge by Peterborough City Council Housing Department of (i) a CRCW Line Manager, and (ii) a 3 months full time induction programme for CRCW'*

3.9 £2,100 was given for URC ministerial expenses in Church Langley, a new village on the outskirts of Harlow where 10,000 people will be living in a few years' time. A new church and community centre have been established by the URC in conjunction with the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches.

The minister writes, *'The grant has enabled the provision of URC ministry, alongside ministry from the Church of England and the Baptist Church.'*

3.10 £5,500 has been provided to support a Methodist Diaconal Worker in a new housing area in North Swindon, which by 2011 will have a population of 200,000. The Free Churches are supplying ministry for the first site, and will be contributing to the second.

3.11 £1,000 has been given to the Hackney Churches' Immigration Bureau, established in 1995 by the local Anglican and URC Churches as a response to the Government restrictions on applications for visas and right to stay. Based at the Rectory Road URC, by 1995-96 it had dealt with over 120 enquiries, being actively involved in 36 cases.

3.12 A grant has been made to the Hastings Village Ministry Project. This imaginative initiative of lay leadership was set up in 1993 to provide support for three village churches in the Hastings area through the work of two 'Village Pastors'. They lead worship, run home groups, work with women and children, and undertake pastoral visiting in the churches at Ashburnham, Robertsbridge and Sedlescombe. Each church has a tiny membership and is in a different country situation. In each, the work has seen major developments, with growing congregations, increased outreach, and a greater ability for the churches to stand on their own feet.

3.13 The Vines and Cuxton URCs in Rochester have been granted £3,000 to support two young workers, whom it is hoped will eventually resource several local churches. Their work is to build on a core of activities for young people, mainly weekly youth clubs, and youth Bible study groups, as well as developing contacts with local schools.

3.14 Sheerness URC has received £2,000 for a mission audit worker to assess the viability of the church, explore the possible role of the church in the town, and encourage it to have the confidence to become more outward looking. The worker is accommodated by a neighbouring Anglican church, and also works with the youth of that parish.

3.15 £1,000 has been given to the Black/White Economy Project, part of the South London Industrial Mission, and led by the Pastor of the Emmanuel Inspirational Church of God in Croydon. The Project works particularly with black-led churches on questions of race equality in employment, and also receives funds from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation.

3.16 Penrhys, Llanfair, has received a £2,000 grant for a student volunteer to serve as musical director. Penrhys is an isolated 1960s housing estate in the Rhondda Valley, with many problems, particularly long-term high unemployment. Much has been done through the church/community centre, especially in the area of education, which includes a music programme. This provides a children's choir and free instrumental lessons run by the student volunteer.

To quote the report, *'The URC grant has provided the seed corn for the music programme.'*

4 Conclusion

4.1 The above descriptions are necessarily brief, but they serve to illustrate what small amounts of money can do when used imaginatively. In 1997, these totalled over £63,000 in new grants, and about £32,000 in extensions of grants.

They also show the very considerable involvement of the URC in all kinds of projects in local communities, frequently working ecumenically.

4.2 As the report from Penrhys says, it is 'seed corn', enabling something to be started. As Friary West Bridgford comments, *'The grant proves invaluable both in supporting the work and in demonstrating that the URC nationally does care about the work.'*

NOTE ON ADVISORY GROUP ON GRANTS AND LOANS

This is an Advisory Group to Mission Council established by Assembly in 1992 *'to advise Mission Council and specialised Committees of Assembly on grants and loans from central funds in support of the local ministry of projects which are designed to develop the outreach of the church and which are applied for by a provincial synod or by a local church or district council with synod approval.'* It was reviewed by Mission Council in January 1996, and its continuation supported.

Apart from its Convener, Simon Rowntree and Secretary, David Lane, the membership is made up of certain Church House staff representing Committees of the Assembly.

