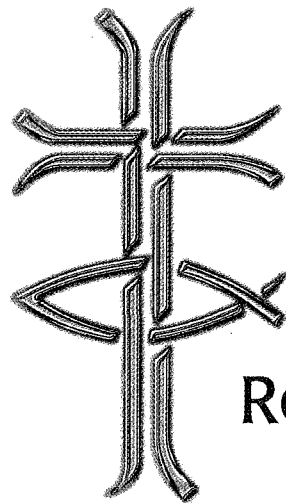


General Assembly 2000

July 1st - 4th London

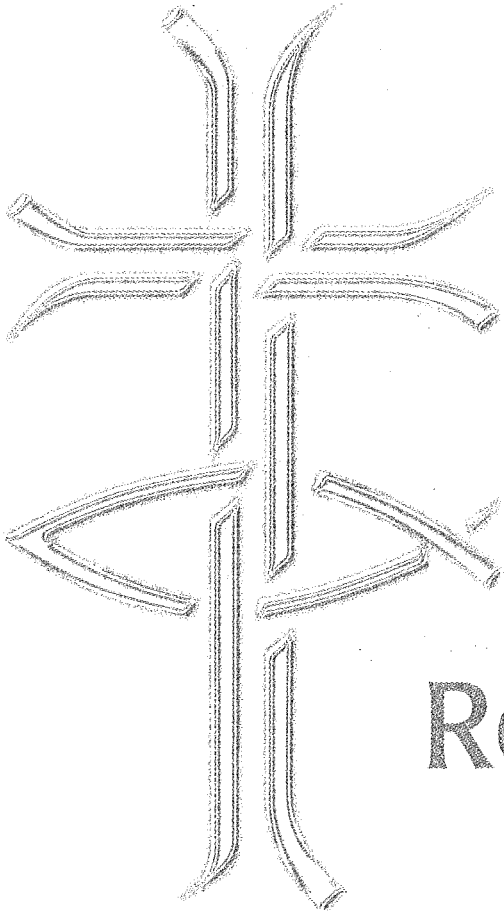


The
**United
Reformed
Church**

**Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers**

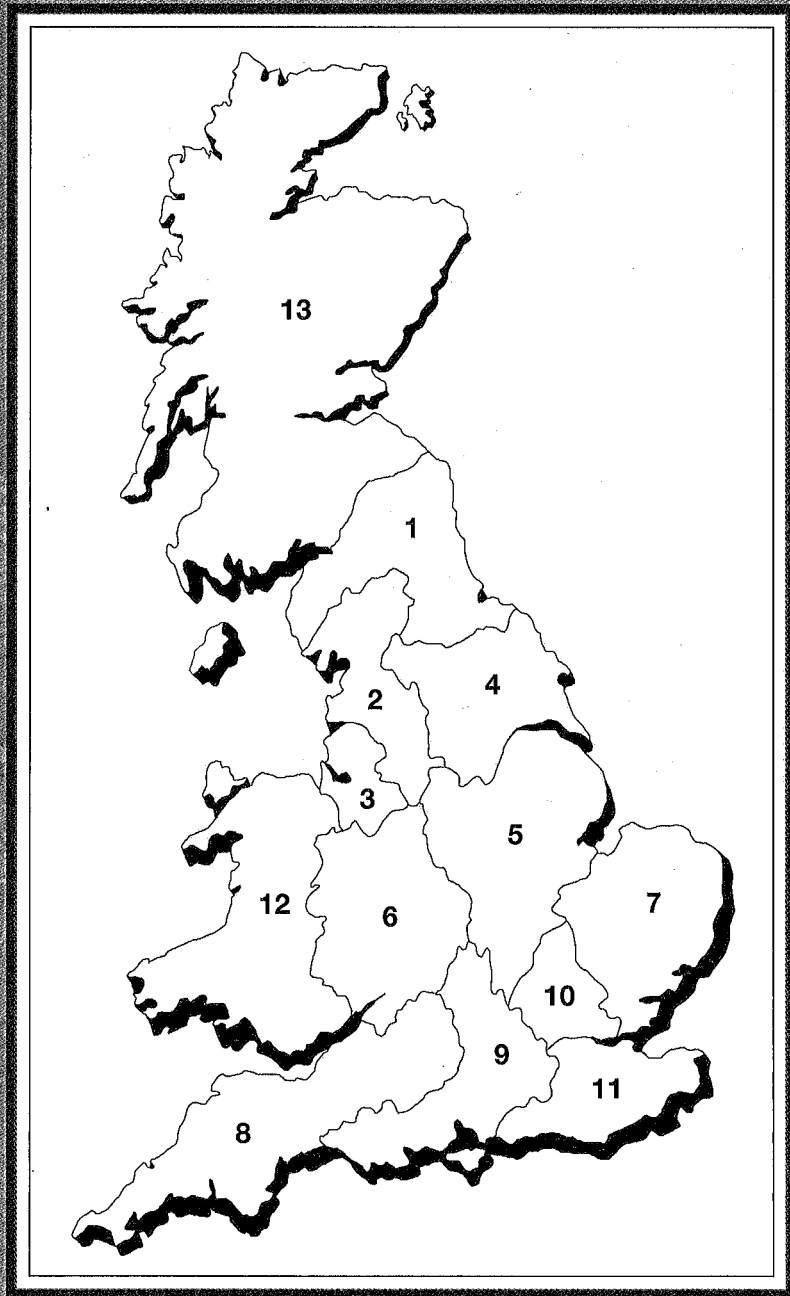
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The
United
Reformed
Church

Synods



- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 Northern | 5 East Midlands | 9 Wessex |
| 2 North Western | 6 West Midlands | 10 Thames North |
| 3 Mersey | 7 Eastern | 11 Southern |
| 4 Yorkshire | 8 South Western | 12 Wales |
| | | 13 Scotland |

Mersey Synod

1 The matters of most importance in the Mersey Synod during 1999 have centred around the "Growing Up" programme of the 1998 General Assembly. The Synod Meeting of March 1999 through discussion groups, set in motion a wide-ranging set of proposals to explore and these were firmed up at the November Synod. Deployment, Development and Training would seem to be words which describe our Synod's "Growing Together" response to "Growing Up".

2 The move to the new offices and resource centre in Liverpool took place in late summer of 1999 and this was operative early in September. It already makes a great difference to the staff of the Synod, who now meet and work together at the same base and so helps them to enjoy the benefits of team-working. The facilities are modern and comfortable and soon the resource centre and bookshop will be advertising its wares for the benefit of our churches.

3 As throughout the whole church the Mersey Synod is seeking to adapt to the need for new leadership for our churches to take into account the dwindling number of ministers. Synod has adopted the policy of a move to the sharing of ministry in teams, clusters, groups etc. Much consultation and discussion has to take place in our districts to achieve the changes necessary. Church buildings can be an asset or hindrance to mission and Synod resources will be allocated only where and when churches have a positive policy towards their mission.

4 The Mersey Synod embraces the concept of life-long-learning. Elders are attending training days. We held a mini-enquirers' conference for anyone who thought they might offer some sort of service to the churches. Nearly 40 people came. One of the consequences was a demand to know more, about the Faith, about the Bible and about the United Reformed Church, its history and belief. As a result, we ran a short course called 'PATHWAY' which we intend to repeat in different parts of the Synod in different years. The search for recruiting the next generation of ministers goes on. The second course of training for Local Leaders is currently under way and twelve people are attending. Synod is pleased to know that this training scheme is being made more widely available to the Church. Those in our churches with a pastoral remit are asking for training to enhance skills and specialisms - e.g. the bereaved. A course is being drawn up for those "Beginning to Lead Worship" in their local churches. Newly ordained ministers and others are taking part in the POET and CME opportunities. The message is getting through that we all need to be refreshed, equipped and encouraged for the vital work of today's and the future's ministry.

5 1999 was notable for the generosity of others to the benefit of the Mersey Synod. Particularly we would give thanks for the generosity of other Synods, which makes us a net receiver through the Resource Sharing Scheme, and the gift of grace from the Yorkshire Synod arriving just before Christmas. These "extras" to our tight budget are of great encouragement and help to bring our dreams closer to reality.

North Western Synod

1 This report seeks to look back over the past ten years and to assess developments. The Synod comprises 154 local churches, largely of Congregational origin, though we do have a dozen or more deriving from the historic Manchester Presbytery, and others from the Churches of Christ in Manchester and Furness peninsula. The independency of Lancashire Congregationalism still survives but it has steadily given way to the more conciliar approach characteristic of the United Reformed Church.

2 Meetings of Synod have become increasingly well attended and more vibrant in mood. On three occasions meetings have taken place in school premises rather than in churches and this has facilitated a flexible approach. Major subjects have been tackled by means of invited speakers and by giving time for group workshops as well as plenary sessions. On several occasions parallel programmes for young people and children have been organised. We have learned to be formal or informal as the occasion demanded, to worship, to laugh together, and at times to disagree in love while affirming one another's integrity. The spirit evident at meetings percolates through the Province at all levels and fosters the sense of togetherness in life and mission.

3 This sense has also been enhanced by special Synod events: a Synod Day in July 1995, held in a Manchester park under canvas with the participation of 3000 people; and an evening act of worship in Blackburn Cathedral in June 1999 when a congregation of 1000, led by a choir of over 200, performed the Christian Aid musical 'Feast of Life'. Some of the Districts also hold one day events.

4 In 1999 a milestone was passed with a new scheme for the collecting of contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund. The churches moved from the principle of 'paying for the ministry we get' to one in which all contribute, on an agreed formula, to ensure that 'the whole Church pays for the whole ministry the whole of the time'. Thus paying for ministry has been separated from the provision of ministry and, overall, the move has been accepted, with the sense of belonging to the wider Church enhanced.

5 The District Councils co-operate to ensure a fair distribution of ordained ministry across the Province while keeping within the total number of posts allocated under the Assembly deployment policy. Currently the number of posts remains slightly under those allocated and looks like remaining so for

the next five years. This once again reflects the sense of mutual responsibility. Meanwhile, a scheme for the discerning and appointing of Local Church Leaders, working within the guidelines promulgated by the Assembly, has been adopted. It has paved the way for more effective leadership among the churches, especially where group pastorates consist of three or even four churches with but one minister: a familiar pattern across the seven District Councils.

5 A new Synod constitution was adopted in 1994 which provided for a minimum of two committees in each District: a Strategy Committee and a Pastoral Committee. As in other Synods, the Moderator sits with each of the Pastoral Committees and thus shares the care and oversight of ministers and churches with those elected by the District Councils.

7 Mission is seen largely as the task of the local church, with support from the District Council and resources available from the Synod, whose Mission Action Committee co-ordinates a number of teams dealing with specific aspects of mission and also seeks to give direction to mission enterprise. A Mission Statement was promulgated by this Committee and efforts are made to help churches to adopt a similar one for themselves. A Training and Development Team, which includes the ministry of a very effective Youth and Children's Work Trainer and others who give their spare time to the work, is available for help in church life and witness. Recently this team has been strengthened by the appointment of a full-time Mission Development Worker whose initial aim is to help churches to respond to the implications of the 1999 Assembly report 'Growing Up'.

8 Ecumenically the Synod would have hoped to see more progress, with a significant development from co-operation to commitment on the road to full communion. Important fellowship, however, exists in the three county areas of Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cumbria, Covenants have been signed by Church Leaders, several have been established between local congregations, and new constitutions are helping ecumenical witness to develop. Very promising ecumenical community-based projects continue to develop and a significant inter-faith project in Nelson was pioneered by the United Reformed Church locally. It is remarked upon that it is often the United Reformed Church which, sometimes from a smaller base than other Churches, supplies the vision and impetus in ecumenical developments.

9 The Synod remembers the parable of the Sower and realises that its task is to sow Gospel seeds and to trust God for the harvest. Sadly, six local churches have closed during the past ten years and the total membership of the Synod has reduced from 13,000 to under 10,000 with a corresponding drop in the number of children. We rejoice, however, in the establishment of three new churches during the same period and in welcoming a clutch of new Pilot Companies. The Synod goes into the new century with a stronger sense of togetherness in mission and growing confidence in the God who encourages and enlivens those who look to him for strength.

10 The Synod has gratefully and warmly commended the Revd C K Forecast and has valued his pastoral diligence, spiritual guidance, ecumenical and world-church vision and, above all, his loving concern for individuals and their churches.

Wales Synod

1.1 1999 was a momentous year for the people of Wales. The long-awaited National Assembly of Wales was brought into being amid much anticipation and hope. This devolution of executive power from Westminster reflects a growing realisation that Wales is a unique and separate entity within the United Kingdom. This fact has also been recognised within the United Reformed Church by our new designation, the National Synod of Wales.

1.2 In common with other religious bodies in Wales, we recognised the need for Churches to liaise closely with the newly-formed Assembly. A full-time National Assembly Liaison Officer has been appointed to serve CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales). He seeks to keep the Churches well-informed about the activities of the National Assembly. He is also able to make the Assembly Members aware of Church perspectives on important issues, e.g. Third World Debt, the care of asylum seekers, the future of the rural economy, etc., by providing a constant Christian presence and regular briefings.

1.3 There are already positive indications that the decision to appoint a Liaison Officer will prove to have been a successful one. It is clear that his presence has been accepted by Assembly Members and that they understand and appreciate his role. He has recognised the need for good communications. He maintains an effective web-site which is constantly updated and he reports to, and seeks views from, the constituent bodies of CYTUN via a Committee which meets quarterly. (Web-site: <http://www.nationalassembly.freeseerve.co.uk>)

2 Lightship 2000

2.1 The Churches, through CYTUN and the National Assembly, are currently exploring the question of Chaplaincy to the Assembly. At present there is an ecumenically appointed Chaplain (URC Special Category Ministry – a post filled by Revd Michael Rees) to Cardiff Bay and Lightship 2000. The Lightship provides a focus for Christian witness adjacent to the Assembly Building and also serves as the Churches' presence and support for the Assembly and its staff. Lightship 2000 is a Cardiff Churches Forum project which provides an attractive Christian presence on the popular, newly-developed waterfront in Cardiff Bay. It is open to the public daily and offers

a wide range of refreshments, a free tour of the vessel and facilities for worship and group meetings. The Lightship is publicised via the Internet and receives a steady stream of visitors (over 200,000 in 1999), many of whom spend time in its lovely chapel. (Web-site: <http://www.lightship2000.demon.co.uk>)

3 Information Technology

3.1 Recognition of this need to communicate with the world outside the URC has prompted the Synod to make fuller use of the available technology. Following the appointment of an enthusiastic and skilled Information Technology Officer, Mr Russell Davies, the Synod has made rapid strides in developing an effective web-site. It contains information about the Synod generally, including an updated message from the Moderator, information about individual Churches and coverage of special events, e.g. a photographic snapshot of the Synod's 1999 Synod Day. (Web-site: <http://www.urcwaales.demon.co.uk>)

3.2 A number of our Churches maintain their own web-site pages but, not surprisingly, the extent of take-up has so far been uneven. It is clear, though, that there is a general acceptance throughout the Synod of the importance of this form of communication and most have responded with enthusiasm to its challenges and opportunities.

4 Rural Officer

4.1 As a result of information received from questionnaires issued to all our Churches, the decision was taken to create a Rural Consultant/Officer Post based in Mid Wales. Revd Michael Cruchley was appointed to this post; he was previously employed as URC and Methodist Rural Consultant and brings a great deal of expertise to the task of ministering to the particular needs of rural communities.

5 Ecumenical Officer

5.1 Revd Stuart Jackson was appointed to the vacant post of Ecumenical Officer with increased scoping; he was previously minister at Warwick Road, Coventry.

I Introduction

1.1 In response to the urgent issues of decline in the Church, starkly demonstrated in the Christian Research Association publication, "The Tide is Running Out" by Peter Brierley, the Synod is continuing its work in developing a vision for the Synod. Examples of this are the two-year programme on mission strategy by the Birmingham District, the conference on "Growing Up" in the Coventry and Warwickshire District, and the consultation on the Future of the Church in Shropshire.

1.2 It is intended that most of the October Synod will be spent reviewing the vision and setting plans for the next few years. These will include thought being given to appropriate structures so that the Church becomes more mission orientated. Because of these shared concerns, this report to Assembly takes up the themes of "Growing Up", and is based on the Five Marks of Mission.

2 To proclaim the good news of the kingdom

2.1 After Synod had met in Chapter House of Worcester Cathedral last October, the Province held a service in the afternoon in the Cathedral in preparation for the Millennium on the theme of "Thy Kingdom Come." Over 1,000 people from across the Synod filled the nave to take part in an inspiring service led by the Moderator, and assisted by the Dean of Worcester, the Assembly Moderator, other church leaders, County Ecumenical and District Officers, and young people. The sermon was given by the Revd Dr Michael Taylor, and one of the musical highlights was a specially commissioned anthem by a local Methodist composer using the words of St Symeon a millennium ago. (When did the United Reformed Church last commission a piece of music?)

2.2 There are major ecumenical events in most Districts on the Pentecost weekend this June to mark the Millennium at interesting venues such as Cheltenham Racecourse and the Three Counties Showground in Malvern.

3 To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

3.1 As previously reported to Assembly, the Synod has started a trend of closing churches and reopening them as Mission Projects!

3.2 The one at Bloomsbury in inner city Birmingham now has a half-time minister, who is looking at new ways of being the Church in that situation. It continues to be supported by the Birmingham Inner City Mission Council, which is funded by local churches, the Synod and the national church, and hopes in due course to apply for a CRCW to work in the area. The local community continues to show great loyalty to Tomkin Chapel on the North Staffordshire Moorlands, which is still under the oversight of local ministers. On the Sunday before the last Assembly, the Chapel celebrated the willingness of over 20 adults and young people to commit themselves to its life.

3.3 Much work has been done during the year in developing a Training Strategy for the Synod, which was endorsed by the March Synod. Given that the Training Officer is only half-time, it is clear that there is a need for more personnel to work in this area, particularly to encourage lay training. The Synod is wrestling with how this need might be met, given its limited financial resources.

4 To respond to human need by loving service

4.1 At Lea Road, a multi-ethnic congregation on the edge of inner city Wolverhampton, a CRCW was commissioned in September to develop the youth and community work that has grown out of the rebuilding some years ago in partnership with local community groups.

4.2 Approval is being sought for a Special Category Ministry post to work with three churches (including Tomkin) in North Staffordshire to develop youth work in particular with the local communities.

5 To seek to transform unjust structures of society

5.1 Following the 1998 G8 Summit in Birmingham, support for Jubilee 2000 continues to be strong in the Synod, with a group managing to go to the Cologne Summit in 1999. The number of churches taking up the Commitment for Life programme is also growing. On other Church and Society issues, the 1999 March Synod had a useful presentation on ethical investment from its financial advisors, and the Finance Committee continues to monitor its investments in the light of this.

5.2 The West Midlands Economic Region covers all but one of the Districts. While the Churches have been unsuccessful in getting direct representation on the Regional Assembly, the newly constituted West Midlands Region Churches Forum, on which the Province has two representatives and provides the Secretary, is developing ways of relating to the new regional structures to ensure the Church's voice and concerns are heard.

6 To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth

6.1 Conscious that not everything can be done at once, the Synod hopes to develop its work in this area over the next few years.

7 Synod Office

7.1 During the year, the Synod was pleased to welcome Helen Cavaco as the new PA to the Moderator, and her efficient presence has contributed greatly to the smooth running of the Office. Conscious of the heavy load on the Treasurer, it is hoped to recruit shortly a part-time clerical assistant to do some of the bookkeeping; and a voluntary Assistant Treasurer is also being sought. ITC continues to be developed in the Office, and email is proving a great boon in better communication.

These changes have increased the pressure on the limited office space, and thought is being given - resources permitting - to developing the present Office or moving it to more spacious premises.

Southern Synod 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 10 March 2000, it was agreed that Balcombe United Reformed Church move from Croydon District to the Sussex East District.

Resolution 1**Occupational Health Service**

General Assembly agrees to explore the setting up of an Occupational Health Service for the benefit and support of all serving ministers, Church Related Community Workers and others paid from central funds.

South Western Synod

Proposer: Dr R Hunt

Seconder: Revd R Blick

1.1 Being aware that other professions have enjoyed the benefits of an Occupational Health Service for many years but that such a service is not available within the United Reformed Church, the South Western Synod perceives a need for such a service for the support of ministers, CRCWs and others paid from central funds.

1.2 An Occupational Health Service would be preventative rather than therapeutic and might be responsible for:

i) examining candidates for ministry and Church Related Community Work and ordinands and CRCWs at the conclusion of their training;

ii) offering medical examinations, advice and support during periods of illness and to ministers moving between pastorates and at retirement;

iii) advising and assisting, when required, if a post is causing or contributing to health problems;

iv) researching the causes and prevention of those illnesses prevalent, particularly among ministers.

Resolution 2**Proposed Ecumenical Bishop (East Cardiff)**

General Assembly endorses the positive response from the National Synod of Wales to the request from Enfys (the Commission of Covenanted Churches) addressed to member Churches to approve in principle the proposals entitled 'Towards the Making of an Ecumenical Bishop'. The Synod in Wales passed such proposals without dissent on 16 October 1999 with the following areas of concern being noted:

- a) The post must be, in principle, open to any ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in any of the four constituent denominations;
- b) In the liturgy for the making of the Bishop there should be no expression that might suggest any sort of re-ordination of the individual concerned;
- c) Clear expression should be given to the newness of what is being proposed. The Bishop, whilst being in continuity of community with our different traditions, should be recognised as a new departure that may, and, we hope will, develop in ways that we have not yet foreseen;
- d) Further detailed work must be undertaken regarding the relationship of the Bishop to the structures of authority and oversight within each church and between the Covenant Partners to ensure that the Bishop can be in practice the focus of unity and mission that the proposals envisage; and,
- e) No appointment should be agreed until the financial arrangements are known and accepted by all the member churches.

Synod of Wales

Proposer: Revd Stuart Jackson

Seconder: Revd Kathryn Price

1.1 This proposal is a direct response to an area of mission opportunity in Cardiff East, one of the few socially mixed and populous areas in the whole of Wales. The area in question is considered by Church Leaders as being more than ready for a strategic approach. Enfys (the Commission of Covenanted Churches) is convinced that now is the time to propose and experience in a well defined area a change of relationship that will allow the denominations to set apart and share in the work of an Ecumenical Bishop who would give leadership in prayer, planning and joint action for the Mission of the Church.

1.2 At the first General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, the Province of Wales was encouraged to support the then proposals for the formation of the Commission of Covenanted

Churches. Since its inception 25 years ago, the Commission (The Church in Wales, The Presbyterian Church of Wales, The Methodist Church, The United Reformed Church plus several local Baptist Churches) has produced widely acclaimed ecumenical material on Baptism and Membership in a Uniting Church, on Ministry in such a Church as well as a fine order for the Celebration of the Eucharist. The proposals for a Bishop have grown out from that work.

1.3 Synod asks for Assembly approval of what has thus far, by grace, been accomplished and seeks its blessing for future plans.

Resolution 3

Drugs and charity workers

General Assembly

- a) **seeks to support those who work in hostels, shelters and drop-in centres, noting with sadness the increased use of drugs among the homeless, which creates difficulties for them, those seeking to help them and the whole community;**
- b) **is concerned at the conviction and dismayed at the sentence of Ruth Wyner and John Brock, and most concerned that this judgement might undermine work with homeless people and those with drugs problems; and**
- c) **urges Church and Society, in consultation with ecumenical partners and appropriate secular agencies, to make representations to the government to secure a clarification or change of the law to minimise the risk of prosecution for those working in similar situations.**

Eastern Synod

*Proposer: Revd Dr David Thompson
 Seconder: Revd Catherine Hare*

1 Wintercomfort is a Cambridge-based charity which runs one of the two day centres for the homeless in East Anglia. It also provides a five-day-a-week doctor's surgery (most GPs won't treat people without a home address), a job training and confidence building course, help with rent and deposits on accommodation, and assistance with emergency winter shelters. Wintercomfort gives people who would otherwise spend their time begging on the streets a place to sit down, sort out their lives, and link in with a range of other essential services. This was run as an 'open-door' drop-in centre, where anyone, whatever their background, reputation or state of mental health, could turn up and find a cheap meal, washing facilities, free clothing and support and advice. Between 60 and 150 people visit the centre daily, and Wintercomfort helps around 100 people a year move off the streets into hostels or private accommodation.

2 In recent years the workers at Wintercomfort have seen a steady increase in the level of drug abuse among the homeless, and nationally between 50% and 70% of homeless people are thought to be drug users. This means that people working in day centres are usually working with people who have drug problems. Many drug users become involved in small-scale drug dealing, as a way to fund their own drug habits, so that there is rarely a sharp distinction between users and suppliers.

3 In January 1997 Ruth Wyner, Wintercomfort's Director, wrote to the police asking them to take a more active role in the battle against drugs at the centre. She also began a policy of banning people from its premises for actual or suspected drug dealing, and 162 bans were made during the next 15 months. As the actual quantities of

drugs involved are often small - no more than the size of a sweetcorn kernel - illicit dealing was hard to detect, especially as the centre has only three full-time and two part-time staff to supervise up to 150 people. It is also hard to enforce bans from a drop-in centre with an open-door policy, especially if those bans are for suspected dealing, and served on people at the edge of the law, some of whom are likely to make violent reprisals against staff. The names of people banned were not passed to police, partly because most of the bans were based on nothing more than suspicion, and partly because of the ethical duty to preserve client confidentiality.

4 In the spring of 1998 Ruth Wyner spoke out publicly about the extent of the drug problem, saying that it was now more serious than the alcohol problem amongst those using the centre; her comments were reported in the local press.

5 At the same time, the police were carrying out an undercover investigation, which lasted for five months, involving two under-cover officers and a surveillance camera on the roof of a nearby building trained on a spot outside the building which could not

be seen from inside the centre. At the end of this operation, eight drug-dealers were arrested for trading heroin, and Ruth Wyner (the Director) and John Brock (the Day Manager) were arrested under Section 8 of the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act because they were running the premises: they were charged with "knowingly permitting or suffering the supply of a Class A drug" (heroin). They were convicted and sentenced to terms of five and four years in prison respectively.

6 Section 8 had been introduced to deal with people who ran pubs or clubs as drug-dealing dens, and had been profiting by the dealing activities of others. The prosecution of Ruth Wyner and John Brock is the first time that the law has been used against people who gain nothing from drug dealing, and instead are seeking to help drug users. It is being viewed as a test case, and leaves many who work with drug users vulnerable: the governor of Park Prison, Bridgend, wrote in *The Independent* (17.12.99) that "If these people are guilty then prison governors should be brought to book because, technically, with the level of drug-taking there demonstrably is in prison, we are failing too."

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Churches - Changes and Synod Moderators' Report



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Churches - Changes

Resolution 4

New Churches

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

New Churches

Locking Castle Christian Partnership, Weston-super-Mare

South Western

Locking Castle is a new, growing, estate on the edge of Weston-super-Mare. About five years ago a small group of Christians from various local churches began to meet regularly for Sunday worship in a portacabin on the estate. In January 1998 Locking Castle Christian Partnership, a local ecumenical partnership between Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and the United Reformed Church was formally inaugurated.

The present ministry team consists of a Methodist deacon and an Anglican priest. The church has taken a lead in developing community life in the locality and providing community facilities. Plans are now under way to build a new church on a site in the District Centre of Locking Castle, which will provide both a worship centre and rooms for church and community use.

The Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads, North Swindon

South Western

The Church of Christ the Servant, Abbey Meads is establishing itself in the first of three village centres in the "green field" development in North Swindon. From an early stage it was decided that the United Reformed Church, the Baptist Church and the Methodist Church should provide ministry with some Anglican involvement and that there should be a church presence on the site as early as possible. A

Methodist Deaconess was inducted in September 1996 and a worshipping community has been built up. They are now eagerly awaiting their church building which will be used not only for worship but for church-based mission to this newly established and fast growing community.

Fairford Leys (Aylesbury) Local Ecumenical Partnership

Thames North

This local ecumenical partnership is situated on a new estate development of some 2,000 houses on the edge of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. It involves the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Fairford Leys is an unusual development, which has been the subject of national media coverage because of the intention of the site owners, the Ernest Cook Trust, to create a sense of community within a commercial context. Ernest Cook was the grandson of Thomas Cook, of travel company fame. The Trust, which has Christian connections, has donated a site in the village centre, so that the church may be the central focus of the entire project. A building, which combines church and community centre, is to be built by the end of 2001. In the meantime, the Fairford

Leys congregation plans to worship in the newly built Church of England school premises. The Trust is refurbishing the original Grade 1 listed Georgian farmhouse as a dwelling for the full-time (Methodist) Minister of the church. It is located near the church, and will have associated conference and office facilities.

Aylesbury, Greenhill, United Reformed Church is providing the bulk of the funding for the church building, as well as the first (part-time) Minister. It is moving from its present site to become the core ecumenical congregation. It is planned to formally close the Greenhill congregation after all outstanding matters relating to assets and property have been resolved.

Slough United Reformed Asian Christian Church*Thames North*

The Urdu speaking Asian Christian fellowship first made application to join the United Reformed Church in April 1998 following a recommendation by the Presbyterian Church of the USA. Since then, following negotiations with the United Reformed Church nationally, with the Thames North Synod and Chiltern District Council, and with local United Reformed Church congregations in Slough, it is now felt appropriate for this congregation to become part of the wider church family and join the United Reformed Church.

The congregation consists of about forty Asian families, mainly of Pakistani background and Presbyterian tradition, and is gathered from a relatively wide area around Slough. Apart from Sunday afternoon worship, the church is committed to a programme of work amongst children, to offering pastoral care to its members and to mission within the local Asian community.

New Mission Project**Holy Island Project***Northern*

St Cuthbert's Holy Island Project is guided by a mission statement which draws on features in the life and ministry of the 13th century saint - hospitality; teaching; solitude; reconciliation and renewal of worship; and it has developed a distinctive pattern of ministry, and varied and innovative worship.

Worship at 8pm on Saturday evenings has evolved into a relaxed and accessible pattern which is welcomed by residents and visitors alike, and has become in itself a quiet catalyst for ecumenism.

The refurbished building, itself a witness to the possibility of careful and sensitive change, enables an open door ministry of welcome and gentle evangelism to the half million visitors to the Island each year.

The Project is run by a Director, volunteer helpers and a management group who are accountable to the URC Northumberland District Council.

Through a programme of events for a variety of ages and interests, and in comfortable and well-equipped facilities the Project has been able to meet specific needs of groups and individuals.

From its inception in 1994 the Project has in vision, style and effect operated as a 'mission project' within the URC and we look forward eagerly, if belatedly, to its recognition as such.

Resolution 5**Closure of Local Churches**

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

Closure of Local Churches**Norham***Northern*

Norham URC was the first congregation in England of the 'Secession Church', from 1737 part of a group of five in the Borders area; the first minister, the Revd John Hunter, was the first to be ordained by that denomination. In 1752, Norham church was formed in its own right. A chapel was built in 1753 (enlarged a century later); the Revd James Morrison, ordained in 1756, remained for 58 years. A Sunday school was formed, over 25 years before the Robert Ralkes school in Gloucester, traditionally England's first Sunday School. The formation of the Presbyterian Church of England led to union with another

Presbyterian church in the village early in the twentieth century. In bygone years worshippers came from farms in the area which employed many workers with often large families in tied houses: depopulation has contributed quite as much to the reduced numbers as any national trend. The church last had its own minister in 1971, since when it has been in several different joint pastorates. In 1997 the chapel was sold and the hall used for worship. The members have struggled gallantly with increasing difficulty up to 2000. The final act of worship took place on 9 April 2000.

Trinity, Bishop Auckland

Northern

The congregation was founded in the 1860's in response to the needs of Scottish people moving into the area. Within a few years the building was opened, ministry secured, and the church began to play a full part in the Christian life of this small town.

In the 1960's the building was radically adapted, providing for an upstairs hall and facilities that had long been lacking. However, these changes could stem the slow decline, and the shortcomings of the building and its position in the town prevented any hopes of developing partnerships with community groups. At one point the members considered a new beginning on a new estate, or involvement in an ecumenical partnership, but again there was no encouraging signs.

Recognising that there were no other options, the twenty or so remaining members sadly took the decision to close at the end of 1999. A service of thanksgiving for the church's 140 years of Christian witness and service was held on 9 January 2000, led by the Synod Moderator. There is much to celebrate; but there is sadness too at the withdrawal of the United Reformed Church from yet another small community.

Brierfield

North Western

The history of this church goes back to 1878. Since the 1939/45 war, however, it has never had more than 40 members. In 1991 the church took a bold step, leasing its site to the local authority who demolished the building and erected a community centre, giving the church access for certain purposes on a peppercorn rent. The small congregation has enjoyed a very rich sense of fellowship and has in many ways been the spiritual "power house" of the group of three

churches to which it has belonged. Aging, however, and seeing no ecumenical growth in recent years another bold step has been taken to close, the members mostly joining Nelson Church. The Brierfield Community Centre will for ever carry the name of the United Reformed Church in its stonework - testimony to faithful witness over many decades.

St. Paul's & Trinity, Bootle

Mersey

St Paul's and Trinity was the eventual product of two Presbyterian Churches - United Presbyterian Church, Bootle (1853), and St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Bootle (1883).

Bootle then was a prosperous seaside resort, where wealthy Liverpool merchants and professional men were building their mansions and large houses. The extension northwards of docks for the Port of Liverpool brought much industrial and population growth to Bootle and the wealthy moved further north along the coast to Blundellsands and Crosby.

Over the ensuing years the two churches had their peaks and troughs and two world wars took their toll. St Paul's was destroyed in 1941 and Trinity was unfit for use following bomb damage in 1940. A war time union was agreed, using Trinity School Rooms as premises. In 1951 this union was made permanent. In 1964 the congregation was enlarged by members

from Emmanuel Congregational Church, who lost their premises in a fire, and in 1968 by members from Breeze Hill Presbyterian Church of Wales, whose church was demolished. In 1972 St Paul's and Trinity Presbyterian Church became St Paul's and Trinity United Reformed Church.

By 1981 there was an ageing congregation, with many fabric and financial problems, but with great spirit. The way forward was to demolish the church and hall and sell the land to a Housing Trust. The caretaker's house was converted to a church seating 50 people, and also ancillary rooms. A small devoted congregation, strong in spirit, continued to worship under the care of various Interim Moderators, until in 1997, St Paul's came into a joint pastorate with Crosby United Reformed Church. Due to declining numbers, it was with real regret and sadness that the decision was made to close, with the final service on Easter Sunday, 2000.

Union Street URC, Wallasey

Mersey

Formerly Union Street Presbyterian Mission, mother church Egremont Presbyterian Church of England (now Manor Church Centre). In 1975 Union Street became Union Street United Reformed Church.

Union Street started in a small upper room in Union Street on 9 October 1986, by James Smith, being subsequently transferred to the present premises which were, for some time, used as a day school. After a few years service by Miss Longmore, Mr Russell

was appointed Superintendent in 1876 and continued the work until ill-health compelled his retirement in 1905. Superintendent Missionaries since 1905 included Miss Craig (12 years' service), Mr Much (14 years' service), Mr Arnold (3 years' service), Mr Faucet (1 years' service), Mr Murphy (25 years' service), Mr J Hewitt (14 years as Lay Pastor, 4 years as Ordained Minister) Mr Pierpoint (6 years as Lay Pastor) and Revd M Poole (10 years as Minister). The closing service was held on 5 September 1999.

Lane URC, Holmfirth

Yorkshire

Lane URC Holmfirth closed on 30 November 1999 because the building was structurally dangerous. There has been Christian worship on that site since the 1780's and Synod on 4th March 2000 marked the

closure with regret, giving thanks for Christian witness there and offered best wishes to the dispersed membership.

Hognaston

East Midlands

There had been a dissenting fellowship in the village of Hognaston from as far back as 1671 and records exist of this fellowship meeting in a barn on the outskirts of the village. The present congregation's life began in 1878, when people from the village of Hognaston met together in their homes. They began to build a church in 1881 and the building was dedicated in August 1882. The adjoining Sunday School premises were dedicated in December 1930. The church, like many of the village congregational churches in Derbyshire, became part of the United Reformed Church in 1972.

members who continue to live in the village. The village of Hognaston is referred to by some locally as "Little Bethlehem" due to the fact that in the 19th century and early part of the 20th century there were a number of family bakery businesses that served that area of West Derbyshire. By the late Summer of 1999 the congregation decided that to keep a church open was too much for them and, therefore, they reluctantly took the decision to close. There were two services which marked the closure of the church, one the Christmas Carol Service of all the churches of the West Derbyshire Group, and finally the five members of the congregation met on Christmas Eve to celebrate Holy Communion and to give thanks for the life and witness of that congregation. All the members of the congregation have committed themselves to be part of other fellowships in the local area.

The church and its congregation have offered a significant contribution to the life of the village and this was true right to the end of the church's life, and, in many ways, will continue with the involvement of the

Alfreton

East Midlands

The presence of a Non-conformist worshipping community in Alfreton dates back to the 17th century. It was for nearly a hundred and fifty years until 1997 housed in Church Street and called after Wycliffe. It was a centre of community activity in Alfreton until the early 1980's by which time it was a part of the United Reformed Church.

Declining membership and the increasing repair costs however eventually forced the membership to move to other premises in 1997 as a temporary measure and put the Church in the Province's care.

Over the years the Church fostered many groups, as well as a thriving Sunday School it had a Boys Brigade, Men's and Women's Fellowships and was home to the local History Society.

In early 1999 after much heart searching the membership took the decision that the Church should close. A final celebratory Service was held on Sunday the 16th of May 1999.

Adsborough

Adsborough is a small village in a farming community. The church was founded in 1868 by a group of concerned Christians in the Taunton area and has served the village faithfully for many years. At the end of 1999 the church had just three members. Two of those members will be moving away from the village

Debden

Debden was developed as a London over-spill estate after the Second World War. In 1950 some members of the Loughton Union Church started holding worship and Sunday School on the estate. In 1952 the present building was erected and a Congregational church formed. Support in the early years came very largely from Loughton Union Church, with one of its members personally paying the stipend of a minister for the first six months.

A lot of useful work has been done, especially with children and young people. There have often been times when there were more children than adults in the congregation. For some time there was a strong Girls' Brigade, and youth work has been maintained until quite recently.

Slough, Mustard Seed Church

The Mustard Seed Church in Slough was formed in 1989 as the most visible expression of a newly created LEP within the town. It was effectively a church plant in the Windsor Meadows estate, and was sponsored mainly by the Church of England and the United Reformed Church. Two semi-detached houses were jointly purchased by the sponsoring bodies, of which one served as a manse, while the other was used for small midweek gatherings. The first minister in pastoral charge was an ordained deacon (CE), the Revd Pat Thomas, under whose ministry the number of worshippers gradually rose to around forty. This necessitated Sunday services being held in a nearby rented hall.

After a short vacancy in 1995, the Revd Elaine Dunn (URC) was inducted as the new minister. Unfortunately, by the time she took over numbers had already begun to fall, partly because many of the homes in the area are 'starter homes' which tend to create considerable mobility, and partly because of personality issues. Nevertheless Elaine rose to the challenge, managing to turn an inherited debt into a small surplus. With financial help from both the Anglican diocese and the other URC congregations in Slough funds were raised to enable the intervening wall between the two houses to be knocked down, thus creating a room large

South Western

shortly and so at a church meeting on 24 January 2000 it was decided that the church should close, the final service having been held on 12 December 1999. The remaining member is to be transferred to North Petherton United Reformed Church.

Thames North

The church has struggled with the usual problems of a residential estate where the habit of church-going is not strongly ingrained in the people, where there are many personal and family problems, and workers are hard to find and keep. Right up to the present time, some valuable pastoral and evangelistic work has been done with individuals, but the burden of maintaining the large premises and reaching out to the community was proving too much for the few hard workers in the church.

In the summer of 1999 most of the key workers in the church, for various reasons, felt they could continue no longer. After a number of meetings, and some conversations with the Methodists about possible co-operation, the members regretfully concluded that it would be best to close the church as from the end of April 2000. It is their fervent hope that it will be possible for Christian witness and mission to be maintained in the building by other agencies.

Thames North

enough for Sunday worship. However the downward trend continued and, when Elaine left at the end of her initial contract in October 1998, only a very few people were regularly involved.

At this point the Anglicans made it clear that they were unable to provide further ministry, except through the services of the local parish clergy, and for the next few months they tried to maintain worship as before. Numbers never rose above four, all of whom were Anglican, and ultimately it was felt that they ought to be encouraged to join in with the parish church. At the same time the Joint Council (3 CE; 3 URC) had come to the conclusion that, as the Mustard Seed church had all but effectively ceased to exist, the respective denominational bodies should be asked to concur with its recommendation to formally close the church. Chiltern District Council duly gave such concurrence "with regret" at its meeting in November 1999, while Thames North Synod gave its approval in March 2000.