The Group meets in April, July and December. Leaflets on 'URC Grant-Making Bodies' and 'Grants for Projects: How to Apply' have been revised and distributed via the Information Service recently for the use of local churches and others seeking funds. Those applying for grants do so through the Secretary, who prepares the papers for meetings, usually with a recommendation for action. He can be contacted at 49 Woodcote Avenue, Wallington, Surrey SM6 0QU.

Information



General Assembly 1998

URC History Society

1 The Society met for its Study Day on 20th September 1997 at Dr Williams' Library. The Annual Lecture was given by Mr John Creasey on the topic of Patience and Perseverance: Joshua Wilson 1795-1874. In the afternoon, visits to the former Catholic Apostolic Church, Gower Street Memorial Chapel and Bloomsbury Baptist Church took place.

2 Dr Clyde Binfield, the editor, continues to gather excellent articles for the journal. Those in the October 1997 issue began in eighteenth-century Bedfordshire and ended in twentieth-century Liverpool, but their main thrust lay in the United States and Canada. A Supplement, *Reformed and Renewed*, eight essays to mark 25 years of the United Reformed Church, was issued in September 1997. The cost of this has been met by a generous gift from Mr W S G Johnstone. It is planned to publish a Supplement marking 250 years of the Coward Trust in early 1998.

3 The Library is largely the property of the General Assembly and, after consultation with the General Secretary, it was decided to move the bulk of the collection from the basement at Church House to special rooms at Westminster College. The basement had been damp and proper conservation work can be done in Cambridge. The collection will eventually be entered on the University Library's electronic catalogue and thus be more accessible to users on a world-wide basis. The books were due to be moved in March 1998 and the archives in July 1998. This had led to a temporary interruption in the Library services. Those wishing to make use of the Library are being advised to telephone the Principal of Westminster College first.

4 Written enquiries and visitors have continued to come to the Library in London until it closed in March. We remain very grateful to the volunteers who helped there, especially Mrs Mary Davies, who has attended every week. We still continue to receive published histories of local churches and occasional books by members of the Society and welcome these additions to the resources available to researchers. In future these should be sent to the Society c/o Westminster College, Cambridge.

5 The moving of the Library and the fact that the Society is a voluntary organisation without paid employees has made the swift implementation of the 1997 General Assembly's Resolution One difficult, but it will be carried out as soon as possible. The General Secretary has been in correspondence with various Local Record Offices regarding the deposit of marriage registers. It is important to make arrangements for researchers to have ready access to all deposited materials and for churches to have access to their own records without charge.

6 At the Society Lunch during the General Assembly at Portsmouth the Revd Canon Alan Wilkinson spoke about 'J N Figgis and Christian Socialism'. A lively discussion ensued.

7 After serving on the Council of the Society since 1972, including five years as President, the Revd John Taylor retired at the 1997 Annual Meeting. He was warmly thanked for the way he had always kept the Society's interests at heart and for his willingness to help with whatever needed to be done. Dr Elaine Kaye was chosen to succeed him as President.

8 The annual subscription to the Society is £10. Individuals and congregations with an interest in the history of the United Reformed Church are warmly invited to join.

URC Musicians' Guild

1 'When, in our music, God is glorified' - so begins the hymn by F Pratt Green which is so apposite to the views and aims of the Guild. It is therefore often sung at Guild meetings using the fine tune by Charles Villiers Stanford. The last verse of the hymn - 'Let every instrument be tuned for praise! Let all rejoice who have a voice to raise!' - embraces all who take part in music in worship. Similarly the Guild (which contrary to what many people seem to think is not just for Organists!) aims to be for the interest and benefit of all who sing or who play an instrument of any sort.