The Joint Council will continue to meet regularly and handle the affairs of the Mustard Seed church until such time as the properties have been sold and the funds dealt with in accordance with the terms of the original sharing agreement.

Ingress Vale

Southern

Ingress Vale church was built in a North Kent industrial village between 1860 and 1862 as a preaching station of Greenhithe Congregational Church. A major contributor to the cost of £1,367 was the owner of the local cement factory. In 1870 the Revd George Shrewsbury, a former missionary in India, arrived and for the next 31 years laboured to make the church the focal point for all local activity. The young men's Bible Class was largely responsible for building the Manse next door in 1902.

Throughout the twentieth century interest in the world Church remained a strong theme. The church collected for the John Williams ships and many visitors from the London Missionary Society took services. During World War 11 a German prisoner-of-war camp was established in nearby Swanscombe and several of the prisoners worshipped at Ingress Vale each Sunday. Contact was maintained with them after the War.

Carmel, Bonvilston

Wales

Carmel was founded as a Welsh-speaking chapel in 1834 by the Eglwys yr Annibynwyr. In 1924 it came into the Congregational Church of England and Wales and in 1972 the United Reformed Church. Its ministry was set amongst the farming communities of the Vale of Glamorgan. Ministry and leadership through its life was provided mainly by one of the chapel families, the Evans family. William Edgar Evans was minister 1880-1930. Tridydd Evans was Secretary 1930-1971, and David Evans 1971-2000. The changing population

The last stipendiary minister left in 1943 and from 1954 the church was grouped with other churches in the Dartford area. Miss Edith Dudney provided continuity as Church Secretary for 64 years until her death in 1998. However in recent years numbers declined while the average age rose.

In 1996 an initiative by Medway District, led by a Lay Preacher, Pamela Tolhurst, attracted some new worshippers and brought new activity. Children's work was revived for the benefit of the estate that had grown up around the church building. In 1999, however, the premises were declared unsafe. The work was moved into a nearby pub but the local response was not sustained. The last remaining member agreed the church must close and the Synod Moderator preached at a Service of Thanksgiving for the church's life held in Dartford on 25 September 1999.

Hodley, Montgomeryshire

Wales

On Sunday 23rd January 2000 Hodley United Reformed Church held a final service to conclude 160 years of worship in a small rural community. Hodley was opened in 1840 at the height of the building of small Congregational churches in rural areas to meet the needs of small communities. It has provided a meeting point and focal point for worship and events for the families in the valley between Kerry and Abermule in Montgomeryshire. As in most of these small communities the declining need of farm

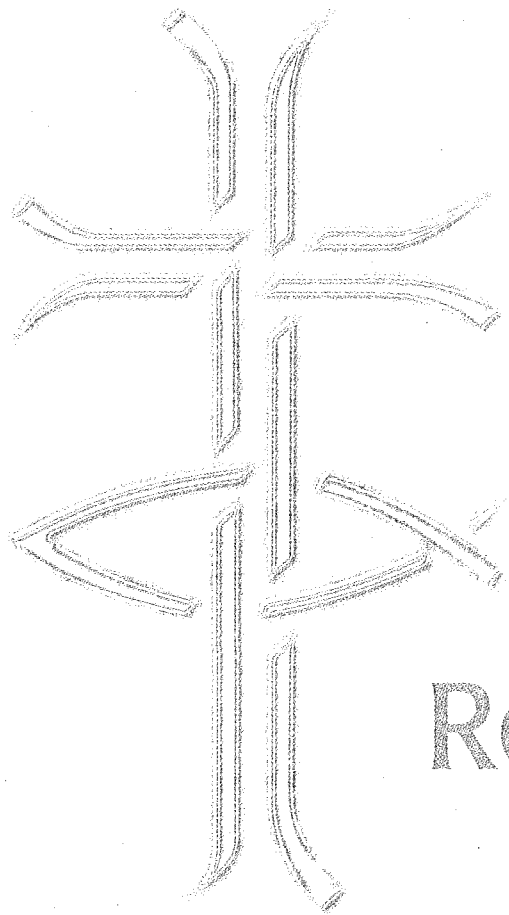
workers and the leaving to find work in other locations has over the years taken its toll. The Church has always been linked with the URC in Newtown and in 1988 became part of the Maldwyn Group. The decline left only 5 members to carry on the work and in October 1999 following the death of one member it was felt with deep regret that the time had come to close the door. We remember the tireless effort of those over the years who witnessed to faith and to those who continue to do so in other fellowships.

Lanteg, Pembrokeshire

Wales

It was in 1814 that a local farmer gave the Beven field as a site for a new Independent chapel to be built in the Parish. People came from surrounding areas to worship in the small community. The original building was an Upper Room with stabling beneath for horses. In 1889 a new chapel was built through voluntary

labour. Lanteg is now a very small village with many holiday homes and the chapel has consequently experienced a decline in attendance. We give thanks for the witness during many years in this community and for the commitment of a few families in sharing the Gospel.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Synod Moderators' Report

I What is the church for?

1.1 In order to get every other question in perspective we need to know what God is up to. The answer is that God's plan is nothing less than drawing together, unifying, all things in heaven and on earth with Christ as head.

1.2 The church, the body of Christ, is called to witness to this plan and to call people and their human institutions to participate in it. In order to do so the church, being the body of Christ, is called to show in its own life, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is called to point to those places in the world's life where the same life, death and resurrection are to be seen. It is at those points that renewal of creation is taking place.

1.3 This 'ministry of reconciliation' is the task of the whole people of God. That is why we keep on emphasising the 'priesthood of all believers.' The United Reformed Church believes in priesthood. The priesthood is in the 'all'. It is when believers act together that priesthood takes place.

1.4 Priesthood happens

- when people have their hearts and minds turned towards God;
- when people hear God speaking;
- when the sacraments speak of the God who is present in them;
- when the stories of human life collide with the story of scripture and release the Word of God from its captivity in scripture into the lives of women, men and their children;
- when broken bodies and unbalanced minds find healing and despairing souls and communities find hope.

1.5 The key to this happening is

- believers meeting together in prayer, in praise and with an open, seeking mind to listen for what God is saying;
- believers meeting together to share in the sacraments;
- believers meeting together round scripture and sharing their stories with each other and discovering that God is in those stories;
- believers together caring for each other and for their neighbours, by their prayers, their visiting, their listening, their participation in the life of the whole community.

1.6 As the Basis of Union has it: The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it.

2 So what are ministers for?

2.1 Ministers are called to participate in this total ministry and to give leadership to the church in recognising it, understanding it and sharing it with the world.

2.2 Ministers were called by God before they were called by the Church. They continue to be called by God after the Church calls them into service. It is therefore a reasonable expectation that they will use their training, their skills and their discipleship to go on seeking God's purposes for the world and keep calling the Church back to those purposes rather than the more limited ones that churches sometimes settle for.

2.3 As we were reminded in the Patterns of Ministry Report a few years ago there is a wide variety of understanding amongst us about the nature of Ordination. The line would stretch from those who would claim that the only difference is one of function, or even time available, to those who would want to assert that there is a difference of order. (Perhaps this continuum should be a circle rather than a straight line.) But most ministers would assert from their own experience that there are times when there has been a sense of being 'the other', or 'the catalyst'. Without this there is no prophecy. Where there is no prophecy there is no ministry. Of course this gift is not the exclusive property of ministers. But all ministers should have it.

2.4 Of course there are day to day practicalities. There are expectations to fulfil and to deny. The Wales Synod, in their study pack 'Great Expectations', recently produced a list to which we would draw the attention of the whole church. We reproduce here part of their list amended from narrative form to something approaching aphorism, and added one or two of our own.

2.4.1 Ministers should be able to organise and administrate, but they are not called to be managers.

2.4.2 Ministers should be able to lead worship winsomely, but they are not entertainers.

2.4.3 Ministers should be able pastors, but they are not therapists or counsellors.

2.4.4 Ministers should share peoples lives, but they are not casual visitors.

- 2.4.5 Ministers should help break 'the strange silence of the Bible in the church', but should be able also to speak of the God who is beyond scripture.
- 2.4.6 Ministers should be students of scripture, but need not be academic scholars.
- 2.4.7 Ministers should know what is going on, but are not called to be sociologists or political scientists.
- 2.4.8 Ministers should have a prophetic detachment, surrendering neither to the cynicism of the world, nor to the nostalgia of the church.
- 2.4.9 Ministers should be men and women of God, yet know their way round the world, acting as interpreters between the community and the church.
- 2.4.10 Ministers should have soft hearts and hard heads, they should not have soft heads and hard hearts.
- 2.4.11 Ministers should be good team players: with their colleagues, their elders and their members.
- 2.4.12 Ministers are not the private property of their congregations. They are called to care not only for those congregations, but also to be ministers in District, Synod and Assembly and should encourage their churches to see these relationships as means of mutual support rather than distant bureaucracies.
- 2.4.13 Ministers in the United Reformed Church are, by definition, ecumenists.

3 The whole ministry for the whole church

3.1 Ministers then play a key role in the life of our church. Because they do so their numbers and their deployment is a crucial matter to us all.

3.2 The ministers of the United Reformed Church are the product of the whole church. Their call is tested by the processes of the whole church. They are trained with the resources of the whole church. They are sustained by the contributions of the whole church. Yet there are parts of the whole church which receive very little of this ministry.

3.3 At a recent meeting between the Ministries Committee and the Moderators to look at the whole question of deployment it became clear that there is huge gap between the number of posts we have available for stipendiary ministers and the number of ministers there are to fill those posts. If we added together the current and potential vacancies there would be approximately 150 more posts than there are ministers. It was agreed that all Synods should be working to a notional 10% vacancy rate to allow for

movement between pastorates. But the present overall vacancy rate is nearer 22.5%. If all the vacancies were to be filled tomorrow it would mean that nearly one quarter of the stipendiary ministers would have to move, and of course the number of vacancies would remain the same. It has also become clear that with the present level of giving we cannot afford any more ministers than we have now.

3.4 It would appear that the only answer is that we will have to have fewer posts. The whole church needs to be aware of this situation and be conscious of how painful this is going to be. It will mean a dramatic lowering of expectation about the levels of ordained ministry the churches can have. In the United Reformed Church decisions about deployment are usually independent of the levels of M&M contributions. We rejoice in this as it allows ministry to be called to places which District Councils have identified as mission priorities. Given that we are going to have fewer posts, these decisions are going to become more difficult.

3.5 Over recent years we have discovered together the value of non-stipendiary ministers to the whole church. Without their call, their training and their service both in the churches and in the total life of the community the crisis we have outlined above would be even more serious. We take this opportunity affirm these men and women in their ministries and to share our prayer that yet more will hear this call.

3.6 We remind ourselves and the whole church that non-stipendiary ministers were never intended simply to fill the gaps left by the shortage of stipendiary ministers. The grouping of churches does give more opportunity for the original vision to be fulfilled of stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers working in collegiality with each other and with existing and developing lay ministries.

4 Some difficult questions

4.1 Some pastorates are already well aware of the consequences of this situation. They have been waiting two, three or in some cases more than four years for a minister to be called and accepted. Not unnaturally they ask with some passion why it is that other pastorates seem hardly to wait at all. The difference is not always in terms of missionary potential. In the meantime they go on contributing towards the cost of a ministry which they feel they do not receive and begin to ask why.

4.2 How do we create fewer posts? The answer would seem to be either by grouping churches or amalgamating them, and sometimes by making the hard choice to close churches. What criteria should be used in this process? Numbers of

members? Ability to pay? Mission potential? How is that to be judged? We know of no church that is without mission potential. We do know of churches which do not live up to it. We also know of areas of immense missionary potential, desperately calling for church planting and for ministerial leadership.

4.3 We are aware of a number of other questions being raised:

4.3.1 Some are asking if the call system is limiting strategic thinking and action. Are there some cases in which Districts should place stipendiary as well as non stipendiary ministers? Others ask if the time has come when the call should not be to the local pastorate but to the District and the District allocate roles within its bounds?

4.3.2 Others ask if a system of termed appointment, with review, would enable us to be more strategic in our use of the ministry?

4.3.3 How do we use the ministers we have in such a way that their gifts, talents and skills are available to all the churches? Many of the Synods and Districts are using some of their deployment figure to make appointments such as Training Officers, Development Officers, Mission Enablers etc. In this way all the churches are served. But what is the balance to be struck between this type of appointment and local ministry?

4.4 What happens when pastorates become desperate? We know of more than one situation in which the church/pastorate has waited so long that they are in the process of taking the situation into their own hands and either are in the process of appointing, or are asking their District if they can move towards appointing, a person to lead them who has previously been designated as unsuitable for the ministry of the United Reformed Church. The churches in these situations, sometimes on their own initiative, seek to appoint one of these people not with the title of minister but some other title which nevertheless gives them the position of pastoral charge of that congregation. Such moves make these churches even more independent in policy and practice. The foot is saying to the hand 'I do not need you'.

4.5 This leads us to ask how flexible can we be in these matters? At what point does a church cease to be a United Reformed Church? Who decides and on what basis? We presume the answer is that the District Council decides. They will make their

judgement on the basis of 'For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.' We suspect that each District Council would have to make its own judgement as to when, and by what measure, the unity and peace of the church had been hurt. We do wonder if all District Councils, or even Synods, are objective enough, or strong enough to make such a judgement.

5 Positive outcomes (with some more questions)

5.1 What has not diminished in any way is the felt need for leadership in our churches. This taken along with the shortage of ministers, and a new consciousness of the leadership skills of lay people is resulting in a large number of experiments in new models of lay ministry. These include Local Church Leaders in some Synods with carefully considered and approved means of selection, training and commissioning within the guidelines laid down by General Assembly.

5.2 There has been a resurgence in the recognition of the important part that Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders are playing in our churches week in and week out. We have been greatly encouraged by the number of people who have been willing to take training for this through the TLS Course. We want to say important this course has been to the life of our church and how pleased we have been to receive assurances that it will continue in some similar form. A number of Synods have also begun fresh 'Starting to Lead Worship' Courses.

5.3 Many churches and pastorates have also been appointing workers to specific tasks such as Family Workers, Youth Workers, Mission Outreach Workers, Social Workers, Pastoral Assistants etc.. Some of these are professional appointments and others are voluntary workers. The numbers are considerable, running into hundreds. This development is admirable in many ways. But it is not without some questions. Many, if not most are appointed without any reference to any body outside the local pastorate. Some of these people are going to have as much influence on a local church as would a Minister yet with none of the processes for selection, training, appointment and accountability.

5.4 Many, if not all, of the Synods, are finding ways of encouraging more and more lay people to take some form of general training so that they become more aware of the faith that is in them, more sensitive to scripture, more able to speak of their Lord, his promises and his demands.

5.5 Gradually more real ecumenical strategic planning is taking place. It makes more sense for our churches to work closely with their ecumenical neighbours within their own community than it does to try and work with another United Reformed Church ten or more miles away. It also makes more sense for churches of different denominations to share ministry within the one community. This means that there is a need for the United Reformed Church and our ecumenical partners to devise easier ways than we have at present for appointing and paying ministers in such situations. It is currently difficult because of the ecumenical failure to arrive at any mutual recognition of ministry.

6 In conclusion

6.1 We are aware that this report raises some awkward and difficult issues. We have not flinched from raising them. Having made a bit of an icon of our structures and systems for so long, now is the time, we believe, for the whole church to engage in discussion about these matters so that the Moderators are not left to deal with them in a piecemeal manner.

7 Personalia

7.1 This year has seen some changes in our number. David Jenkins has been replaced by Peter Poulter who is already so at home among us it is as if he has always been there. For several months we have also had John Arthur as the General Secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland sitting with us. He has made us aware of the subtle changes that our new union will bring to us all. At the time of writing that union is an eagerly awaited future event. John, of course, is to be the Moderator of the Synod of Scotland.

7.2 This Assembly will see Keith Forecast's retirement. With him will go a huge degree of experience in the life of our church, a detailed knowledge of ministers and pastorates, a pastoral sensitivity and an administrative gift which will be hard to replace. We will also miss his boisterous sense of humour. We look forward to welcoming Peter Brain as our new colleague.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Mission Council



Mission Council

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

Members: *The officers of the General Assembly, the past Moderator, the Moderator-elect, the Legal Advisor, the conveners of the Assembly standing committees (except the Pastoral Reference Committee), the synod moderators, two representatives of FURY Council, and three representatives from each synod.*

Those representing synods in March 2000 were:

Northern	<i>Revd Pamela Ward</i>	<i>Dr Peter Clarke</i>	<i>Mrs Roberta Wood</i>
North Western	<i>Revd Geoffrey Townsend</i>	<i>Mrs Margareta Batchelor</i>	<i>Mrs Janice Cockcroft</i>
Mersey	<i>Mrs Lillian Covell</i>	<i>Dr Donald South</i>	<i>Revd Gwynfor Evans</i>
Yorkshire	<i>Revd John Jenkinson</i>	<i>Mr Steve Wood</i>	<i>Mrs Val Morrison</i>
East Midlands	<i>Mrs Jill Strong</i>	<i>Revd Clifford Wilton</i>	<i>Mrs Irene Wren</i>
West Midlands	<i>Mr Simon Rowntree</i>	<i>Mrs Erica Young</i>	<i>Revd Tom Bayliss</i>
Eastern	<i>Revd Michael Burrell</i>	<i>Mr Ken Woods</i>	<i>Revd Clive Sutcliffe</i>
South Western	<i>Revd John Rees</i>	<i>Mrs Mary Eden</i>	<i>Revd Sandra Lloydlangston</i>
Wessex	<i>Mr Graham Rolfe</i>	<i>Revd David Williams</i>	<i>Revd Simon Thomas</i>
Thames North	<i>Mr Keith Webster</i>	<i>Revd Rachel Poolman</i>	<i>Mr Geoffrey Duncan</i>
Southern	<i>Mrs Christine Meekison</i>	<i>Revd Margaret Collins</i>	<i>Dr Graham Camppling</i>
Wales	<i>Dr Jean Sylvan Evans</i>	<i>Mrs Delyth Rees</i>	<i>Mr Peter Devaney</i>

I Our meetings

1.1 During the year Mission Council has met residentially twice at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, and for a one-day meeting at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh. Inevitably time and energy has been given to considering the consequences for the church of the 1999 Assembly debate on human sexuality. However it has also been possible to devote significant pieces of time to issues of direct concern to the mission of local churches and the whole United Reformed Church.

1.2 The Moderator has made a distinctive contribution to the meetings, helping the Council with both his perception and his humour. The worship also took the Council into deep places, and in this the Moderator worked effectively with his chaplain, Revd Peter Poulter.

1.3 Theological reflection at the residential meetings was provided by the Revd Dr Noel Davies and Professor Mary Grey. Their reflections enabled the Council to see the hand of God in what otherwise could have been remembered only as very full agendas.

1.4 At each meeting progress towards union with the Congregational Union of Scotland was reported. This, coupled with the presence and involvement of members of the Union at all the meetings, made Mission Council aware that it was working at a time of significant change. At the conclusion of its March meeting it looked forward to the first meeting of the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, including four representatives of the synod of Scotland.

2 Responding to the Assembly

2.1 Discipline of church members. In 1996 Assembly asked Mission Council, among other matters, to "review the procedures for disciplinary action for all members of the URC whether they be ordained or not". The other matters have been dealt with and a task group, convened by the Revd Julian Macro, has produced a report indicating the responsibilities of local churches in matters of discipline. However, in receiving the report, Mission Council recognised that the situation has moved on considerably. In particular, experience with the Section O disciplinary process for ministers, once it has been reflected on, may have relevant insights to contribute. It is also the case that the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee is encouraging a wide

discussion of issues of church membership, and this may also provide insights into questions of discipline. Mission Council does not therefore intend to proceed with this matter at the moment. It does draw the attention of Elders' and Church Meetings to part of the task group's report. The responsibility for adding people to, and removing them from, the membership roll lies with these meetings, as does the maintaining of standards of membership. Occasionally complex questions arise which may be outside the experience of local churches. In such cases they are strongly urged to use the wider experience of their district councils and synods.

2.2 Human sexuality pastoral group. This was set up by resolution 41 of the 1997 Assembly. The members of the group are: Elizabeth Caswell, Malcolm Hanson, Jim Hollyman, Glyn Jenkins, Lis Mullen and John Waller. Mission Council agreed to keep the group in existence until at least October 2000. It has been consulted on a small number of occasions. Contact can be made through the General Secretary or Deputy General Secretary.

2.3 Small churches. Resolution 6 of the 1998 Assembly required Mission Council to set up a task group to consider and report on the opportunities, challenges and difficulties which small churches face. The group was set up under the convenership of the Revd Graham Robson and an interim report was presented to the January meeting of the Council. The task group is continuing its work, and it is hoped that it will bring a final report to Mission Council in October.

2.4 Oversight of Growing Up. Resolution 15 of 1999 asked Mission Council to oversee the planning of this mission programme. Mission Council asked the General Secretary to undertake this particular responsibility, bringing matters to it whenever he felt it necessary.

2.5 Consequences of accepting the statement in resolution 34. The Human Sexuality Report of 1999 recognised that further work needed to be done on the possible consequences and it asked Mission Council to make the necessary arrangements (resolution 37). Recognising the sensitivity of the subject, Mission Council took considerable care in appointing a task group to do the work. Those appointed were: Revd John Reardon (convener), Revd Ken Chippindale, Mr John Ellis, Revd Malcolm Hanson, Mrs Barbara Martin, Mrs Helen Mee, Mrs Val Morrison, with the General Secretary acting as secretary. The group met on a number of occasions and produced a report which was presented to Mission Council in March. However, by that time it was known that the statement in resolution 34 could not be accepted because it had not received sufficient support in the councils of the church. Mission Council did not discuss the task group's

report, nor is it forwarding the report to Assembly, because it believes that discussing "what might have been" will confuse the discussion of the actual situation facing the Assembly in regard to the human sexuality debate. The members of the task group have been thanked for their work.

2.6 Report of the Working Group on the Authority of the General Assembly and other Councils. In receiving the Human Sexuality Report 1999, Assembly requested Mission Council to consider the recommendations of this Working Group and to report to a future Assembly (resolution 39(ii)). Mission Council decided to remit this work to a task group of seven people, which would be asked to report in 2001, first to Mission Council in March and then to Assembly. Having regard to the content of the Working Group's report, Mission Council asked the Assembly's Nominations Committee to appoint the members of the task group. Those appointed are: Revd Adrian Bulley (convener), Revd Ray Adams (secretary), Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, Mr Eric Chilton, Revd Jack Dyce, Revd Pat Nimmo, Mrs Irene Wren. The task group has begun its work.

3 Actions on behalf of the General Assembly

3.1 Appointment of the moderator of the North Western synod. Acting on behalf of the Assembly, Mission Council appointed the Revd Peter James Brain as moderator of the North Western synod for a period of seven years to 31 August 2007.

3.2 Appointments to staff posts. Acting on behalf of the Assembly, Mission Council made the following appointments and re-appointments:

Miss Avis Reaney to be Secretary for Finance from 1 April 2000.

Mrs Rosemary Johnston to be Children's Advocate for a further period of 5 years to 31 March 2005.

Revd David Lawrence to be Editor of Reform and Media Officer for a further period to 31 August 2005.

Revd John Proctor to be Director of New Testament Studies at Westminster College for a further period to 31 August 2003.

3.3 Basic ministerial stipend. Acting on behalf of the Assembly, Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2000 at £16,308 p.a.

3.4 Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia. In order to make clear that the United Reformed Church does not claim any right to Presbyterian property in Malaysia, the following resolution was passed:

In accordance with the powers devolved upon it by the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church and acting on its behalf, Mission Council resolves as follows:

to confirm that the United Reformed Church does not claim any right or authority to exercise control over any Malaysian property belonging to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia and

to ratify the actions taken by Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia with regard to the transfer of properties in Malaysia under its control insofar as such ratification is legally necessary and

to confirm that from this moment the United Reformed Church relinquishes permanently to Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia all such control and authority as may be vested in it by any enactment or deed in relation to any such Malaysian property so that in future Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia shall be able to act without reference to the United Reformed Church and

to authorise the officers of General Assembly to give any future consents or confirmations which may be required in relation to the property and assets of Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia.

3.5 Island House, St Paul's URC, Cubitt Town. Also in order to clarify the ownership and control of this piece of property in east London, the following resolution was passed:

Mission Council confirms, on behalf of General Assembly, that control and ownership of Island House rests with the Thames North Synod.

3.6 Appointment of a director of a trust. These appointments are normally the responsibility of synods, but as the area covered by this trust includes two synods the following resolution was passed.

Mission Council, under authority delegated by the General Assembly (1994 resolution 11) in exercise of the power conferred on the General Assembly by section 7 (2) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 appoints Mr. Michael Gabb as a director of the Congregational Union of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire Inc.

3.7 Changes to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration. It had been realised that the changes agreed by Assembly in 1999 regarding childrens' allowances would penalise ministers whose family income exceeded the basic stipend by slightly more than £2000. It had also been recognised that changes in legislation would require the existing arrangements for heat and light costs to be ended. Having been persuaded of both these points, Mission Council passed the following resolutions:

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the addition of the words in italics in para 6.1.5, and the re-numbering of the sub-paragraphs, which will then read:

6.1.5.1 **Children's allowances:** Where a minister has one or more financially dependent children below the age of 24 years, an annual non-pensionable allowance of £800 in respect of the first dependent child and £400 in respect of each additional dependent child will be paid, provided that the minister certifies (on a form provided) that the total annual income of the family (excluding state children's benefits) is expected to be less than £2,000 in excess of the basic stipend; (see para 6.1.5.6 below)

6.1.5.2 Any casual earnings of, or educational grants for, dependent children, or housing or fixed car allowances paid by the Church, may be disregarded as family income;

6.1.5.3 The allowance will be paid in accordance with the circumstances pertaining at the date that the certificate is signed. Any subsequent change, e.g. when the family income changes, will be disregarded in the current year; pro-rata grants may be claimed in the year of the birth of a baby, and in the year in which a child ceases to be dependent, or attains the age of 24;

6.1.5.4 The first year in which this allowance will be paid is 2000. The sums of £800, £400 and £2,000 in paras 6.1.5.1 and 6.1.5.6 will be reviewed by the MoM Committee for each subsequent year;

6.1.5.5 It is envisaged that forms will be issued in February of each year, and grants will be paid through the first available payroll run after the form is received in the MoM office;

6.1.5.6 *Where a minister certifies that the total family income, as defined in this para, is likely to exceed the basic stipend + £2,000, the allowance will be paid less 50p for every £1 that the expected income exceeds the basic stipend + £2,000.*

Mission Council, acting for Assembly in a matter of urgency, suspends para 6.1.2 of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration relating to any cost of heating and lighting incurred after April 1st 2000, and amends the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration by the deletion of para 6.1.2 with effect from July 1st 2000.

3.8 Changes to the Section O ministerial discipline process. Having been consulted about a potential case, it was realised by the legal adviser that the process put ministers in synod and Assembly appointments at a disadvantage from those under the oversight of district councils. He advised that, even though a case might not arise before the next Assembly, justice required that the provisions should be changed immediately so that all ministers were treated equally. The issue was carefully considered by Mission Council and the following resolution was passed:

Acting on behalf of the General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that the existing Paragraph B.9 of Part II of the Process for Ministerial Discipline (the Section O Process) be replaced in its entirety by the following Paragraph B.9:

B.9.1

To enable them properly to carry out their respective functions under Paragraphs 2(4)(xv) and 2(5)(xxiii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, every Synod and the General Assembly shall act through a group of three persons ("the Mandated Group") which shall have mandated authority to act on behalf of the Synod or the General Assembly as the case may be in every matter requiring consideration under those respective functions.

B.9.2

Any Mandated Group required to act on behalf of a Synod in a particular case shall be appointed by the Synod Moderator and the Synod Clerk (or their duly appointed deputies) from the Provincial Panel for that Synod.

B.9.3

Any Mandated Group required to act on behalf of the General Assembly in a particular case shall be appointed by the Deputy General Secretary (or, in his/her absence or if for any other reason he/she is unable to act, by another officer of General Assembly not otherwise involved in the Section O Process) from the members of the Provincial Panels other than that of the Synod out of which the case arises.

B.9.4

Paragraphs B.2, B.4, B.5, B.6, B.7 and B.8 shall apply to cases falling within Paragraph B.9, but with the following changes:

In Paragraph B.5 the word 'Standing' shall not apply and, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly, the words 'Deputy General Secretary' shall replace the words 'Provincial Moderator'.

In Paragraph B.6.1, in the case of a Mandated Group appointed in the name of General Assembly the words 'in consultation with the Provincial Moderator' shall not apply.

In Paragraph B.7.1 the words 'the Minister concerned' shall replace the words 'a Minister under the oversight of the District Council', and the second reference to 'the District Council' shall be replaced by a reference to 'the Synod' or 'General Assembly' as the case may be.

In Paragraph B.8 the first reference to 'the District Council' shall be replaced by a reference to the Synod or General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf) as the case may be and the appointment of the different Mandated Group shall be made by repeating the procedure set out in Paragraph B.9.2 or B.9.3 as the case may be.

4 Other Actions

4.1 Human Sexuality Report 1999. As the core and working groups had been appointed by Mission Council, the following resolution of thanks was passed and conveyed to those who had been involved in this demanding piece of work:

Mission Council discharges the core group and working groups on human sexuality, recording its deep gratitude for the task that has been completed on behalf of the whole church. It recognises that the work has been done with seriousness and integrity, and that it has involved considerable pain. The result has been widely appreciated - even by those who do not accept the conclusion.

4.2 Mission Council minute secretary. Following the resignation of Mrs Sally Brooks, Mrs Barbara Hedgecock was appointed to this post.

4.3 Task group on the grouping of churches. This group reported at two meetings. The final draft of the report is to be sent to district councils with an invitation to comment on it from their experience. There was strong feeling in Mission Council that the ecumenical discussion and the pending questions needed to be completed as soon as possible.

4.4 Information Technology task group. Mission Council has been concerned to see that developments in IT at Church House should be co-ordinated with those in synod offices and throughout the church. A task group has been established under the convenership of Mr Steve Wood (Yorkshire). Four members represent the different functions within Church House (Mr Hilary Gunn, Mrs Judith Johnson, Mr Chris Langham and Revd David Lawrence) and two other members to represent wider interests were about to be appointed at the time of writing. It is recognised that IT developments open up significant possibilities for the church.

4.5 Personal and conciliar leadership task group. The role and authority of synod moderators, and its relation to that of district councils and synods, has cropped up in Mission Council discussion at intervals over the last three years or so. It has become obvious that changes in the mission situation of the church, and developing ecumenical relationships, have modified the URC practice of personal and conciliar leadership - but the basis on which the changes have been made is not so clear. This new task group has been charged to look at the principles and then to advise whether any changes should be made.

4.6 Resource sharing task group.

The annual consultation between synod representatives heard encouraging stories of appreciation for the benefits that the annual sharing of income has produced. Those present were reminded that sharing involves both giving and receiving, and that all synods are engaged in both aspects of sharing. Those synods which give much more than they receive in financial terms, have been asked to consider how the gift they receive, however small, should be applied.

As a result of the comparisons that have been documented, there is concern that the variation in the standards of manse accommodation across the church is so marked. As with the other differences that the resource sharing process has identified, synods will be asking themselves whether they need to review their own arrangements. On a more positive note, the consultation was very pleased to see that the method of funding for Continuous Ministerial Education responds fully to its stated hope that ministers would not be disadvantaged as a result of working in a synod which had limited financial resources. A further area of study has been initiated in the comparison of funding for lay training.

The consultation took a bold step to seek a commitment from all synods to move towards giving based on 10% of investment income. It is hoped that this might be achieved in 2001, based on income in a year of jubilee. The consultation in October will discover whether this hope is to be realised.

4.7 Local church premises task group. This group was set up as a consequence of a discussion of the Growing Up report. Its task is to suggest ways in which the premises of local churches can be used and developed as a resource for mission. The group, under the convenership of Mr Martin Ballard, is expected to report to Mission Council in October.

4.8 Deputy to the Clerk of Assembly. It was recognised that arrangements needed to be made if the Clerk is unable to be present at either Mission Council or Assembly owing to illness or a sudden emergency. Mission Council resolved that in these circumstances the General Secretary should act as Clerk. This was because the rules of procedure already allow for the two offices to be held by one person. It was recognised that if the Clerk's absence was of any length, the General Secretary might wish to propose a named person to act as Clerk for a specific period.

4.9 Continuation of staff posts. During the year Mission Council considered whether or not the following staff posts should be continued for a further period, and in each case resolved that they should:

Editor of 'Reform' and Media Officer; Children's Advocate; Secretary for Church and Society; Secretary for International Relations; and Secretary for Ministries.

4.10 General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary job descriptions. Mission Council agreed a revised version of these job descriptions at the request of the special committee charged with nominating a General Secretary.

4.11 Nomination of Principal of Westminster College. Mission Council was asked to judge whether the Principal should be nominated by a group set up by the Assembly's Nominations Committee (which would then bring the name to Assembly), or by a group set up by the Board of Governors (who would present a name to the Board, who in turn would take it to Assembly). The text agreed by the Assembly in 1996 setting up the Board of Governors was not clear on this point. It was decided to follow the process beginning with the Nominations Committee.

4.12 Nominations in Scotland and Wales. The synod of Scotland preparation group sought clarification of Part 5 of the Congregational Union of Scotland/United Reformed Church union proposals, which provided for nominations to representative bodies in the two nations to be made by the respective national synods. The clear implication of this was that some appointments previously made by the Assembly would in future be made by a national synod. In order to establish a practice in time for the Unifying Assembly, Mission Council agreed that:

All appointments to the Assemblies and synods of sister churches, and to appropriate representative bodies, relating to England, Britain and internationally will continue to be made by the General Assembly.

From 1 April 2000, all such appointments relating to Scotland and Wales will be made by the relevant national synod and reported to the General Assembly.

It was recognised that this did not prevent the national synods from appointing people from other nations, nor did it necessarily end the practice of sending Assembly officers as representatives to some church assemblies and synods.

4.13 Multi-racial, multi-cultural development programme. (see Appendix 9) In 1996 Assembly agreed that a post to initiate and support this programme could be established for "an initial period of three years". The Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper was in due time appointed to the post and her term of service will end on 31 July 2000. Ms Lewis-Cooper has been supported by a management group representative of the Church and Society committee, Equal Opportunities committee and Overseas Exchange sub-committee, convened by the Revd

John Waller on behalf of Mission Council. The question of the future of the programme and a post to serve it has been discussed at the January and March meetings of Mission Council. In January the following resolution was passed:

Mission Council:

acknowledges the support given by the Council for World Mission and gives thanks for the ministry of the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper as multi-racial / multi-cultural development worker during these past three years;
 accepts the need for a continuing programme of work which seeks to ensure that the United Reformed Church becomes and remains an instrument for racial justice within its own life and the life of society.

It was also agreed to investigate the staffing and financial implications of this resolution. The management group had proposed the establishment of an Assembly Committee on Racial Justice, served by a full-time staff member. At the March meeting Mission Council agreed to the establishment of a staff post, but deferred taking steps to fill it until there had been discussion with ecumenical partners and until a way had been found to guarantee the funding required. In the meantime the programme will proceed under the direction of the management group with a budget of £30,000 p.a., which will enable the group to continue the racial justice advocates' network and to provide some staffing support. There was strong feeling in Mission Council that the ecumenical discussion and the funding questions needed to be completed as soon as possible.

4.14 Grants and Loans Group. During the year Mission Council has looked to change the system by which grants and loans are made to local churches for mission and community projects. The change was particularly driven by the decision to use the URC's entitlement from the CWM self-support fund for local projects. The Ministries Committee will now deal with grants for the support of industrial and higher education chaplaincies. Ecumenical grants are the responsibility of the Ecumenical Committee. This leaves all other grants and loans previously made by the Advisory Group on Grants and Loans (AGOGAL); the Church Buildings Fund committee; and all applications for self-support fund money as the responsibility of the Grants and Loans Group. Each synod has a representative on the Group, and this person will be responsible for processing applications from local churches. Information about the grants and loans available can be obtained from the Secretary, Miss Jean Thompson, 28 Mountcombe Close, Surbiton KT6 6LJ.

4.15 Consultation on resolution 34. At its March meeting Mission Council received the following report from the General Secretary:

"At last year's Assembly the following resolutions were agreed:

34 In order to test the mind of the church regarding homosexuality, General Assembly asks the councils of the church to consider the Human Sexuality Report 1999 and to come to a view on the following statement:

In the context of the affirmations commended to the church in Resolution 31, the United Reformed Church affirms and welcomes people of homosexual orientation within the life of the church and society, but does not believe that there is a sufficiently clear mind within the church at this time to affirm the acceptability of homosexual practice.

35 General Assembly:

- (i) invites local churches, district councils and synods to discuss the statement contained in Resolution 34;
- (ii) agrees that if any local church, district council or synod passes a resolution that *the statement be not accepted* by a majority of members present and voting at a duly convened meeting of such a body, notice of such a resolution must reach the General Secretary by 14th March 2000;
- (iii) agrees that if by 14th March 2000 such notice has been received from more than one third of local churches or more than one third of district councils or more than one third of synods, then the Assembly in its concern for the unity of the church shall not proceed to accept the statement;
- (iv) agrees that if by 14th March 2000 such notice has not been received, a motion to accept the statement shall be put to the Annual Meeting of the Assembly in 2000, such motion requiring a simple majority of the members present and voting to pass.

The Voting

Since the Assembly of 1999 some local churches have closed and two district councils have joined together. The resolution did not make clear on what date the total number of local churches, district councils and synods should be calculated. In the event this does not affect the outcome but, to avoid any dispute, the table below gives the figures both on the day of the Assembly decision and the date given for the conclusion of the process.

	7 July 1999	14 March 2000
The number of those NOT in favour of accepting the statement in Resolution 34, shown also as a percentage of the total number of churches, district councils and synods.		
Local churches	439 (25.4%)	436 (25.3%)
District Councils	30 (40.5%)	29 (39.7%)
Synods	6 (50%)	6(50%)

It is therefore clear that the Assembly will be in the situation envisaged in Resolution 35(iii). In its concern for the unity of the church, the Assembly will not proceed to accept that statement."

Resolutions 6-7

Mission Council considered the consequences of this outcome at length, and is bringing resolutions 14 and 15 to Assembly.

4.16 The world beyond. In all the variety of its concerns Mission Council has not forgotten the context in which it has met. Among other things the Council heard about and commended the Taiwan

Earthquake Appeal, supported representations made to the Indonesian authorities at a time of Christian-Muslim community violence, and encouraged the Pilgrim 2000 visit in solidarity with Palestinian Christians. That "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" is the key to all our mission. It is God's mission.

Resolution 6

Changes to the Structure

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Amend paragraph 2(5)(b) by inserting "and" before "the Deputy General Secretary" and deleting the words "and the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee".

Add a new paragraph 3(1)(h): For the purposes of this paragraph 3(1), only synods, district councils and churches in existence on the date set for responses to be made shall be counted in the calculations.

1.1 Paragraph 2(5)(b) deals with certain officers who are members of General Assembly. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee is made a member of Assembly by the following clause, which refers to all conveners of standing committees. The inclusion of this officer in 2(5)(b) is unnecessary duplication.

1.2 Paragraph 3(1) relates to the reference of certain decisions to synods, district councils and local churches. The present resolution 35 process has revealed a weakness in this section, in that it does not say on what date the total number of synods, district councils and churches is determined. This addition makes clear that only those councils in existence at the date set for responses will be counted.

Resolution 7

Changes to the Structure

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1999 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 paragraph 1(2)(a) by inserting the following sentence after the existing second sentence: "The expression "Provincial Synod" when used in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972 and 1981 shall in relation to property in Wales be read as referring to the national Synod of Wales."
- b) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(a) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church-related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that district, and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that district".
- c) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(3)(b) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "Such other ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers as shall from time to time be appointed by the synod as hereinafter provided".
- d) Amend the existing category at paragraph 2(4)(a) by deleting the words "deaconesses" and "registered local pastors". This paragraph would then read: "All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church-related community workers who are for the time being members of district councils within the province or nation.

- e) Delete the present category 2(4)(xiv).
- f) Renumber the existing categories 2(4)(xv) - 2(4)(xvii) as 2(4)(xiv) - 2(4)(xvi)

No objections have been raised to this decision (Resolution 28 of 1999), which brings the Structure in line with a number of other decisions already made.