1.1 All such forms of music making have featured in the events organised by Branches of the Guild during the last year. For example the Yorkshire Branch gave a concert of anthems they had rehearsed including also Pergolesi's *Magnificat* with organ and instrumental music as well. The Southern and Wessex Branch sang Faure's *Requiem* during a meeting at Guildford and the Eastern Branch had choral, instrumental, organ and choral music during a day visiting two United Reformed Churches in Ipswich. Other events have included visits to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals at Liverpool (Merseyside Branch), exploring new and varied music with a Regional Director of the RSCM (East Midlands Branch), an afternoon of singing, organ and instrumental music at Morpeth (North Eastern Branch) and a visit to Buckfast Abbey with organ music and a singing practice led by the Devon Chairman of the RSCM (South Western Branch). By way of variety the latter meeting included rides on a vintage bus and steam train! Most of these events have been very well supported and appreciated.

1.2 Two areas have held events aimed at helping organists. The North Western Branch under their Chairman, who is also the Provincial Minister for Music, arranged several sessions at different venues dealing with suitable organ music for all levels of competence, the accompanying of services etc. The Eastern Branch held a day for 'Reluctant' organists with Janette Cooper at which a group of organists were given helpful criticism and encouragement.

1.3 The Annual Celebration Day of the Guild was held at St Giles, Cripplegate where we received a warm welcome. The day had been arranged by our member Anne Marsden Thomas who unfortunately was prevented from being with us having had to undergo an operation. Nevertheless her colleagues and our Chairman gave an excellent day of singing and organ music including a session with advice on accompanying and singing hymns.

1.4 The Guild was again represented at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown Park in May where literature was distributed and the excellent Guild Magazine was displayed and available.

1.5 As we continue to pursue our aim to make the music of our worship more worthy and meaningful we again ask for your support and prayers. Please show your support by joining us or encouraging individuals or Churches to do so.

Schools linked with the URC

1 The activities and achievements of the Six Schools during 1997 and 1998 are outlined below.

2 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. While these grants contribute particularly to the education of the children of serving ministers and missionaries they also contribute to the education of the children of women and men preparing for ordination.

3 Acknowledgement is also made of the grant to the Six Schools by the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust towards sixth-form scholarships. The Schools can provide details of these grants.

4 The Schools would draw attention to the range of bursaries and allowances which it is often possible for them to make to members of the United Reformed Church. Enquiries are always welcome, for each school seeks to share the continuing opportunity for Christian education with the churches which provided its foundation.

5 Caterham School

5.1 Caterham School is now in its third year of co-education, and the trauma of the merger with Eothen School has been consigned to history. It really is hard to imagine what the school was like without girls in each year group. Caterham now is well and truly co-educational pursuing a policy of equal opportunities for boys and girls equipping them to live and work in a co-educational world. It had been feared that the girls would have been a "bolt on" feature for the school. Nothing could be further from the truth. Both boys and girls have benefited immensely from being together.

5.2 This past year for the first time the school has had a Head Boy and Head Girl. Graeme Coates and Elaine Dunwoody (who is a member of the local United Reformed Church) have been good role models for pupils.

5.3 Caterham has suffered as a result of two government initiatives. We have lost a number of very able and highly experienced staff because of changes in the Teachers' Superannuation Scheme. Colleagues who might have stayed for a while longer found themselves having to retire early in

1997 or having to stay until they reached sixty years old. A number have chosen to go early and they have been missed. In their place have been recruited younger men and women who have brought a breath of fresh air into the common room. The phasing out of the assisted places scheme has presented the school with the moral problem of how it manages to educate children from poorer families. Governors have thought long and hard about this and have devised a Caterham School scheme to take its place. Sadly this cannot be as wide ranging as the state scheme but at least some children from poorer backgrounds will be able to benefit from the education Caterham has to offer.

5.4 Caterham was inspected during the year by a team of inspectors from the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference. The inspection, which is recognised by Ofsted, was full of praise for the way in which the school strives to be Christian and for the high quality of the pastoral care given. It also congratulated the school for the way in which average and less than average pupils were helped to achieve well. Overall the Headmaster and Governors are very happy with the excellent inspection report and are considering the positive recommendations made so that the school can strive to be better.