Resolution 8

Belonging to the World Church - Membership of General Assembly

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1999 to amend paragraph 2(5)(e) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church so that it reads: "Up to twelve representatives from the partner churches of the United Reformed Church outside of Britain and Ireland or such other number as the Assembly shall from time to time determine;"

No objections have been raised to this decision (Resolution 48 of 1999), which amends the Structure so that representatives of partner churches can take the places at Assembly which used to be allocated to missionaries on furlough.

Resolution 9

The Section O process - ministerial discipline Changes to Part I

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 1999 to make the following changes to the Section O process (See the procedure for constitutional amendment set out in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.):

Paragraphs 3.2 and 3.9

Delete Provincial

Paragraph 3.13

Insert a new Paragraph as follows:-

References to district councils shall be understood to include area councils in Scotland, such area councils being in every respect identical with district councils and wherever the words "district council" or "district" appear they shall, as regards Scotland, be read as meaning "area council" or "area".

Paragraph 4.2

Delete the final sentence.

Paragraph 5.1

Delete Provincial

Paragraph 7.1.1

Insert a new paragraph as follows:

No person shall be a member of the Commission Panel or of any Appeals Commission and at the same time also be a member of any Synod Panel or Mandated Group as defined in the Rules of Procedure.

Paragraph 7.1.2

**The existing Paragraph 7.1 will become 7.1.2.
Also delete Provincial.**

Paragraph 10.2

Delete the existing Paragraph 10.2 and add the following Paragraphs 10.2 and 10.3.

10.2 If the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission considers that there has been some conduct, statement, act or omission on the part of the Minister which, although not sufficiently serious to justify deletion is nevertheless of sufficient concern to justify lesser disciplinary action against the Minister it may, whilst allowing the name of the Minister to remain on the Roll, take either or both of the following steps, the first being part of its decision and the second being by way of recommendation:-

10.2.1 It may issue a written warning to the Minister that any continuance or repetition of any of the disciplinary matters complained of might be considered a cause for deletion by a future Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission.

10.2.2 It may append recommendations to its decision in accordance with Paragraph 16.1.3.

10.3 If the decision of the Appeals Commission is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll, it will in recording its decision also consider Paragraph 16.1.4.

Paragraphs 11.1, 14.2, 14.3 and 14.6

Delete Paragraph 10.2 and substitute Paragraph 10.2.1.

Paragraph 16.1

Delete and substitute the following:

16.1 In recording its decision the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be shall comply with the following:

16.1.1 It shall state whether its decision is unanimous or by a majority.

16.1.2 It shall append a written statement of its reasons for reaching its decision, but shall not be obliged (unless it wishes to do so) to comment in detail on all or any of the matters of evidence laid before it.

16.1.3 In the event that the decision is not to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll it may in its written statement append such recommendations as it considers will be helpful to moderators of synod, district councils, local churches and others within the Church in relation to the future ministry of the Minister.

16.1.4 If the decision is to delete the name of the Minister from the Roll of Ministers it is particularly requested to include appropriate guidance to assist moderators of synod, district councils, local churches and others within the Church concerning any restrictions which might be placed upon any church-related activities involving the Minister after his/her deletion.

16.1.5 In addition to its power to make recommendations or to offer guidance under Paragraph 16.1.3 or Paragraph 16.1.4 respectively, the Appeals Commission may if it sees fit endorse, overrule, vary or modify in any way any recommendation made or guidance offered by the Assembly Commission in the case in question.

Paragraph 21

In the first and second sentences, delete Provincial Moderator and substitute moderator of the synod.

In the last sentence delete Province and province and substitute synod each time.

No objections have been raised to this decision (Resolution 27 of 1999), which makes minor changes to the Section O Process, in connection with the union of the Congregational Union of Scotland and as a result of early experience of the process.

Resolution 10**The Section O process - ministerial discipline
Changes to Part II**

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part II of the Section O Process (the Rules of Procedure) :-

- A.2.7 First line - replace "Provincial" with "Synod" and replace "Province" with "Synod"
- A.2.9 Add an additional definition as follows :-
 "The Structure" shall mean the Structure of the United Reformed Church"
- A.2.10 Add an additional definition as follows :-
 "The District Council" shall mean that District Council which in relation to any minister exercises oversight of that minister in accordance with its function under Paragraph 2(3)(i) of the Structure"
- A.3 Third line - delete "Provincial".
 Fifth line - delete "of the United Reformed Church".
- A.4 Add an additional sentence as follows :-
 "The Assembly Commission should also consider whether to make any recommendations under Paragraph 16.1.3 of Part I or to offer any guidance under Paragraph 16.1.4 of Part I "
- A.8 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
 "In any case where a person authorised or required to take some action regarding (i) the appointment of persons to any Mandated Group under Paragraphs B.5 or B.9 or (ii) the calling in of a Mandated Group under Paragraphs B.6 or B.9 or (iii) some other administrative or procedural matter under the Section O Process is unable for any reason to do so, then, unless the Section O Process already makes specific provision for such a situation, that person's duly appointed deputy shall take such action in his/her place. This Paragraph does not permit any member of an Assembly Commission, an Appeals Commission or a Mandated Group to appoint his/her own deputy."
- B Replace the heading of Section B with "Appointment and role of Mandated Groups of District Councils, Synods and General Assembly".
- B.2 First line - delete "Provincial"
 Second line - replace "Provincial" with "Synod"
 Third line - replace "Province" with "Synod"
 Fourth line - replace "Province" with "Synod"
- B.3 First line - replace "Provincial" with "Synod"
- B.4 First line - replace "Provincial" with "Synod"
- B.5.1 The existing Paragraph B.5 shall become B.5.1. On the second line replace "Provincial Moderator" with "Moderator of the Synod" and on the third line replace "Provincial" with "Synod".
- B.5.2 Add a new Paragraph as follows :-
 "Persons appointed to any Mandated Group or Synod Panel set up under this Section B are subject to the restrictions contained in Paragraphs 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 of Part I".

B.6 Add a new Paragraph B.6 as follows :-

"If at any time the Moderator of the Synod or (if for any reason s/he should be unavailable or unable to act) the President of the District Council in consultation with such officers of the District Council as s/he considers appropriate believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister s/he may forthwith in the name and on the authority of the District Council call in its Standing Mandated Group"

B.7 This is the original Paragraph B.6, now renumbered B.7. Replace the opening words "The functions of the Mandated Group are twofold with the following :-

"The functions of the Mandated Group called in by the person duly authorised for that purpose under Paragraph B.6 in any particular case are twofold :-"

Continue with the original B.6.1 and B.6.2, now renumbered, B.7.1 and B.7.2.

B.7.1 Replace the opening words "To carry out the initial enquiry in consultation with the Provincial Moderator" with the following :-

"To carry out its own initial enquiry in consultation (where practical and appropriate) with the Moderator of the Synod" "

B.7.2 Add the following words " and at the Hearing of any Appeal under Section G of these Rules"

B.8 Delete the original Paragraph B.8.

B.8.1 &

B.8.2 These are the former Paragraphs B.7.1 and B.7.2, and will now be renumbered B.8.1 and B.8.2.

B.8.3 Add a new Paragraph as follows :-

"The Mandated Group shall forthwith notify the Moderator of the Synod and the Secretary of the District Council in writing of the issue of the Referral Notice and the Notice of Suspension".

B.9.2 Replace the existing Paragraph with the following :-

"In connection with the any such steps under Paragraph B.9.1 as are required to be taken by a Synod, if at any time the Moderator of the Synod in consultation with such officers of the Synod as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister in membership of that Synod, s/he may forthwith in the name of the Synod appoint a Mandated Group for the particular case from the Synod Panel for that Synod and the Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Standing Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6"

B.9.3 Replace the existing Paragraph with the following :-

"In connection with any steps under B.9.1 as are required to be taken by General Assembly (or Mission Council on its behalf), if at any time the Deputy General Secretary, in consultation with such other officers of the General Assembly as s/he considers appropriate, believes that there is or may be a disciplinary issue in respect of any minister s/he may forthwith in the name of General Assembly appoint a Mandated Group for the particular case from a Synod Panel other than that of the Synod out of which the case arises and the Mandated Group so appointed shall be deemed to be called in and vested with authority in like manner to the Standing Mandated Group of a District Council called in under Paragraph B.6"

B.9.4 In the first sentence delete the reference to Paragraph B.6. In the first change referred to replace "Provincial Moderator" with "Moderator of the Synod". In the second change replace "Paragraph B.6.1" with "Paragraph B.7.1" and "Provincial Moderator" with "Moderator of the Synod". In the third change replace "Paragraph B.7.1" with "Paragraph B.8.1". Remove the fourth change altogether.

B.10 Replace "Paragraph B.7.1" with "Paragraph B.8.1"

- B.11 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
 “Once a Referral Notice has been issued by a Mandated Group in any case, no further Referral Notice shall in any circumstances be issued in respect of the subject matter of that referral”.
- C.1.3 Replace “preliminary response” with “comments”.
- C.1.5 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
 “Inform the General Secretary of the receipt of the Referral Notice”
- D.4 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
 “In cases where Paragraph E.7.1 applies, the Mandated Group shall forthwith suspend its own investigation during the period specified in that Paragraph”.
- E.3 Replace the existing Paragraph E.3 up to the words “which shall :-” with the following :-
- E.3 E.3.1 “Unless the case is subject to compulsory adjournment under Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission consult with the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission and, where possible, with the parties as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon.
- E.3.2 Having complied with Paragraph E.3.1, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall forthwith serve on the Minister and the District Council a notice which shall :-
 Continue with the sub-paragraphs which are now renumbered E.3.2.1, E.3.2.2., E.3.2.3, E.3.2.4, E.3.2.5 and E.3.2.6.
- E.3.2.4 Elide the whole of this Paragraph into one clause as follows :-
 “Invite the parties to state the names of persons whom they propose to invite to attend the Hearing and, briefly, the purpose of their attendance and the approximate length of time which each of the parties will require at the Hearing”
- E.4.1 Replace the references to Paragraphs E.3.3 and E.3.4 with references to Paragraphs E.3.2.3 and E.3.2.4.
- E.4.3 Replace the references to Paragraphs E.3.5 and E.3.6 with references to Paragraphs E.3.2.5 and E.3.2.6 and at the end of the existing text continue with the words “ and copies of each party’s response shall thereupon be sent by the Secretary of the Assembly Commission to the other party”.
- E.7.4 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
 “If the case falls within this Paragraph E.7, the Secretary of the Assembly Commission shall, as soon as practicable after the appointment of the Assembly Commission, notify the parties of the compulsory adjournment of the case”.
- E.8 Replace the existing Paragraph E.8 in its entirety with the following :-
 “Any of the following may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I that is to say :-
- E.8.1 Any obstruction or unreasonable delay on the part of either of the parties in complying with the procedural steps prior to the Hearing and/or
- E.8.2 The failure by the Minister to attend at the Hearing without satisfactory explanation and/or
- E.8.3 Any obstruction caused by either of the parties to the Assembly Commission in the conduct of the Hearing itself”
- E.9 Replace the words “of the consequences of such admission” with the following words :-
 “ that the consequences of such admission might be a decision to delete or to issue a written warning ”

- E.12.2 Add the following additional sentence :-
“S/He shall not be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides on the case”.
- E.14.2 Insert the “2” in the Paragraph numbering.
- E.14.3 Add the following words :-
“ , nor shall s/he be present when the Assembly Commission deliberates and decides upon the case”
- E.16.1.1 Add a new Paragraph number E.16.1.1 as follows :-
“In all cases the burden of proving the case against the Minister shall fall upon the Council”.
The existing Paragraph E.16.1 then becomes Paragraph E.16.1.2.
- F.2.1 On line 2 after the words “and the General Secretary” add the words “and the Moderator of the Synod”
- F.2.2 Replace “omission” with “Commission”
- G.1.4 Add an additional Paragraph as follows :-
“Except for those Rules which by their content are inappropriate for the Appeals Procedure, the Rules set out in Section E shall also apply to Section G (with the necessary changes).
- G.8.2.2 Replace the existing Paragraph with the following :-
“The General Secretary shall consult with the Convener and the other members of the Appeals Commission and, where possible, with the parties as to a suitable venue, date and time for the Hearing and, having so consulted, shall decide thereupon and shall forthwith send a notice to the parties informing them of the arrangements for the Hearing”.
- G.8.2.3 Delete this Paragraph as it has been moved forward to become Paragraph G.1.4. The succeeding sub-paragraphs will be re-numbered G.8.2.3 and G.8.2.4
- G.9.2 On line 1 after the word “Council” remove “and” and insert a comma.
On line 2 after the words “Assembly Commission” add the words “and the Moderator of the Synod”
- H.2.2.1 Replace the existing Paragraph with the following :-
“By delivering the document personally to any person nominated by the Mandated Group to accept service or, in the absence of any such nomination, to the spokesperson for the Mandated Group”.
- H.2.2.2 Add the following words :-
“ or, in the absence of any such nomination, to the spokesperson for the Mandated Group.
- H.2.2.3 Delete this Paragraph.
- H.2.2.4 This now becomes H.2.2.3.
- H.5 Replace the final sentence with the following :-
“Each Secretary must pass all papers on to his/her successor, and the importance of retaining all written records is emphasised”.

In proposing the Part I changes to last year's Assembly, the General Secretary stated that some amendments to the Part II Rules of Procedure would be presented this year. These are set out in the above Resolution. They arise from the cases which

have passed through the Process or from the various seminars and discussions which have been held on Section O. They are all procedural in nature, which is why a detailed commentary has not been given.

Resolution 11**Role of Mandated Group in Section O Process**

General Assembly confirms that once a Mandated Group has been appointed from the Synod Panel(s) in connection with a particular case, it has full authority to act on behalf of the appointing council (be it district council, synod or the General Assembly) throughout the Section O Process to the exclusion of such council.

1.1 It has come to light that some have not been sure about the nature of the relationship between the district council and its Mandated Group. Specifically, there has been uncertainty about whether, after a Mandated Group has been appointed and begun its work of investigation and preparation to present a case at the hearing, a district council has the right to intervene and act contrary to the authority of that Mandated Group.

1.2 In fact, the Section O Process was specifically designed to separate the district council's pastoral role from the disciplinary action, and also to ensure confidentiality. The conduct of the case by the

Mandated Group is regarded as one of the key factors in achieving these important objectives. We are advised that the Section O Process as we have it does make clear the intention that the Mandated Group should act throughout the Process to the exclusion of the district council and with fully mandated authority. However, it is felt wise to make certain changes to the wording so that such confusion will not arise in the future. Work has begun on this and a resolution to effect these changes will be brought to the next Assembly. In the meantime, for the avoidance of doubt, the Assembly is asked to pass this resolution in order to clarify the situation.

Resolution 12**Assembly Committee Conveners**

General Assembly resolves that normally anyone appointed to the office of convener of an Assembly committee or sub-committee shall be appointed to serve, ex-officio, for a preliminary year as convener-elect.

1.1 The term of office of committee members including the convener, is four years. This proposal would mean that the person appointed as convener would serve a preliminary year in addition.

1.2 It has been realised that, at present, a convener may be appointed to a committee with no previous experience of its working. This has sometimes resulted in a period of uncertainty in the

committee's life. The preliminary year of service will enable a convener to get to know the members, to become familiar with the agenda and to observe the committee's style of working. During the year the convener-elect may play a full part in the committee's work.

If agreed, this proposal will take effect as soon as possible.

General Assembly accepts the budget for the year 2001 set out in Appendix 1 to the Book of Reports.

1.1 The budget for 2001 shows a deficit of £653,000 and continues the policy of deficit budgeting, adopted last year, which is intended to take account of the effect of unanticipated income and cost savings which arise in most years. By planning to spend more than the income predicted in the budget we hope to achieve a closer matching of actual income and expenditure and avoid the accumulation of unspent income which has occurred in the past.

1.2 The most significant item in the budget is the cost of stipendiary ministry. The budget assumption is that this cost will rise by a net 2.5%, representing the difference between the stipend increase and the reduction in the number of ministers. The 1999 General Assembly agreed that the National Average Earnings index ("NAE") should be used as the guide for determining future stipend increases. However, at the time the budget was being prepared, the NAE was showing an exceptionally high level of increase and, for budget purposes, a lower rate has been assumed. Mission Council has recognised that careful judgement will be required when the 2001 stipend level is considered in October.

1.3 In preparing the 2001 budget no account was taken of the Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland as firm figures were not available. However, the overall financial impact is expected to be small. It is hoped that a more accurate assessment of this will be available by the time of General Assembly.

1.4 The significance of unanticipated items, upon which the policy of deficit budgeting is based, is well illustrated by the results for 1999 where, on our unrestricted funds, the actual result was £453,000 better than budget and investment values increased by £430,000. It is too early to predict whether 2000 will show a similar improvement. However, there is one situation which gives cause for concern. The

2000 budget set a target for Ministry and Mission contributions 3% higher than the budgeted amount for 1999 but so far the promises fall short of that target by 1% or £175,000.

1.5 There is no hiding the disappointment that, after three years during which the churches were presented with no increase in the overall Ministry and Mission contribution, the offers from Synods should fall 1% short of the 3% target. A consultation of District and Synod Treasurers in February, as well as Mission Council in March, were asked, in the light of this, to consider the way forward for 2001. Each agreed that the increase for 2001 must take account of the expected 2000 shortfall (equivalent to less than £2 per URC member, or 4 pence per week). In 1999 Assembly heard that the projected increase for 2001 would be approximately 3% but this now becomes 4% and is represented by the figure for Ministry and Mission contribution which appears in the budget statement.

1.6 Clearly, this is a major challenge to the churches and their members. However, only by regaining lost ground can we base our church's finances on firm foundations. Mission Council members were asked to be active advocates for such a response and members of General Assembly are invited to be the same. The shortfall will not be compensated by allowing a further reduction in the number of ministers, nor a curtailment of programmes affirmed by General Assembly. A diligent oversight of expenditure will, however, be maintained.

1.7 The question is often asked whether the URC has the resources, both human and financial, to meet our demanding programme. Mission Council is confident that it has and calls for the release of those resources so that the acclamation of 'Growing Up' and the Church's self-evident desire to be a missionary church can be fulfilled.

Resolution 14**Human sexuality : continuing discussion**

General Assembly, recognising that the statement contained within Resolution 34 of 1999 has received a measure of support in the councils of the church, but not sufficient to allow it to proceed:

- a) accepts that there is a lack of agreement relating to issues of human sexuality, and that any further resolution attempting to declare the mind of the church on this subject would be unlikely to find sufficient support at this time;
- b) affirms that the process the church uses to assess candidates and to call ministers is the means by which the church seeks to discern the call of God;
and
- c) acknowledges that discussion on these matters will continue within as well as beyond the church and encourages the United Reformed Church to base its consideration on the Human Sexuality Report 1999, wherever possible within an ecumenical context.

The present situation

1 The statement contained within Resolution 34 has not gained a sufficient level of support in the councils of the church. Therefore, by its own decision in 1999, Assembly cannot now proceed to accept the statement.

2 Mission Council is of the view that to search for an alternative form of words at this stage is extremely unlikely to be fruitful, and would almost certainly prolong the argument and hurt that has marked parts of our common life over the past three years or so. In coming to that conclusion Mission Council is aware that, not only have two different approaches failed to unite the church, but various attempts to modify those approaches by amendment in Assembly have also failed.

3 Mission Council, by virtue of its representative nature, is also very aware that the difference is not simply between two clearly-defined points of view. There is a wide spectrum of opinion on many aspects of sexuality within the United Reformed Church. Those who have voted for, or against, the various resolutions have sometimes done so for very different reasons. Reason has been a characteristic of this whole discussion. Yet in each person, as in the other, emotion, experience and culture also play a part. None of this encourages the use of more time in trying out another resolution on human sexuality at the moment.

A way forward

4 To leave the matter there may sound like a counsel of despair. It also leaves unanswered questions around homosexual candidates for the ministry. Mission Council believes that in the resolution and this supporting paper it has set out a framework within which members of the church may

continue in worship and fellowship together, whilst still holding and discussing varied and often opposing views. It also allows any candidate for the ministry to be assessed according to a tried and tested process.

5 The framework will be an uncomfortable one for a number of people. In an early draft it was submitted to six former Assembly Moderators. Whilst they generally supported it as a way forward in a difficult situation, for some it was barely tolerable, yet for totally different reasons. The reaction of these senior people will no doubt be reflected in the Assembly. Yet Mission Council has searched for an inclusive framework because of the strong commitment to unity contained in resolution 17 of 1997. A path that led in any other direction was not to be contemplated.

6 Reference to resolution 17 of 1997 can serve as a reminder that Assembly has already found agreement on a number of resolutions within the human sexuality debate. These also are part of the framework:

General Assembly commends to the church the affirmations set out in section 7 of the Human Sexuality Report 1999.

General Assembly sets before the church the challenges set out in section 8.1 of the Human Sexuality Report 1999.

General Assembly, taking into consideration the variety of views held within the United Reformed Church on the matter of human sexuality, urges all members, congregations and councils to continue in love together, respecting this diversity of views, supporting each other through the pain and tension of our divisions, seeking the mind of Christ and working together to fulfil the purposes of God in the world.

General Assembly:

commends to the church the report of the Working Group on the Nature of Biblical Authority for the life of the Church, and encourages local churches to deepen their studies of the Scriptures in an atmosphere of open listening in order for the study of Scripture to come more alive throughout the church;

commends to the church the report of the Working Group on Ordination and Human Sexuality as an aid to study in the continuing discussions;

offers to the church the report of the Working Group on Wider Issues of Human Sexuality to assist in further reflection.

There are only two Assembly resolutions which have not received adequate support throughout the church.

7 Of course this cannot be simply a matter of cool calculation, of assessing majorities and minorities. All have to ask, where is God in all this? What is the Spirit saying to the church? There is no doubt that God is in the situation. What we have been debating is the nature of our creation in the image of God; the interpretation of Scripture in order that we might hear the Word of God; the ability of councils of the church to discern God's will for God's people in the contemporary situation; and the nature of a holy life, particularly in the case of those called to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. In all the discussions and debates of the past three or four years, prayer for guidance has been real and urgent.

8 So the question will become; is the church in this situation because people have ignored, or not heard, the guidance that has been given? Or is the current situation the place of God's leading? It is easy for anyone to say that those they profoundly disagree with have ignored, or not listened to, the guidance which God has given. In this situation, if for a moment it is possible to be both dispassionate and compassionate, no-one can justly accuse the other of ignoring God. To do so would be to overlook the hours of study, prayer, discussion and tears that have been given to this matter. There must have been serious openness to God in that.

9 Many have been attracted by the position that the four working groups reached in 1999: to a recognition that there are significantly different points of view held among us, views held with integrity and with Christian commitment: to a discovery that in charity it is possible to sit with those we disagree with and talk about matters that affect us all - but in vastly different ways. If that was possible for the working groups, why not for the whole church? Why not wait until the way forward is clearer? Isn't that the finest model of Christian fellowship and community?

Some New Testament considerations

10 This is no new model. The debate in the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) over whether or not Gentiles could be accepted into the church without first becoming Jews was not one of quick and easy agreement. It was also followed by a sharp disagreement between Barnabas and Paul. In Galatians 2 (1-14) we have a sense of the strength of the differences within the church and particularly between Paul and Peter, and the robust way in which they were expressed. Yet these main protagonists remained within the church because "we know that no-one is ever justified by doing what the law requires, but only through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16a). Using a different example, Paul in Romans 14:19 - 15:7 indicates how consideration of one another may help people of different convictions to remain in fellowship. This, however, seems to conflict with Paul's advice to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 5: 9-13). It seems likely that the Romans passage is an indication of the way a Christian community should conduct itself. It is only when things have got as far out of control as they evidently were in the Corinthian church that more radical measures are needed.

Unity and diversity

11 Unity with diversity is not a new experience for the United Reformed Church. It describes the basis on which the church was formed in 1972, 1981 and 2000. Over that time diversity has been revealed on such issues as the use of nuclear weapons, the ethics of the national lottery, the covenant for unity, and the alternative statement of faith. It is not always comfortable to realise how different one is from those in the same fellowship, but the church was never intended to be gathering of the like-minded. It is by God's grace that we are called and God's grace embraces many with whom we do not agree or even understand

12 Diversity is not of itself a bad thing. It is not something always to be resisted. Often it adds richness to human life. Yet it can bring serious tension to a community. In our day the situations in Kosovo and Northern Ireland are a witness to that. Therefore a challenge for the Christian community will always be to show an example of how diversity can be held within unity. For us this is a matter of good relationships: for some in the world the right balance between unity and diversity is a matter of life and death.

13 It seems inevitable that in human society there must be a point at which diversity is so great that it destroys unity. As a separate exercise, it may be helpful if one or more of the synods did a study of legitimate diversity in the United Reformed Church.

14 Some have seen unity as in a sense an alternative to truth. If we know something to be true, why compromise it for the sake of unity? Unfortunately it is not as simple as that. Unity is itself part of revealed truth (John 17: 20-23, Ephesians 4: 1-6). The wrestling between different understandings needs to go on, without deadlines, in the belief that "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word".

Candidating for ministry

15 If we end the current stage of the debate in this way some questions remain unanswered. What is to happen when people in homosexual relationships offer themselves as candidates for the ministry? Are they to be accepted, rejected, or told to wait until a conclusion is reached?

16 The Assembly is asked to consider the possibility that it has been approaching the answer to this vital question in the wrong way. That the mistake has been to take a particular theological and ethical question and to try to relate it to ministerial candidacy in a way that is different from the way every other theological and ethical question is approached. To see whether this may be the case, part of the rationale for the consideration of ministerial candidates needs to be rehearsed.

17 It is clearly part of our tradition, and its uniting strands, that those called to the ministry of Word and Sacraments should live in a way that is consistent with the Gospel. At ordination a question is asked about a candidate's willingness to live a holy life. It is a serious matter that we look for godly ministers. (Titus 1: 7-9)

18 However, the way in which until now the church has assessed the suitability of a candidate is to ask those who know him/her best. That is the point of asking the candidate's Church Meeting and minister and the representatives of the District Council. No-one tells them what suitability means. Their judgement will be informed by worship, bible study, fellowship and varied Christian experience. Their judgement will also be informed by theological and ethical discussion in the church at large. In recent years the Assembly has guided that discussion by accepting Criteria for Assessment in 1996 and a statement on holy living in 1997. It has now added the 1999 human sexuality reports.

19 Reflection makes it clear that over the years a Church Meeting's judgement is likely to change. For example, early in this century many would not have supported a candidate unless he was a teetotaler. Until rather more recently a candidate who had been divorced would not be commended. Christian understanding changes and evolves all the time. The Spirit is alive and active. However it would be wrong

to infer that every judgement we make will change, or that all change will be in a liberal direction. Neither of those inferences can stand the test of Christian history.

20 What has been said about a candidate's suitability for training applies also to a pastorate's call to a minister. It is for the particular pastorate, with the concurrence of the district council, to call a minister. The rest of the church is not given the right to approve or disapprove of that decision. Yet the decision is taken recognising that everything done by a limb or organ affects the whole body - and that discernment of a holy life is an aspect of every call.

21 It is very important not to depart from the principle that ministers (and not only ministers) need to live a holy life. Of course those exercising public ministry do have an entitlement to a private life. The point is not that anything goes in private life. Holiness is a Christian calling and it should apply in the whole of life.

22 The evidence of holiness is not seen in terms of absolute principles or rules of behaviour, but in the wholeness of a person's life as a disciple of Christ. The fact that synods make the final decision on candidates may mean that the assessment of individuals is not done with absolute consistency. In theory it is possible that a person could be accepted or rejected in one place who would not have been so in another. There is no evidence of this happening, nor is there any reason for thinking it may do so in the future - so long as trust is placed in the assessors and they in turn trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

23 This emphasis on the present process is not seen as a way of avoiding a difficult issue. It is to affirm the strength of the tradition. The alternative would be to identify a number of ethical tests which would be applied to all ministerial candidates. To do this we would have to draw up a set of ethical criteria to be applied to every conceivable situation in which moral judgement has to be exercised. Even if it was desirable, it would be difficult to find a form of words relating to each of them which would obtain significant agreement throughout the councils of the church. However, Assembly is advised that such a course is not even desirable.

The continuing discussion

24 An open discussion without any agreed position will be hard for some in the church to accept. That needs to be recognised by those who would prefer no debate at all. Those who see things so very differently also need to keep in mind that the whole Christian Church is divided on the matter of homosexuality at the moment. In official statements Orthodox and Catholics are divided from Protestants, east from west, north from south. Then there is

Resolution 15

division within each tradition. Ecumenical discussion may widen and deepen our understanding of the complexities and so, by God's grace, enable us to find together where truth lies.

25 Such an apparently leisurely approach to a burning issue will inevitably be under pressure from society. The church finds itself in a climate of intense debate on this ethical and justice issue. The church's silence on the issue can easily be interpreted as the Church's irrelevance. It may be that at the moment all the church can contribute is a statement of our divided views and the pain that causes us.

26 The last word is with the apostle John. "If God thus loved us, my dear friends, we also must love one another..... Love must not be a matter of theory or talk; it must be true love which shows itself in action. This is how we shall know that we belong to the realm of truth, and reassure ourselves in his sight where conscience condemns us; for God is greater than our conscience and knows all." (1 John 4.11 and 3:18-19)

Resolution 15

A sabbatical on resolutions

General Assembly asks that for a period of seven years, during which reflection, prayer and sharing continue, no resolutions attempting to define the policy of the church on homosexuality should be proposed in any of the councils of the church.

1.1 It is possible for any of the councils of the church to bring a resolution on any subject at any time, subject only to the limitations in standing orders. Mission Council believes that while the discussion on human sexuality should continue, there ought to be a voluntary agreement throughout the church not to

bring resolutions on the subject for a sabbatical period. It hopes that this will relieve some of the pressure that has been put on individuals, groups and churches in recent times. It also hopes that in a calmer atmosphere people will be better able to listen to one another and to the Holy Spirit.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Committees and Task Groups



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

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*

I Assembly 2002

1.1 In view of the union with the Congregational Union of Scotland, it seems right to hold a meeting of General Assembly in Scotland at an early date. The committee, therefore, brings a resolution that this be at the University of St Andrews from Thursday, 4th July to Monday, 8th July 2002. In view of the time and distance involved, it is proposed that this Assembly begins on the Thursday evening, with a free session built into the programme on the second or third full day. (*Resolution 16*)

2 Future patterns of Assembly

2.1 The committee is grateful to those synods, district councils, Assembly committees and others who responded to our initial requests for views on possible changes to the way Assembly conducts its business. A variety of interesting comments were received but although last year the hope was expressed of bringing a full report to this Assembly, more time is needed for consideration of these comments and for further consultation.

2.2 We do, however, bring one recommendation that can be introduced immediately and which comes in response to suggestions from many parts of the church. This concerns the way committees report to Assembly.

2.3 Under the present system many committees feel themselves to be restricted by pressures of time. There is only the autumn in which to follow up on the previous Assembly and to initiate new work before they have to prepare their report to the following Assembly. Because of this, and because there is a widely held view that Assembly attempts to do too much, there is strong support for the idea that most committees should report only in alternate years.

2.4 The advantages of a two-year reporting programme are that it would:

- a) allow more time to consider issues, develop ideas and work out programmes;
- b) remove the expectation that committees will produce 'new business' every year;
- c) reduce the pressure on other councils and local churches to respond in what is often, at present, a very tight time-span;
- d) allow more time for debating issues when presenting at Assembly;
- e) provide opportunity for greater consultation with and involvement in business by synods and districts.

2.5 For legal and administrative reasons a few committees would continue to report annually. These are: Assembly Arrangements, Finance, Ministries (necessary administrative matters), Mission Council and Nominations. The Moderators will also continue to report annually. (*Resolutions 17 and 18*)

3 Synod Reports

3.1 After consultation with synod clerks, the General Secretary has arranged a programme whereby normally only a third of the synods report to Assembly each year.

4 Other issues

4.1 Assembly works best when it is not only receiving reports and making decisions, but is a forum engaging in debate with incisive questioning. Members of Assembly appreciate it when a wide variety of opinions are expressed. The committee particularly encourages participation by those who are present for the first time, as well as those who have been before and speak regularly. However, concern has been expressed that a few representatives speak too frequently without always contributing significant arguments that take the debate forward. It is hoped that no-one who has thoughtful contributions to offer is deterred or prevented from speaking.

Resolution 16**General Assembly 2002**

General Assembly agrees that General Assembly in 2002 will meet at the University of St Andrews from 4th – 8th July.

Resolution 17**Future Patterns of General Assembly**

General Assembly agrees that from 2001 committees will report in alternate years, except where for legal or administrative reasons annual reports are required, namely Assembly Arrangements, Finance, Ministries, Mission Council and Nominations.

Resolution 18**Rules of Procedure**

General Assembly agrees to make the following change to the Rules of Procedure for the conduct of the United Reformed Church.
In the last line of paragraph 2(3) delete 'annually' and add at the end: 'as and when the Assembly shall direct'.

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: Ms Gabrielle Cox **Secretary:** Revd Peter Brain
Dr Sue Brisley, Revd Kenneth Cox, Mr George Morton, Revd Raymond Singh, Mrs Marva Ward,
Mrs Helen Warmington, Ms Catriona Waterson
nominated by Youth and Childrens Work Committee: Revd Kathryn Price
attending by invitation: Mrs Sandra Ackroyd (Churches Commission for Racial Justice),
Revd Alan Paterson (Scottish Congregational Church)

Preamble

1.1 It has been an encouragement to those who believe that the "Church and Society agenda" is an essential element in contemporary Christian witness to share in discussions around the country during this year on the importance of social transformation and care for the environment as two of the five marks of mission featured in "Growing Up". This committee sees its work as part of God's mission and not as "AOB". Partners in churches from other lands have little hesitation in requiring both the prayer meeting and the protest march in their calls to discipleship. The spirituality of their politics inspires and sustains them, even in times of trial. Such believers (and there are of course many in our own ranks) will not hesitate to denounce the powers that be in the name of the Power that is. Nor will they draw back from giving praise where praise is due - though Christians, like all believers, do prefer to be in opposition! As with the other marks of mission, the challenge is first understanding, then implementation.

1.2 The link between spirituality and politics is being made more overtly by politicians in recent years, paradoxically considering the decline in active church membership all round. Maybe everyone prefers the moral high ground, if only to look down on the others! But what the churches say does seem to matter - and we do try to say what needs to be said. Admittedly there is some electoral calculation in the approaches being made. But the cynic must not have the last word since, as Proverbs puts it, where there is no vision it is the people who perish.

1.3 Our committee report and continuing agenda is set in the vision-free context of twilight Britain and not at the dawn of a bright new century. We are not pessimists but we cannot ignore the dark side of our own society, not to speak of the wider world. For example: the widening divide between rich

and poor with as many as a quarter of our children still living below the poverty line; as many as 50 children dying from abuse each year; a vicious xenophobia not far below the suburban surface; thousands of jobs dependent on making small arms and major weapons systems for far-away use; rising rates of suicides among teenagers; so many telephones and so little human communication; and more. Yet it must be said that most are more sinned against than sinning, having lost their way rather than chosen a known dead end, hope-less rather than faith-less in what is for so many a distinctly love-less world.

1.4 Thus, when Church and Society urges and enables local congregations to engage more urgently with society and public issues as part of God's mission this is more than whistling in the dark; it is at least lighting a few candles. When we all extend the invitation of a welcoming God, when we share in the struggle for justice, when we try to care for the earth, when we speak of a deep truth embodied in Christ Jesus, when we resolve to love, then we know it will cost but we know it is true. If the prayer meeting and the protest march belong together then both are painful. And then, when Church and Society makes so bold as to offer public comment on the mundane political agenda to those who claim to be listening, we shall discover that our authority lies not only in the actual vision itself but also in the fact that this vision is being shared and worked out across the church as we all participate in God's transforming mission.

Personalia:

Peter Brain's vision and energy have been central to the development of the diverse and important work of Church and Society over the past ten years. The Committee thanks him for his hard work and commitment as he moves on to become Moderator of the North Western Synod.

2 Following up 1999 Assembly

2.1 Children Are Unbeatable

(Resolution 44, 1999)

2.1.1 The United Reformed Church, as a member of the Children Are Unbeatable Alliance, has been involved in the responses to the Government's Consultation Document of January 19, 2000, called "*Protecting Children, Supporting Parents*". All are agreed with that Document's affirmations that "*a failure to provide guidance and set boundaries is in itself a form of neglect that can be very damaging to a child*" and that "*the harmful and degrading treatment of children can never be justified*". The issue is, again to quote: "*where do we draw the line*".

2.1.2 The Government has decided not to abolish the legal defence of "reasonable chastisement" since to do so might appear to criminalise parents for smacking. The Alliance would much prefer all physical assaults to be declared wrong; this would be a step towards a culture which did not depend on "might is right" but set out the ideal of non-violent resolution of all conflicts, even in the home though many might fall short of the ideal. The Government is now obliged to redefine "reasonable chastisement", inevitably leaving the judges as arbiters of how hard, how long, how painful, etc. Our submission on this matter refers to the 1999 Assembly resolution and notes the unsatisfactory nature of the proposals in the Consultation Document.

2.2 Racial Justice (Resolution 46, 1999)

2.2.1 Most of the work done in this field during the year, including following up the resolution which was passed in the light of the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry (the Macpherson report), was done by the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper and her network of advocates or the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ). Among other things, CCRJ have made submissions on the Government's Race Relations (Amendment) Bill.

2.2.2 Assembly staff have attended meetings called by the Metropolitan Police and responded to an enquiry from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Other similar contacts have continued across Britain.

2.2.3 The URC member of CCRJ, Mrs Sandra Ackroyd, chairs the committee responsible for production of material for Racial Justice Sunday. This was formally accepted some years ago by the ecumenical instruments as the second Sunday in September but is still not generally observed.

2.2.4 The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, to which we made a submission 18 months ago, should have reported by the time of Assembly.

2.2.5 CCRJ continues to express on behalf of all the denominations our shared dismay at the continuing phenomenon of racially-motivated attacks and killings in many parts of the country. We call on all local churches to demonstrate an openness and welcome to minority ethnic adherents and members as together we struggle to build a properly diverse community in our land.

2.2.6 The Committee unanimously agreed to support the proposed programme of work within and beyond the United Reformed Church following the three years spent by Marjorie Lewis-Cooper among us.

2.3 The Middle East (Resolution 45, 1999)

2.3.1 In February a large party, led by the Moderator and Deputy General Secretary, visited Israel / Palestine under the auspices of the Pilgrim 2000 programme. This was written up in Reform and reported upon at several Synods and District meetings; a report is to be found in Appendix 2. The sense of fellowship with local Christians was especially valuable as was an inter-faith dialogue in Jerusalem. The encounter with a range of Palestinian opinion has allowed participants to correct some common misunderstandings and, more particularly, to appreciate at first hand the efforts being made by our *Commitment for Life* partner PARC.

2.3.2 During the year the 'peace process' has moved in fits and starts with little sign of meeting the (postponed) deadlines for agreements on Jerusalem, on the return of Palestinian exiles, on water supply and on security. Both communities are divided on most of these issues, with both sets of political leaders under enormous pressure and many people (including the terrorist organisations) still hostile to any settlement. At the time of writing the focus is on northern Israel and the vulnerable frontiers with Syria and Lebanon. But for most Palestinians the issue of Jerusalem is crucial. It is easier for Birmingham Christians than for Bethlehem ones to get to church in Jerusalem and the same is true for Muslims. URC representatives affirmed on several occasions during the year the thrust of the Assembly resolution that "*any settlement ... should honour the holiness and the wholeness of the city as a shared city in terms of sovereignty and citizenship*".

2.3.3 During the year we have shared in discussion on sanctions against Iraq and supported the ecumenical deputation to the Foreign Office on this matter in March. A fresh UN Security Council resolution, largely drafted by the UK, was adopted but has not proved to be the hoped-for breakthrough. The dilemma remains of assisting the desperate people of Iraq while denying military advantage to the regime.

2.3.4 We received copies of the consultant's reports on the Ilusu Dam project from the Government's Export Credit Guarantee Department and were dismayed to discover that almost no

preparation has been made for relocating tens of thousands of people, mainly Kurds, and the flooding of their villages - even less care than the English showed when flooding Welsh villages in the 19th century! There are political implications, too, since neighbouring Arab countries tend to regard the massive project as a "conspiracy" between Turkey and Israel to tighten their regional control. We therefore wrote again to protest that UK public money should not underwrite this particular project, even with a British firm as the lead contractor.