5.5 The international nature of the school continues to be highlighted with the 'Melting Pot' Society bringing together pupils and students from nearly thirty different countries. Of particular concern recently have been pupils from Hong Kong. This large contingent went back to Hong Kong for the handover from Britain to China not knowing what was ahead of them. The changeover does not seem to have made much immediate difference. The economic downturn in the Far East has affected our Malaysian students and it looks as if the present contingent may be the last. This will be a shame for they bring a maturity and a culture of hard work which has helped enrich our sixth form.

5.6 The school has experienced moments of happiness and also of extreme sadness. One of our sixth form leavers, who had gained a place at University, died as a result of a car accident. As one teacher said at his funeral, 'Teachers do not expect to outlive their pupils. When it does happen people's instant reaction is to say, "What a waste!" Surely life is only wasted if no effort is put in and no achievement comes out and it fails to touch people or make them smile. Richard did all of these.'

5.7 This was a timely reminder to the school community about essential human values: and an education in which such values are prized.

6 Eltham College

6.1 Looking back on 1997 the single event that had most impact on the school community was undoubtedly the tragic death of one of the pupils during the Easter holidays. When the School returned the Headmaster and Chaplain helped the pupils reflect on this tragedy and the nature of Christian hope. Later in the year fellow pupils offered rich and varied tributes at a very moving service of thanksgiving in the Chapel.

6.2 Local links with United Reformed Churches were strengthened through invitations for the Chaplain to preach, and through groups attending the three Sunday evening services held in the College Chapel. The speaker at the Lent Service was the Secretary of the USPG, Canon Peter Price. He drew on his experience with that Missionary Society to remind the congregation that, although the response to the missionary task may have changed, the challenge remains. Canon Price is now the Bishop of Kingston.

6.3 The Chapel was also full with pupils, parents and friends for the splendid Songs of Praise Service in October and for the end of year Carol Service. The school continued to receive local ministers and clergy to speak occasionally in the weekday assemblies, and the year also saw a significant increase in the pupils' giving to charitable causes.

6.4 In more general terms the school has continued to flourish. The tradition of academic success in public examinations was maintained, with fourteen pupils gaining places at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. These days it is most unusual for a pupil not to move on to Higher Education on leaving, though an increasing number opt to take a GAP year, in which to work or travel, first.

6.5 An interesting initiative was the new partnership between Eltham College and Classic fM, established for mutual benefit to promote high quality music at the College and the involvement of young musicians in the area. A Masterclass orchestral festival was held during the summer holidays, involving promising young instrumentalists from all over the United Kingdom. This culminated in a magnificent concert in Cabot Hall, London.

7 Silcoates

7.1 At the beginning of 1997 our three schools - Silcoates, Sunny Hill House and St Hilda's - were formally established as The Silcoates School Foundation by the Charity Commission.

7.2 Pupil numbers at all three schools are at record levels and our public examination results were pleasing, with a 92% pass rate at GCSE breaking a further record.

7.3 The election in April of Mr David Dinmore, our Bursar, as Chairman of the Independent Schools' Bursars' Association was a high honour, both for him and for the school.

7.4 Our A level programme has been enriched by the introduction of Business Studies, English Language and Sports Studies. Latin has returned to the Silcoates curriculum after an absence of more than a decade and a group of second formers have embarked on a course leading to GCSE. French has been introduced in the third form of the Junior School.

7.5 Three highlights of a busy extra-curricular programme have been our participation in a performance of Brahms's *Requiem*, an excellent production of *An Inspector Calls*, and the achievement of our intermediate boys' freestyle swimming team in reaching the national finals.

7.6 Social and fund-raising events promoted by the Junior and Senior Parents' Association and the Old Silcoatians' Association have been unprecedentedly well supported and productive.

7.7 The Silcoates School foundation is in good heart and it is fitting to pay tribute here to the dedicated and imaginative stewardship of the Governors, many of whom are, of course, nominees of the United Reformed Church.