2.4 **Genetics** (Resolution 4, 1999)

2.4.1 Following the deferment of the Synod resolution on Genetically Modified Organisms at last year's Assembly, the Environmental Issues Group of Church and Society held an extra meeting to determine what we might be doing directly. In the short term we agreed to promote use of the Methodist pack "*Making our genes fit*" (available from URC Bookshop) which contains Bible studies and discussion starters plus a useful glossary, all in an attractive format. Revd Dr Andrew Fox, one of the joint editors of the Methodist pack joined us for the meeting as did URC minister Revd Dr Neil Messer.

2.4.2 However, at the same time, the ecumenical Environment Issues Network of CTBI (EIN) decided to hold a consultation in May at which the parameters of agreement and disagreement among the churches and church-linked agencies can be clarified. We shall be urging that EIN meeting to put in hand the production of a document which we would be pleased to publicise, outlining the different issues and positions being adopted and pointing to useful resources (study packs, web sites, etc.). Our group wishes to raise the awareness of church people at a time when there is so much public lobbying and campaigning from interested parties.

3 **Associated groups**

3.1 **HIV / AIDS**

3.1.1 December brought the end of the period of part-time service by the Revd Justine Wyatt, after her full-time post came to an end two years ago. We are glad that Justine is to continue working in this field in Oxford. The HIV / AIDS Working Group has agreed some new terms of reference. It is chaired by the Revd John Humphreys and now has five other members from different backgrounds.

3.1.2 There is still a need to remind the churches of the prevalence of HIV in our own country and across the world. Last year saw the largest increase in HIV infections since the mid-1980s, 2,941 cases, with more heterosexual people infected than gay men and 20% of new infections among the under-25s. The number of people who are HIV positive in the UK is thought to be around 28,000. Since 1996 the death

rate has fallen. Treatment here is extremely costly, quite apart from the vast expenditure on research to stay "one step ahead" of the ever-changing virus. Unmeasured outbreaks of AIDS have decimated whole populations in several developing countries, cutting average life expectation and distorting other development indicators.

3.1.3 The working group will continue to prepare material around World AIDS Day (December 1), will keep a list of contact numbers for those needing pastoral advice, and will ensure that the church as a whole, through Reform or on public occasions, does not forget this issue nor the very many people involved.

3.2 **Peace and peacemaking**

3.2.1 Following an announcement in Reform and a preliminary consultation earlier in the year, around 20 folk attended (with a further 20 apologies) what turned into the inaugural meeting of a United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship last November.

3.2.2 The steering group, chosen on that occasion, met in January and finalised a statement of intent: *The United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship is a group of United Reformed Church members and adherents with different approaches to peacemaking who are united in seeking to discern and obey the urgent call of God to pursue peace with justice in the world.*

3.2.3 A notice inviting people to become subscribing members of the Peace Fellowship on the basis of this statement has already generated 60 acceptances; others who are interested should contact Church and Society in the first instance. The new Fellowship will affiliate to the Network of Christian Peace Organisations but will not, as the statement makes clear, be a pacifist body.

3.3 **CTBI Forum**

3.3.1 After a gap of over two years, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland have established a four-nation Forum for Church and Society. We are represented on this by the convener and secretary. It will meet twice a year, once outside England. The ideal is to share not only finished work and agreed statements but ideas and drafts and maybe dreams. This implies a willingness to collaborate which the episcopally ordered members of CTBI have not always demonstrated, for reasons of ecclesiology rather than coldness.

3.3.2 CTBI has also appointed a new Secretary for Church and Society, the Revd John Kennedy, who had been working for more than 10 years in this field for the Methodist Church. There now appears to be every expectation that the churches together will be an effective presence at a time when politicians of several persuasions are apparently listening to us.

4 **Altogether a full year**

4.1 The main focus of our pro-active work remains in the field of **money and economics**.

4.1.1 The sales of the 1999 video pack "*For a Rainy Day*" are steady but slow, though the responses are very positive. The committee was encouraged to continue through a further phase with the following **aims**:

- To enable church people to make connections between economic affairs, including their own experiences, and the gospel and insights of faith.
- To encourage those who have been roused by the Jubilee 2000 Coalition campaign to understand that mass opinion still counts for something and to sustain some of that momentum for justice and liberation.
- To support the call in the mission strategy paper "*Growing Up*" for local churches to reflect on and engage with their immediate context, in this case the social and economic conditions of their local community.
- To encourage some local churches and Districts to go further and become involved in community economic development or in other schemes.

4.1.2 Our **primary concern** is to involve local churches in something which would not only raise their own level of awareness but also contribute to some outcomes which they could own. Hence it was agreed that we should begin with a programme of visits to Job Centres by church members in Districts across the country. A later phase will include a survey of current 'alternative' economic activity, e.g. fair trading, ethical banking, etc.

4.1.3 The outcomes of this programme are necessarily imprecise at the outset. But it should allow evidence-based comment on aspects of current economic policy and thinking, and thus help us all to continue the discussions foreshadowed in "*For a Rainy Day*":

- a) on what is "good work",
- b) on how wide are regional differences,
- c) on the wisdom and reliability of a "welfare to work" strategy for tackling poverty,
- d) on the various moral and Christian principles that underpin economic views, etc.

4.1.4 Church and Society will buy in appropriate skills for the pre-survey preparation, the management of the actual visits and survey work, the compilation and interpretation of the resulting database, and the eventual writing up for a report or organising an event. A steering group is being formed to monitor and manage this work.

4.2 During the year there were opportunities to make **several representations and submissions to Government** in response to consultation documents of various kinds on a range of issues. The Secretary and others have participated in several face-to-face meetings with ministers. In addition to those mentioned earlier, written submissions were made on reform of the House of Lords, on welfare reform in general and the proposals around pensions in particular, on the strategy for international debt relief, on the report "Supporting Families", on the Holocaust Memorial Day and on the Freedom of Information proposals. Most of these submissions may be found on the Church and Society pages of the URC web site.

4.3 Serious money and time has again been contributed to the **Jubilee 2000 Coalition** which is in its final year of life, as the name implies.

4.3.1 Contributions from local churches plus grants from Assembly funds and Commitment for Life enabled £11k to go directly from the URC, with a further £50k as a grant from CWM following a joint request by the URC and the Congregational Federation.

4.3.2 Direct action sponsored by the Coalition at HM Treasury and at the Japanese Embassy attracted plenty of URC participants. Postcards have also been flooding into the embassies of G8 countries in advance of the next and climactic G8 meeting in Japan due soon after the General Assembly meeting. Moves last year by the British Government were welcomed, especially the declaration that bi-lateral debt would be written off for those countries receiving multi-lateral remission and the special remission for some particularly hard-hit countries such as Mozambique.

4.3.3 As the basic case for remission has been slowly accepted in recent years by governments and international agencies, attention has been focused on the underlying purpose of the whole campaign, the **reduction of world poverty** of which debt remission is but the start. The need for careful monitoring of funds released to developing countries through debt remission to avoid corruption or misuse was always part of the Jubilee 2000 platform. It has assumed extra importance as such remission begins to happen. The British Government is in the forefront of the international push for a reduction by 50% of those living in desperate poverty across the world by 2015, even as the overall numbers of such people continues to rise rapidly. Clare Short has committed the Department for International Development to this grand strategy. If the notion of "**jubilee**" as liberation means anything, it must sustain all of our commitment - our faith and our hope and our love - beyond an arbitrary chronological threshold. In that spirit, *Commitment for Life* will continue to focus on this issue.

5 In one world

5.1 **Other international concerns** have been addressed jointly by the Secretary and the Revd Phillip Woods, Secretary for International Relations, who both continue to represent the church on the CTBI International Affairs Liaison Group (IALG), attending alternately. Generally speaking they split the international affairs remit between them, with Phillip leading on the primarily geographical concerns and Peter on the issue-based ones.

5.2 Whether geographical or issue-based the concerns do not seem to change much from year to year. Sadly **wars and conflicts** go on. Civil wars cease in one place (e.g. Bougainville) only to erupt in another (e.g. Indonesia) or in several others. We watch from the sidelines, often knowing through contacts with our partner churches some of the people caught up in the human tragedy which is unfolding before us. Some tensions or conflicts are not so remote either; the rivalry between India and Pakistan, which has boiled over on a number of occasions in the past year, is felt very acutely in many of Britain's Indo-Asian communities.

5.3 The riots in Seattle in November brought to prominence the World Trade Organisation and a whole range of issues connected to a greater or lesser extent with **globalisation**. Beyond Jubilee 2000 there are some very significant issues of economics and the environment to consider and to reflect upon ethically – see 3.3 above. Doing so from a position of privilege does not make this easy as many of us are the beneficiaries of today's economic systems and dependent on them for our future well-being. The continuing campaigning of bodies such as World Development Movement (directly linked with us through Commitment for Life) allows us to understand more and act.

5.4 Concern about **human rights** has never been far from the news. China, along with Myanmar and Afghanistan, to name a few places, continue to make the headlines with actions against their own peoples. Many people within the church quietly and determinedly protest these abuses and show their support for the victims as they participate in the campaigns of Amnesty International and other similar groups.

5.5 The debate about the future shape and character of the **European Union** goes on with the launch in February of another Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC), with an agenda largely determined by what was not achieved in the last IGC and the pressing nature of EU enlargement. With the prospect of a European Union of over 20 countries the mechanisms and institutions originally designed for a Community of six are badly in need of overhaul. Alongside this there is for Britain the debate about the Euro. Having published in 1993 *"The United Reformed Church - a European Church"*, we are still asking how far are we all willing to throw our lot in with the European Union? In the face of globalisation is there any alternative? We hope to hold a fringe meeting at Assembly on this topic.

5.6 For most of these issues and questions there is no specifically 'Christian' solution other than to follow Micah's injunction to *"do justice, love compassion and to walk humbly with our God"*. Our responses are driven by specific contexts and often constrained by the apparent impossibility of all the options. It is only in humility that we venture to say or do anything - and then we discover that we are not spectators or commentators but that **all** are players, visibly and invisibly inter-dependent one with another on God's one earth.

Resolution 19

End of life

General Assembly:

- a) invites Church and Society to gather a working group, including members suggested by other Assembly committees, to examine the range of issues listed in the Book of Reports and other related matters associated with the end of life, to work on some of them and to report in 2002;
- b) in particular reaffirms its belief in and support for the National Health Service as a necessary expression of our common life.

1.1 **Several factors**, some of which are listed below, have led Church and Society to bring this resolution to seek encouragement and endorsement for further serious work on a range of apparently disparate issues which are nevertheless connected in personal experience, in political and economic analysis and in the perceptions of faith. The current difficulties for the NHS reflect a deeper and more general crisis in society, especially in the public sector, as technology continues to advance more rapidly than most ethicists are able to interpret and more demanding than taxpayers and others are willing to pay. Last summer a consultation was convened by Church and Society at Windermere on "*Prioritising in health care*"; the full report (available from Church and Society) shows how a number of end of life concerns are linked and deserve more attention.

1.2 During that consultation it was agreed that health professionals of several kinds, whose morale is low, deserve our clear support as they wrestle with often intractable problems deriving in the main from rising demand and limited resources.

1.3 It became clear at the consultation that the current treatment of people of all ages (not only the very old) who may be diagnosed as terminally ill or be unable to respond to medication is, for several reasons, in need of careful scrutiny and evaluation. This becomes more urgent as the traditionally implicit trust of patients in doctors is undermined by recent events in Bristol and Hyde.

1.4 Another conclusion from the consultation was that the Church should find ways to challenge the prevalent assumption that death is "a mistake" on someone's part (medical staff, close family, etc.) with all the tensions, guilt and pressure that assumption generates. 55% of all deaths in Britain occur in hospital, with a further 15% in other institutions. There is a taboo in this area, even among some believers, which is unworthy and damaging.

1.5 The phenomenon of HIV treatments also raises profound questions. Some people who had been "prepared to die" are now reprieved, but for how long and at what cost. A parallel concern is the justice issue of the availability of HIV treatments in poorer countries.

1.6 The experience of the multi-racial, multi-cultural development worker's research has revealed considerable ignorance and consequent uncertainty on the part of ministers and others in respect of minority ethnic attitudes to terminal illness, funeral customs and pastoral expectations.

1.7 Ministers often have to face the dilemma of whether to involve a non-married partner in the funeral of a church member and how to counsel the family on this issue.

1.8 There is a growing tendency to support and seek to make legally enforceable the documents known as "living wills" or "advance directives". A resolution at FURY Assembly in 1996 signalled support for this in principle. People who wish to determine what treatment they will receive when no longer capable of clear thought and speech may draft such statements but they have no legal status.

1.9 Linked with several of these points is growing concern in several quarters at what may or may not be "euthanasia", what that term actually signifies, and how the Biblical commandment not to kill is to be understood.

1.10 In 1999, designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Older Persons, churches and church-related bodies, including Church and Society, were involved with the Debate of the Age, sponsored by Age Concern. This was a wide-spread public consultation (including a visit to our 1998 Assembly by the Debate display bus) which produced a number of statements and reports which are to be presented to Government in the spring of this year under the heading "Agenda of the Age". That document, in draft at the time of writing, echoes several of the points being raised above and challenges the churches on a number of issues.

2.1 This resolution is intended to alert the church to a rising tide of concern, to invite spoken and written comments, to identify the key issues and to enable some further work to be done. This process might lead, for example, to a review of church practice in caring for the sick and dying and in the conduct of funerals; it should offer a chance to contribute to the ongoing public debate around health care; and it is bound to deepen our awareness and understanding of the pain and plight of too many of our fellow-citizens.

2.2 Since these linked concerns cut across the demarcations of church work (social policy, training, pastoral care, liturgical practice, etc.), we have begun to consult with other Assembly committees and have received support for this approach. Some ecumenical bodies will also need to be consulted.

2.3 Church and Society plans to commission research on some of these matters and will be doing so over the next year under the guidance of the proposed working group. Hence we would not expect to be reporting to the Church until 2002.

General Assembly:

- a) welcomes the growth in the number of local churches participating in Commitment for Life and the consequent increase in funds raised and associated activity, including production of worship material, a pack for children and campaigning around debt and fair trade;
- b) recognises the personal effort in promoting the programme put in by advocates in each synod and the effective work of the Co-ordinator and support staff;
- c) notes the fresh emphasis on the four countries with primary partners in each country;
- d) agrees that the disbursement of Commitment for Life income shall remain at 75% going overseas via Christian Aid, 10% for World Development Movement, 15% for Grants and Advocacy, and that Church and Society shall continue to devote staff time to the programme;
- e) therefore urges non-participating churches, large or small, to join in the Commitment for Life programme.

1.1 When the *Commitment for Life* programme first grew out of the former 1% appeal and was launched in 1992, the Church and Society committee decided to make a **fuller report** to Assembly with accompanying resolution every four years. The re-launch in 1996 led to a substantial increase in the number of participating churches to **over 500** at present (30% of churches with 54% of recorded members), with that involvement signifying much more in the life of those churches. This is a rise from under 300 in 1996, with 10% more churches during 1999 and a corresponding rise in income during 1999 of about 10%, to almost £380,000.

1.2 In 1999 the *Commitment for Life* sub-committee invited Ms Sara Burns to conduct a small-scale review of the programme in anticipation of coming to this year's Assembly. Her review did not reveal the need for any fundamental changes in the way the programme is presented and run. This report and recommendations, and some changes already in hand, owe much to her review.

1.3 During the year we have been in touch with many local churches whose first instinct and practice is to support **Christian Aid**. The Director, Dr Daleep Mukarji, is proving a good friend and will be addressing the Assembly to spell out that *Commitment for Life* is **the recommended way** for local URCs to support Christian Aid. Christian Aid see this as a unique model of partnership with a denomination which has done much to increase awareness and campaigning as well as fund-raising. We look to Christian Aid, in particular the Churches Team, for several features of the programme as the principal ecumenical agency. In short, both Christian Aid and Church and Society will continue to urge local churches to join in *Commitment for Life*.

1.4 This year is the occasion for a **complete re-design of the materials** supplied to churches, including posters and picture sets, leaflets and prayer cards, videos and specialist items. There will be a display of these at Assembly, with samples already in the hands of local churches. In 1999, in co-operation with the Children's Advocate and Christian Aid Youth Team, "4 Life" a pack for 8 – 12 year olds was produced and has been much in demand.

1.5 The primary **campaigning** issues for *Commitment for Life* during the year have again been within the Jubilee 2000 Coalition on third world debt, and for fair trade including the activities of the World Trade Organisation.

1.5.1 **Jubilee 2000**, as the name implies, will cease to function towards the end of the year 2000 (see the main report 3.3) but *Commitment for Life* will keep up the campaigning on the progress of debt remission and the activities of governments and global financial institutions, especially as they affect our partner countries.

1.5.2 On **fair trade** we have continued to support the Fairtrade Foundation and the special fortnight in March. We were supportive of the non-violent protests over the proposals brought to the Seattle meeting of the **World Trade Organisation**. Our campaigning partner, World Development Movement, has been lobbying effectively for genuine global fairness and against agreements which would represent the triumph of multi-national corporations over vulnerable national governments and their people.

2.1 The work of the national Co-ordinator of *Commitment for Life*, Anne Martin, has kept our nation-wide **team of 40 advocates** in good heart and well supplied with regular mailings. Anne meets them in Synod groups for briefing and training. Advocates are encouraged – and subsidised - to attend the ecumenical consultation in May and the annual get-together in London in January. It is this work of proactive advocacy and of the Co-ordinator which has caused *Commitment for Life* to spread and to take root.

2.2 Each participating church receives regular **mailings** during the year, with news of their partner and a campaign newsletter. The advocates visit both participating and interested churches – *do ask for one to visit you!*

3.1 The *Commitment for Life* materials are all based around an **overseas link**. Partnership of this kind is meant to help a church identify with people living in a very different context without slipping into a patronising attitude towards them. This year we are ending the link with Olodum in Brazil, mainly because the focus and financing of their work has changed so much since the partnership began.

3.2 It has been decided to refer to the “**country focus**” and the “**primary partner**” rather than simply to our “partner organisation”, not least because in certain cases our generous *Commitment for Life* funding enables Christian Aid to finance the work of other similar organisations adjacent to our own primary partners. This is especially the case with our newest country focus, Jamaica, where there are several organisations which will benefit from our support. The other countries remain Zimbabwe, Palestine and Bangladesh, with our existing primary partners Silveira House, PARC (Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee) and CCDB (the Christian Commission on Development, Bangladesh).

3.3 These links have been strengthened during the past four years year by **personal visits** including those to Bangladesh (by a FURY group in 1998), to Palestine (on several occasions) and to Zimbabwe (by URC representatives attending the WCC in Harare in 1998). More recently there have been visits from two CCDB staff and visits to PARC, including Pilgrim 2000. There will be a visit from two PARC staff later this year and one for some advocates to Zimbabwe in early 2001. It is significant and important that *Commitment for Life* visits are included in the exchange visits under the strategic ‘Belonging to the World Church’ programme; deliberately, three of the four countries now linked with *Commitment for Life* are also home to Council for World Mission member churches.

4.1 In 1999 income for *Commitment for Life* came to £379,030, more than **11% up** on £340k in 1998. An outline of how this money was disbursed was sent to participating churches in February. We kept the WDM grant at 10% of the income and were able to find £5k for Jubilee 2000, as well as £10.5k for One World Week.

4.2 We benefited from the first contributions made under **Millennium Gift Aid** (MGA) - over £17,000 in 1999. This will probably peak in January 2001. Please note that it is still possible to classify contributions of £100 or more made during the year up to December 31 as MGA, allowing us to reclaim the tax; all treasurers of participating churches have been sent information on this..

4.3 **Good news:** from April 2000 tax-efficient giving is being transformed to cover all gifts made to *Commitment for Life* each year, not only in a lump sum. This replaces covenants and Gift Aid, with special incentives for Give As You Earn. Church treasurers are being briefed on this.

4.4 As the income rises, advocacy and administration costs do not rise proportionately, thus releasing more for grants to campaigning and educational bodies. Core administration of the programme by Church and Society office staff is **not charged** against *Commitment for Life*. Wendy Cooper does most of this, in addition to her other duties.

5.1 The final paragraph of the resolution points to the **ongoing opportunity** to take advantage of this programme. *Commitment for Life* is now part of the mainstream life and mission of the United Reformed Church; it is slowly becoming the ‘norm’ to participate rather than the exception.

5.2 The benefits are two-way. Certainly the work overseas benefits greatly, as Christian Aid reports testify. With this support the World Development Movement’s campaigning is strengthened and a number of other worthy organisations are also helped. But it must be emphasised how much good this programme can do **for us** within the participating churches and as the United Reformed Church as a whole. *Commitment for Life* resonates with two of the ‘five marks’ of mission, with a broad-based appeal across age-groups, theological positions and urban or rural settings. Because it is a modular programme with plenty of options built in, smaller churches should not feel overwhelmed nor larger churches bored. Thus, though we do not set ourselves rigid targets, all those involved in *Commitment for Life* are looking to see more churches signing up each year until we seek a fresh mandate at Assembly in 2004.

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: Revd Graham Cook **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

VISION

A CHURCH THAT SAYS WELCOME WILL RECEIVE THE RESPONSE 'WE'LL COME!'

1 Recent research among the Books of Reports to General Assembly since the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 has shown that the role of this committee, both under the original title of Communications and Supplies and now as the Communications and Editorial Committee has been, and is, seen as a service to other committees, in preparing and publishing their material, usually at the end of a piece of committee work, and often as an after thought. However since the word heard most frequently in meetings at all levels, and in all the councils of the Church is 'Communication', the committee would contend that the question "*How is this work to be communicated*" should be added to the remit of every committee, and asked at the beginning of any new project. The committee also request that the expertise to be found both within the committee membership and the staff should be used to the full, consulting with the relevant people at every stage. The work of the Communication and Editorial Committee should be considered as a major tool for mission.

2 **Practical Steps.** The resolution to General Assembly in 1999 that a *communications strategy* should be developed for implementation at every level of the church, has led to a programme being developed and begun. The first stage has been to make material available on the United Reformed Church website and the agreed logo is already available for local church use. More items will be added in the next few months and during 2000 the committee will be encouraging local churches to look at their buildings to see what sort of impact is being made on the local community. A leaflet will be available at General Assembly and will also be circulated to all local congregations. It is planned to add designs for notice boards including colour schemes and advice on typography to the website. Professional expertise is being sought to ensure that the designs are suitable for churches of all sizes and in all localities. Go back to your PC's and prepare for mission!

TEACHING AND TRAINING

3 PUBLICATIONS

3.1 The Publications Board has continued to meet regularly to oversee all publications. The Revd Graham Cook has become the Convener of the Board together with his covenership of the main committee. New titles for 2000 include *Beginning Prayer* – a book of prayers suitable for use in the vestry and at Elders and Church Meetings and edited by John Slow, a selection of material from 10 years of the Prayer Handbook arranged liturgically and chosen by Graham Spicer, a new and expanded edition of *Under God's Good Hand* by David Cornick and two further titles in the series of P T Forsyth reprints. The Training Team has produced a pack of material for those working with children and young people and this will be launched at General Assembly. Much of the material published by the United Reformed Church deserves a wider audience than merely within the denomination and a trade list has been prepared and circulated to over 600 Christian Bookshops. The response has been encouraging and as a result the Publications Board have decided to adopt a publishing imprint which will help to widen the appeal of United Reformed Church Publications especially to booksellers. The name suggested is **Granary Press**. Statutory Publications (Manual, Year Book, etc) will continue to be published by the United Reformed Church.

From information gained from the Church Returns Forms it now seems that over 950 local churches have bought copies of *Rejoice & Sing* and of these 856 consider it to be the main hymn book in use. The total number of copies sold now exceeds 167,000. Annual publications continue to sell well. Although the print run for the annual prayer handbook has been pruned to a realistic level in the past three years, for the first time all copies of the current book, *Justice Joy and Jubilee*, have been sold.

3.2 The United Reformed Church Bookshop at Church House continues to be appreciated, with outlets at the Windermere Centre, the National Youth Resource Centre, the Community for Reconciliation and the Arthur Rank Centre. Sales of books and publications continue to expand, particularly through mail order and at special events. The discounts offered to ministers, students and lay preachers are appreciated and there is great satisfaction among the staff when some of the more obscure titles requested are tracked down. The distribution service continues to deal with orders speedily, but unfortunately problems with the postal service continue to be a regular occurrence. Alternative services are being explored. United Reformed Church publications continue to reach a high standard of production. The members of staff involved are constantly improving their expertise. The policy using eco-friendly materials is being maintained and widened.

4 REFORM

4.1 Despite the apparent reduction in numbers in membership, Reform's circulation has remained remarkably resilient, largely as a result of the success of the special offer which provides any new member of the United Reformed Church with free copies for three months. This has provided a refreshing antidote to the inevitable regular losses at the upper end of the age-scale.

4.2 The high degree of penetration which Reform has achieved over the years (it is read by a higher proportion of its target audience than any other denominational publication in Britain) has led to an increasing recognition of its value to the United Reformed Church as a cost-effective means of communication with members. The Information Service, which was both expensive to produce and widely recognised as failing to reach the majority of its intended audience, is now included in Reform on a three-monthly basis and is reaching larger numbers of people for a lower cost. Discussions have also taken place with FURY on the possibility of reaching younger members of the Church by including material either in or alongside Reform.

4.3 For better or worse Reform has also been one of the major arenas for the human sexuality debate, generating a significant increase in the number of letters. The Editor took a conscious decision to allow the correspondence to continue while the debate continued to occupy the centre stage within the other Councils of the United Reformed Church. In the absence of further major initiatives in this area to provoke debate it is anticipated that the correspondence can be de-emphasised and some of the space it formerly occupied devoted to other uses.

5 ARTICLES of reformed faith and religion

5.1 In 1997 we asked Graham Cook to re-establish a magazine with theological content to take the place of the defunct *'Reformed Quarterly'*. We asked that it should be able to publish articles of greater length than *'REFORM'*. We also asked that it should appeal to ministers and elders and members of our church with a concern for an exploration of what it means to be Reformed Christians now.

Since then there have been nine issues of the magazine *'ARTICLES of reformed faith and religion'*. It has explored such varied issues as holiness, the nature of biblical authority, the place of God on the campus, Mark's Gospel, Taizé and Iona worship, ecumenism and mission, ecumenical worship, the nature of call, and learning to receive missionaries.

It has maintained a steady number of subscribers of between 400-500. We believe that it deserves more.

MISSION

6 PRESS AND PR

6.1 The majority of the work done under this heading is inevitably private, and consists of supporting and advising those who find their churches in situations which might attract unfavourable press comment. A number of press releases are also distributed over the year which are generally taken up by the religious media but seldom, as we have noted frequently in previous years, by the secular media.

7 Christian Resources Exhibition

7.1 The committee heard with some disappointment that the request for extra money to enable the denomination to continue to be present at the **Christian Resources Exhibitions** at Esher and Manchester had been turned down, but understand that such events may not be seen as essential nor the best use of available resources. The stands at the exhibitions in the last three years have been much appreciated, especially by members of local churches, and it is with gratitude that the committee have accepted the offer of Thames North and Southern Synods to arrange and finance the stand at Esher for this year and approaches have been made to other Synods with regard to the Manchester Exhibition. Questions of the best way to promote the United Reformed Church, both to local congregations, the wider church and to the public at large need to be urgently addressed.

8 WEBSITE (www.urc.org.uk)

8.1 The United Reformed Church's Website has been one of the undoubted success stories of the last few years. It carries an ever-increasing quantity of information and generates a large number of positive comments. The completion of the computer network at Church House should ensure a greater flow of information from individual offices within the building.

8.2 In all of this a word of caution needs to be heard. A commercial Website of comparable size and complexity in the commercial sphere would normally draw upon the resources of a number of staff with specialist skills, all drawing significant salaries. The United Reformed Church site has one-half of the time of a graphic designer working in the Reform/Press Office. For that reason a wide variety of otherwise desirable developments which are regularly suggested by users and others simply beyond the resources available at present and are likely to remain so unless circumstances alter significantly.

8.3 The issue of accessibility, especially in relation to those with more limited vision was raised at Assembly in 1999. Advice was obtained from the RNIB which suggested that the current approach to the site was broadly acceptable. A larger font size is employed than in almost all commercial sites and complex graphics for the purpose of navigation are avoided. A similar question was raised with regard to users with older equipment who found the downloading of graphic items unacceptably slow. This is a difficult issue, since to constrain the design of the site completely to suit the capabilities of older equipment would be to reduce its attractiveness significantly for the majority of users. We have attempted to adopt a middle way by keeping a careful eye on the size of graphics and, in general, avoiding the use of otherwise desirable technical innovations which might not be compatible with older equipment and software. It is, however, important to recognise that there will undoubtedly be occasions when users with particular combinations of hardware and software have difficulties with the site. In the commercial world the solution to such a problem would be to write alternative versions of the site suited to the needs of different users but that strategy is beyond the resources available to us.

9 CHRISTIAN COPYRIGHT LICENSING

9.1 Almost 1200 local churches now take part in the United Reformed Church / Christian Copyright Licensing scheme for the reproduction of words for service sheets etc. A number of churches have also taken out a licence to cover the reproduction of music. This year sees the commencement of Christian Copyright Licensing taking responsibility for the issuing of **PERFORMING RIGHTS** licences for churches. All local churches are requested to look carefully at the use made of their premises for activities other than services of divine worship and to see if such a licence is required. To help churches understand the situation pertaining to performing rights, a leaflet is being circulated to all local churches.

THE WIDER CHURCH

10 ECUMENICAL WORK

10.1 **Churches Advertising Network.** In accordance with a decision of General Assembly in 1998 the Committee makes an annual donation on behalf of the United Reformed Church to the Network which has so far been at the level of £5000. The Network's campaigns frequently attract controversy and generate both passionate support and opposition and the Committee's support for their work is not on the basis of detailed approval of each campaign. Rather, the support is given because the Network has proved extraordinarily effective in raising, once or twice a year, major religious issues in the media. The space occupied in both print and electronic media far exceeds what could reasonably be expected from such a relatively small expenditure and the Committee believes it to be a very cost-effective piece of 'mission to the culture'.

10.2 The secretary continues to serve as Convener of the **CHURCH PUBLISHERS NETWORK** and as a member of the **MEDIA AWARENESS PROJECT**.

10.3 The Revd Peter Moth represents the Church at the **CHURCHES ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR LOCAL BROADCASTING** and the committee share the concerns of the Council over the future of religious broadcasting within the BBC.

Resolution 21**Religious Broadcasting and the BBC**

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church thanks the BBC for much splendid religious broadcasting over many years and calls upon the Corporation:

- a) to broadcast more religious radio and television programmes at peak listening and viewing times;
- b) to restore the hours of religious television to the average of the 1980's;
- c) to ensure that in a time of budget reductions high production values are maintained;
- d) to produce programmes for young people which treat religion seriously; and to give religious programmes a prominent place in existing and future digital radio and television channels.

1 The United Reformed Church is a member of the Churches Advisory Council on Local Broadcasting (CACLB) which has been following closely the debate about the current state of BBC national religious broadcasting.

2 Questions asked in Parliament and in other denominational assemblies indicate a fear that religious programmes are being marginalised, with widespread worries about scheduling, quality of content, staff cutbacks and budget restrictions.

3 CACLB believes that accessible and good quality religious programmes nourish the human spirit and offer insights into who, why and what people believe and how that affects our society and the world. In contributing to an open and honest discussion about BBC religious broadcasting it is hoped that it will continue to flourish as an essential part of the Corporation's core public service responsibilities.

Doctrine, Prayer and Worship

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

- to lead the Church in its continual study of theology, enabling it to reflect upon and express the doctrines of the United Reformed Church;
- to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on the doctrinal matters;
- to advise the Assembly, its officers and committees on questions of doctrine;
- to listen to the concerns of local churches, district councils and provincial synods about public worship and personal devotion;
- to develop programmes and material which will encourage the growth in faith and spiritual experience of those involved in the life of the Church;
- 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;
- to respond to requests for national materials and consultations;
- 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;
- 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;
- to oversee the network for Silence and Retreats.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Dr Colin Thompson

Secretary: Revd Terry Hinks **Staff Secretary:** Revd John Waller

Mr David Bowen, Revd Thelma Cole, Mr Colin Ferguson, Revd Hugh Graham, Revd Charles Martin, Revd Nadim Nassar, Revd Philip Nevard, Revd David Peel, Revd Michael Playdon, Ms Kirsty Thorpe, Revd Janet Tollington and Revd John Young.

I Introduction

1.1 The Committee held two residential meetings in the year: one in July at Westminster College, Cambridge and one in January at Heronbrook House, Solihull. Small sub-groups have also met to carry forward specific pieces of work between the main meetings.

2 Theological discussions

2.1 **Baptism and Communion.** The Committee responded to correspondence concerning the relationship between baptism and communion and in particular the question of un-baptised children receiving communion. The Committee produced a short paper outlining the variety of practice within the United Reformed Church and the theological challenges.

2.2 **Eldership.** The Committee continues to gather resources concerning the theological basis of the eldership and the practice of ordination of elders. A member of the committee is preparing a paper which aims to provide a brief and clear statement of the importance of the eldership within our tradition and its doctrinal basis.

2.3 **Diaconate.** The Committee is contributing to an inter-committee working group to look further at the diaconate and local leadership.

2.4 **Accountability of Ministries.** Mission Council asked the Committee to explore the accountability and responsibilities of the various ministries of the United Reformed Church, including ordained and non ordained, stipendiary and non-stipendiary, elders and lay preachers, forms of diaconal ministry and local leaders. A small working group continues to work on a paper exploring these issues.

3 Prayer Handbook

3.1 The Handbook for 1999-2000 *Justice, Joy and Jubilee* was prepared by a group of young writers and artists and used the Revised Common Lectionary (Year B) as the basis of its reflections. The Handbook for 2000-2001 has been prepared by three people involved in Church and Industry. After wide consultation, the Committee appointed Norman Hart as editor of the handbook for 2001 to 2004.

3.2 The Committee wishes to commend the handbook to the churches both for use in personal devotions and in corporate worship.

4 Links with other committees

4.1 There are many areas of church life where national committees share concerns and so cross representation between the committees remains important. The Committee welcomed David Bowen as the new representative of the Inter-Faith Committee, following on from Bill Mahood. The Committee also has representatives from the Youth and Children's Work Committee, the Ecumenical Committee and the Silence and Retreats Group as well as having links with many other groups. Hugh Graham now represents the Committee on the Ecumenical Committee.

5 Ecumenical Issues

5.1 **Advisory Group on Faith and Order.** The Advisory Group on Faith and Order, which advises the Ecumenical Committee but also has strong links with the Committee has met this year. It has been able to consider the Roman Catholic document *One Bread, One Body* and the WCC document *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* and prepare responses to these documents.

5.2 **Theological Consultation with the Church of the Pfalz.** 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. The consultation in June 2000 at Dunblane has as its theme 'Approaches to community, nation and world'.

5.3 **Ecumenical Conversations.** The Committee continues to be represented at discussions nationally and internationally. Nadim Nassar is now its representative on discussions arising from the Leunberg Fellowship of Churches, following on from the work of Donald Norwood. Revd Fleur Houston

has been its representative on conversations between the British and Irish Anglican and French Lutheran and Reformed Churches and reported that the implications of these conversations for Anglican-Reformed relations in this country should be explored.

5.4 The Committee receives reports of 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 Thelma Cole and on the Joint Liturgical group by Hugh Graham. Two representatives from the Committee also attended a second ecumenical consultation at St George's House, Windsor on the theme of episcopacy and have reported the conclusions of the two consultations to Mission Council.

6 Spirituality

6.1 **Silence and Retreats Group.** The Silence and Retreats Group continues to be represented on the Committee by Michael Playdon. The Committee has reaffirmed its support for the work of this Group and continues to provide a financial contribution towards its activities.

6.2 **Churches Together in England Spirituality Co-ordinating Group.** Kirsty Thorpe is the Committee's representative on the Group following Fiona Gow's work on our behalf.

7 Membership of the Committee

7.1 This year Terry Hinks completes his term as the Committee's Secretary. We record our warm thanks to Terry for his considerable contribution to the work of our Committee.

Resolution 22

New Service Book

General Assembly notes that the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee has begun work on producing a new Service Book. It encourages use of and comment on the draft services provided for Baptism and Holy Communion (in the period July 2000 to February 2001), in order to assist with the process of drafting.

1.1 The Committee has considered carefully the purpose and form of the new service book and has concluded that the book should contain the core services of the church, rather than be a resource book. It plans to produce new or revised orders of the services contained in the existing book and add a small number of additional orders of service and materials.

1.2 There are also plans for an electronic form of the contents of the book and possible opportunities for additional resources being made available from time to time through this means.

1.3 The Committee is making available draft orders of the two central services for experimental use in a sample number of churches, as well as putting the drafts on the website. Any responses are required by the end of February 2001.

1.4 Two sub groups have been formed to carry forward the work, recognising the aim to produce a book by 2002. One group will focus on matters of publication and production, the other on matters of drafting and redrafting. Contributions from a wide range of sources are being sought.

Resolution 23**Addition to Schedule A**

General Assembly accepts the addition to Schedule A of the Basis of Union outlined in Version III, as follows:

(c) Addition to Schedule A: *Version III*

(At Baptism at an age of responsibility or at profession of faith for those baptised as infants)

Q: Do you believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
maker of heaven and earth,
giver of life, redeemer of the world?

A: I do.

Q: Do you repent of your sins, turn away from evil, and turn to Christ?

A: By God's grace, I do.

Q: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

A: I do.

(At reception into the full privileges and responsibilities of membership)

Q: From the beginning,
believers have continued in the worship
and fellowship of the church:
N, do you commit yourself to this life?

A: I do, with God's help.

Q: Do you accept the gift and the cost of following Christ
in your daily life and work?

A: I do, with God's help.

Q: With the whole Church, will you proclaim
by word and action
the good news of God in Christ?

A: I will, with God's help.

Resolution 24**Change in Schedule A**

General Assembly agrees to delete from Schedule A of the Basis of Union

**"Or: (c) in the forms customarily used in the uniting churches before unification."
and to add**

"Or: (d) in a form which includes the following elements:

- a Trinitarian confession of faith
- repentance of sin
- a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord
- a promise to share in the worship, fellowship and mission of the Church."

1.1 In preparing the draft service for Baptism the committee has come to the view that the questions posed at the service of adult baptism should also be posed to those baptised as infants on their profession of faith and reception into church membership. It also believes that the questions in the new service book should be included in Schedule A to the Basis of Union. Resolution 23 begins the

constitutional process to make this possible. At the same time the committee brings Resolution 24. It seems unhelpful to continue to refer to forms customarily used before unification, which for some people took place nearly thirty years ago. In place of that reference in the Schedule, the committee proposes the basic elements which should be part of any locally-devised profession of the Christian faith.

Resolution 25

Celebrating Church Membership

General Assembly receives the discussion paper *Celebrating Church Membership* and encourages local churches to discuss and respond to it.

**United Reformed Church
'Celebrating Church Membership'**

A discussion paper for local churches

QUESTIONS

1.1 How would your congregation respond to the following situations?

- Louise has been part of the Church fellowship for many years, attending worship regularly and belonging to a number of church groups. Approached about church membership, she says that she couldn't give that kind of commitment.
- Gemma is nine. She tells the minister that she likes being a friend of Jesus and asks if she can be baptised and 'join' the church.
- Mark is in the church youth group and takes part in drama at worship. He wants to make a commitment to Jesus, but says he is put off by the institutional church.
- Geoff has been attending the church for some years. He was confirmed as an Anglican. Asked about 'becoming a church member' he says that he assumed that he was a member of Christ's Church.
- Teresa brings her child to church for baptism. She hasn't been baptised herself and wishes to be baptised at the same time, but is unsure about church membership.

1.2 What relationship does the Church membership roll of your congregation have to its actual life?

1.3 How is your church encouraging people to profess their faith?

1.4 What nurture does your church provide for all ages (e.g. Alpha, Emmaus, Developing Discipleship, Bible study, local programmes)?

1.5 What importance is placed on baptism as the sacrament of entry into the church?

1.6 What do you see as the relationship between baptism, confirmation/reception into membership and admission to communion?

1.7 Is membership of a denomination seen as important?

1.8 What is your understanding of church membership?

BACKGROUND TO DISCUSSION

2.1 In 1997 the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee began a reflection on our church's understanding of church membership today. It followed concerns being raised that some young people were actually being discouraged from becoming church members on grounds of finance and that local understandings of church membership varied greatly. Discussion of the issues surrounding church membership continued in the committee for the next two years, with papers being contributed by five members of the committee. It was recognised that considerable work had already been done on the subject within the denomination and ecumenically. It was decided in 1999 that the discussion should be taken back to the Church, nationally and locally, for its reflection.