8 Tauton School

8.1 It has been an eventful year. The School proudly celebrated its 150th Anniversary with the publication of its history and a number of special events during the Summer Term culminated in an open-air Thanksgiving Service in front of the School.

8.2 The Anniversary coincided with the retirement of the Headmaster, Barry Sutton, after ten years of unstinting service. His successor, Julian Whiteley, has spent the last four years as Deputy Head of St Paul's School in Sao Paulo and before that he was Head of Physics at Sherborne School. In addition there has been a change of Bursar.

8.3 The Science Department has continued to innovate and, as the year drew to a close, they were in the process of commissioning a microwave Internet link which will permit unlimited, high speed access to the Internet at a fraction of the running costs of conventional links.

8.4 Academically it was a sound year, the Upper Sixth not quite matching the exceptional results of their predecessors. Drama, public speaking, and music continue to flourish, and on the sporting front the girls' hockey team enjoyed an unbeaten season.

8.5 The Taunton School International Study Centre came into being in August 1996 and has proved to be a valuable asset to the School.

9 Walthamstow Hall

9.1 The highlight of 1997 was undoubtedly the opening of our new library and its attendant festival. Built in mansard style as a top storey to an existing block, it provides a vast, light, airy space to house our books and new computers, with magnificent views across the valley to the North Downs and Knole Park. Comfortable work-stations for study, armchairs on the sunny balcony for sitting and reading, and an atmosphere of calm and warmth have made it a favourite place: the heart of the school, as a library should be.

9.2 The writer Susan Hill performed the official opening and spent much time with the girls, discussing her books and extolling the pleasures of reading. She was one of many writers and poets who visited the school during the celebratory Library Festival to talk about their work.

9.3 The Friends and Parents' Association of Walthamstow Hall also celebrated: their 21st Anniversary was marked by a ball held at Leeds Castle and the Hale-Bopp comet put in a timely appearance in the sky over the floodlit castle. Appropriately, the Friends' major gift to the school during the year was an astronomical telescope.

9.4 Drama productions include Sophocles' *Ajax*, Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* and a Christmas double bill of Ted Hughes' *The Coming of the Kings* and Tony Horowitz's *Good King Wenceslas and the Chancellor of Bohemia*. In addition to our regular concerts and recitals, the Choir sang Haydn's *Creation* with Tonbridge School in their newly rebuilt chapel.

9.5 Public examination results were again excellent, with 29% of our Advanced Level candidates gaining three or more A grades, and ten girls achieving all A or A* grades at GCSE. The nursery department of the Junior School received a superb report for its Ofsted inspection, commending the excellence of its provision for three and four-year-olds.

9.6 The work-experience programme for linguists has been extended to Germany. The French and German exchanges involved about sixty girls, and the Lower Sixth French group made a week's study visit to Paris. We welcomed a German orchestra, *Fidelia*, from Sevenoaks' linked town of Rheinbach.

9.7 The Millennium Bursary and Leavers' Scholarships scheme has been launched to counteract the loss of Government Assisted Places, so that children from poorer backgrounds can still come to Walthamstow Hall, in accordance with our traditions.

9.8 The Headmistress was busy all year as President of the Girls' Schools Association, but despite a very full programme was determined not to miss the stimulating Six Schools' Conference at Taunton School. The contact with schools of similar history and outlook is of great value for heads, governors and staff, as is the fellowship engendered.

9.9 Four daughters of missionaries and three daughters of ministers (two United Reformed and one Church of England) are at the school.

10 Wentworth College

10.1 The last academic year (1996-97) was special for Wentworth College and all those who are associated with the school. We celebrated the 125th anniversary of our foundation with a variety of events culminating in an Anniversary Weekend at the end of the Summer term. Parents and senior girls enjoyed a Summer Ball and many old girls, including Miltonian Guild members, were able to join us for a Garden Fete the following afternoon. A history of Wentworth, *Beyond the Best*, has recently been published.

10.2 Also in the summer of 1997, the twenty six UVI students entered for a total of eighty Advanced levels in seventeen subjects and achieved an 85% pass rate. These young women have now started their degree course in a variety of subjects including: archaeology, art and design, business

studies, chemistry, computer science and management, law, medicine, multi-media communications, oceanography, physiotherapy, sports science and tourism.

10.3 During the last academic year we had the privilege of educating six daughters of United Reformed Church ministers, four daughters of United Reformed Church members and the daughter of a former missionary. These girls and our other students had the chance:

- ◆ to enjoy the annual Science and Technology Dinner, with Dr Mary Harris, the Director General of the Year of Engineering Success, who was our speaker this year;
- ◆ to travel to the Pasteur Institute in Lille on Eurostar, as guests of the Neighbourhood Engineers;
- ◆ to act either in the senior drama production of *Lady Audley's Secret* (a flamboyant melodrama) or the junior drama club production of *Bright Society*;
- ◆ to gain a LAMDA Speech and Drama Award (most with Distinction) and to compete in the Bournemouth Festival (seven girls gained first place, eight second place and ten third place, in their chosen classes);
- ◆ to play, sing or dance in *Oceanworld* (our first school musical) or in our fifth Creative Arts Evening;
- ◆ to achieve Royal School of Music grades (including Grade 8 and the Trinity College, London, Performer's Certificate);

- ◆ to be successful public speakers;
- ◆ to be members of the badminton squad, who enjoyed another exceptional season, to be one of the lacrosse and netball county players, to swim for the school or to compete in our first mother and daughter tennis tournament;
- ◆ to improve their standard of skiing in the Swiss Alps;
- ◆ to spend a day at sea aboard HMS *Loyal Chancellor* or join a group of Royal Marines for an exercise in Poole Harbour;
- ◆ to help provide sailing and canoeing sessions for the Victoria School (which is specially for children with physical disabilities) as a member of Task Force;
- ◆ to prepare for Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Awards;
- ◆ to participate in Young Enterprise and to attend an international trade fair in Belgium - one of our students won the new award for Best Achiever in East Dorset and one of our companies was the first East Dorset group to reach the South West Regional final in seven years.

10.4 As our Head Girl said on Speech Day: 'Just to reflect on the successes of the past twelve months is proof enough that Wentworth brings out the potential in each and every girl!'

Silence & Retreats Network

Convener: Mike Playdon

Editor: Keith Green

1 Since the report to General Assembly in 1997 a number of matters have become clear and some remain unclear! While we remain firmly within the Church and are represented on the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, the Network and its core group have been administered and serviced from outside the structures of the Church since the beginning of 1998. We are particularly grateful to the Aston Tirrold Centre for Reflection for their help. The production and mailing of our journal *Windows* have gone smoothly and we have received many appreciative comments from within and beyond the United Reformed Church. The core group has been strengthened by the addition of the Revd David Bunney who now serves as our treasurer.

2 We are now dependent upon subscriptions to *Windows* for our finances. In the early part of 1998 the number of new subscribers was most encouraging; but the mailing list we inherited has proved to need considerable pruning. So we need more new subscriptions to ensure financial stability: £10 for individuals and £20 for churches, retreat centres and groups, brings *Windows* two or three times a year, the National Retreat Association's annual 'Retreats,' and information about retreats and training opportunities. Donations are also welcome.

3 At the end of April there was a consultation at The Windermere Centre between the members of the core group and the provincial Silence & Retreats link persons. This enabled us to explore together ways in which we can better serve the Church as a whole, to hear what is going on around the country, to share ideas, and to provide mutual support. There was time for prayer, reflection and training, and the 48 hours concluded with a 24 hour retreat.