CHALLENGES

3.1 Changes both within the Church and in society and culture challenge many of our past assumptions about church membership:

- Ecumenism has enlarged our vision of the church. Every local congregation, whether a LEP or not, has people from a variety of Christian backgrounds.
- Decline in church membership in the Twentieth Century has burdened questions of membership with an obsession with numbers.
- Rediscovery of the church's task of mission and nurture (through the Decade of Evangelism, Alpha Courses etc.) has brought a new focus on the pattern of faith development and an emphasis on 'belonging comes before believing'.
- Rediscovery of the importance of all ages within the life of the church has changed our picture of church and patterns of nurture.
- Today's individualism has brought about a widespread rejection of institutions and authority.
- Consumerism has made people wary of long term commitment and increased their perception of choice.
- Multi-cultural and multi-faith dimensions of our society have raised many alternative perceptions of reality.
- Our society has become much more mobile and shifting.

REFLECTION

4.1 The principle underlying Church Membership is the conviction that the Church is the body of Christ, one body with many members or organs held together by Christ. It is this organic and mystical picture given by Paul that needs to inform our discussions on membership rather than the more general use of the word. Ideas linked with the membership of clubs, parties and organisations often colour our thinking. Membership has often become linked with voting rights, financial payment, statistics and a very narrow understanding of privileges and responsibilities.

4.2 The Church is a broken body, fallible and imperfect, fragmented and divided, despite the faithful presence of the one Lord in its midst and ahead of it on the journey. The body of Christ is 'now' and 'not yet' and the Church is constantly being called by Christ to become more fully the reality that in one sense it already is. As a result of this we have to treat ideas of Church Membership with considerable care, recognising the element of process or pilgrimage involved.

4.3 According to the Basis of Union (para. 14) people are received into the fellowship of the universal Church by baptism, whether this is administered at infancy or 'at an age of responsibility'. 'Membership' is thus implied in the act of baptism, but a personal

profession of faith in Christ as their Saviour and Lord is required before people can 'enter upon the full privileges and responsibilities of membership', exercised within a local congregation.

4.4 The agreement of the Church Meeting is required before a person's name can be added to the membership roll of the local church. The local church may also suspend or remove names from the membership roll. Many churches also keep a supplementary roll of those who have been members of that congregation but whose membership is no longer being exercised in that place. It should be noted that suspension or removal from the church membership roll is not a denial of the person's baptism or profession of faith.

4.5 The Church Meeting (advised by the Elders' Meeting) has the responsibility of 'maintaining standards of membership' (Structure para 2 (1) (ix)). Behind this phrase is the belief that we are accountable to each other within the body of Christ. The Methodist report *Called to Love and Praise* speaks of membership as 'responsible and witnessed commitment'. Membership is not an individual right we can take for granted, but a mutual belonging together.

CONVICTIONS

5.1 The discussion within the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee underlined that:

- There should not be an over-simplistic reliance on church membership figures for financial assessments and scoping policy.
- There is a general lack of understanding and valuing of baptism as a sacrament of entry to the church that needs to be addressed within our congregations.
- Church membership is to be celebrated in global and local terms; above all it begins with the gracious call of God in Christ. We need to recover a proper emphasis on the biblical picture of membership.
- Our understanding of membership today must take into account our mobile society and the rejection by many of institutions and commitment. We must allow Christ to lead us into new patterns of belonging to him and serving one another and the world. What might these patterns look like?

RESPONDING

6.1 Local churches are invited to discuss the document and to send their comments and reflections to the Deputy General Secretary:

**Revd John Waller, United Reformed Church,
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT**

Please include a description of your church (e.g. its size, any ecumenical links) and of the group that is giving your church's response (e.g. Church Meeting, Elders Meeting, study group). Responses should be sent before **28 February 2001**.

Resolution 26

The United Reformed Church and Creeds

Recognising that "the United Reformed Church accepts with thanksgiving the witness borne to the catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds" (paragraph 4 of Schedule D of the Basis of Union), the General Assembly commends the paper *Do we believe in Creeds?* to local churches for discussion.

Do We believe in creeds?

A discussion paper for local churches

INTRODUCTION

1.1 During 1997 and 1998 the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee considered the World Council of Churches report *Confessing the One Faith*, which encourages all the churches to explore again the Nicene Creed. As a result the following discussion paper was written to assist reflection of the place of the Creeds within the life and worship of our Church.

1.2 Do we trust creeds to say what we in the United Reformed Church believe? In this discussion paper, the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee rehearses some of our traditional reservations about them, then affirms their value in the light of our Reformed experience and ecumenical involvement.

PRESENT PRACTICE

2.1 At the inauguration of the United Reformed Church in 1972 we accepted 'with thanksgiving the witness borne to the Catholic faith by the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds' and recognized as 'our own particular heritage the formulations and declarations of faith which have been valued by Congregationalists and Presbyterians'. Later we added a reference to our new partners from the Churches of Christ. These formulations, we said, 'stated the gospel' and sought to 'make its implications clear'. *The Westminster Confession* (1646), *The Savoy Declaration* (1658), Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address* (1809), *A Statement of Faith* of the Presbyterian Church of England (1956) and *A Declaration of Faith* of the Congregational Church in England and Wales (1967) were brought together by Dr David Thompson in *Stating the Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1990), together with the revised *Basis of Union* (1981).

2.2 *Rejoice and Sing* (1991) included the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church. The outline Order of Service suggests that after the sermon there be a 'Confession of Faith'.

Church Hymnary: Third Edition (1973), authorized by the Church of Scotland and by Presbyterian Churches in England, Ireland and Wales, gave the ancient creeds their traditional place. The Apostles' Creed was included in the section of baptismal hymns, and the Nicene Creed introduces the selection of responses and hymns for Holy Communion. The United Reformed Church *Service Book* (1989) suggests a creed or confession of faith be said after the sermon.

2.3 The Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church is required to be read at ordinations and inductions of ministers and elders. But how many of our churches stand and confess their faith in the language of the traditional creeds or by using other credal material?

HISTORICAL RESERVATIONS

3.1 The Reformers did not reject any article of faith in the historic creeds. On the contrary, they affirmed, as we do, the Catholic faith. But for various reasons they and their successors had reservations about their use. These may be summarized as follows:

- i) the use of creeds to compel belief. The *Savoy Declaration* spoke of 'whipping men into belief'; in the seventeenth century this was no mere figure of speech. Churches of Christ reacted against the use of creeds as tests of fellowship, and came to abandon them altogether;
- ii) a feeling that creeds were manmade, in contrast to Scripture as 'the word of God';
- iii) a suspicion of anything that smacked of 'vain repetition', in contrast to the immediate response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit;
- iv) a sense that creeds gave the intellectual aspects of the faith undue importance, compared with the need for practical holiness. The dissenting brethren at the Westminster Assembly said: 'We took measure of no man's holiness by his opinion';

- v) a growing awareness that all creeds are historically and culturally conditioned. The point is most obvious in the case of the Nicene Creed, the language of which betrays fourth-century controversies with those who were judged to have distorted the faith.

Most of these are negative points. The positive response to the need to proclaim the faith was found in the preaching of the Gospel and in singing, hence the importance in our tradition of good preaching and good hymns. It was also seen as our common calling to *live* the faith.

REFORMED AND ECUMENICAL AFFIRMATION OF CREEDS

4.1 The Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas told the Faith and Order Conference of the World Council of Churches in Santiago (1993) that creeds were something to sing about. We have always believed this, and have recognised it in our tradition, from metrical psalms and Isaac Watts to modern examples of hymns of faith. Great hymns help us celebrate that faith; but we also need to know what it is that we are celebrating.

4.2 Creeds can serve as helpful summaries of what we believe. We now accept that the Apostles' Creed was not written by the Apostles, but we may agree that it contains the main points of the apostolic preaching. Hence its continued use in the initiation of those to be baptised, and in the nurturing of all Christians through exposition of its clauses. The Creed of 381 (commonly called the Nicene) still has the greatest claim to be ecumenical, since in its original form it pre-dates the major divisions in the Church.

4.3 Agreement in faith should be welcomed as a gift from God. John Owen wrote in the Preface to the *Savoy Declaration* that unanimous agreement even in some few points of religions was a matter for rejoicing. The modern ecumenical movement sees unity in faith as both gift and calling. We need both to reassure and encourage one another that we share 'the faith once delivered to the saints', and to give thanks to God for all we believe together.

4.4 Creeds are not, of course, the only ways of expressing faith. How we live shows what we wholeheartedly believe. But when we are asked to 'give account of the hope that is in us' some confession of faith is called for. Creeds and confessions have a missionary purpose. They are public declarations of faith: this is what we, as the Church, believe; here we stand.

4.5 At the same time, we can affirm that no single formulation can do full justice to the height and length and breadth and depth of God's wisdom and love. Maybe that love itself was the expression of faith missing from some ancient creeds and the use made of them. We constantly have to find new ways of 'stating the Gospel and making its implications clear' for our daily life. But because we believe in the apostolic succession of faithful Christians, we are bound to try to understand and join with all who in the past two millennia have told us the great things God has done. Could the Apostles say 'Amen' to the faith we profess?

AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND ACTION

5.1 Use the Apostles' or Nicene Creed as the basis of a series of discussion meetings of the essentials of the Christian Faith. There are many books and commentaries available on the Creeds, including the WCC report *Confessing the One Faith*.

5.2 As a local church prepare your own statement of faith and reflect on its differences and similarities to the major creeds.

5.3 Use the structure of the Creeds as the basis of a sermon series.

5.4 Arrange an ecumenical discussion with members of other churches and Christian groups on the value (and limitations) of creeds.

5.5 Consider occasions when a creed or other statement of faith could be used in worship.

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 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 its 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)

Ms Lesley-Anne Morgan (International Relations Programme Officer)

Members: Revd Peter Arthur, Revd Mary Buchanan, Ms Bethan Galliers, Revd Stuart Jackson, Revd Phillip Jones,

Mrs Jackie Marsh, Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd Elizabeth Nash, Revd John Rees,

Revd John Crocker (Convener of the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee)

Representatives of other committees: Revd Peter Brain, Revd Jonathan Dean,

Dr Iain Frew, Revd Hugh Graham, Mrs Rosemary Johnston, Revd Tony Ruffell

Representatives from other churches: Rt Revd Colin Buchanan (Church of England),

Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquhar (Presbyterian Church of Ireland), Revd John Smith (Scottish Congregational Church),

Revd Peter Sulston (Methodist Church)

I Introduction

1.1 'What is the Spirit saying to the churches?' must be a key question for all committees (and churches) but the Ecumenical Committee has been particularly challenged this year as it seeks to discern just how the United Reformed Church is 'to take, wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people.' (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 8)

1.2 Being a church in three nations, situated in an increasingly multi-ethnic society, in a shrinking but divided world where we have partners through the Council for World Mission, the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European Churches, as well as special friends within those bodies, calls us to be open to a variety of ways of understanding our commitment to the 'unity of all God's people'.

1.3 The breadth of the Ecumenical Committee's remit challenges it to discern and pursue that variety of ways in which God is calling us to seek 'the unity of all God's people.'

Expressing our unity of purpose through the UK ecumenical bodies

2 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

2.1 Almost all United Reformed Church assembly committees work through some part of **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**.

2.2 **Building Bridges of Hope**, a programme which has monitored the mission and outreach of 40 local churches and is now ready to help local churches develop their missionary calling, is a valuable resource to our *Growing Up* programme. The Life and Witness Committee is the main channel.

2.3 Peter Brain, Secretary for Church and Society, represents the United Reformed Church on the ecumenical group looking at the **reform of the House of Lords**, following the publication of the Wakeham report.

2.4 Jean Black, Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education, represents us on the **Friends of Bossey Council** in order that the United Reformed Church can both use and influence the nature of that World Council of Churches-related ecumenical training resource.

2.5 The Churches Commission for Racial Justice has been monitoring **the asylum bill** and advising churches on how to prepare to respond to the needs of asylum seekers when they are dispersed around the country. Sandra Ackroyd represents us on CCRJ.

3 Churches Together in England

3.1 Our General Secretary, Revd Tony Burnham, as one of the presidents of **Churches Together in England**, has represented the member churches on several occasions, notably the English national Millennium Service at St Paul's Cathedral and the National Service of Commemoration for the Home Front at Coventry Cathedral.

3.2 Many local churches and 'churches together' groups availed themselves of the wide range of **New Start millennium material** offered by Churches Together in England, some celebrating at the beginning of the year, many at Pentecost.

3.3 The challenge of government **regionalisation** to the churches' shared responsibility for society has been high on our synod moderators' agenda. They have been greatly helped by the country-wide knowledge of Jenny Carpenter, CTE Field Officer for the North and Midlands, who accompanied them to Brussels (see 17.2 below)

3.4 The Group for Local Unity

3.4.1 The Group for Local Unity is piloting a model for **LEP finance**, a subject which has always been an ecumenical stumbling block.

3.4.2 GLU has issued an advice paper especially for use in Local Ecumenical Partnerships on an ecumenically sensitive approach to **the disposal of the bread and wine after communion**.

3.4.3 The Group has also been concerned about **the problems black churches often encounter when they worship in the church buildings of the historic denominations**. These last two concerns touch the life of many local United Reformed Churches and are a challenge to two different kinds of 'unity'.

4 The Free Churches' Council

4.1 Member Churches are currently discussing a proposal that the FCC become a 'desk' within Churches Together in England and, possibly, Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN). FCC resources would continue to be available to 'free church' work.

5 Wales

5.1 The United Reformed Church in **Wales** is pursuing Christian unity in several different ways.

5.2 **Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)** is setting up regional sponsoring bodies (with boundaries co-terminus with the government regions) to oversee and develop Local Ecumenical Partnerships. The synod ecumenical officer, Stuart Jackson, works closely with Revd Dr Sion Aled Owen (who is both the new CYTUN ecumenical officer and the General Secretary of Enfys (see 5.4)) as the United Reformed Church is involved in many of the Welsh LEPs.

5.3 **Proposals for a Free Church Union** are being studied by the churches, including the United Reformed Church which is an active observer rather than a full participant.

5.4 **The proposal from the Commission of Covenanted Churches (Enfys) for an ecumenical bishop in Wales** is being brought to this Assembly by the Wales Synod.

5.5 The United Reformed churches and Methodist churches in part of Pembrokeshire have formed **a united area which is both URC District and Methodist Circuit**.

6 Scotland

6.1 A variety of approach to the 'unity of all God's people' is also to be found in the United Reformed Church's ecumenical commitments in **Scotland**.

6.2 The highlight, of course, was the Unifying Assembly on 1 April when the **Congregational Union of Scotland and the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom united to form the United Reformed Church**. The Scottish Congregational Church/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee held its final meeting in February having made its valuable contribution to strengthening relations between the two churches over the 10 years of its life. (see appendix 3 for a record of and tribute to its work)

6.3 The new Synod of Scotland continues the commitment of both churches to the **Scottish Church Initiative for Union (SCIFU)** whose Second Interim Report is now available for study by the churches. Thanks are due to Peter Arthur, James Breslin and Fleur Houston for their significant contribution to SCIFU until the Unifying Assembly.

6.4 Those churches in Scotland involved in LEPs have been brought together by **Action for Churches Together in Scotland** to seek to form a single ecumenical oversight body for Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

6.5 The Ecumenical Committee looks forward to holding its September meeting in Edinburgh.

**Seeking unity through
understanding one another's
traditions**

7 The Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee

7.1 **The Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Committee** has continued to work at the points of local difficulty in the relationship between the two churches, especially vacancies and ministry, and has found it helpful to identify how far their roots are in our different ecclesiologies.

7.2 A detailed paper, entitled **Managing change of ministry**, designed to fit into the pack *How to Make it Work*, is now available. It is the fruit of wide consultation and calls for some creative flexibility from both churches. It (and the pack) is strongly recommended to all in United Reformed Church/Methodist Church LEPs, and especially to interim-moderators and district pastoral committees.

8 The Formal and Informal Conversations involving the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

8.1 The **formal conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist Church** have held four residential meetings. There is also increased meeting and working together between the two churches at every level. The ecumenical participants, including those from the United Reformed Church, contribute fully to the discussions.

8.2 The **informal conversations**, which include the United Reformed Church as a full member, have discussed papers from the United Reformed Church on eldership, on conciliarity and apostolicity, and on our understanding of and commitment to the visible unity of the Church.

8.3 The two sets of conversations exchange reports of their meetings and there is an overlap in personnel. Both have increased mutual understanding and clarified points of difference.

9 The Advisory Group on Faith and Order

9.1 The Ecumenical Committee and the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee each sent two representatives to an ecumenical consultation on **Episkope and Episcopacy** in September 1999. In December they met with the members of the Advisory Group on Faith and Order, which advises both committees, and produced a brief paper on issues for the United Reformed Church in connection with personal leadership and authority. This was offered to the Mission Council and will contribute to its ongoing work on oversight ministry with particular reference to synod moderators.

9.2 The Ecumenical Committee supported the recommendation in that paper that synods with European partner churches who are a party to one of the Church of England's agreements, such as the Reilly Common Statement with the French Reformed and Lutheran churches or the Meissen Agreement with the German churches, should discuss those agreements with their partners.

9.3 The Advisory Group on Faith and Order also drafted a United Reformed Church response to and critique of **the Roman Catholic document 'One Bread, One Body'** and a response to **the WCC statement on 'the Nature and Purpose of the Church'**. The Advisory Group is also considering, from a Reformed perspective, **the Methodist statement on the Church, 'Called to Love and Praise'**, and the **House of Bishops (Church of England) paper on collegiality, 'Bishops in**

Communion⁷. All these papers, once approved by the committee, are available on request. The documents themselves are available from the bookshop.

10 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland

10.1 The committee greatly values its links with the **Presbyterian Church in Ireland** which sends a representative to each meeting. Through that representative, currently Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquhar, the committee is kept abreast of developments in church and society there and always undertakes to uphold this partner church and its land in prayer.

10.2 The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations was invited to address the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Inter-Church Relations Board in February.

10.3 The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of Wales and the United Reformed Church are holding a consultation in March 2001 on **what it is to be Reformed churches** in our different nations, with our different histories, yet our common roots.

The challenge of new kinds of unity

11 Single ethnic congregations and the United Reformed Church

11.1 The committee has continued to consider the process for receiving single-ethnic Presbyterian congregations into membership or closer friendship with the United Reformed Church. **A model constitution** for such churches wanting to join the United Reformed Church has been prepared.

11.2 Revd Noble Samuel, minister of Walthamstow United Reformed Asian Christian Church, attended a **consultation in the USA** in September 1999 on the particular mission of such fast-growing Asian churches. The Secretary for International Relations also met with the new Secretary for Immigrant Ministries in **the Presbyterian Church (USA)**. That partner church is recognising that such congregations are their growing edge.

11.3 A second Urdu-speaking Presbyterian church, **Slough Asian Christian Church**, will apply to become a congregation of the United Reformed Church at this Assembly.

11.4 On 4 March, the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and the Multi-racial, Multi-cultural Development Worker organised a **consultation for representatives of Pakistani, Ghanaian and Korean**

single ethnic presbyterian churches along with representatives of some multi-ethnic local United Reformed churches. These growing churches are challenging the United Reformed Church to seek a different kind of 'unity of all God's people'.

12 The Synod and District Ecumenical Officers

12.1 **The network of Synod and District Ecumenical Officers** plays a vital role in the United Reformed Church's commitment to 'the unity of all God's people' in terms of encouraging LEPs, Churches Together bodies and the ecumenical work of mission and service which takes place through the county bodies or their equivalent.

12.2 The network is resourced by **four mailings a year**, which offer either '*News from the Ecumenical Committee*' or '*Ecumenical Filings*' together with advice or position papers and notice of new publications and training courses. There is a **bi-annual residential consultation** which, this year, will have the Co-ordinating Secretary for Inter-Church Relations in the Methodist Church, Revd Peter Sulston, as its visiting speaker.

12.3 The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations welcomes, diary permitting, invitations to the synods' ecumenical committees to both listen and contribute. An occasional in-depth visit to see something of a synod's ecumenical life also helps to keep the committee and staff rooted.

Witnessing to our unity through international bodies and partnerships

13 The World Convention of the Churches of Christ

13.1 **The World Convention of the Churches of Christ** is a four-yearly gathering of people from local congregations of the Stone-Campbell family of churches (Churches of Christ, Disciples and Independent Christian churches) around the world. As a united church, which through our union embraces the Churches of Christ, we are part of the family. Other united churches are also involved, for example our CWM partner the United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is a member.

13.2 In August this year **the 2000 Convention** will be held in Brisbane, Australia and will be attended by several people from the United Reformed Church, including an official delegation of people who will be involved in organising the next Convention which the United Reformed Church will be co-hosting with the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in **Brighton in 2004**.

13.3 Along with organising our own participation the Ecumenical Committee is sponsoring (along with CWM) the attendance of three people from the Churches of Christ in Malawi.

14 World Alliance of Reformed Churches

14.1 Following a search process led by Elizabeth Nash in her capacity as one of WARC's officers, WARC appointed **Revd Dr Setri Nyomi** from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana as its new General Secretary to succeed Dr Milan Opecensky who retired at the end of March.

14.2 One of the main programmes of the department of which Elizabeth is Moderator (the department on Co-operation and Witness) is an exploration into economic injustice. In November, as part of this programme and along with the World Council of Churches, WARC held a **symposium in Thailand on The Consequences of Economic Globalisation in Asia**. It is a common theme at present, echoed also in the work of the Council for World Mission and the International Association of Mission Studies.

14.3 Through our partnerships in WARC we have been moved to monitor the deteriorating situation in **Indonesia** and in January representations were made to the Ambassador of Indonesia about the sectarian conflict which was threatening both Christian and Muslim communities. WARC are hoping to send a solidarity visit, of which Elizabeth will be part, before the end of 2000.

14.4 In March we hosted the annual meeting of the **European Area Committee** of WARC in London.

15 World Council of Churches

15.1 In September Jenny Downing attended the first meeting of the new **WCC Central Committee** and in November the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations attended an **Ecumenical Officers' meeting convened by the WCC**. Both heard about how the WCC intends to develop its life and work following the Assembly in Harare in December 1998.

15.2 The UK ecumenical officers present at the meeting are now pressing Churches Together in Britain and Ireland to network all those who represent UK churches both on the WCC and on the Conference of European Churches so that the churches of these islands can make a more coherent input and communicate more effectively with local congregations. However, the world-wide nature of the Ecumenical Officers' meeting also brought home to those from the UK and North America that the word *ecumenical* means so much more than *inter-church* and is also about responding together to injustice and poverty.

15.3 To improve communication with its member churches the WCC has launched a new publication **WCC News**, which the committee is making available to Synod World Church Advocates and Synod Ecumenical Officers.

16 Council for World Mission

16.1 Just before last year's Assembly the **CWM biennial Council meeting** was held in Samoa, the first time a CWM Council meeting had been held in the Pacific Region. It was a truly memorable occasion, especially for those of us brought up on the stories of John Williams. The most significant item to emerge from the meeting was a new statement of CWM's Mission Theology, prepared by an international group and edited by Preman Niles (CWM General Secretary), the successor to "Perceiving Frontiers, Crossing Boundaries" produced in 1995. The committee welcomed the document as setting The United Reformed Church's *Growing Up* report (1999 Assembly) in a larger context and so circulated it to members of Mission Council, and various other likely interested people.

16.2 At the Council meeting **Philip Woods** was elected as **the European Region representative on the Executive**. The first meeting of the new Executive was hosted by the United Reformed Church in London in November.

16.3 The **European Region** of CWM has been particularly active this past year.

16.3.1 With the closure of St Andrew's Hall it has been reflecting on how **mission education and training** might now be best developed within the Region. To further this debate the Region held a consultation in September for key people in the member churches involved in ministerial training, continuing ministerial education, lay training and mission enabling. The consultation concluded by proposing that the Region, on completion of the present Mission Enabler programme in 2000, should appoint a new full-time Mission Enabler who in addition to working with denominational mission enablers would also begin working with theological institutions and developing contextual missiology courses for CME programmes. This proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Regional Secretaries Meeting and is now being considered by the member churches and the CWM Executive who will be asked to use the proceeds from the sale of St Andrew's Hall to part endow the post. The committee has considered it and given its backing to the idea.

16.3.2 The annual **Window on the World** conference, attended by nearly 300 people last year, picked up the current CWM theme *What does the Lord require?* with Fr Tissa Balassuriya from Sri Lanka as the keynote speaker. Through a global analysis of

events during the last century he pressed the question, what does the Lord require of those who have benefited from the domination system bequeathed the Earth following 500 years of colonialism? For some it was overwhelming, whilst for others it was a spur to action. As a consequence some participants produced a guide, "Information to Response", to help people process and act on such presentations, using the events of the conference as a model. The conference as a whole urged CWM to do more work with its member churches on the issues of drug-patenting/intellectual property rights and globalisation which all had been highlighted in particular case studies.

16.3.3 The **Youth in Mission** workshop programme has had two events in the past year. The first was in August in Glasgow, looking at the drug culture and the second in May in the Netherlands on the theme of money and globalisation.

16.3.4 A long-term aim of the CWM European Region has been to be a little more European (currently the member churches come from Great Britain and the Netherlands). This past year saw a bold step on the way to achieving this as the region co-sponsored a **European Mission Conference** with the Conference of European Churches, the European national mission councils and the European Evangelical Missionary Alliance. Held in the Netherlands in October, the conference, *Living the Story of Christ – Mission in Europe Today*, brought together around 60 participants, most of them in their 20s and 30s, from a broad spectrum of confessions – Protestant, evangelical, Roman Catholic and Orthodox – and from every corner of Europe.

16.3.5 In November the Region held its second **Mission Enablers Consultation**, with around 30 participants. Although there are different ideas about what constitutes a mission enabler, the networking and support of mission enablers has been one of the success stories of the European Region in the last three years.

16.3.6 Throughout the year work has continued on the Region's **Mission and Liturgy** project. The first fruits of this will be seen at this year's *Window on the World*, at Swanwick, 5-11 August (places still available – book through the International Relations office) where the conference will explore, with keynote speakers from Jamaica, how we can make our worship an effective tool of mission.

17 Conference of European Churches

17.1 1999 saw the completion of the merger of the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) with CEC, to form the **CEC Church and Society Commission**. During the latter

part of the year the new CEC Church and Society Commission Working Groups met for the first time. The United Reformed Church is represented on two. David Pickering is a member of the Economy, Environment and Sustainable Development working group and Philip Woods is a member of the European Integration working group.

17.2 In February the **synod moderators held their monthly meeting in Brussels** so as to learn more about how the European Union is involved in regional policy and funding. In a programme arranged by the Secretary for International Relations and the CEC Church and Society Commission they met with people in the European Commission and the European Parliament and learnt how Europe's churches relate to these institutions. The visit raised a number of questions about **regionalisation** and how The United Reformed Church (indeed churches in general) relate to EU regional programmes. The potential value of our European partnerships in the development of EU regional partnerships was also noted.

17.3 In April the **synod European Link Co-ordinators met in Brussels**, with representatives of some of our European partner churches to learn about the work of the CEC Church and Society Commission and to be introduced to the European Institutions.

17.4 At its January meeting the committee received and approved our response to **Charta Oecumenica – For the Co-operation of Churches in Europe** produced by CEC and CCEE (the European council of Roman Catholic Bishops' Conferences) in response to some of the concerns and hopes raised at the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, Austria in 1997. Welcoming the document, which sets out a framework for ecumenical co-operation, the committee reiterated the United Reformed Church's commitment 'to deepening our life together as churches in Europe and to sharing with other churches in a common responsibility towards Europe.' The response then went on to make a number of detailed comments before concluding: 'We recognise that the *Charta* is a call to a process ... We have seen that it has challenges for our own life and witness as churches together in these islands. In particular its constant refrain to worship together, to hear the word of God together and to pray with as well as for one another ...'. If sufficient churches respond positively a revised text will be prepared to be launched at a major European ecumenical gathering at Easter 2001.

18 International Partnerships

18.1 The Ecumenical Committee, through individual visits and more formal arrangements, seeks to nurture and stimulate a whole range of partnerships.

- 18.2 Of particular note in the past year are:
- the visit by the Moderator of Assembly, Peter McIntosh, to South Africa to share in the bi-centenary of the arrival of the first LMS missionaries and the union of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa to form the United Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa;
 - the continuing role journeying with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

19 Churches Commission on Mission

19.1 During the year the committee has reorganised our representation on the **CCOM Area Forums** and given our representatives a clear job description to improve the quality of our input and the benefits we gain from sharing in this work which links concerns for mission and international affairs with church partners around the world.

20 Belonging to the World Church

20.1 In September the committee received the first annual report on the implementation of the *Belonging to the World Church* programme and at their January meeting received a further update indicating that slowly but surely elements of the programme were taking shape. However, progress was set back in the autumn when Lesley-Anne Morgan, the International Relations Programme Officer, was off work with a serious back injury following an accident whilst on holiday in August. Now, more or less fully recovered, she is back with us tackling the detailed work of setting up the components of this programme.

20.2 It is anticipated that in 2001 two pilot programmes for the **ordinands/CRCWs' overseas training opportunities** will take place.

20.3 Through **World Exchange** the committee is offering **the opportunity for up to six teachers** a year to take a year out to work with one of our overseas partner churches.

20.4 In conjunction with World Exchange **one-month work/study camps** are being developed for adults with our partner churches. The first of these took place in March in partnership with the Church of North India.

20.5 Two young people participated in the **Bridge Project**, a European ecumenical project, which consisted of a seven month exposure programme to each of the seven participating churches

20.6 Unfortunately, the pilot for the **Global Partners programme (visiting speakers)**, which should have taken place in the autumn did not happen. A second attempt is being made this autumn.

20.7 There has begun to be some take-up of the additional ***Belonging to the World Church CME grants***. Further work on promoting these and developing international CME opportunities is being undertaken with the Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education

20.8 Northern College, in conjunction with the North-Western Synod, has made the **first Research Fellowship appointment** and a second is being prepared with Mersey Synod.

20.9 The new intensive **English language programme** for people from some of our overseas partner churches was held in August/September, with eleven participants from Europe, Africa and Korea.

20.10 A leaflet demonstrating **the complementary nature of *Commitment for Life* and *Belonging to the World Church*** has been produced in conjunction with the Church and Society Committee and has been circulated through both networks. Two of our Global Partners this autumn will be from PARC, one of the *Commitment for Life* projects.

21 Pilgrim 2000

21.1 Throughout the year, the International Relations office has been involved in the arrangements for **Pilgrim 2000**, the centrally organised pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine which was held in late February/early March. With its mixed programme of traditional pilgrim sites and encounters with local people from a variety of churches and faith traditions, it connected the historical with the contemporary, challenging all involved to see afresh events past and present. (A fuller report can be found in Appendix 2)

22 World Church and European Networks

22.1 The annual meeting for **Synod World Church Secretaries** was held in February at St Colm's International House in Edinburgh, the home of World Exchange. In addition to reviewing progress on the *Belonging to the World Church* programme and learning about the work of World Exchange, the consultation agreed changes to our world church synod and district network. Although it was recognised that there will be differences across the synods and districts it was agreed that the role is now very much one of advocacy and therefore that the normal title will be **World Church Advocate**, and that their primary purpose will be:

Resolution 27

To deepen people's understanding of the world church and in particular to promote the opportunities available through the *Belonging to the World Church* programme.

22.2 In April the **Synod European Link Co-ordinators** met in Brussels for their annual consultation. At their meeting, in addition to learning about the European Institutions and the work of the CEC Church and Society Commission, they reflected on our European partnerships and considered whether their role should be restyled as *European Partnership Co-ordinators* reflecting our commitment to partnership in all our relations.

22.3 The regular contact with the World and European advocates and co-ordinators in each synod is vital to the international work of the committee. **Mailings** and other support is offered to District World Church Advocates and to other interested individuals through our subscription mailing service based on CWM's excellent journal *Inside Out*. These networks are a resource to every congregation as they promote our belonging to the world church. Thanks are due to them all for all they do to communicate the United Reformed Church's many and varied international concerns and partnerships.

23 Welcome and farewell, with thanks

23.1 The committee welcomed Rt Revd Colin Buchanan, Bishop of Woolwich, as the new representative of the Church of England and Revd Peter Sulston, the Co-ordinating Secretary for Inter-Church and Other Relationships of the Methodist Church as its new representative and Revd John Smith as the co-opted member from the Scottish Congregational Church.

23.2 The committee is very sad to lose the wisdom and experience of Revd Dr Peter Arthur, who has represented the Mid-Scotland District on the committee for several years and also that of Miss Bethan Galliers, one of the core members of the committee. Others whose contribution as representatives of other committees will be missed are Revd Peter Brain, Revd Jonathan Dean, and Dr Iain Frew. Revd Gabrielle Ellis-Farquar comes to the end of her three-year term both as representative of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on the committee and as its voting representative at the General Assembly. Both the Assembly and the committee will miss her.

Resolution 27

Change of Name of Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee to International Exchange Sub-Committee

General Assembly agrees that the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee of the Ecumenical Committee be re-named the International Exchange Sub-Committee.

1.1 Why the change? Firstly, for some time the members of the Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee had expressed disquiet at its name. Recognising that the work of the committee involved both the sending and receiving of people – mission partners, volunteers, scholarship holders and others – it was felt that the name should reflect this. Rather than have a 'Brit-centric' tone it should more clearly convey the all-embracing global character of our work.

1.2 Secondly, with the advent of the *Belonging to the World Church* programme it was felt that using terms such as 'overseas' in this context (with its connotation of 'over there') expressed our separation more than our belonging.

1.3 Hence, the desire to change 'overseas' to 'international' and so express more clearly the nature and understanding of our work.

Overseas Exchange Sub-Committee

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

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd John Crocker*

Secretary: *Revd Phillip Woods*

Revd Bob Andrews (Convener, Ecumenical Committee), Mrs Virginia Becher (until her untimely death), Mr Peter Bryant, Revd Keith Riglin, Revd Gwen Collins, Revd Keith Forecast and Revd Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations).

I Introduction

1.1 During the past year the committee has spent much time reflecting on our practice of sharing people in mission as we have listened to the experience of those we receive amongst us as mission partners here and those whom we send. We are not alone in this. In March there was a UK Mission Agencies consultation to listen to and learn from each other's experience, and in April CWM convened a meeting to reflect on what sharing people in mission means today. Emerging from all this are a number of issues which the committee will be working on in the coming year as we revise our guidelines for receiving and sending mission partners and address some of the more fundamental issues of how we share skills, insights and experience in the service of God's global mission today.

2 Sharing people in mission

2.1 Sharing people in mission is a difficult and stretching process for all involved. The challenge of working cross-culturally, different needs and expectations, a wide range of understandings about how the church should function, a multitude of differing experience, unspoken assumptions, tremendous hopes and fears and much more all go into the process whereby we send and receive people around the world as partners in God's mission. Mistakes are made, misunderstandings are commonplace and people get hurt. At the same time, people are stretched and enriched by the experience and their encounters both as mission partners and as host communities. Good work is done and much is learnt from the experience by all involved.

2.2 The committee regularly experiences all of this as we process the applications, prepare and support the people we both send and receive. Each year brings difficulties and successes. We rejoice in the successes and try to learn from the difficulties. This year we have journeyed with one couple through

a particularly difficult experience which has revealed multiple shortcomings in both our own and CWM's systems. As a result we have made a number of significant changes to our recruitment practice and to the support we give people during the process from selection to appointment.

2.3 On the receiving front we have experienced increasing difficulties with obtaining visas for our partners to enter the United Kingdom. As a consequence we have engaged an immigration lawyer to advise and assist us on immigration and visa matters as they occur.

2.4 In a series of discussions initiated by the Ministries Committee and its Accreditation Sub-Committee we have found ourselves addressing the question of the status of ministers we send and receive. Both theological and practical the issues raised go to the heart of what it means today to share people in mission.

2.5 At the time of writing the following United Reformed Church people are serving with partner churches outside the UK:

- Revd Chris and Carol Baillie – United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (CWM)
- Alison Gibbs – United Church of Zambia (CWM)
- Stephen and Hardy Wilkinson – FJKM, Madagascar (CWM)
- Revd Jane Stranz – Reformed Church of France
- Brian Wilkins, India (World Exchange volunteer)
- Chris Evans, India (World Exchange volunteer)
- Amanda Dawson, Malawi (World Exchange volunteer)
- Allan Christie, Malawi (world Exchange volunteer)

Current CWM vacancies are advertised on their website (www.cwmmission.org.uk) or are available as a printed list from the International Relations office. Most of the vacancies are for lay people and cover a wide range of occupations.

2.6 The following people from our partner churches outside the UK are currently serving The United Reformed Church here:

- Revd Francis Amenu from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana – Ghanaian Minister to the United Reformed Church in London
- Revd Moiseraela Prince Dibeela from the Botswana Synod, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa – Mission Enabler in the East Midlands Synod (CWM)
- Mrs Jasmine Jebakani from the Church of South India – Tutor at the Southern Theological Education & Training Scheme (CWM)
- Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands – Multi Racial/Multi Cultural Development Worker (CWM)
- Miss Vanlallmalsawmi Bapui from the Presbyterian Church of India – volunteer at Yardley Hastings (CWM)
- Jean Noel Randriamiarana from the FJKM (Madagascar) – volunteer in Penrhys (CWM)

At present we have one vacancy in the overseas special category ministry posts and would encourage congregations, districts and synods to consider if they could creatively utilise such a person in their situation.

3 World Exchange

3.1 World Exchange continues to develop as an important resource for the international programmes of The United Reformed Church. In addition to participating in the volunteer programme, we have welcomed the development of St Colm's International House in Edinburgh (the former Church of Scotland mission college) as World Exchange's UK base. The house has a core international community (mostly students) who help resource World Exchange's preparation of volunteers. It has also become the base of our English language scholarship programme and has been used in the past year for meetings of our World Church Advocates and our mission partners serving in the UK. The English language programme developed for us by World Exchange is now also being utilised by Christian Aid and our World Church Advocates and mission partners had the pleasure of meeting the first Christian Aid group from Kurdish Iraq when they had their meetings at St Colm's in February. In September the Secretary for International Relations was elected as Chairperson of World Exchange for a three-year period.

4 Scholarship programme

4.1 With the closure of St Andrew's Hall the committee was forced to review its scholarship programme. After consulting the partner churches to whom we make the programme available (Central and Eastern European churches and some non-CWM

partners in Southern Africa and Korea) we learnt that what they really valued were the opportunities to develop people's English language skills. Accordingly we asked World Exchange if they could develop for us an intensive English language programme which would equip people to represent their churches internationally, both in attending meetings and handling correspondence. The first of these courses was held in August/September 1999 with the following participants:

- Presbyterian Church of Mozambique
 - Carlos Faquione
 - Ernesto Fernando Langa
 - Lucilla Julia Siteo
- Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren
 - Pavel Krivohlav
 - Vaclav Hurt
 - Nad'a Betakova
- Evangelische Kirche der Union
 - Silke Schrader
 - Gurdi Nutzel
- Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea
 - Sin-Jung Kim
 - Jin Kim
 - Eun-Young Kon

5 International Ministry Exchanges

5.1 In June 1999 the first International Advisers meeting for Clergy Exchange International (the international short-term ministerial exchange programme we participate in) was held and as a consequence a number of significant changes were made. The first was to rename the programme *International Ministry Exchanges* and to open it to all people engaged in full-time professional service in the church. The second was to move the programme away from working holidays to opportunities for continuing ministerial education with participants using the occasion to learn from the experience of another church tradition and practice, e.g. in worship, or Christian education, or pastoral care. The third was to seek to extend the programme to a wider range of churches/countries than are currently involved. The committee has welcomed these changes as making the programme far more interesting and useful to The United Reformed Church. The next International Advisers meeting will be hosted by The United Reformed Church in July 2001.

6 St Andrew's Hall

6.1 Last year's Assembly acknowledged the closure of St Andrew's Hall, giving thanks for its tremendous witness over the years. On the 14th February 2000 the St Andrew's Hall Association was dissolved, following the completion of the sale of the St Andrew's Hall Missionary College to the Baptist

Missionary Society at the end of August 1999 and the subsequent winding up of the Association's affairs and disbursement of funds. It was a long and complicated process overseen by two people from The United Reformed Church serving as officers of the Association – Revd Ernest Cruchley (Chairman) and Revd Gwen Collins (Secretary). Working with Mrs Janet Gibbins, the Association's Treasurer they had the unenviable task of seeing to all the details involved in this difficult process and we are grateful to them for all their work on this. That is behind us now and the Ecumenical Committee are looking to how we can carry forward the task of mission education and training in an international context as requested of them by the 1999 Assembly. The United Reformed Church's share of the disbursement of funds amounts to £176,186. It is not a huge sum, but certainly a meaningful legacy to continue the important work of equipping people for God's mission today.