4 We recognise that the picture country-wide within our Church remains patchy. In some Provinces there are regular quiet days and retreats, for Ministers, Ministers' spouses, lay people, and all together. The Wessex Province, for instance, is looking forward to the dedication of the Aston Tirrold Centre for Reflection, as a place of quiet and retreat, a resource to serve all who are looking for space and quiet. The South West province, in addition to its regular quiet days and retreats, is looking to lay on 'taster days.' The Eastern Province has appointed its 'link person' as an 'advocate for the

encouragement of prayer and the development of spirituality.' There are Silence & Retreats 'link persons' in every Province except the Southern and we look forward to an appointment there in the near future. We have to confess, however, that little appears to be happening in some areas - this may be because our communications are not very good!

5 Through the national network the core group wants to provide support and encouragement, respond to needs and requests, and promote silence and retreats for the spiritual growth and building up of the community of faith. We remain committed to resourcing Provinces, Districts, local churches and individuals, to keeping a high 'Silence & Retreats profile' within our Church, and to working ecumenically as far as possible. We value our membership in the National Retreat Association and welcome the prayers and support of all who walk the way of faith with us.

6 The National Retreat Association came into being in 1990 in the belief that the Holy Spirit is at work in our society, creating in many people a desire to discover inner peace and harmony. The same Spirit is making people more open to a wealth of deep insight which has developed within our separate Christian traditions and is giving us a desire to learn from one another.

7 The traditions which are represented on the NRA are very varied (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Society of Friends, United Reformed Church), but over the years the member groups have learned considerably from each other, and have discovered more about themselves. The riches of the Church which have for so long been kept separately become more obviously the inheritance of the whole Church.

8 By prayer and the deepening of spiritual life, and in the daily getting on with its varied activities, the National Retreat Association demonstrates Christian unity in practice, and undergirds us all in our 'intention to go on praying and working with all our fellow Christians for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses, so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.'

SPIN (Sharing People in Network)

Joint co-ordinators: Mrs Lindsey Cole, Revd Bob Day

1.1 This year the WCC Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women reaches its climax with events all round the country to mark its end and to assess its effectiveness. The major celebration takes place in Durham after Easter called *Forward to the Promised Community*. Here about 350 people will come to share their stories of the Decade and their future hopes and visions for The Community of Women and Men in the Church. The United Reformed Church is well represented and is participating in the preparations. From here images and issued of the Decade will go forward to the WCC Assembly in Harare. England will focus On Josephine Butler, Ireland on Bridget, Scotland on groups of women, and Wales on Anne Griffiths. Thus a four nations response can be made.

1.2 Stop for a moment and ask yourself how your awareness of issues particularly affecting women, your own practice in this area and your understanding of the deeper challengers has changed throughout the Decade.

1.3 This is what was attempted at the AGM at Swanwick as the SPIN group sought a way forward. Rosemary Wass, a former Vice President of the Methodist Conference, led the thinking by bringing a world perspective to the economic, political and sexual struggles that continue to dehumanise women. The aim for further work was clarified as:

To ensure that issues that primarily diminish women are tackled effectively in the United Reformed Church by communities of women and men working together.

1.4 We suggest this could best be forwarded by means of a permanent sub-committee of Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness Committee so that the issues would be seen as **mainstream**, affecting the whole of our church life. The provision of a **staff person** with special responsibility for attending to networking, information sharing, keeping these issues as main stream and as a concern of every committee, was seen as essential to promote continued change. We recognise that proposed union with the Congregational Union of Scotland will require a particular input from the Women's Union in Scotland to this process (see Part 4 G of the proposals).

1.5 The publication of *SPIN-OFF* comes to an end but individuals can still subscribe to *Insaka* and *Magnet*. This is a good opportunity to say 'thank you' to all those who have given their time and expertise to SPIN during the Decade and have seen progress in some areas of the work, many of which have understandably been very personal and emotive ones.

1.6 The SPIN Core Group wants to high light some ongoing **issues**:

- a) Violence and Abuse. The need for national guidelines that have been understood, accepted and put into practice by each local church. (This needs to be monitored by District Councils).
- b) Gender parity, the removal of subtle discrimination in selection procedures.
- c) The use of inclusive language especially among lay preachers.
- d) The world wide trafficking of women and their treatment as a commodity.
- e) The need to work alongside government initiatives and with Joan Ruddock, the Minister for Women in the Department of Social Security.
- f) The nature of ecumenical staff resourcing for the new 4 nations groups in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and networking between them.

1.7 What is required now is a continuing implementation of and a commitment to **Good Practice** in these areas and a determination to enable our churches to become more equal and just communities of women and men in order to facilitate both witness and dialogue with the wider society.

1.8 Overall the Decade has moved us positively in the right direction and it is our hope that this process will continue to inform the life of our church.

Women's World Day of Prayer

Representative on the English Committee: Mrs Josie Owens
on the Scottish Committee: Mrs Molly Glen

England

1 The 1998 service held on Friday 6th March was prepared for us by the Christian women of Madagascar, with the theme 'Who is my neighbour?' Human relations are very important to the Malagasy people and they have a word - Fihavanana - which is used to describe the special bond that joins people together. This bond is very important in Malagasy culture. It expresses the feeling of solidarity between members of a family in times of sorrow or of joy, as well as the honesty that is needed in all such relationships. Starting with the family this bond extends to include the wider community. The 'Fihavanana' in this year's service was most warmly felt, as we learnt more about this beautiful land named 'The Red Island'. Through readings and prayer we shared with the people their joys and sorrows, and their hopes for the future of their land.

2 Services have taken place in Churches, Hospitals, Halls, Cathedrals, and the Chapel at Gatwick Airport. Over 320,000 orders of service are used throughout England, Northern Ireland and Wales, with one member of the committee translating all the material into Welsh for the Welsh speaking Churches. In addition there are copies of *Together in Prayer*, an informative booklet about the movement, with prayers, readings and background to the country the service has been prepared by. The committee were most grateful to the Council for World Mission, who provided much of the information on Madagascar used in this year's *Together in Prayer*. There are also Bible Study notes, Children's Services sheets, a cassette of the Hymns and Music used, and many interesting information sheets.

3 As well as the Service on the first Friday in March, there are many Day Conferences held, where preparation for this day take place. So popular have these become that, in 1992 there were just 10 conferences throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In 1997 there were 42. All this could not take place without much hard work, especially by the dedicated team at the office in Tunbridge Wells, where, 3 delightful ladies run this busy office, and, even with the volume of work they always find time to welcome anyone who calls in, or have a friendly

chat on the telephone, as well as helping and organising the numerous tasks completed by the 21 members of this Interdenominational committee.

4 As I complete my first full year as the United Reformed Church representative, I reflect with great joy, and grateful thanks to God, for the fellowship, friendship, and the many interesting people I have met while serving on this Ecumenical committee.

5 The 1999 service comes from Venezuela with the theme 'God's Tender Touch'.

Scotland

6 Madagascar is an Island in the Indian Ocean. Several tribes inhabit the island but everyone speaks Malagasy.

7 In 1991-92 a prolonged drought brought untold misery and hardship to the southern part of the Island. A campaign was launched 'Solidarity with the South'. People from all parts of the island helped. Neighbour alongside neighbour proving the saying you cannot be indifferent when faced with your neighbours misfortune.

8 It was against this background of love and concern that the Christian Women of Madagascar chose as their theme for the 1998 World Day of Prayer service - Who is my Neighbour?

9 The service this year was simple and warmed many hearts as it made us focus on all the goodness and kindness that surrounds us everyday. Unlike the press and media would have us believe with their daily reports on 'Neighbours from Hell'.

10 The many services held through Scotland were well attended helped, I'm sure, by the unusually mild and Springlike weather for early March.

11 As part of the service the Malagasy women suggested that we might 'anoint' the person next to us with a fragrant oil and the words 'I am your neighbour', this we did and as the fragrance filled the air we hoped the neighbourly feeling would go with us all into our everyday life.

Standing Orders



General Assembly 1998

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.



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