7 Members

7.1 The committee wishes to record its appreciation of the contribution made by Virginia Becher whose sudden death is mourned by all who knew her, especially her family to whom we extend our deepest sympathies.

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: Revd Nanette Head **Secretary:** Miss Ruth Norton
 Revd Susan Armitage, Revd Wilf Bahadur, Mr Hilary Gunn (staff link),
 Revd Derek Hopkins, Mrs Lucille King, Ms Georgette Margrett, Miss Stella Salmon.

'WE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST'

1.1 During the last year we have continued to listen, observe and monitor the implementation of the Equal Opportunities policy to which the United Reformed Church is committed. This is not an easy task as the life of the church is diverse. The example and teaching of Christ shows us care and love for the individual - any policy should seek to ensure that we are involved with and concerned for individual people, not faceless groups.

1.2 It is very easy to speak about inclusive language, ethnic minorities, the disabled because these are people in a mass and they don't worry us, even though we know that every day in our society individuals are being discriminated against.

1.3 This year, once again we emphasised the importance of monitoring, although this meets with resistance in some areas of the church. We were very grateful to the 415 members of the 590 on the Roll of Assembly who returned their completed questionnaires at last year's General Assembly, particularly those who did so reluctantly. The results showing 31% more men than women still suggest that it is easier to get to Assembly if you are a man, but across the sexes the age grouping, ethnicity and disability have virtually the same proportions:

1.4 Members of Assembly returning questionnaires:

Men	233
Women	178

Ages:		Men		Women
Under 25	27		12	15
25-59	240		138	101
60-65	74		45	27
65+	72		37	34
Ethnic Origin:		Men		Women
White	402		224	174
Black Caribbean	3		1	2
Black African	5		3	2
Black other	1		1	0
Irish	3		3	0
Other	1		0	0
		Men		Women
Not Disabled	368		209	156
Disabled	38		20	17

1.5 We declared in 1994 that 'the church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on grounds of race, gender or disability'. We may not want to, but we have to recognise, whether it is intended or not, that some people experience discrimination. If each of us as individuals, churches, districts and synods keep equal opportunities high on our agendas and thinking these instances will diminish.

1.6 Our continuing priorities are:

- a) to establish appropriate methods of monitoring the appointment, representation and position of women, black people and people with disabilities in the church. In 1996 a questionnaire went out to the churches with the intention of repeating the exercise periodically. We hope to do this again later this year. In 1996 66% of churches responded – we hope for an even larger response this year, and would also appreciate comments as there may be other questions we should be asking.
- b) to encourage churches to take advantage of the booklet published by 'the churches main committee' on the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Churches must respond to this legislation which cannot be ignored and we are planning to hold consultations at which local churches can share together their experiences and questions on the issues contained in the Disability Act regarding facilities and services. We hope that churches and Districts will support such consultations, and may even volunteer their premises.

- c) to help churches understand the implications of the equal opportunities policy presented to Assembly in 1996. This is essential reading for all areas of church life, particularly local churches, where responsibility for implementing it lies. We receive some information as to how churches are tackling the issues and would welcome more stories which can be shared with the wider church.
- d) to support the work of the Multi-Racial, Multi-Cultural Development Worker and the Racial Justice advocates.
- e) to encourage the work of the committees of the church, particularly those involved in Nominations where we have every reason to believe that both nationally and at Synod level they try to take on a balanced representation.
- f) to encourage Districts, particularly in their pastoral work with churches to keep on their agenda equal opportunities issues.
- g) to help new ministers understand the policy and issues involved by updating and issuing a leaflet.

1.7 Equal Opportunities is not an option for Christians, it is a moral, and getting to be a legal, imperative. Equal opportunities is about valuing individuals, getting the best person for the job. Being the body of Christ.

1.8 One of the joys of our faith is surely hearing and listening for God's word. In the life of the church we see the most unexpected people responding to the call to serve in the church's life. Should it surprise us? Not if we are a church that recognises we are all one in Christ!

Finance

The Committee is responsible for the general financial oversight of funds administered for the benefit of the United Reformed Church 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 - until 31 March 2000)

Miss Avis Reaney (Financial Secretary - from 1 April 2000)

Mr Alan Duncan, Mr Bill Grieve, Mr Gordon Latham, Revd John Piper, Miss Catriona Waterson, Dr Brian Woodhall (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust), Mr Tegid Peregrine (Church Buildings Secretary)

I Staffing

1.1 On June 30th 2000 Clem Frank will be retiring after 25 years of service. He joined the United Reformed Church as Chief Accountant in July 1975 and became Financial Secretary in 1978. Over the years Clem has contributed enormously to the development of all of the financial structures and procedures we now enjoy, from accounting systems to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration, the Pension Fund and Retired Ministers' Housing. We have benefitted greatly from Clem's skills and his Christian concern for the Church and its people. We thank him for all that he has given and wish him and his wife Betty a long and happy retirement.

1.2 In preparation for this change, Chris Langham, ACA, who has assisted Clem as Accountant since the beginning of 1996, was appointed as Chief Accountant on January 1st 2000. Avis Reaney FCA was appointed as Financial Secretary, and took up her post on April 1st 2000. The committee wishes these two members of the staff well as they commence new spheres of service.

1.3 Two other members of the staff of the Finance Office have completed more than 20 years of service. David Ramsay who is now the cashier has served since September 1978, and Judy Stockings who is now in charge of the Maintenance of the Ministry Office, and the detailed work on the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund, has served since January 1979. Other members of the staff in the finance office have built up many years of service. The committee records its appreciation of this long service.

2 Union with the Congregational Union of Scotland

2.1 The staff of the finance office have been very much involved in the union of the Church with the Congregational Union of Scotland. Whilst the settlement of ministerial stipends and the operation of the minister's pension fund are primarily matters for the Ministries Committee, the detailed work is carried out in the finance office, and members of the staff accompanied the Treasurer on two occasions on visits to Scotland to ensure that the financial arrangements for the union went smoothly.

3 Procedures

3.1 With the expected changes in staffing in the Finance office, another major task in the year has been to ensure that as many as possible of the procedures in the office have been recorded. The index to the documents setting out procedures now runs to over 100 topics.

4 The millennium and electronic equipment

4.1 In the event, although widely forecast, no problems were caused by the 'millennium bug'.

4.2 The somewhat old data-base program that has been used for many years has been replaced with the data-base from the office suite, 'Access'; much effort went to ensure that this complex change was achieved without disruption. The work to update the computer programs continues.

5 Church Buildings Fund

5.1 This fund continued to be used mainly for the provision of housing for centrally appointed ministers, and for the provision of building loans of up to £75,000, being up to 50% of the cost of major works in local churches or the provision of new manse accommodation. The emphasis on obtaining proper professional advice continues, and approval has been given for a number of feasibility study grants and professional fees loans. The demand for disabled facilities grants continues, and up to the end of March 2000, 166 applications have been approved, and 124 paid at a cost of some £560,000.

5.2 The committee was able to give a grant of £350,000 toward the cost of a new ecumenical church building at The Ortons, Peterborough, in the East Midland Synod, although only a small part of this sum had been drawn in the year.

5.3 Responsibility for the management of the Church Buildings Fund has now been passed to the Mission Council Grants and Loans Group.

5.4 At the same time, Tegid Peregrine will retire from the position of Secretary for Church Buildings which he has held for many years. We thank Tegid for his careful attention to the many requests for assistance that he has handled, and are glad that he will continue to help the Church centrally in his membership of the Churches Main Committee, and through the listed Buildings Advisory Group.

Resolution 28**Accounts**

General Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31st December 1999.

1999 Accounts

The 1999 accounts are set out in Appendix 1 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31st December 1999.

Resolution 29**Ministry and Mission Fund**

General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 1999 to the Ministry & Mission Fund.

The giving of the members of the Church to central funds.

The financial operation of the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration could not happen if each Church Treasurer did not make very great efforts to ensure that the money required for this part of the work is in the local bank account on 20th of each month, for collection by direct debit. That this system runs very smoothly is evidence of much hard and

devoted work, and in thanking the Church for the response to the appeal for Ministry and Mission, which once again has been met with a nearly 100% result, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

Methodist/URC Health and Healing Development Group

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Brenda Russell **Secretary:** Revd Jim Needham
Mrs Jackie Ballard, Revd David Chapman, Revd Ward Jones, Dr Margaret Moore,
Revd Malcolm White, Dr Janet Wigle, Revd Elsie Howelly

I Personnel

1.1 We bade farewell to Revd Jim Hollyman last summer. Revd Jim Needham has taken over as Secretary. Revd Brenda Russell is now the Convener. Revd Elsie Howell takes the place of Dr Ivan Cox as URC Representative. We have been helped in the year by the attendance at each meeting of Mrs Beatrice Brandon, an observer, and a member of the Church of England Working Party.

2 CCHH - RIP

2.1 In September the decision was taken to lay the Churches Council for Health and Healing to rest. The Council has lurched through several crises of late. Yet its achievement over the years are significant, not least at the interface between religion and medicine.

3 Ecumenical Developments

3.1 So what next? One of our aims is to further ecumenical development. We therefore invited Revd John Kennedy, on whose desk is the call for a new ecumenical forum for Healing ministry, to meet with us. We envisage an evolving process in which we have a key role especially in relation to England. We will encourage our Advisors in Scotland and Wales to pursue their own links there. It will not be easy to determine who can speak for Roman Catholics and Anglicans at a national level.

4 Willersley Castle (Cromford) Conference

4.1 'Time for Healing' is the title when we meet on 6th to 9th November 2000. Chair of the Anglican Working Party report, which is due to be published in June 2000, will be the keynote speaker, Bishop John Perry. There will be a day on Complementary and Alternative therapies, and half a day on Deliverance ministry. Anyone interested will be welcome to join us. Please book directly with Willersley (01629 582270).

Inter-Faith Relations

The task of the committee is

- to encourage and assist the 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: Mrs Daphne Beale **Secretary:** Revd Brenda Willis

Mrs Linda Hopley, Mr Matthew Bean, Revd David M Taylor, Revd Jonathan Dean

Consultants: Revd Dr David Bowen (Hinduism and Islam) Revd Ron Lewis, (Judaism)

Revd Dr John Parry (Sikhism) Dr Elizabeth Harris (Buddhism)

Staff Link: Revd Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations)

I Growing up

1.1 "To fulfill the church's calling requires a deliberate engagement with the local community" (9.1, *Growing Up*, Assembly Reports 1999). When we engage with our community most of us will find we are also engaging with different faith traditions. People from these faith traditions may need empowering as they tackle issues important to them, but they may also be in a position to empower others. When we are in partnership across the faiths we can treat each other with openness and respect, recognising that there are many valid styles of working within communities and that we can learn from each other. It is good to encourage ecumenical co-operation in this and offer support to inter-faith and multi-faith initiatives in our area.

1.2 Facing the Theological Implications. We can comfortably work alongside people from a variety of faiths in building up community life, helping people to feel affirmed and sharing in issues of justice, but there are times when we need to look at issues of faith. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, do not believe the same things. We have much in common for example, what we say about love, care and respect for others, the importance of prayer and the enjoyment of worship, but there are times when we need to sit down with each other and talk through some of the deeper issues of faith.

1.3 This is the point where some of us need reassurance. Our theological viewpoints may make a difference to how we approach such conversations and what our motives are. These differences need to be acknowledged and we need to be sure about where we stand in our own faith when we are discussing with

others. The challenge of inter-faith dialogue can lead us to a strengthening of our own faith as we struggle to explain to others the deeper aspects of that faith and as we listen to the depth of their faith.

1.4 As Christians find themselves getting involved in this dialogue, which is often a necessary part of engaging with their local community, they may need help in looking at the implications of what they are doing, assurance as to how this fits with the gospel imperative, information about different faith communities, links with other churches who have experience to share, guidance on the work done in schools or opportunities to share in dialogue at a regional or national level.

1.5 The United Reformed Church has been in the forefront of raising inter-faith issues and has the experience and expertise to tackle the theological and educational questions coming out of our increasing contacts with people of different faiths as well as to support individuals and churches in their searching.

How can we encourage you?

2 Consultations

2.1 This year we held a further seminar with members of the Reform Synagogues on our use of Scripture. As we studied in depth our shared Scriptures we were led to new insights, particularly on the concept of the Messiah in both traditions and how we understand God acting in history. In the coming year we hope to pursue this further and also have a meeting with Sikhs, especially with younger people. This kind of Bi-lateral dialogue can be done at local level.

Why not try it?

3 Sharing concerns

- 3.1 Concern was expressed for -
- Local Muslims in the light of the tragic situation both in Kosovo and Chechnya.
 - Hindus in this country struggling to come to terms with the actions of some extremists in India and Christians as they meet with their Hindu neighbours.
 - our relations with Messianic Jews in this country.
 - those who go from our churches to Israel and Palestine as they are faced with the political/religious situation there.
 - Christians who are involved with New Religious Movements.
 - those who feel they belong to two faiths.
 - those who are involved with inter-faith marriages.

What issues have you been faced with?

4 Education

4.1 We rejoice with our consultant on Religious Education in schools on becoming the head of the Religious Education department for Schools Net, the biggest educational site on the internet. At our last meeting she spoke to us of the importance now being given to Religious Education in schools and the recognition of the spiritual dimension which should be present in all subjects.

4.2 We are considering new ways of giving support and guidance to members of the United Reformed Church members of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education. (SACREs)

How do you support your local teachers?

5 Pilgrim 2000

5.1 The committee shared in the organisation of Pilgrim 2000 through the participation of its former convenor (Bill Mahood) in the leadership team and by making a grant from the Jewish Fund to enable fourteen young people to participate. A report of the visit can be found in Appendix 2.

Resolution 30**Christians and Local Inter-Faith Activity**

General Assembly commends the paper *Christians and Local Inter-Faith Activity* produced by the Churches Commission for Inter-Faith Relations and encourages churches to use it in their local situations.

1.1 Some years ago the predecessor of this committee, the Mission and Other Faiths Committee, promoted some guidelines on inter-faith dialogue. These are now out of print. The present committee recognise the importance of such a resource for all who find themselves needing or wishing to relate to other faith communities and so have welcomed the initiative of the Churches Commission for Inter-Faith Relations to produce a resource for local churches on inter-faith activity. The text of the Commission's leaflet can be found in Appendix 4.

1.2 In a clear and straightforward fashion the leaflet asks, why are Christians involved, how are Christians involved, and briefly answers other frequently asked questions. It also reminds us of the

four principles of inter-faith dialogue produced by the British Council of Churches in 1981 (which were adopted by the United Reformed Church General Assembly in 1983) and the four forms of dialogue enunciated by the Vatican in 1984. As such it is a valuable aid to anyone thinking about how to engage with people in their community from a variety of faith backgrounds.

1.3 Whilst not everyone has the opportunity for dialogue with people from other faith communities, where the possibility exists the committee would encourage individuals and congregations to go out in faith and discover how enriching the experience is. As the paper says: "Inter-faith encounter can renew, enrich and transform our Christian discipleship."

Life and Witness

The purpose of the Life and 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 challenge members in their stewardship and witness
- to encourage the local church to engage with its community in evangelism, if possible ecumenically;
- to enable each church to engage with its local community in partnership and service;
by gathering ideas and experience, including best practice, and advocating these to the local church;
by monitoring and assessing relevant government policy and advising the local church accordingly;
- to support the work of elders and the work of the district councils in their oversight of the local church;
- to stimulate district councils and synods in the development of their own strategies for mission;
- to support the work of the Windermere Centre and of the Rural Consultant;
- to enable ongoing reflection on issues related to the Community of Women and Men in the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Frank Beattie

Secretary: Revd John Steele

Convener of Stewardship Sub-committee: Mr Keith Webster

*Revds Peter Ball, Eddie Boon, Bob Day, Ken Forbes, Suzanne Hamnett, Bob Warwicker, Mrs Rita Joyner,
Mrs Tina Rook, Mrs Sheila Thatcher and Mr David Williams.*

All Change

1.1 For us in this committee, the last General Assembly heralded a number of changes: a new name, a new convener, six new members (over 50% of the committee) and a purpose that had been revised and extended. We are hugely indebted to those who have served the committee in the past, not least Elizabeth Caswell who for the first four years of the committee's life was its convener.

1.2 This year **Bob Day's** term of service ends, and we thank him for the expertise and enthusiasm he has brought to our work.

1.3 Michael Cruchley, who since 1990 has been the Rural Consultant for both the Methodist and United Reformed Churches, (and the Life and Witness Committee's unofficial photographer) has come to the end of his term of office. Michael has been a great enthusiast and has accepted the drudgery of touring the world learning the job with typical grace and humility. He has done much to keep rural matters in the forefront of our attention and we shall miss him. Michael's final word from Stoneleigh appears elsewhere in this report.

1.4 Towards the end of last year, the vacancy left by Michael's departure was advertised in the religious press. There was a healthy amount of interest in this joint post and three candidates were interviewed. The outcome of the process was that the position was offered to **Mrs Jenny Carpenter**, a

Methodist. Jenny comes to the job from CTE. We hope to introduce her to Assembly and we wish her well in her new responsibilities. We look forward to welcoming her to our committee, and to the breadth of vision she will bring to us.

2 The Spiritual Aspects of Ageing

2.1 Last year, the International Year of the Older Person, we offered the Church suggestions for worship materials and in tandem with the Church and Society Committee, promised a theological colloquy to explore some of the issues raised by providing meaningful and sensitive pastoral care for the aged. We had hoped that this would take place in the autumn of 1999. This proved to be over ambitious. However the colloquy was re-arranged for the 28-30 March 2000 at The Windermere Centre. It was initially by invitation only and at the time of writing this report, was well subscribed. We anticipate that this will be a live issue for all of our churches and we await with interest the distilled wisdom of the Windermere conversations.

3 College of Evangelists

3.1 As reported last year, our Church has been part of discussions on the role and place of evangelists, and all eyes were on the Church of England in October as they inaugurated their College of Evangelists.

3.2 The Service of Commissioning in Westminster was a significant and memorable event, presided over by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, with some forty or so Anglican evangelists received and formally recognised as the College's first members.

3.3 The commissioning itself was moving for those witnessing it, and affirming of those re-committing themselves to the ministry of evangelist. Some were well known figures of many years' experience. Those from other churches listening for an invitation to 'come and join us' were disappointed, but the life of this 'network' will be observed with interest as our discussions continue.

4 Money! Money! Money!

4.1 A retired Inspector of Taxes, who is also secretary of a South Yorkshire church, likes to remind his minister from time to time that there is no such thing as a free meal. Who would argue with such wisdom? But when funds that otherwise may lie hidden come to our attention, then it is our joy to invite all who will, to share the bounty.

4.2 **Gift of Grace.** We reported last year that we expected significant funding to be made available to local church projects, through the CWM Self Support Fund. A capital sum of £366,043 has been set aside for use within the URC, and the newly constituted Grant and Loans Group is already co-ordinating applications for submission to CWM. Application forms and guideline notes may be obtained through the Grant and Loans Secretary, Miss Jean Thompson.

4.3 **Grants for Rural Churches.** Grants are available for rural churches from the Arthur Rank Centre, to enable church youth leaders to attend a training course connected with their church youth work or to assist the arrangement of a training course for church youth workers. The grant may also be used to help defray the costs of resources needed for rural church youth work. Further information about these and other grants available to the rural churches is available from: The Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire CV8 2LZ Tel: 01203 696969, ext 216. Fax: 10203 414808 E-mail: arthur.rank.centre@virgin.net

4.4 In addition to grants available from the Arthur Rank Centre, every 'shire county' has a Rural Community Council (it may not have that title!). These councils hold details about local charities and have access to information on larger grant making trusts. Their field officers are usually very willing to assist churches develop their plans for serving their local communities.

4.5 **Money Trees.** It is worth remembering that churches of all denominations in urban settings may apply to the Church of England's national Church Urban Fund and that many Local Authorities are able to make grants available to organisations who do work in their area of interest, for example, community care. Local Police Forces are sometimes able to provide funds for work done in partnership with them. A youth project, for instance, may have crime prevention spin-offs.

4.6 **Europe.** A seminar, jointly organised by the Life and Witness Committee and the Vines Centre Trust, Rochester, and entitled *Empowering and Envisioning the Voluntary Sector* was held on the 16 & 17 February this year. The aim of the seminar was to help participants consider how to establish a community project and how to access funds from various sources including Europe. Invitations were sent to every synod. Someone from your synod may have attended. Ask at your synod office.

5 To encourage growth in faith among people of all ages

5.1 The Committee has been asked to give some preliminary consideration to the requirement for **Church Membership** material. At the same time we were invited to provide some input to a suitable replacement for the *Hitchhikers' Guide*. There is no doubt that such a piece of work will mean collaboration with a number of Assembly Committees and we look forward to the opportunities that will present. We are conscious that some local churches have developed their own materials and we would be glad to receive a copy of them along with notes about how they have been used, and received.

5.2 Fifty years ago, **Holiday Forum** was introduced to the Congregational Church diary, and it has remained a firm favourite ever since. Thus the 1999 Holiday Forum started with a day of celebration, ending with a service led by Keith Forecast at which Tony Burnham was the preacher. The week's conference then continued on the theme of "Going for Go(l)d". Murdoch McKenzie ably led our thoughts about jubilee and millennium with Alan Morris leading the worship. A week of learning, mixed with fun and fellowship, proved that Forum has lost none of its appeal. Attendance was again about 220, thus ensuring that financially Holiday Forum is in good shape. The conference in 2000, from 19th-25th August, is following on from last year, with the theme of "Ready for Action?" led by Paul Quilter and Rosemary Johnston. To book your place or for any further information, contact Caroline Sturtridge at 27 Cavendish Road, Bognor Regis, PO21 2JN (01243 822902)

6 To encourage the local church to engage with its community in evangelism, if possible ecumenically

6.1 We rejoice that through the expertise and guidance of synod Mission/Evangelism Enablers and CRCW's many of our churches are engaging with their communities in effective ways of evangelism. We appreciate that often this means unwavering commitment to a course of action that sometimes can be called into question by the doubters. We are absolutely convinced that evangelism is by both word and deed. In Jesus, word and action were held together in perfect unity. His deeds encouraged questions he was well placed to answer and his words led the sinner to seek healing and salvation. Those emphases continued into the life of the young church and we find them again in the vision and generosity of the great philanthropists of the 18th and 19th centuries. More than that, men and women of faith found courage to challenge socially respectable views on child labour, slavery and wealth. It is a matter of concern to us that the methods of evangelism, 'word' and 'deed', can so often become polarised in people's minds.

6.2 We in the United Reformed Church recognise and thank God for the work being done by Mission/Evangelism Enablers and CRCW's. The Life and Witness Committee is seeking to engage these servants of the church in a dialogue about evangelism, which ought to bear fruit for the whole church.

7 To enable each church to engage with its local community in partnership and service; by gathering ideas and experience, including best practice, and advocating these to the local church.

7.1.1 **Church Life Profile 2001.** The United Reformed Church has signed up to take part in a Church Life Profile which will take place in April 2001 – to coincide with the Government census. A random sample of 10% of congregations will be chosen to participate. (Other congregations will have the opportunity to take part in the profile as well.) Everyone who attends a worship activity connected with the congregation during "survey week" will be invited to answer questions about themselves, their faith and their congregation. (There will be special forms for under 11s and for ministers.) The answers from the sample congregations will be used to build up a profile of URC congregations and attenders, and (with samples from other denominations) of church attenders in England. This information will be used for national and local planning both within the United Reformed Church and ecumenically.

7.1.2 The most important benefit will be for the congregations who take part. Each congregation will receive an individual report about itself, pointing out its strengths and its weaknesses, together with a focussed mission planning resource suggesting ways to build upon those strengths and remedy weaknesses.

7.1.3 The Church Life Profile is being carried out for the churches by Churches Information for Mission, a charitable company set up by various churches and Christian agencies in England to facilitate and co-ordinate the work of churches and mission agencies in the use of information for mission planning. Alison Gelder, the chief executive officer of CIM is available to speak to synods, by invitation, about the Profile and the benefits of participation. (Alison Gelder: CIM, 22 Salisbury Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HZ; tel & fax 020 8241 0847; alison.gelder@virgin.net.)

7.2 Building Bridges of Hope.

Does YOUR Church

- want to grow and to help others to grow?
- want to learn with others effective ways of conveying faith?
- want to become a 'mission church' connecting with the needs of the community at large?

Building Bridges of Hope could be for you!

7.2.1 This is not 'just another programme' but a process. It began in 1994 with twenty local Christian communities across the four nations, representing a variety of denomination, social situation, ecumenical commitment and mission approach. CTBI's 'mission arm', the Churches Commission on Mission, began gathering information and practical wisdom from these communities.

7.2.2 Each was visited during 1997-99 by a 'participant observer' who systematically took 'snapshots' of their life over that time. Developments and setbacks were monitored and analysed so that conclusions could be shared with all churches. The three key elements of the BBH process have been to i) learn from local situations, ii) work on sharing values and iii) investigate wider church support. This has resulted in communities being enabled and encouraged to think 'big and daringly' to move out and to build bridges of hope with their wider communities.

7.2.3 The United Reformed Church has so far featured in two of these communities, High Barnet and Furnival, Sheffield, supporting the process since it began, and committing both financial and personnel resources to it. Our representatives went to the national BBH Consultation in February, and Life and Witness has made available copies of the video and booklet 'Bridges to Build' following a launch in May.

7.2.4 From the findings so far, the following **seven key indicators** have emerged, and the next step will be to **test them out** in a variety of settings within our church life. They are:

1. **Recognising opportunities**
Integrating vision and programmes
2. **Sharing the same road**
Engaging through community partnerships
3. **Sharing yearnings and faith**
Sharing with others on values and aspirations
4. **Helping each other grow**
Spiritual nurture for daily life and work
5. **Becoming a team**
Formation for clergy-lay teamwork
6. **Looking through fresh eyes**
Accompaniment and networking from the wider church
7. **Learning on the job**
Becoming a community of learning and engaging.

7.2.5 We have already confirmed the URC's support for this next exciting stage but **congregations, districts, training colleges and individuals are needed to act as 'models'**, working with the indicators which are appropriate to their setting and discovering together how their life and mission can be reshaped and revitalised.

7.2.6 There is much in Building Bridges of Hope that will be of great value and resonates with our 'Growing Up' proposals. It could be just what your church or group is looking for. Further information from the Life and Witness office.

8 To support the work of elders and the work of the District Councils in their oversight of the local church.

8.1 As part of the *Growing Up* report, the Life and Witness Committee was asked to 'review the work that is being done on **elders' training** and to present proposals for a systematic programme'. We realise that much good work is already done in this field and we are in the process of ascertaining from synods exactly how the work is carried out and by whom. Representatives of the committee will be involved with the Mersey Synod Training Committee in reviewing the training that is currently offered across the denomination. It is hoped that we will be able to offer to the church a new Elders' Training programme that is both comprehensive and practical.

8.2 Since last assembly, the committee has commissioned two pieces of work that are both almost complete and should be available to the church before the end of the year. The first deals with the role of the **church secretary** and the second with that of the **district secretary**. We recognise that there will be local emphases that cannot possibly be reflected in pamphlets like these but the hope is that they will give a good foundation to any local edifice that needs to be built upon them. Both will be in the format 'They've asked me to be...' It is worth noting here that the **Windermere Centre** continues to offer short courses on both these areas of service. The next one for church secretaries is scheduled for 3-5 November 2000.

8.3 While thinking about the support offered to district councils, it seems appropriate here to remind Assembly of the leaflet, '**They've asked me to be an Interim Moderator**'. This is available from the URC Bookshop. A much fuller set of Guidelines was also produced some time ago and circulated to all District Pastoral Committee conveners. It remains a useful resource for those approached by District Councils to become interim moderators of local churches. Further details from the Life and Witness Committee.

9 To support the work of the Windermere Centre and of the Rural Consultant.

9.1.1 **The Windermere Centre** continues to serve the Church through the diversity of its programme, its ethos of fellowship and care, and the unspoken individual ministries which are exercised. Much of 1999 has been and most of 2000 will be marked by the travelling life of the Centre Director as Moderator of General Assembly. That the Centre has not lost momentum is a tribute to the diligent and caring work of the Locum Director and all the Centre staff. We already know that the retiring Moderator will bring much stimulus to the Centre in 2001 as a result of his Moderatorship.

9.1.2 Occupancy in 1999 was somewhat lower than in the previous year for a variety of reasons. The need for general advocacy and targeting of publicity remains clear and the Advisory Group is considering ways in which this need might be met – but the best form of advocacy is from people who have enjoyed their 'Home in the Lakes'! It is good that we now have 650 'Contact People' in local congregations.

9.1.3 The work of the Management Group is evident in excellent employee relations, provision of further en-suite facilities, improvement of office accommodation and the ongoing redecoration and minor improvement schedule. A structural survey revealed no surprises and precautionary work to an external wall is complete.

9.1.4 The Centre and the Carver congregation have intensified their mutual exploration of effecting mission locally and nationally. A very helpful independent Feasibility Study was completed during the year and a joint council is now prioritising areas of further partnership. The hope is that the result will demonstrate what applying the principles of the 'Growing Up' report can mean in practice

9.1.5 So this part of the Church's life leaves one century successfully and plans a new life for a new century.

9.2 **Rural Consultant.** In his final report as our Rural Consultant, Michael Cruchley writes:

9.3.1 **Farming.** The last year has seen continuing difficulty in the farming community and a further decline in farm incomes. The Day of Prayer for the Farming Community held in May 1999 was well received by many in that community and is being repeated in 2000. If churches have not observed it in May, then to include special prayers at Harvest time would be appropriate.

9.3.2 The Arthur Rank Centre will be continuing the Harvest Briefing Sheet that has been produced for churches in recent years. It may be true that not many of our churches have close contact with farming families and, at the same time, many ask why we make special pleading for farmers. 'We all need food' is one answer. Another is that because many in the churches did not speak out about the decline of coal and steel industries (though some significantly did) we should not make the same sin of omission again.

9.4 **Regional Government.** Significant changes took place in 1999 concerning regionalisation as well as devolution. There is a continuing need for the churches to relate to the new agencies who are beginning to develop their working patterns. The pressure on the members of these agencies to concentrate on urban needs is great and we need to help them keep a balance of service to the whole community whilst not saying that rural is better than urban, or vice versa.

9.5 **Small Churches Report.** This report will be of considerable significance to our rural churches in every synod. It is anticipated keenly by many of us in those rural areas.

9.6 **Arthur Rank Centre.** The Revd Gordon Gatward has begun his term of service as Director and is keen to continue the close relationship with the URC. As Mrs Jenny Carpenter begins her service as our Rural Consultant it is hoped that Synods, Districts and churches will call on the resources of the Arthur Rank Centre and its staff to encourage and enable mission and to give considered views on all aspects of rural life and work.

10 To enable ongoing reflection on issues related to the Community of Women and Men in the Church.

10.1 When the United Reformed Church heard from the World Council of Churches in 1987 about the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the response of the then Faith and Life Department resulted in the network known as Sharing People in Network (SPIN). This became linked with Discipleship, Stewardship and Witness in 1995.

10.2 With the end of the Decade came the end of SPIN, but not of its work. The 1998 Assembly gave Life & Witness the mandate to enable a new network to take shape, in association with other related groups. But SPIN was 'of its time' and its aims resonated with many. Could a new network do the same?

10.3 Since then, there has been much discussion and planning. A Consultation at the Methodist International Centre in November concluded that there is a place for a network which has 'inclusive community' at its heart and is capable of facilitating awareness of gender and social issues across the structures of the church.

10.4 To this end, a small steering group is taking shape which will begin to set a working agenda for a Community of Women and Men. Life and Witness want to hear from anyone who would like to become involved.

11 Growing Up. A Church at the Crossroads.

11.1 It has not been within our remit as a Committee to question the broad-brush picture painted in part 1 of *Growing Up*. We are grateful for the painstaking research and are happy to acknowledge that the broad sweep of the historical perspective never intended to give the impression that every local church is the same. Clearly there are already a number of churches that deserve to be described as 'missionary congregations.'

11.2 Growing Up. Towards a Mission Strategy

'The lessons of the URC's past resistance to what the New Testament means by evangelism indicates that the (Life and Witness) Committee must sharpen its focus, to help the people become more effective in its witness of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.'

'To revive the desire to witness and to suggest the ways, must be the focus of the Life and Witness Committee's work in supporting the local Church in proclaiming the good news.'

As General Assembly accepted the mission programme outlined in the report *'Growing Up'*, an awesome responsibility passed into the hands of the Life and Witness Committee. These quotes and the whole of the paragraph that binds them together (7.2) have concentrated our minds and held us to account at each of our meetings. As we considered how we were to respond to the challenge we became more and more convinced of our impotency. How can **we** revive *'the desire to witness'* in a Church which historically has proved so resistant to what the New Testament means by evangelism? How are **we** to envision and energise a church that received the report for 'consideration' only? If this report, like so many others before it, is not to wither on the vine, it needs to be welcomed by local churches for consideration, prayer and action.

11.3 How can the *'desire to witness'* be revived? Not by external helps and props! Later in this report we shall recommend a number of tools readily available to the church to equip them for the task. But if there is no heart for the task, even the best tools will accomplish nothing. As a Committee, we can do nothing to revive the desire to witness. We would suggest however that that desire may well be re-kindled, by a loving appreciation of what God has done for all men and women in Christ crucified. But more than that, a return to the first principles of our faith needs to be coupled with prayer. If our devotion towards the God who has saved us is not to terminate in a cosy 'me and him' relationship, then we need to pray that the Spirit will give us the desire to witness. No survey of the Welsh revival in the 18th century, or of the founding of the great missionary societies or indeed of the Irish revival of 1859, would dare to play down the place of faithful, corporate prayer. How many of our churches have meetings for prayer? How many of our people acknowledge the need? The recovery of the desire to witness is grounded in prayer. If we are not prepared to give ourselves to prayer in this matter, the best programmes, the most instructive books and the highest quality teaching will not help us.

11.4 **On Your (5) Marks!** The General Secretary, in introducing the report to the 1999 General Assembly, described the report as, *'the sound of the starting pistol in a long race'*. If local churches receive **Growing Up** for discussion, prayer and action, they will find that they have entered a marathon, not a sprint. We would ask the church to recognise that we in this Committee are fellow runners! Rather than making a dash for the line, we have been forced to pace ourselves. Consequently, not all the issues laid at our door receive equal weight in this first report. We have chosen to begin where *Growing Up* begins - PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM.

11.5 *'People need help to be credible witnesses'*. Jesus said more than 'follow me', he continued 'and I will make you to become fishers of men.' How long would it take to expound all that? At least we can agree that there is here a promise that Jesus will foster a process of change within us that will result in others being brought into the Kingdom. The assessment of *Growing Up* is that many of us have stalled in that process and now we need help to begin moving on again.

11.6 Ministers must bear responsibility in this task of enabling the people of God to be credible witnesses. But if ministers too have stalled, who is to help them? Is there a difference between preaching and witnessing? Where are we to find again our confidence in telling our faith story? Has this cry been heard by our colleges and training courses? If local churches are to move on in the whole business of being credible witnesses, then we need to learn to trust one another, to acknowledge our shared failure and to move on together - minister and people. This will not be without risk or pain but will have the value of enabling congregations to reflect on the truth that in telling our faith stories, ministers and people start from the same place of discomfort and vulnerability. We need to grow fellowships committed to the task where the risks are understood, where the hesitant are encouraged and where wounds are tended.

11.7 **Resources.** We have been thrilled to learn of the initiatives taken in several synods and of the imaginative ways of getting the *Five Marks of Mission* onto the agenda. We would wish to encourage those who are already 'off the mark'. In spite of all these best efforts, we have an underlying unease that a huge percentage of our local churches remain impervious to the challenge. How to encourage them to join us in the race has exercised us considerably. Do we need some local churches to become advocates for the 5 Marks? We would like to hear from any church, prepared to become a local resource by telling its stories in a way that would encourage others. Do we need small group action packs on each of the 5 Marks and modelled on the excellent *'Roots and Branches'* which addresses the issues of the environment in the fifth mark? We are keen that the church should avail itself of the first rate resources already on the market that deal with the challenge to be witnesses to the faith. The ones we have chosen to highlight are accessible, inexpensive and could make an immediate difference to our mission.

Building Bridges of Hope (see 7.2)

Telling Our Faith Story. This small booklet is designed to help Christians tell their faith stories. (Janice Price, Church House Publishing, £2.95 available at Bookshop)

Lay Witnesses. This is a human resource. The Lay Witness Movement is an independent, non-denominational organisation who will run a weekend at your own church. They offer a low-key gentle approach to help any church become more effective in mission. No charge, but a donation is requested. Please visit Brian and Hazel Rollins at their Assembly display or contact them at The Lay Witness Movement, 25 Chorley Road, Standish, Wigan WN6 0AA. Tel: 01257 422995.

Lost for Words. A six-session course full of practical ideas, offered by CPAS to help Christians relax into 'being ourselves, with God, for others'. (CPAS, Athena Drive, Tachbrook Park, Warwick CV34 6NG. Tel: 01926 458458)

11.8 **Joined-up thinking.** The mission of the church is about words, action and relationships. The five marks of mission are a joined-up way of thinking about how we live out our faith in a world of need. None of us can with integrity, turn away from the challenge we face.

Stewardship Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Mr Keith Webster **Secretary:** Revd John Steele

Members: Mr Frank Dale, Mrs Sue Wilkinson, Mrs Sheila Yates, Mr Geoffrey Wood

12.1 **Introduction.** This has been a transition year for the Sub-Committee which has a continuing aim of developing and promoting ways in which the church, at all levels, can exercise real stewardship of the gifts entrusted to it. These gifts, whether financial or individual skills, must be identified, nurtured and used effectively to support the life of the church. This can range from the day to day 'housekeeping' to the high profile mission activity, not losing sight of the fact that everything that is done in some way supports the implementation of God's mission for the church as a whole.

12.2 **TRIO (The Responsibility is Ours).** Work started during the year to develop a successor to TRIO. Many churches can testify to the benefits they have found in raising the profile of stewardship through the use of TRIO. The basic programme still has a role to play since not all churches have given their stewardship needs the detailed attention to be found in TRIO. The aim of the Sub-Committee is to develop a successor programme which will help churches as they look at their mission initiatives and their wide role within the local community. A key element in the success of TRIO has been the involvement of the whole congregation, highlighting the fact that everyone has a part to play in stewardship.

12.3 **Vision Workshops.** Local Churches still find that the identification of a clear focus for their church life brings renewed commitment and enthusiasm. This focus has been achieved through the running of a Vision Workshop (or some similar activity by whatever name), arranged through the Synod or District.

12.4 **GEM (Giving Enables Mission).** GEM, which is a full stewardship programme, continues to be used by churches that have carried out a Vision Workshop or similar programme. The programme is still available from URC Bookshop at £25, which includes copies of the necessary literature and acetates for presentation.

12.5 **Deeds of Covenant.** During the year the updated leaflet setting out the substantial benefits available to the church, through Deeds of Covenant and Gift Aid became available. All gifts under deduction of tax are from April 2000 made under the new Gift Aid scheme and the leaflet will be reviewed in the light of the recent changes in the tax implications of charitable giving.

12.6 **Ecumenical.** Through the Staff Secretary, John Steele, the Church is represented on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, which is invaluable for the sharing of resources and information on all stewardship concerns.

The annual Conference of the Network takes place in Harlech College, Gwynedd from the 17th – 20th July.

It has been good also to renew contact with the United Church of Canada this year, and to have received information on their programmes.

12.7 **People.** The year has also been one of change with regard to membership of the Sub-Committee. Julian Macro, whose role as Convener began in the days of the Advocacy Group, stands down this year. His guidance and input over the years has been much valued. Also standing down are Janet Turner, David Netherwood and Tom Hamilton – their contributions have been greatly appreciated.

Ministries

The Committee is responsible for the ministry of word and sacraments, church related community work and lay preaching. 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 oversees the work of the National Assessment Board. It is assisted by five Sub-Committees.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Maintaining the roll of ministers, this Sub-Committee accredits those applying for inclusion after training and those coming from other denominations. It is concerned with numbers and recruitment.

Church Related Community Work Central Management Committee

It is responsible for managing the Church Related Community Work Programme under the terms agreed in the Church Related Community Work Covenant.

Lay Preaching Support Committee

It is responsible for the advocacy of lay preaching and support of lay preachers in the United Reformed Church.

Maintenance of the Ministry

Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' 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 Ministers Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Graham Long* **Secretary:** *Revd Christine Craven*
Mrs Sally Abbott, Mr Brian Evans, Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Brian Jolly, Revd Tjarda Murray,
Revd Martha McInnes, Revd Tony Ruffell, Revd Graham Sweeney

I Personalialia

1.1 Once again the passing year has seen a number of changes in both committee membership and staff appointments. In June Ms Suzanne Adofo and Mr Stephen Summers began to job share as our new Church Related Community Work Development Officers. Already we are benefiting by their work. Earlier in the year the Revd Sandy Mailer had been forced to retire as Lay Preaching Commissioner on the grounds of ill health. He has been succeeded by Mrs Carol Dixon. Mr Geoffrey Wood has become Convener of the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee. Ministries Committee has said farewell to Revd Sandra Lloydlangston and Mr John Ellis and welcomed Revd Roz Harrison and Revd Tjarda Murray. We have also been glad to have Miss Margery King of the Congregational Church in Scotland present at our meetings in anticipation of the union.

1.2 In addition, we want to acknowledge the assistance given by the Revd Nelson Bainbridge, Revd Keith Fisher and the Revd Terry Girling who did the foundation work on stipendiary Ministers and retirement and Mr Michael Harrison, Revds Sandra Lloydlangston, Bill Sewell and John Slow who undertook the review of non-stipendiary Ministry.

2 Overseas Recruitment Scheme

2.1 Last autumn our Secretary made a valuable visit to the United States to refresh our personal contacts with our partner churches in the overseas recruitment scheme. The conversations held raised a number of questions which require more work to be done, not least in the area of reciprocity. In addition, applications from ministers in Australasia, Southern Africa and Europe suggest that the time is right to consider increasing the breadth of the scheme to take

in additional Churches. But we cannot use the scheme, whatever its current name, simply to make up depleted ministry numbers in this country. Churches in other parts of the world which in previous times had a surplus of ministers for the most part no longer do so. The scheme has therefore to be seen much more in terms of an interchange of ministers rather than one for drawing into areas of depletion ministers in excess of requirements elsewhere. This suggests that some recasting of the scheme in both nature and name is necessary.

3 Enquirers' Conferences

3.1 Over 110 enquirers into various ministries attended the three conferences which took place in 1999. Several of those enquirers have now also attended a National Assessment Conference. At the time of going to print four conferences are planned for the year 2000 including one hosted by the Synod of Scotland.

4 Deployment

4.1 During the year Mission Council has returned deployment issues to the care of the Ministries Committee. A useful consultation with the Synods was held in January 2000 and the Committee is now seeking to carry forward agreed concerns raised by representatives at that meeting. These centre around the need to extend deployment thinking beyond concern for the national numbers of ministers to the way in which ministers are used in synod and district strategies. To this end the Committee is setting up a working party to look in detail at these concerns.

5 Chaplains to the Forces

5.1 Last year General Assembly committed us all to the mission strategy outlined in *Growing Up*. It committed us to reach out more pro-actively into the community and commented that "people actually deserve more than 'the best we can manage' and certainly more than 'the best we could think of twenty years ago'". Our attitude to military chaplaincies, whether as full time service or with local volunteer units has been at best ambivalent. Yet in recent years we have seen volunteers serving alongside regular units in the former Yugoslavia in peace-keeping roles. Those who serve us in this way deserve support from their local churches, even though they may not see themselves in a church context. Chaplaincy service whether full time or honorary, is a real ministry and a vital expression of the church's mission.

5.2 The United Reformed Church currently has two serving chaplains - the Revd Steven Whiting who is in Northern Ireland and the Revd Michael Meachin who is with the 1st Submarine Squadron in Scotland.

There are vacancies for chaplains to the forces and there is concern that if the churches do not bring forward candidates for the appointments available the chaplaincy provision for the forces could be cut back. We ought not to let this opportunity to provide ministry go by default.

5.3 In addition there is great scope for the appointment of local ministers as honorary chaplains related to Territorial Units, Cadet Corps. etc. Many units would welcome the involvement of local ministers. Such chaplaincy work is at least as important as the variety of industrial, commercial and public service chaplaincies being created through agencies such as Ministry in the World of Work.

6 Reviews

6.1 This year the Committee brings to General Assembly two important reviews, on Ministers and Retirement and the non-stipendiary Ministry. Both reports are supported by extensive research and consultation.

6.2 In early 1998 the Committee invited the Revd Nelson Bainbridge, former Wessex Moderator, to convene a working party to deal with stipendiary Ministers and Retirement. The first aspect of consultation involved the wives of those on the working party. Thereafter a questionnaire was circulated to every retired minister in the Dorset District with a 69% return. The Revd Roger and Mrs Mary Hall who have extensive experience from the pre-retirement conferences were also consulted and the working party studied documents from other sources. Once the initial report was drafted a copy was sent for comment to Synod Ministries Committees and to at least one retired minister in every District and to a number of other people. It was then amended in the light of the comments received, and subsequently considered by the Ministries Committee which made further amendments, a few of content and rather more of style to enable the presentation of the report to Assembly.

6.3 It is over two and half years since the Committee began the process of reviewing the non-stipendiary Ministry and two years since it asked one of its members, Mr Michael Harrison, to convene a working party to make the review. The working party prepared and circulated questionnaires to every non-stipendiary minister, every District and Synod. The response was considerable and the replies were studied carefully. Conflicting views were expressed on a number of matters but all were taken into account by the working party in preparing the report now presented.

6.4 The Committee is very grateful to all who have assisted in the preparation of these reports.

Accreditation Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Robert Way **Secretary:** Revd Christine Craven
Mrs Frances Caldwell, Mrs Julie McLaren, Revd Graham Robson

1 The Committee met three times during 1999, and has continued to consider requests for names to be added to the United Reformed Church rolls of Ministers, stipendiary and non-stipendiary. We maintain the list of those accepted for ministerial training, and the roll of Accredited Lay Preachers.

2 **Certificates of Eligibility**

2.1 Chief amongst our tasks has been that of weighing applications for inclusion on our rolls of Ministers from Ministers of other denominations, and of deciding upon them. Great care has to be taken in such matters, for complexities sometimes lie behind a seemingly straightforward request. This has caused disquiet to some who felt that their application was being delayed in process, and to others whose request did not receive the response for which they had hoped. Care is taken throughout to make sure that the United Reformed Church acts in close liaison with other Churches in these islands and elsewhere.

2.2 It is the intention of the Sub-Committee to reconsider the way in which applications are made and are processed. We expect to be bringing possible changes to the notice of the Ministries Committee in due course.

2.3 Our concern for good inter-Church relations and for the happy settlement of those who come to be of our number has led us to a major piece of work. Our continuing attempt to draw up procedural guidelines to help those who wish to join us from other denominations has led us to take careful note of those inevitable cases which lie outside the expected pattern. At the same time we have received a report from one of our members upon the workings and effectiveness of the Overseas Recruitment Scheme, and another from the Ministries Secretary on her recent visit to those American Churches who are our partners in the scheme. We have sought to clarify mutual understanding on how the Scheme may best be worked. We found that these three lines of enquiry overlapped and raised some questions of principle and others of good practice. Work to bring these to a proper resolution is presently under way.

3 **Admissions to the roll of Ministers** (from 1st April 1999 to 20th March 2000)

3.1 **By Ordination:**

- i) stipendiary:
Ruth Allen, Jane Barron,
Christopher Coe, David Downing,
Giles Henry Goodchild,
Catherine Elizabeth Hare,
Geoffrey Charles Hewitt (from Salvation Army), Rosemary Pullen, David Rees,
David Sebley, Alistair Smeaton,
Jim Thorneycroft, David Varcoe,
Camilla Veitch, Alan Wickens
- ii) non-stipendiary:
Janet Conway, Derek John Ilines,
Susan Elizabeth Kirkbride,
Alan James Kirkcaldy,
Barbara Pearson, David Thompson

3.2 **By Transfer from other Churches:**

John Cox (United Church of Christ, USA), Valerie Davies (Congregational Federation), Hartmut Eder (Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz), Julie Hopkins (Baptist Union of Great Britain), Leonora Jagessar-Visser t'Hooft (United Protestant Church of Curacao), Michael Jagessar (United Protestant Church of Curacao), Malachle Munyaneza (Presbyterian Church of Rwanda), Murray Rae (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand), Tamas Sugar (Reformed Church of Hungary)

4 **Deletions from the roll of Ministers** (from 1st April 1999 to 20th March 2000)

4.1 **By Resignation:**

Marlene Brown, Graham Caswell,
Stephen Mark Piper

4.2 **By transfer to other Churches:**

Margaret McKay

5 Changes within the roll of Ministers
(from 1st April 1999 to 20th March 2000)

5.1 **From non-stipendiary to stipendiary service:**
David Simpson

6 Admission to the list of Church Related Community Workers
(from 1st April 1999 to 20th March 2000)

Alison Micklem
Adella Pritchard

7 Lay Preachers

7.1 The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been Nationally Accredited.

Northern Synod:- Andrew Graydon, Philip Theaker
North Western Synod:- Irene Bnmskill, Marie Crook, Rowland Dowell, Janet Eccles, David Foster, Brenda Gill, Elisabeth Mullen, Joan Parry

Mersey Synod:- Ernest Howard, David Powell

Yorkshire Synod:- William Clarke, Elaine Harrison, Thomas Hodge, Keith Mellor, Roy Squires, Sheila Telfer, John Wadsworth

West Midlands Synod:- Ann Evans

Eastern Synod:- Roger Gillingham, Carole Pearl, Mary Playford, Andrew Royal, Margaret Woods

South Western Synod:- Janet Clark, Ruth Fulbrook, Peter Swift

Wessex Synod:- Madeline Diver, Colin Ferguson, Mark Meatcher

Thames North Synod:- Chris Bryant, Patrick Coleman, Robert Harvey, Susan Impey, Pauline Main, Andrew Searle, Terry Silvey, Julia Spencer, Elizabeth Webber

Southern Synod:- Bernard Doust, John Ellis, Peter Groves, Albert Read, Lynne Wilkins

Synod of Wales:- Jessie Griffiths

National Assessment Board

Convener: Mr Brian Evans **Secretary:** The Revd Christine Craven

Mrs Jean Barraclough, Miss Margaret Compton, Mrs Janine Lawley, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Ms Elaine Gentles, Mr David Coaker, Mr Monty Helmn, Mr Alan Small, Dr Chris Whitehead, Revd Alison Davies, Revd Denise Megson, Revd Lythan Nevard, Revd Ivor Rees, Revd Reginald Rooke, Revd Howard Starr, Revd Derek Wales

1 In 1999, three Assessment Conferences were held, compared to the four held in recent years. Happily, this change was the result not of a smaller number of candidates but of a high level of co-operation between those responsible for the assessment process. This meant that the last Assessment Conference was held in mid-year (compared to mid-May in 1998 and early June in 1997). This schedule was clearly helpful both to candidates (and their families) and to Colleges in their preparations for the new academic year.

2 Candidates

2.1 **42** candidates attended the National Assessment Conferences in 1999;

- 21 for stipendiary Ministry
- 8 for non-stipendiary Ministry
- 4 Church Related Community Workers
- 9 Re-Assessment (NSM to SM)

2.2 **36** were finally accepted for training as a result of Assessment Conference recommendations and Synod decision;

- 16 stipendiary Ministry
- 8 non-stipendiary Ministry
- 4 Church Related Community Workers
- 8 Re-Assessment (NSM to SM)

3 Although there has been no dramatic increase in the numbers coming to Assessment Conferences, the large number of positive recommendations reflects the impact of the new criteria upon the assessment process. In the long

pre-assessment period, candidate's sense of vocation is nurtured and explored with the help of the District Council. It has to be said, however, that the number of students completing training each year is still smaller than the number of ministers retiring. Please continue to pray that men and women will respond to God's call.

4 Discussion has continued of the assessment of the training needs of candidates. It has been decided that the separate training conference envisaged in last year's report will not, after all, be held. The training interview will continue to be held at Assessment Conference, but it will come after the two interviews that each candidate has with assessors.

5 At the Board's annual meeting in September, we followed up the Equal Opportunities training held in 1998 with a valuable complementary session led by Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper. It is important that we should continue to widen the ethnic base both of the field of candidates and of the Board itself.

6 The annual November consultation at Windermere (held this year for the first time at a weekend rather than mid-week), continues both to provide valuable training for those involved in the training of candidates and to develop co-operation between the Board and the Synod committees. The consultations have revealed a widely shared concern that those not accepted for training should receive continuing pastoral support within the Districts and Synods.

Church Related Community Work Central Management Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Susan Flynn **Secretary:** Mr John Boddy
Revd Peter Cruchley, Revd Alison Hall, Revd Clifford Wilton, Mrs Diana Herbert
Co-opted: Chris Lawrence, Adella Pritchard (CRCWS)

1 Suzanne Adofo and Stephen Summers were appointed in a job-share to the post of Church Related Community Work Development Worker in June 1999. They have been undertaking an induction programme for the first six months but have also had to quickly become involved in the support and maintenance of the programme. Grateful thanks are extended to Daphne Beale and Ernest Cruchley for their help during the vacancy. Suzanne and Steve have already begun to have an impact on how the CRCW programme is managed and they bring new relevant skills and experience from outside the United Reformed Church.

2 The responsibility for the support and training of CRCW students is now being undertaken by a part-time Course Co-ordinator (8 hours a week) - Alison Micklem, through the Faith in Living Course based at Luther King House. This is a welcome and appropriate development.

3 Work has begun on the priorities reported last year

3.1 Marketing the CRCW programme and recruitment of additional Church Related Community Workers. This is crucial as there are a number of vacancies and more are anticipated as new Church-in-Community projects are approved.

3.2 A number of new ideas have been floated which include an apprentice-style model of working and undertaking training as not all mature candidates can afford to live on a student grant. On the one hand there is a commitment to achieving parity between Church Related Community Workers and Ministers of Word and Sacrament whilst on the other there is a need for flexible and innovative ways of recruiting and training more Church Related Community Workers. It is thought that more could be done to attract Community Workers from other denominations through advertising etc.

3.3 The devolved management of the Church Related Community Worker Programme to the Synods over an agreed time-scale. A plan of action is being prepared which will be ready for Assembly.

3.4 In collaboration with the Life and Witness Committee, work to produce a strategy of mission. Future meetings include a consultation of 'Growing Up' and one between Church Related Community Workers and Mission Enablers.

4 The past year has again been a very demanding one but the committee and workers are now ready to embark on enabling the change involved in the Review of the CRCW Programme and 'Growing Up' to happen.

Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Carol Dixon (National Lay Preaching Commissioner)

Secretary: Mrs Judith Johnson

Dr Berta Doodson, Dr Robert Pettigrew, Mr Hugh Barlow, Mr Les Phillips

1 During the past year the Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee have been involved in organising activities and considering issues.

2 Consultations for Commissioners

2.1 The residential Commissioners Consultation 1999 was a great success. 25 Commissioners and a number of other people were addressed by Wilma Frew who shared some of her experiences during her year as Assembly Moderator. The programme also included discussion on the role of the Lay Preaching Commissioner, ongoing opportunities for training, guidelines for District Recognition of Lay Preachers and visiting speakers met with small groups to explore issues relating to initial training of Lay Preachers. The general sense of fellowship and formation of friendships was greatly appreciated by all who attended and the success of a weekend consultation was noted. It is hoped to hold a residential Consultation every 2nd year.

2.2 Arrangements have been made for the Commissioners' Consultations in 2000 and 2001. The keynote speaker at the Consultation in London in June 2000 is Revd Tony Burnham addressing "Growing up" - its implications for Lay Preachers". The afternoon includes discussion in small groups on the issues of District Recognition, Lay Preachers Self-Reflection, and an opportunity for the Commissioners to meet the National Lay Preaching Commissioner, as well as open plenary session for the commissioners to raise any particular concerns they have. It is proposed to pilot the Self-Reflection scheme in particular Districts.

2.3 Consultation 2001 will take place on 15-17 June at Hinsley Hall, Leeds and the main guest will be Revd Bill Mahood, Assembly Moderator. We hope to look at the issue of Lifelong Learning and Continuing Development and also how best to deliver integrated ministry (Lay Preachers and ministers working in partnership).

3 Key issues arising from Consultation 1999 identified by the Support Sub-Committee and addressed during the year were:

- a job description for District Commissioners;
 - a programme of Self Reflection for Lay Preachers to encourage them in their present ministry and identify areas of potential development;
 - recommendations for the District Recognition of those lay preachers not seeking National Accreditation, 'tidying up' current procedures and advising on future practice;
 - and guidance notes for Assessed services.
- Some of these are already in the hands of District Commissioners and others are nearing completion.

4 A leaflet 'Towards Best Practice - When Visiting Preachers Lead Worship in Local Churches' was passed to the Ministries Committee for consideration prior to being circulated to churches and to those involved in leading worship for congregations other than their own.

5 New Lay Preaching recruitment material is being produced.

6 Future items over the next year to be addressed by the Support Sub-Committee include:

- review of the pilot of the proposed Self-Reflection scheme;
- further consideration of the opportunities for Continuing Development and support for Lay Preachers working in isolated situations;
- final production of the new recruitment material;
- representation of the committee on the Joint Lay Readers and Preachers Conference;
- and consideration of the issue of membership for National Accreditation in an ecumenical context.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Simon Swalles **Secretary:** Mr Clive C Willis
Mrs Margaret Waller, Mrs Sheila Woodcock, Revd Graham Cook, Revd John Pugh, Mr Graham Stacy

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 Property statistics

2.1 Overall activity remained high during 1999, but the emphasis switched from purchases to sales. Twelve retiring ministers were housed and five already-retired ministers or widows were re-housed. In addition we took over the management of two properties from a Synod, thus making a total of 19 acquisitions. However, no less than 27 properties were sold, meaning a fall of 8 in our total stock of properties owned or managed.

2.2 Number of Properties

As at 1st January 1999	315
Acquired in 1999	19
	334
LESS Properties sold in 1999	- 27
As at 31st Dec. 1999	307
Of which:	
Unoccupied	NIL
For Sale	5
Occupied by - Retired Ministers	197
- Widows	101
- non-URC tenants	3
Freehold Ground Rents	1
	307

2.3 At the year end 4 properties were in the process of purchase and 4 applicants were seeking a property for purchase.

3 Properties are purchased in the name of either United Reformed Church 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:-

4.1 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.

4.2 Applicants wishing to have a retirement property costing in excess of the Joint ceiling figure should consult with the Secretary.

4.3 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 was surveyed.

4.4 The maximum amount of contribution is not provided as of right to each applicant, the determining factor in deciding the amount is how much capital is owned by the applicant and spouse.

5 In 1999 the standard rent was £67 per calendar month. This sum is the rent payable by those who are provided with the maximum contribution when acquiring the property. If less than the maximum contribution is provided, the rent payable is reduced proportionately.

For 2000 the standard rent has been set at £68 per calendar month.

6 Rental income for 1999 was £225,000 (as compared with £222,000 for 1998). This sum was credited to Property Management Account, from which all costs relating to maintenance, repair, insurance and administration are taken. In 1999 these costs totalled £244,000, thus giving a shortfall for the year of £19,000 on Property Management Account. However, General Revenue Account, which includes

grants, donations, legacies and profits on sale of properties, showed a surplus of £440,000, thus enabling our reserves to increase by £421,000 from these sources.

7 The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year. These amounted to £232,000.

8	1999 £	1998 £
During the year we spent on 19 new properties (1998 - 19)	1,215,000	1,216,000
We sold 27 properties (1998 - 18) for	850,000	759,000
Thus net investment in property was	365,000	457,000
We received cash legacies, donations, net rents etc. of	383,000	509,000
and thus were able to reduce borrowings by	18,000	52,000

9 It is anticipated that during 2000 assistance will be required for 15 retiring ministers. After allowing for possible need for widows or for rehousing it would be prudent to expect up to 20 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to £1.5 million and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.

10 During 1999 visits were made by the officers of the Society to approximately 56 applicants, tenants and 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. In 1999 three courses were run, in May, October and November and three more are planned for this year. The housing 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 Geoffrey Wood **Secretary:** Mrs Judy Stockings

Miss Margaret Atkinson, Mr Victor Hughff, (Convener Pensions Executive), Mr Graham Stacy, (Honorary Treasurer),
Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Tony Wilkinson

I Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

1.1 Children's Allowances

Children's Allowances were introduced by Assembly 1999. Representations were made to the Sub-Committee that the framework was too severe in that if the family income exceeded the prescribed 'cut-off' limit by only £1 then all entitlement was lost. Mission Council approved a revision to allow a reducing benefit where the family income does exceed the limit. The Allowance will be rebated by 50p in the pound in respect of family income over stipend plus £2,000.

1.2 Manse heat and light arrangement

Since 1992 we have operated an arrangement under which part of the stipend was treated as reimbursement of manse heat and light costs. This arrangement resulted in an annual saving of National Insurance contributions amounting to some £50,000 for the church and an average of about £60 for the minister. Following a change in legislation, this saving ceased to be available to the Church after 5th April 2000, although it could still apply to individual ministers. The Sub-Committee came to the

conclusion that the administrative time and cost involved in continuing to operate the arrangement, together with the complicated and sometimes unpredictable impact on minister's payroll deductions far outweighed any potential benefit to ministers. Accordingly the Sub-Committee recommended to Mission Council that the manse heat and light arrangement be discontinued with effect from 1st April 2000 and that paragraph 6.1.2 in the Plan, which provided for the arrangement, be deleted. Mission Council approved this recommendation and ministers have been advised.

2 Union with the Scottish Congregational Church

2.1 A number of issues needed to be addressed i.e. collection of Ministry and Mission Fund contributions, payment of stipends, information on a wide range of matters (as included in the information pack for ordinands) – as well as issues related to introduction to the URCMPF (where Scottish Ministers are eligible and apply). An initial meeting in Glasgow in November 1999 was followed by a meeting with all ministers and church treasurers – again in Glasgow in February this year.

Resolution 31

Plan for Partnership

General Assembly amends the Plan for Partnership by the inclusion of the words in italics in para 6.3.4 which will then read:

Expenses: The local church or other appropriate body shall reimburse the minister or CRCW for the cost of postage, telephone, stationery and any other expenses necessarily incurred on church business, *this may well include expenses relating to the use of a computer and in some instances the provision of a computer.* The reimbursement of expenses will be on the basis of actual cost incurred, and not by a pre-determined sum.

Expenses necessarily incurred by the minister on church business are to be reimbursed in accordance with paragraph 6.3.4 of the Plan and questions were raised as to whether a specific paragraph should be added to relate to computer costs. The Sub-Committee felt that it is important to point out that in

the present age the minister ought to have access to a computer and costs of provision (if possible) and running expenses should be borne by the church. It was thought this could be covered by adding the reference to computers in the list of examples of expenses in 6.3.4. The resolution provides for this.

General Assembly amends the definitions of the rules, and the rules of the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund, by the deletion of the words in square brackets, and the addition of the words in italics in the rules shown:

Definition 10 to read

10. **Pensionable Service**

comprises:

- 10.1 all service while a contributory member of the Fund or the Congregational Fund or the Presbyterian Fund;
together with
- 10.2 Any service after age 21 but before joining the Congregational Fund which was recognised pastoral service rendered to churches within the former Congregational Church in England and Wales. *Provided that for any year of such service covered above in which less than the basic stipend is received, for the reason that some of such service was part-time, a fraction only of that year, calculated as the ratio of stipend received to full stipend, shall rank as Pensionable Service, unless a concession under Rule 14.1.2 has been granted.*

Definition 12 to read

12. **Qualifying Service**

in respect of a person means the aggregate of any periods of service in membership of the Fund or the Congregational Fund or the Presbyterian Fund together with any period[s] of service pensionable in] *granted at entry in respect of a transfer value received from any other pension fund [scheme or arrangement for which a transfer value has been received by the Fund] provided that in no other form shall any period of service preceding payment from this Fund of a refund of contributions or a transfer value in respect of such period constitute Qualifying Service* [there shall be deducted from Qualifying Service any such service as aforesaid which precedes an interval between two successive periods of membership if:-

- 12.1 the period of such service before the interval is no longer than two years after deduction of any period in respect of which a refund of contributions or a transfer value has been paid out, and
- 12.2 the interval itself is
- 12.2.1 one during which such person aforesaid was neither a member nor a pensioner of the Fund and
- 12.2.2 not coterminous with an interval in the service of such person which is brought to an end by exercise of a right to return to work under Section 45(l) of the Employment Protection (Consolidated) Act 1978 (or the equivalent of that sub-section in previous or subsequent legislation) and
- 12.2.3 longer than a month.]

Amend Rule 12 to read

12. **Membership**

Members of the Fund shall consist of the following persons:

- 12.1 *Remunerated* ministers of the URC who on the amalgamation date were members of the Presbyterian Fund or of the Congregational Fund.
- 12.2 Missionaries who prior to 5th October 1972 were in the service of the former Presbyterian Church of England and who on the amalgamation date were members of the Presbyterian Fund.
- 12.3 Such other *remunerated* ministers of the URC in the service of the Church other than in local churches as the Assembly shall appoint.
- 12.4 All *remunerated* ministers of the URC admitted after the amalgamation date as is provided in Rule 14.
- 12.5 Ministers of the URC who are serving Participating Bodies approved by the Committee.

Amend Rule 13.2 to read

- 13.2 Members in *the* [full-time] service of the URC either in a local church or as appointed by the Assembly and who have not reached the pension age shall normally be contributing members.

Amend Rule 14.1.2 to read

14.1.2 If a minister serving a local church is inducted to part-time service whilst under the age of fifty five years or being a contributing member of the Fund reduces his/her commitment to that of part-time service whilst under normal pension age, *the Pension Trustee may raise the Pensionable Service to the level applicable to a full-time minister* [his/her entry to the Fund or his/her continuing contributory membership to the Fund shall be regarded as limited membership. In such cases contributions due and the benefits available in respect of the period of limited membership shall be based upon the proportion of basic stipend being paid for the part-time service and not on the full basic stipend. The Pension Trustee may however] having regard to the length of any previous full-time service, to the age and health of the minister, to the fraction of basic stipend being paid and to the purpose and pensionability of any other employment *and shall in such cases allow full membership of the Pension Fund* [in appropriate cases,] contributions then being payable on the full basic stipend.

Amend Rule 14.2 to read

14.2 Every minister who has ceased to be a contributing member under Rule 13.3. and who whilst under normal pension age is re-admitted to full-time *or part-time* service in the URC [shall] *may* become a contributory member of the Fund as is provided in the previous Rule. At the time of re-admission the Pension Trustee shall have discretion to aggregate for the purposes of Rules 18-23 that minister's previous period or periods of membership with the minister's latest period of membership PROVIDED that the minister waives his/her right to any deferred pension and surviving spouses pension under Rule 29. in respect of such previous period or periods of membership and repays to the Fund an amount equal to the sum of

Amend Rule 15.3 to read

Where [limited] *part-time* membership only has been granted under Rule 14.1.2 the contributions referred to in paragraphs 15.1. and 15.2. of this rule shall apply only in relation to the proportion of the basic stipend being paid.

Amend Rule 18 to read**18. Normal Retirement Pensions**

Subject to Rules 18.3. and 18.4. all pensions are based on stipend at date of retirement or normal pension age whichever is the earlier.

A member retiring in respect of whom all due contributions have been made shall be entitled to a pension based on years and months of *pensionable* service. The pension will be proportionately reduced in respect of any year of [limited] *part-time* membership granted under Rule 14.1.2.

Add a new Rule 18.5 to read

18.5 *Provision for dependent children may be payable (see Rule 48).*

Amend Rule 20.3 to read

20.3. If a member at the time of ill-health retirement is a [limited] *part-time* member under Rule 14.1.2. any uncompleted years under paragraph 20.2 above shall be reduced to the proportion that the number of pensionable years under Rule 18. bears to the number of years membership of the Fund, *unless a concession granted under Rule 14.1.2 is in operation and full contributions were paid up to the date of incapacity.*

Add a new Rule 20.5 to read

20.5 *Provision for dependent children may be payable (see Rule 48).*

Amend Rule 21 to read

21. Early Retirement

A member may retire within ten years before normal pension age; he/she will then become entitled to an immediate pension based on the actual years of pensionable service and the amount of pension so calculated shall then be reduced on the advice of the Actuary having regard to the age of the member at the date of retirement, *save that no reduction will be required if the member has completed 40 years of stipendiary service to the URC or its constituent denominations.*

Amend Rule 22 to read

22. Death in Service before normal Pension Age

In the event of the death of a contributing member in service before normal pension age, there shall become payable the following benefits:

Where the member leaves a spouse or a lawful or adopted child or children who is or are a dependant or dependants and who in either case survive the member by 30 days or more, a lump sum equal to three year's basic stipend at the date of death, to be held by the Pension Trustee upon Discretionary Trusts; and in all other cases, [to be held by the Pension Trustee upon Discretionary Trusts] a lump sum equal to two year's basic stipend at the date of death to be held by the Pension Trustee upon Discretionary Trusts; Provided [save] that in the case of a part-time [limited] member who has at no time during membership of the Fund been paid the full basic stipend, the lump sum shall equal only a proportion of three years or two years basic stipend at the date of death as the case may be. In such a case the proportion shall be equal to three times or twice as the case may be the greatest proportion of basic stipend which [has] in any year has been paid to him/her during membership of the Fund.

Amend Rule 22.2 to read

22.2 To the surviving spouse a pension for life of an annual amount equal to one half of the pension to which the member would have been entitled if the member had attained normal pension age plus in the case of the spouse of a member of the Congregational Fund £17.34 or one quarter of the amount authorised from time to time under Rule 18.2.1. per annum for each year of pensionable service prior to June 1971 provided always that the total annual amount of such pension shall not be less than £200 (Two hundred pounds). The pension will be subject to reduction on the advice of the Actuary if the surviving spouse is more than ten years younger than the member. In the case of a member who is at the time of his/her death a [limited] part-time member under Rule 14.1.2. the pension to which the member would have been entitled had he/she attained normal pension age shall be calculated by assuming the same average proportion for each future year as the entitlement in years at date of death bears to the number of years membership of the Fund.

The existing rule 22.3 will be re-numbered as Rule 48.

Add a new Rule 22.3 to read

22.3 *Provision for dependent children may be payable (see Rule 48).*

Add a new Rule 23.4 to read

23.4 *Provision for dependent children may be payable (see Rule 48).*

Amend rule 25 to read

25.1 This shall apply to pensions payable in the terms of Rules 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, [and] 29 and 48

Amend rule 22.3 and renumber as rule 48, to read

48. Provision for Dependent children

Where a *retired member has, or a deceased member dies leave[s]ing*, one or more children below the age of 24 years, an annual pension *shall be paid to the retired member or the widow(er)* in respect of each child (*or if there is no such widow(er) to such person as the Pension Trustee may determine*) until the child attains the age of 24 years, or until the child ceases to be dependent, whichever is the earlier. [Initially this pension is £256 and this level of pension will be reviewed annually]

For the purposes of the Rule a child shall mean a lawful or adopted child of the retired or deceased member and such child shall be deemed to be dependent so long as he/she shall in the opinion of the Pension Trustee be dependent upon the retired member or in the case of a deceased member the surviving spouse or estate for the provision of all or a substantial number of the ordinary necessities of life.

From July 1st 2000 the initial level of the pension in respect of a dependent child or children will be £800 pa for the first dependent child, and £400 pa per child for any further dependent children. The initial level of the pension will be reviewed by the Committee at least annually. Once in payment the pension will escalate as is provided for in rule 25, until the children cease to be dependent, as defined in this rule.

The pension in respect of a dependent child or children will not be subject to early retirement reduction (Rule 21,) nor late retirement addition (Rule 19), nor the age disparity reduction (Rules 22.2 and 23.1)

The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund

1. As was reported to Assembly in 1999, the Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee appointed a group under the chairmanship of Howard Bridge to undertake a review of every aspect of remuneration for ministers both in service and retired. The report of the group suggested (inter alia):

- that there should be an increase from twice annual basic stipend to three times annual basic stipend in the lump sum death in service benefit where the member leaves a spouse or dependent children;
- normal retirement to be available at 65 years of age or 40 years service whichever is earlier;
- that the level of pension paid in respect of dependent children of ministers who die in service should be the same as the level of children's allowances paid to active ministers.

2 In reviewing these proposals the Pensions Executive felt it would also be appropriate to recommend that pension in respect of dependent children should be paid to retired ministers and widows who have dependent children.

3 The Pensions Executive has, from time to time, received requests for reinstatement from former members upon their return to the stipendiary service of the Church. Although this is permissible under the current rules where the minister returns to full-time service, the rules do not provide for such reinstatement if the minister returns to undertake part-time service. This is not in line with current thinking in the Church, and in fact it may not be legal to prevent members returning to part-time service from being reinstated to the pension scheme. In one or two other cases it has been felt that the rules are not as clear as they might be. We propose that it be made clear that all ministers returning to part time service should be permitted to rejoin the pension fund.

4 In the examination of the rules to implement these various changes, it was noted that rule 14.2 purports to make contributory membership of the fund mandatory for ministers who return to service after a period out of service. This is not in line with law, which provides that membership of an occupational pension fund must be voluntary. This has been rectified in these rule changes.

Changes in the rules to implement these improvements, and to make clarifications are contained in the resolution.

5.1 The improvement in the death in service benefit is contained in the change to the first part of rule 22.1.

5.2 The approval for retirement after 40 years of service without actuarial reduction in pension is contained in the latter part of rule 21.

5.3 A new rule 48 is included to provide for additional pensions for members and widows with dependent children, with new cross-reference rules 18.5, 20.5, 22.3 and 23.4.

5.4 Rule 25 provides for the escalation of pensions in payment in line with RPI limited to 5%. A cross reference from rule 25 to rule 48 needs to be made.

6. Members of Assembly may wish to examine the new and changed rules in the context of the full rules. Copies of the current rules of the URCPMF may be obtained from the MoM office of the central office of the church, or downloaded from the URC web site www.urch.org.uk.

Resolution 33

Stipendiary Ministers and Retirement

General Assembly, welcoming the statement on stipendiary Ministers and Retirement:

- a) thanks the working party for its assistance;
- b) urges stipendiary ministers, local churches, District Councils and Synods to adopt it as an aid to the development of good practice;
- c) instructs Ministries Committee to prepare a further statement on church related community workers and non-stipendiary ministers and retirement.

Annex I

Report on stipendiary Ministers and Retirement

I Introduction

1.1 The care of retired ministers and their spouses and of the widowed partners of retired ministers is a major responsibility of the Church. This has been exercised in three main ways. The provision of courses in preparation for retirement. The provision of housing according to need in retirement. The care given by the Moderators to retired ministers and to the widowed partners of ministers resident in their Synod. In addition General Assembly has from time to time determined aspects of this care. Currently the Church assists over 300 retired ministers or their widowed partners with housing in retirement. It also provides over 930 pensions. Hitherto there has not been any attempt to gather thinking about ministers in retirement into a comprehensive statement.

1.2 The growing number of those for whom we have a responsibility prompted the Ministries Committee to establish a working party to look into the ministry in retirement. This statement embraces the report from the working party but includes thinking from within the Committee itself. The Committee notes that much of what is presented could helpfully apply when Ministers in non-stipendiary service and Church Related Community Workers retire. However there are aspects relating to both. Further work needs to be done on these. The report is issued to assist the establishment of good practice across the church and is therefore commended particularly but not exclusively for the close attention of district and synod pastoral and ministerial committees.

2 Before Retirement

2.1 Preparation for retirement is covered in a most helpful way by the pre-retirement course for ministers and spouses at Windermere 18 months to 2 years before the expected date of retirement. These have been greatly appreciated by those who have attended them and should be regarded as an absolute "must" for all ministers and spouses approaching retirement.

2.2 At these conferences it would be helpful if even stronger emphasis could be laid on the following crucial points, the location of the retirement home, which should not be in the area of the minister's last pastorate (see below) and the importance of the minister developing hobbies to be pursued during retirement.

2.3 It is to be hoped that no minister will come to retirement without hobbies or wider interests. In any case some thought should be given well before retirement to the adoption of new hobbies and interests or the developing of well-established ones. Some ministers experience enrichment in retirement as they discover latent talents in painting or sketching or music. Others find new satisfaction in voluntary service. The potential is endless. The important thing is to think about it well in advance - and not just drift.

2.4 Thought should also be given to the question of books. Some will doubtless have to go, either given away to colleagues or students or sold via booksellers such as SPCK. Books not only furnish rooms, they furnish minds. It is important to consider well in advance the feeding of the "retired" mind.

2.5 These matters, perhaps with an advance word about the pre-retirement course, the existence of which seems not to be known to all ministers, should be brought to their attention in a letter, say, five years before retirement, to allow adequate thought to be given to them in the years leading to retirement.

3 Where to live

3.1 The whole question of retirement housing is dealt with admirably at the pre-retirement course and the advice and help given by the representatives of the Retired Ministers Housing Society is greatly appreciated. There is widespread and warm appreciation of the oversight given by the society to retirement property. Among the many factors to be considered in dealing with the location of the retirement home (public transport, shops, hospital access etc.) two call for special mention.

3.2 Ministers should not normally retire in the immediate vicinity of where they have been serving or continue in membership in the pastorate. Examples could be quoted of happy settlements in this respect and of situations where an incoming minister has found tremendous support in having his/her predecessor in the congregation. But there are far more examples of situations in which a new minister has felt at the very least threatened by the presence of a predecessor and has even found his/her ministry undermined by this. It also causes problems for members of the congregation who may turn to the previous minister pastorally or for occasions such as funerals and weddings.

3.3 The second factor is the relationship of a retired minister to previous congregations. Retirement back into a congregation previously served is often found to be more difficult than anticipated, thus taking some of the pleasure out of retirement. The present minister may feel threatened by the arrival of a previous minister and congregations can become seriously unsettled. There may be good reasons, such as family proximity, for returning to a previous church but such a move should only be undertaken after consultation with the Moderator and present minister.

3.4 The problems inherent in returning to a previous pastorate are by no means confined to a retirement situation. Generally, ministers should not normally return to a previous pastorate during their successor's ministry until a reasonable period has elapsed and then as no more than a casual visitor unless a specific invitation is received otherwise. Invitations to take part in funerals and weddings should not be encouraged and should be accepted only after consultation with and by the agreement of the resident minister.

4 At Retirement

4.1 Acknowledgement of the service given by the minister should be made by both the Assembly Moderator and the Synod Moderator, a gesture which is deeply appreciated by most ministers, both stipendiary and non-stipendiary. Care should be

taken that the Synod Moderator, Synod Clerk and District Secretary are all notified of the fact when a minister is retiring into their area.

4.2 Some districts arrange a retirement get together for ministers and their spouses. This can assist the sense of completing one's ministry as part of the team of ministers serving in the district. It also provides an opportunity for the team to acknowledge with appreciation the departure of a colleague.

5 Retired Ministers in the Local Church

5.1 Careful thought should be given to the local church situation and where the minister and spouse are likely to find a suitable spiritual home within easy reach - preferably within walking distance for the spouse, when the minister is preaching elsewhere - where they will feel comfortable and find worship which will meet their needs. Everything, else about a retirement home may be ideal, but it can create major problems if there is no church at hand where those concerned will feel at home in retirement. This point emerges with considerable force in the research undertaken reflecting some most unhappy experiences in finding the right church after retirement. We would emphasise, therefore, that this consideration should figure highly in the choice of a retirement home.

5.2 To assist this the Committee would encourage a new practice. Ministers in their final two years in a pastorate could helpfully be given additional free Sundays over and above their holiday allocation. Church members are free to visit churches on a Sunday to sample the worship and ministry style and can do this as many times as may be necessary within the process of house hunting. By and large ministers do not have this freedom and can find themselves needing to complete the purchase of a property with scant regard to the local churches. The Committee would encourage churches whose minister is nearing retirement to offer additional free Sundays to assist the task of finding a new spiritual home.

5.3.1 It can be a difficult adjustment to make as ministers and their spouses settle in retirement as members of a local church. This is an area, which calls for great sensitivity on the part of both the minister and members of the local church and of the new arrivals. Many ministers - and their spouses! - find it difficult to accept that they are no longer at the centre of the life of the church.

5.3.2 They need to take care not to interfere in the life of the church or to act as though they still had a leading role, giving careful thought to the part they play in church meetings, house groups, pastoral care etc. They should be careful to do nothing which would

in any way undermine the leadership of the resident minister (and spouse) and should seek to give support in every way possible. When this happens, the presence of a retired minister in the congregation can be a source of great enrichment and encouragement.

5.4.1 For their part congregations should recognise that retired ministers and their spouses may have much to contribute to the life of the church. They should not waste such contributions, where they are made available, nor make unreasonable demands on those who have given so much over the years. With sensitivity, and as relationships are established, the right balance can be achieved, but it needs care on the part of all concerned.

5.4.2 With these needs in mind there have been suggestions that congregations receiving retired ministers could be given some help in understanding the particular situation. Congregations should be encouraged to regard retired ministers and their spouses as ordinary church members. It is less than helpful either to distance them by putting them on a pedestal, or to regard them as supplementary ministers with unfettered time, which has been the unhelpful experience of some.

6 Retired Ministers in the wider Church

6.1 Here, too, it is a question of attaining the right balance. This involves both the gifts and wishes of the retired minister (and spouse!) and the needs in the district and synod. It is recognised that, with a limited number of ministers available, retired ministers may have a major contribution to make. Some may be ready to be called upon as resources available in clusters of local churches; others may possess gifts which they are still willing to put at the disposal of the Church - in training lay preachers and others, as pastoral adviser to a newly ordained minister, in the committees of the church, or in areas such as church growth, quiet days, the ministry of healing, here they have particular gifts and experience. In this connection it is clear that there are some retired ministers who feel that their gifts and expertise are not being used to the full.

6.2 Many, perhaps most, retired ministers will be ready to conduct worship from time to time, particularly in the early years of retirement. Some will want to continue in stipendiary ministry on a part time basis; others would welcome the opportunity to do an interim ministry of, say, one or two years, if the financial resources were available. Whenever such work is undertaken, it is important that proper review procedures should be established, which take into account the ability of the minister to discharge responsibilities, the feelings of the spouse and the wishes of the congregation.

6.3 On the other hand it must be recognised that ministers, who may have given up to forty years service, may have reached retirement drained and exhausted and looking forward to freedom from the pressures and responsibilities of ministry.

6.4 Others come to retirement eagerly looking forward to being able to do things for which they have been denied adequate time in the past: quality time with their families, hobbies, reading, writing etc. These are legitimate desires and should be acknowledged as such. Those hoping to enjoy a well-earned retirement should not be put under any obligation to undertake further responsibilities which they are unwilling to assume. It must be clearly understood that while the gifts and expertise of retired ministers should not be wasted, further service should be undertaken only with the ready and willing agreement of the minister concerned. No pressure should ever be put on retired ministers to take on unwelcome burdens of responsibility. There will, unfortunately, be those whose health and strength does not permit them to undertake any duties or responsibilities and this should be respected.

7 Pastoral Care

7.1 The focus of pastoral care for retired ministers and spouses must lie in the local church of which they are members. As with all church members, the main source of such care will be the minister and elders, backed by the caring fellowship of members. This is particularly important in the early period of retirement, as those concerned adjust to life in a new community and of a totally different pattern. In this respect the pastoral care and sympathetic understanding of the local minister, as one who knows the ministry from the inside, probably counts for more than anything else in easing those retiring into their new situation.

7.2.1 Because ministers and spouses have particular needs and concerns the pastoral care of the local church needs to be supplemented by the wider church. The Synod Moderator has a no less important role in the care of retired ministers and spouses than for all ministers and spouses. The visits which the moderator can make to retired ministers and spouses, and not least widows of ministers, are a deeply appreciated reminder of the part that ministers have played in the life of the church and the place they still hold in its care and fellowship.

7.2.2 It is doubtful whether this aspect of care should ever have been seen as that of the Moderator alone, and plainly it should not be seen so now. To say this is but to recognise the size of the overall task we now have of caring for servants of the church who have served us so well and are now in retirement. The opportunity for Moderators to visit on a regular basis

is inevitably and rightly restricted if they are to discharge their other responsibilities. A pattern of care needs to be developed in which both District and Synod share the responsibility.

7.3.1 The practice followed in several parts of the country whereby "pastoral aides" are appointed to work with the Synod Moderator in visiting ministers, spouses and widows on a regular basis - say, two or three times a year - is warmly recommended. Such pastoral aides need to be chosen carefully by the Moderator in consultation with the district officers or pastoral committee. They provide an excellent means of expressing the care of the wider church and of keeping the Moderator and district pastoral committee informed of the situation and needs of those whom they visit. They can also help in providing some of the additional pastoral care needed by some retired ministers and spouses in particular times of difficulty such as illness and bereavement. Discerning care requires good communication amongst all concerned: the local church and minister, the pastoral aide, the District and the Moderator.

7.3.2 The scheme of pastoral aides, or something similar, should be adopted nationally to provide an overall pattern of care. It is warmly commended to all Synods. Ministries Committee will itself gather the experience of those who already operate such schemes with a view to preparing guidelines to assist good practice.

7.4 In some areas the personal visits of pastoral aides have been supplemented by an annual get together of retired ministers and spouses, providing the opportunity of shared fellowship over a meal. Not all those in retirement will seek this kind of fellowship. Nonetheless the endeavour to hold in fellowship those who can so easily feel separate and isolated is to be commended.

7.5 The provision of opportunities for retired ministers to continue some of the "activities" in which they have been involved in the past, e.g. ministers' meetings (the "fraternals" of pre-inclusive language) spring/summer schools, quiet days etc., is also important. While some are glad to be relieved of attendance at district and synod meetings, others miss very much the opportunity for fellowship and enrichment, which these wider opportunities provide. They would warmly welcome the chance to go to quiet days and spring/summer schools. Some Synods have a tradition of extending invitations to retired ministers, and some also include their spouses. Ministries Committee would encourage districts and synod planning committees to keep the need to make provision for retired ministers in mind when arranging these wider opportunities for fellowship.

8 Other areas of concern

8.1 A number of questions have been raised about other aspects of retirement. What, for instance, is the relationship of retired ministers to the disciplinary structures of the Church? Can the provision of supported housing in retirement in any way be related in the future to the desire to have a more specific strategy for mission and ministry in the synods and districts? Is the package offered to stipendiary ministers on retirement appropriate? What needs to be done to address the situation of non-stipendiary ministers approaching retirement? Such questions involve larger issues than could be addressed by the working party. Discussions are underway among the Sub-Committees within Ministries Committee in response to them. They will be addressed in reports to General Assembly in future years.

9 In Conclusion

9.1 Ministers and spouses have particular problems as they adjust to retirement. These stem from the change of role and life style which is an inevitable part of retirement. They no longer find themselves at the hub of church life, a position which is now occupied by someone else. For some this is not easy to accept and can lead to a sense of loneliness and of being no longer wanted or of value. For others the break of the self discipline exercised over many years on a daily basis can leave them without motivation and purpose. More positively minister and spouse will find that they have more time to spend together, not least in the evenings. This will be a cause for joy and relief for some, but may be a challenge and a frustration for others. Some may have financial problems, as they adjust to living on a pension, though this seems not to be a major concern.

9.2 Sensitive pastoral care in all these areas given by both the local and wider church can be immensely helpful. The objective is clear: to make retirement for all what many find it to be, the opportunity for a new life, freed from the pressures of the daily responsibilities of ministry.

Resolution 34**Non-stipendiary Ministry in the URC**

General Assembly expresses gratitude for the service offered by our non-stipendiary ministers and offers encouragement in their ministries by:

- a) thanking the working party for its support;
- b) urging the speedy implementation of recommendations 1 to 6 in the report on non-stipendiary ministry in the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 35**New pattern of Ministries**

General Assembly notes the concern expressed in Section 4 of the report on non-stipendiary ministry in the United Reformed Church and instructs the Ministries Committee, in consultation with others, to draw up proposals for a new, diverse pattern of ministries, building on ecumenical insights and designed to enable the church to respond more effectively to the challenge of the mission strategy outlined in *Growing Up*.

Annex 2**A Review of non-stipendiary Ministry in the United Reformed Church****I How we got here**

1.1 The concept of a non-stipendiary ministry (henceforth NSM) entered the life of the United Reformed Church as a result of the original conversations with the Churches of Christ. A way needed to be found to affirm the ministry of those of their Elders who regularly presided at the weekly celebrations of the Lord's Supper which were a normal feature of their churches' life. In doing so the opportunity was taken to adopt a new model of ministry which was "appropriate to the new insights and needs of our time".¹

1.2 The so-called "Auxiliary Ministry" then envisaged not only saw such Ministers supplementing the work of those Ministers of Word and Sacraments (henceforth MWS) in pastoral charge of local churches; it also saw them as a sort of pioneer corps exercising a ministry, distinct from that within local churches, on the frontiers of secular life, equipped to bring a theological critique to particular situations and to feed the insights gained therefrom into the life of the Church. In adopting such a model, we recall, General Assembly was greatly influenced by Lesslie Newbigin, then recently returned from India, who spoke of his experience of just such a ministry on the frontiers of mission in that sub-continent. "I long for the day, he said, when I shall be called an Auxiliary Minister"². The original conversations with the Churches of Christ failed. However, two years later we find Lesslie Newbigin, as chairman of the Ministerial Training committee moving proposals³ in General Assembly for the introduction of such a ministry.

1.3.1 While these Auxiliary Ministers were, like the Ministers they were called to assist, regarded equally as MWS (the Church's Basis offered no alternative other than that of elders), the nature of the original vision was such that it left unclear whether they belonged to the same or a distinct ministry. It would be well at this stage to summarise this distinctiveness.

i) Unlike other MWS who are, theoretically at least, free to serve the church wherever they are called, Auxiliary Ministers were only available in the area where they lived or worked.

ii) Unlike other MWS whose calling as Ministers is tested separately from the call to a particular charge, their calling as Ministers was limited to the particular task in which they were engaged; there was no guarantee that, if they were to move from the situation in which they were called, they would be similarly used by the church.

iii) It was to be the responsibility of the District Council to identify and define appropriate ministries within their area, whether within the life of the churches of the District or within community life, and to match suitable candidates to them.

1.3.2 The training of Auxiliary Ministers, unlike that of other MWS, was to be geared to the other demands of their personal lives and to equip them for the particular ministry to which they were to be called - a commitment of 10 hours per week for 3-4 years was suggested. They were regarded as "normally without sole pastoral charge"⁴

1.4 By 1982, and ahead of any candidates for Auxiliary Ministry having completed their training, a revised scheme of union with the Churches of Christ had been implemented and about 100 of their Elders had accepted the opportunity to 'become Auxiliary Ministers'⁵ During the following years a steady and encouraging stream of candidates were accepted for training. More found their way onto ecumenical courses, alongside mainly Anglicans, training either for full-time or for local non-stipendiary ministry or as Ministers in secular employment, than to the correspondence course which the United Reformed Church instituted. Just as Anglicans were finding more NSMs were gravitating towards local ministry rather than into posts related to their secular employment, but also no doubt because of the priorities of local United Reformed Churches and District Councils, most Auxiliary Ministers found their way into local ministries alongside or in place of full-time colleagues. Increasingly, as the eighties progressed the title "Auxiliary Minister" became disliked; it had the tang of being a lesser or second-rate ministry. Increasingly the church felt led to affirm the unity of MWS and Auxiliary Ministries. Consequently in 1990 what was now the Ministries Department brought forward proposals for a change of name. "Auxiliary Ministers" were now to be what they had frequently been called informally: non-stipendiary Ministers (NSMs) as distinct from what were now known as stipendiary Ministers (SMs)⁶. In the amendments to the Basis of Union entailed in this change it was for the first time made explicit that NSMs were part of a single MWS.

1.5 No further review of NSM has been undertaken since then until the present one. The report, *Patterns of Ministry* presented to Assembly in 1995, did make a number of recommendations which involved NSM. While proposing a form of "local ministry" which looks similar to that model of NSM inherited from the Churches of Christ (now model 1), it envisaged the amalgamation of what were known as model 2 and 3 NSMs (i.e. NSMs in pastoral charge of a small local church and those working in a team with SMs), that distinctions between stipendiary and models 2 and 3 should be removed and that model 4 NSMs ("those whose ministry is particularly directed towards the world") should become "Ministers in Secular Employment". Only this designation of the various models and, in 1997, steps towards the parity of training between SMs and NSMs, which was also recommended, have so far been implemented.

1.6 So where has all this left the church, and its NSMs in particular? The present working party was set up in the autumn of 1998 to consider this.

2 Where we are now - a review of non-stipendiary Ministry

2.1 When the working party first met in November 1998 it was given to understand that the expectation was that it would prepare, by February 1999,

- a report on the present non-stipendiary ministry in the United Reformed Church;
- a paper on the issues and questions that arose from that report.

To assist it questionnaires had already been drafted within the Ministries Committee and circulated to (a) NSMs (b) District Secretaries and (c) Moderators or Synod Clerks for completion by the end of October 1998. The working party is grateful for this work and has found the information contained in the replies that have been received indispensable. Replies were received from each of the 12 Synods, from 85% of District Councils and from 68% of NSMs - an encouraging response.

2.2 We have undertaken a detailed analysis of the replies to each of the questionnaires. What follows here are the major issues to which we see these responses giving rise.

2.2.1 **Questionnaire to NSMs.** It would be a mistake to give the impression that the replies we have received from NSMs reveal nothing but a catalogue of woes. The great majority speak of the joys and satisfaction of their hectic, varied and fulfilling ministry, one that is important for a missionary church, building bridges between the church and increasingly secular world. But frustrations do keep breaking through:

i) A small but representative number of those who entered the ministry from the Churches of Christ, among that first 100 Auxiliary Ministers, often now retired, give us the impression that they feel that, although the introduction of this ministry was an important selling point of the union in both the Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church, their contribution, in the form of what is now model 1, has never been fully received or understood by the Church.

ii) A significant number of NSMs encounter what they feel to be the lack of a clear understanding of the distinctive contribution that they have to make, and of their limitations. They find it at every level of the church's life: in local churches, among SMs, District Councils, Synods and Moderators.

iii) This is particularly acute in the case of the relatively small number of model 3 NSMs, who speak of Districts not being interested in their work and, in some cases, finding it unacceptable unless it is also associated with the oversight of local church.

iv) We hear the cry of some NSMs who feel under pressure from local churches and districts to give more of their time than is available and thereby to put their secular work, their private lives and their marriages in jeopardy. On the one hand they do not want to be regarded as inferior to their stipendiary colleagues; on the other hand some of them emphatically affirm that SMs and NSMs are *not* equivalent. They feel these pressures are being reinforced by the decision to aspire to equivalence of training for SMs and NSMs. We ask, at what cost will parity be achieved?

2.2.2 **Questionnaire to the Districts.** The replies we have received from Districts give rise to the concern that while some Districts are ably fulfilling the responsibility placed upon them in matching calls to NSM with opportunities for mission and outreach in their areas, many are not.

i) A significant proportion of Districts apparently fail to give the same attention to ensuring that NSMs have realistic conditions of service agreed that they give to calls to SMs.

ii) The requirement that a particular ministry be defined by the District as a pre-condition for accepting an NSM candidate for training is widely seen to be unrealistic. For one reason candidates' interests and abilities may be expected to develop during the course of training.

iii) We are concerned that so many replies speak of the lack of flexibility of NSM - or the "choosiness" of NSMs - as weaknesses. They are surely inherent in nature of this ministry. It would appear that many Districts, and churches, see NSM as a cheap alternative to SM.

iv) The comment of one District Secretary sums up our concern here: "I am appalled at the way people have tunnel vision focused only on the local church: after all, that is where it's happening". Well, is it happening there? And what is *it*?"

2.2.3 **Questionnaire to Synods.** It is perhaps to be expected that these replies reflect a greater awareness of the problems in equating SM and NSM, though we do not detect anything like a consensus as to how we ought to proceed. Some emphasise the distinctiveness of the original vision; others, recognising the dependence of the church on NSMs if all local churches are to share in ordained ministry, point to the need for equivalent training for those exercising equivalent functions.

i) A significant proportion of Synods would have seen some NSMs (and some SMs!) better directed to some form of diaconal ministry.

ii) All Synod replies say Yes to the need for additional training for those transferring from NSM to SM, though it is recognised that we need to be clearer than we are as to what this "top-up" needs to contain. Flexibility in training for both NSMs and for "top-up" is perhaps the watch-word.

2.3 As we reflected upon these responses we reached a number of interim conclusions:

2.3.1 We detected two directions in which we would have liked further information, which the questionnaires did not provide. We would have hoped that Synods or Districts might have been asked to give the number of NSMs operating within each of the three models. It would have been useful to know also how many model 2 NSMs are in sole pastoral charge, how many work in a team with one or more SMs, and how many exercise a ministry within the District wider than the oversight of particular local churches. We have some information on this from the replies of NSMs. However, there seems to be widespread confusion about which NSMs are exercising which model of ministry.

2.3.2 It would also have been useful to know the range of views held by those who had first-hand experience of the work of NSMs, either in local churches, or in the case of model 3 NSMs in their secular situations.

2.3.3 We were aware that our present review needed to be seen in a wider ecumenical context. Other Churches have forms of ministry comparable to our NSM. Perhaps they are facing similar questions. Perhaps they have found solutions from which we could benefit.

2.3.4 We came to the conclusion that while it might be possible to suggest ways in which some of the uncertainties and malaise which our surveys have uncovered could be alleviated piecemeal, they are symptomatic of the need for an even broader and more comprehensive review of our Patterns of Ministry than the recent document of that name sought to address. The decision of General Assembly not to accept much of its approach and many of its recommendations has left the church with unfinished business of which we see this review of NSM as a part. To enter such territory was, however, beyond our original mandate and certainly could not be undertaken within our original very tight time schedule.

2.4 We accordingly presented an Interim Report to the Ministries Committee in February 1999. Following that meeting we were encouraged to continue our researches, to bring forward any recommendations we could make for immediate implementation, to carry further our ideas for longer-

term solutions and to report back to the Ministries Committee in September 1999 with a view to presenting material to Mission Council in the autumn of 1999 and General Assembly in 2000.

2.5 This further report builds upon that Interim Report and seeks to fulfil this further mandate.

2.5.1 We have now sought from Synods, with but little success, information on the number of NSMs in the various categories. With the good offices of their Synod Clerks we have been put in touch with a number of those who have experienced at close quarters the work of NSMs and have benefited from studying the many and often lengthy replies we have received from them. We are happy to be able to report a high level of contentment with the work of NSMs in the churches - considerably higher, indeed, than the feeling of contentment which we have detected among NSMs themselves.

2.5.2 Members of the working party had a useful meeting with the Moderators to discuss our interim report and we have tried to take account of some of their comments.

2.5.3 Some of us also met with those officers of the Methodist Church concerned particularly with the work of their Ministers in local Appointment, a report advocating more Flexible Patterns of Ministry, which shares many of our concerns, was presented to Conference in 1999. We were interested to learn that this report has now been remitted to Districts and Circuits for consideration.

2.6 What follows in section 3 are reflections and recommendations for more immediate action and in section 4 our thoughts on the future of NSM in the light of the church's ministry and mission as a whole.

3 What we can do now

3.1 We begin by looking at the original vision of NSM. How far has it stood the test of time? What modifications to that vision are now required? To what extent have we failed to live up to our original vision?

3.2 Let us start with the most basic question: how many NSMs have we and what sorts of work are they undertaking? We have to report that we have failed to find answers to these questions with any degree of accuracy. The Year Book lists all those ordained as NSMs (though retired NSMs are not distinguished from their stipendiary colleagues). It does not indicate which model of ministry is being exercised. Nor does it indicate those who are no longer active. The 1998 Year Book lists 182 NSMs (excluding any who have retired). This figure cannot be reconciled with the figures we have been given

by the Synods (over 200 below retirement age) or by those Districts which have replied to our questionnaire. This worries us. It is symptomatic of a lack of understanding (?interest) in the work NSMs are doing and a factor in the low morale amongst NSMs we have in many quarters detected.

Recommendation 1 :-

that the Ministries Committee should as a matter of urgency make and maintain contact with each District Secretary in order to establish the names, addresses and model of ministry of each NSM (active, non-active and retired) in his/her District, a copy being sent to the Synod Moderator, the relevant information to be included in the list of ministers in the Year Book⁸

3.3 It was part of the original intention that the NSMs serving local churches should normally work in partnership with an SM (or team of SMs). Alternately, they should be concerned with out-reach into various wider aspects of community life. District Councils are therefore the appropriate body to have a special concern for the direction and care of NSMs and the work they undertake. We have discovered that in many places, especially if NSMs are not actively contributing to the pastoral oversight of local congregations, District Councils seem neither to understand nor care about furthering their ministry.

Recommendation 2 :-

that each District Council should make and maintain contact with every NSM in the District, including those in training, to ascertain what s/he is doing and how successfully, what difficulties are being faced and how the District Council might help, and whether there are further opportunities for his/her gifts to be deployed.

3.4 At the heart of the original vision was the need to extend ministry beyond the setting of the local church and to build bridgeheads with the economic and civil life of society and to feed the experience of those exercising this ministry into the life of local churches. It was, we believe, expected that the majority of NSMs would fall into this category, which we now know as model 3, Ministers in Secular Employment. We were disappointed to learn that some candidates and NSMs who believe their vocation is to work in a secular environment are put under pressure to work within the setting of the local church. We are disappointed to learn that we have been able to identify only 25 active model 3 NSMs and that of these only 5 have support groups through which their experiences may be more widely disseminated. Many of these feel frustrated by the lack of interest the church as a whole appears to take in their work and some have lost contact with the United Reformed Church altogether.

Recommendation 3 :-

in view of the feelings of marginalisation of many model 3 NSMs all Synod Moderators should as a matter of priority re-establish personal contact with each such NSM in their Synod.

3.5 What is distinctive about NSMs is that in comparison with their stipendiary colleagues, they are more limited in the time they are able to devote to ministry, their other commitments and/or employment and in their freedom to serve where needed. On the one hand this does place an obligation on those who have at some cost been trained for ministry by the church to offer a reasonable amount in return (Is there a basic minimum number of hours which an NSM should be expected to offer?). But it also places obligations on the church to respect what can be offered, and not to make unreasonable demands on a Minister's family and leisure time. It is important that a carefully thought out contract should be entered into between the NSM and the church and that once made that contract should be honoured on all sides. In drawing up such contracts it is important that all parties to it should recognise that space needs to be found for the development of the Minister's personal and spiritual life, for continuing ministerial education and for the Minister to build his/her distinctive ministry into the total mission of the church. In particular, NSMs need to recognise that, by virtue of their ordination, they have a part to play in the life of District Council and Synod.

Recommendation 4 :-

that there should be a contract between each NSM, the District Council, local church or churches and, in the case of model 3 NSMs, the organisations to which the minister is to relate, similar to the terms of settlement for a stipendiary minister, including agreed details of availability, length of service, reviews and retirement, payment of expenses, provision of adequate support and the responsibilities and accountability of each party.

Guidelines for the drawing up of such contracts are set out at the end of this report.

3.6.1 The original guidelines for NSM contained the provision that because of their restricted availability candidates should not be accepted for training unless and until a clearly defined piece of work had been identified for them. This provision has by and large lapsed. On the one hand if a piece of work needs doing urgently it cannot wait for years until an NSM has completed candidature and training. On the other hand the sort of work for which a candidate is most suited may have changed during the course of training.

3.6.2 While we do not wish to suggest that such a provision should be strictly implemented, we do note that a similar requirement is made of Methodist circuits as a condition for accepting candidates for training as Ministers in local Appointment. We do believe that it is important that during the course of an NSM's training there should be close and continuing contact between the District Council from which a candidate comes (and maybe also, in some circumstances, a neighbouring District) and the institution giving training. This is particularly important in view of the present requirement of an extended (800 hours in total) period of supervised placement study. There needs to be a smooth transition from this placement to eventual ministry.

Recommendation 5 :-

that at least by the beginning of an NSM candidate's final⁹ year of training the District Council(s) involved, in consultation with the training institution, shall have agreed a scheme for the candidate's placement and sphere of future ministry.

3.7 According to the report *Growing Up*¹⁰ accepted by General Assembly in 1999, there were in 1997 720 stipendiary Ministers serving 1738 United Reformed churches, with each minister on average serving 131 members gathered in 2.4 churches. If present trends continue we shall increasingly see fewer stipendiary ministers serving pastorates with fewer members but more churches. Leaving aside the scope for Ministers working in secular environments, this suggests that there will in the future be many more opportunities for NSM than there are at present. The present flow of candidates coming forward will not be sufficient to meet the need. Perhaps if the foregoing recommendations are implemented, more candidates will come forward. At all points of the Church's life, the call to NSM must be set out before potential candidates. It is a response to particular needs in particular situations. We should expect that increasingly the candidates for NSM we shall need will emerge only in response to emerging opportunities and we should plan accordingly.

Recommendation 6 :- that as part of its strategy for deploying ministers, each Synod and District Council be encouraged to draw up plans for developing opportunities for NSM and for challenging suitable candidates to offer themselves for training to enable these plans to be implemented.

4 What do we want ministers for?

4.1 We would have greater confidence that the plans we have just referred to would bear the desired fruits if as a church we were to address the more profound questions which our review of NSM has exposed.

- Why is NSM so widely perceived as not just a distinct but an inferior model of ministry?
- Why has the church not made greater use of it?
- And in particular, why have we so neglected model 3 (Ministers in Secular Employment)?

As we have wrestled with these questions we have repeatedly found ourselves coming back to a more general one:

- What do we want ministers for?

4.2 There is amongst us a conventional answer to that general question, enshrined in our foundational documents, which goes deep into the history of our Reformed tradition, "Some are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments"¹¹. Although there is widespread agreement within the Reformed tradition that it is unsatisfactory to define the nature of ministry in terms of function, that in the minister we look for a pointer to the presence of the risen Christ in the local congregation¹², nevertheless it is significant that it is by stating these two particular functions that ministry has amongst us customarily been defined. We want ministers because we believe that God calls them and gives them to his church **to preach and to preside over their gathering as his people.**

4.2.1 There can be no doubt that the church has been enriched by this formulation of ministry. It has led us to value a learned ministry, capable of intelligently expounding the Word of God, in ever-changing contexts. It is significant, also, that by emphasising presidency at the sacraments it has helped to undermine the widespread Protestant tendency to see God's communication with us exclusively in verbal terms. But it is worth remembering that it is a description of ministry which only arose out of the controversies of the 16th Century, not one deeply rooted in Scripture. The consequence of defining ministry in this way has not always been benign.

4.2.2 It has meant that the focal point of ministry has been the gathering of local church, in particular its gathering for worship. Thus we make the final judgement on a minister's sense of call, and subsequently his/her competency to exercise a particular ministry, by taking a decision after

"preaching with view". To be sure congregations have looked for other qualities in a future minister - to have a sympathetic ear as well as a golden tongue, for instance - but one result of the manner in which we describe ministry has been that the pioneering role of MWS in an increasingly secular world has not been given a high priority.

4.2.3 Another perhaps inadvertent consequence is that many a gathered congregation has come to see as its ideal having "its own" minister, exalted in his/her pulpit, its own pointer in its midst to the Christ who has called him/her. This has fostered an individualism which has encouraged in some MWS delusions of omnicompetence and makes collaborative ministry uncongenial. Furthermore it has tended to turn the remainder of the church, "sitting beneath" their minister (until lately a widely used phrase), into more or less passive consumers of ministry.

4.3 The concept of a non-stipendiary ministry sits uncomfortably with this conventional picture, perhaps to an extent that no one realised when it was introduced. In the first place, if the minister were to be exercising his/her ministry not in the setting of a local church but in an essentially secular environment - and it was primarily with this in view that Auxiliary Ministers were originally introduced¹³ - it was inevitable that the business of formal preaching and presiding, central to the idea of a MWS, would be at the most a peripheral feature of that ministry. Here lies the reason why much of the original vision of NSM has been lost by all but a few. Instead we have increasingly seen NSM as a valuable way of supplementing the diminishing pool of full-time stipendiary ministers.

4.3.1 But here again there is a problem. The provision of a stipend, as we have seen, has been an essential feature of our understanding of the MWS. Thereby the minister was set free not merely to perform certain functions, but also to be the sort of person the church has been led to expect. When ministers began to be ordained to exercise these functions without becoming at the same time unreservedly free to do so (i.e. NSMs), it was inevitable that such ministers would come to be seen as in some sense second-rate. The church's response to this situation has been to insist that, if they are to exercise equivalent functions, without making an equivalent commitment, at least they must undergo an equivalent training to stipendiary ministers. Increasingly we have been raising the barriers candidates for NSM must surmount, to an extent that one is permitted to wonder whether, at least in the minds of some, the intention is not to cut off the supply of NSMs altogether.

4.4 Indeed our analysis of the present situation suggests that there are only two courses of action open to us. Either we must re-affirm our commitment to the existing pattern of ministries based on that of Elders and MWS, and as a consequence admit that the decision to ordain to a non-stipendiary ministry of Word and Sacraments was a mistake and discontinue the experiment, or we must recognise that ever since the time we were led to ordain NSMs God has been steering us in a direction which would eventually lead us to out-grow the present limited and limiting pattern of ministry which we have inherited from our Reformed patrimony. This latter is the course we strongly advocate.

4.5 There are a number of straws in the wind which give us some encouragement in this view.

4.5.1 General Assembly in 1998 gave its encouragement to the identification of forms of local church leadership, rooted in the Eldership, but part of ministry of the whole people of God. We are glad to have seen details of work done in the Mersey Synod to further this decision. What is not clear to us is how these forms of local leadership are intended to relate in particular to that model of NSM (model 1) which was inherited from the Churches of Christ and which has largely been neglected by the church ever since its introduction.

4.5.2 Meanwhile many of those already ordained to the Eldership do not altogether recognise their call in the description of functions set out in the Basis of Union and the normal form of the ordination service, functions which largely replicate those of MWS. Our response has generally been to insist on more Elders' training. We believe that there is a case to be made for a complete redefinition of the ministry of elders (see below para 4.8).

4.5.3 The church has for some years experienced and come to appreciate the work of Church Related Community Workers. A recently adopted report committed the church to support a greater number of such workers; and to explore their relationship to what other churches understand by the Diaconate.

4.5.4 The range of tasks laid upon the shoulders of twelve Synod Moderators has increased enormously in recent years. Mission Council is currently considering the responses from Districts and Synods to papers exploring the nature of oversight ministry.

4.5.5 Taken together with the decision to conduct the present review of NSM, there are here indications that the church may be ready to enlarge its vision of the nature of ministry beyond that of the existing, rather monochrome one of Elders and MWS.

4.6 Where might it be that we are being led?

4.6.1 We start with the conviction that we shall only get our pattern of ministry right once we have become clear about the nature of the mission in which God is involving us today. In the report *Growing Up – A Mission programme for the United Reformed Church* adopted by General Assembly in July 1999, to which we referred above, a foundation has been admirably laid for us. We welcome in particular the breadth of vision which is leading the Church to model its calling on the five marks of mission drafted by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and endorsed by the Forum of Churches Together in England in 1997. The next stage is to recognise that our whole pattern of ministries needs to be re-shaped so that the Church is liberated to participate effectively in these five dimensions of its mission.

4.7 This leads us back, in the first place, to the WCC Faith and Order Commission's consensus-seeking document on Ministry, part of the BEM process. So long as the United Reformed Church has felt content simply to remain loyal to its Reformed heritage of ministries, it has been able to dismiss that document's suggestion that, although the historic threefold pattern of bishops, presbyters and deacons "stands evidently in need of reform", churches like the United Reformed Church which have not maintained that pattern need to ask whether it "does not have a powerful claim to be accepted by them".¹⁴ It has been able to regard that pattern historically arbitrary and its adoption to be merely the importation of something from an alien tradition. Instead we believe we are now being presented with an opportunity, in consultation with other denominations, to give this historic pattern of diaconal, presbyteral and oversight ministries a renewed relevance, one differing in form from that currently exercised in the catholic tradition and more attuned to our Reformed heritage.

4.8 In this way: If we look at the five marks of mission set out in *Growing Up*, and regard, as we believe we should, the first of those marks ("to proclaim the good news of the kingdom") as a dimension which embraces all that follows,¹⁵ then the other four correspond closely with the historic threefold dimensions of the Church's ministry. The second mark ("to teach, baptise and nurture new believers") corresponds closely to that presbyteral ministry which we have seen elders and MWS together called to enable in our local churches. The third mark ("to respond to human need by loving service") clearly points to the church as a whole possessing a diaconal ministry. The fourth ("to seek to transform unjust structures of society") may be interpreted as an element of that same diaconal ministry; it may equally be understood, along with the fifth mark ("to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth"),

as the church's obedient acceptance of its calling to exercise oversight of God's creation. This it derives from the calling of the Christ who saw in his world a people "harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9 36). What we are saying, then, is that if the churches' mission, in its five marks, broadly embraces these three dimensions, presbyteral, diaconal and episcopal, it is reasonable to assume that God's provision of an ordained ministry, called to be a pointer to and to enable the church in that mission, should possess a correspondingly diverse pattern.

4.9 What we envisage is that at least in each locality, and even in each local church there would be teams of Ministers exercising a variety of ministries, some presbyteral, some diaconal, and some with an oversight dimension, corresponding to the five marks of mission, and to the historic threefold pattern. All will necessarily be working collaboratively. Some few would be stipendiary and full time, many more would not. We live in a society in which much of the work is of a casual and part-time nature. The church has no option but to adapt to that social climate, however critical it might be of elements within it. Already some NSMs receive a salary (eg. as hospital chaplains).

Already there is scope for many more MWS to serve part-time perhaps combining their service with a part-time secular job. We see no reason why the exercise of ministry should not be completely flexible. In this way we believe that the Reformed preference for a continuum of ordained ministries, from full-time to (very) part-time, rather than a sharp clerical/lay divide, would be best maintained. Above all we see ministry, in whatever form, being deliberately and explicitly geared to enable and equip the whole people of God in its mission.

4.10 Clearly much more work needs to be done in order to map out in detail the proposals which, in the time at our disposal, we have only begun to outline. We are convinced that this work needs urgently to be undertaken.

Recommendation 7:-

that the Ministries Committee should take the necessary steps to ensure that proposals are drawn up for a new, more diverse pattern of ministries, building on ecumenical insights and designed to enable the church to respond more effectively to the challenge of the mission strategy outlined in *Growing Up*.

Footnotes

- 1 Reports to Assembly, 1977, p23
- 2 Noted in a copy of the report referred to in the above footnote.
- 3 Reports to Assembly, 1979, pp46ff
- 4 Proposals for Unification, 1976, para 22, p12.
- 5 Reports to Assembly 1982, p96f
- 6 Reports to Assembly, 1990, p21f
- 7 Patterns of Ministry can be found in Reports to Assembly, 1995, pp113-144. See in particular p121 and resolution 43, p132.
- 8 We suggest that in the Year Book list instead of the single letter N alongside NSMs one of the following designations be included:

Service in a congregation as part of a team (the former Churches of Christ model)	NI
In pastoral charge as part of a team:	N2a
In sole pastoral charge:	N2b
Exercising a ministry at District or Synod level:	N2c
Ministers in Secular Employment	N3
NSMs no longer active:	NN
NSMs past the age of retirement and no longer active:	NR
- 9 We assume that the 1997 General Assembly's requirement of 800 hours supervised placement will in most cases add a year to the length of an NSM's training. It is in the year prior to this placement year that decisions will need to be taken about future spheres of service and the nature of the appropriate placement. The location of the final placement and sphere of future ministry may or may not be one and the same.
- 10 See Annual Reports, 1999, p134ff
- 11 Basis of Union para 21
- 12 cf. "Public ministry is never completely described by listing the minister's tasks": Theology of Ministry, a paper presented to Mission Council, Sept/Oct 1997, p4 para 3.6)
- 13 See Reports to General Assembly, 1979, p47, where the reasons for introducing an Auxilliary Ministry are listed.
- 14 The quotations are from WCC, BEM, Ministry para 24 & 25
- 15 cf.op.cit para 4

Draft Guidelines for a Contract of Service for a non-stipendiary Minister

- 1 The contract should be drawn up by the District Council in consultation with
 - the Minister concerned;
 - the Synod Moderator;
 - any local church(es) affected by his/her ministry and;
 - in the case of Model 3 ministries (Ministers in Secular Employment), representatives of those organisations to which it is intended that the minister should relate.
 - 2 The contract should deal with the following matters:
 - a precise description of the areas of ministry to be engaged in;
 - expectations regarding the minimum/maximum amount of time per week to devoted to ministry;
 - expectations regarding time to be devoted to holidays/leisure pursuits/family life/business travel etc (especially important in relation to ministers in full-time employment);
 - expectations regarding participation in post-ordination and continuing ministerial education.
 - 3 The contract should be, in the first instance, for a period not exceeding five years, should be reviewed by the District Council in its final year and may be extended for further periods not exceeding five years.
 - 4 The original of each contract should then be kept among the District Council records, with copies held by all interested parties.
-

Nomination of the General Secretary

Convener: Revd Peter McIntosh

Resolution 36**Appointment of General Secretary**

General Assembly appoints the Revd Dr David Cornick to serve as General Secretary for a period of seven years from 1 August 2001 to 31 July 2008.

1 The present General Secretary, the Revd Anthony Burnham, will retire at the end of his present period of service on 31 July 2001. At its last meeting the Assembly appointed a special committee to nominate his successor. The appointment was made in accordance with the rules of procedure: two representatives of each synod, nine people nominated by Mission Council (five of whom were conveners of Assembly committees), the Moderator of the General Assembly and the convener of the Nominations Committee.

2 The names of those appointed can be found on pages 48-49 of the 1999 Book of Reports. The Deputy General Secretary acted as secretary to the committee but was not present when interviews were carried out or when the interview group discussed and made its decision.

3 The committee met on four occasions. Using the process followed in 1991 as a basis for its work, the first two meetings were concerned with agreeing procedures and considering the job description and person specification. Changes in these were reported to Mission Council. By means of an advertisement in 'Reform' and letters to synod

clerks, nominations of suitable ministers were sought from individuals, district councils and synods. Forty six names were submitted and these were considered by the committee at its third meeting. A short list was agreed and an interview group appointed to meet those on the list. This group had three meetings, at the last of which it interviewed those on the short list and then decided which was its preferred candidate. This name was presented to the full committee, which itself met with the candidate, the Revd Dr David Cornick, presently Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge.

4 Each of the meetings was held in the context of worship and prayer, and at the end the committee was unanimous and confident in nominating the Revd Dr David George Cornick to the General Assembly to serve as General Secretary for a period of seven years from 1 August 2001.

5 The committee suggested that the preferred candidate should have a medical examination. Dr Cornick has done this satisfactorily. Similarly it suggested that a careful programme of induction should be prepared. This is in hand.

Nominations

This committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as conveners and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of URC representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for synod moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Glyn Jenkins **Secretary:** Mr Desmond Curry

Synod Representatives:

I Miss Janet Turner	II Revd Geoff Tolley
III Revd Angus Duncan [until March 2000]	IV Mr John Seager
V Revd Christopher White	VI Mr Simon Rowntree
VII Revd Elizabeth Caswell	VIII Revd Ray Adams
IX Revd George Thomas	X Revd Adrian Bulley
XI Mrs Christine Meekison	XII Revd John Humphreys

with the Immediate Past Moderator, General Secretary and the Secretary of the Scottish Congregational Church

I ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 The Nominating Group for the North Western Synod Moderator was convened by Revd Angus Duncan and recommends the appointment of Revd Peter James Brain from 1 Sept 2000 until 31 August 2007.

1.2 The Nominating Group for the Secretary for Finance was convened by Revd David Hannen and recommended to Mission Council the appointment of Miss Avis Reaney with effect from 1 April 2000.

1.3 The Review Group for the Children's Advocate was convened by Mrs Wilma Frew and recommended to Mission Council that Mrs Rosemary Johnston be re-appointed from 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2005.

1.4 The Review Group for the Editor of Reform and Media Officer was convened by Revd Donald Hilton and following its recommendation Mission Council re-appointed Revd David Lawrence for a further period from 1st July 2000 to 31st August 2005.

1.5 The following groups have been appointed:

1.5.1 Appointment Group for Secretary for Church and Society convened by Revd Keith Forecast.

1.5.2 Review Group for Mersey Synod Moderator convened by Mr Brian Evans.

1.5.3 Review Group for South Western Synod Moderator convened by Mrs Wilma Frew.

1.5.4 Nominating Group for Southern Synod Moderator convened by Revd Sandra Lloydlangston.

1.5.5 Nominating Group for National Synod of Wales Moderator convened by Revd Christopher White.

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 1999 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 2000 is invited to appoint for the first time. (#) indicates a representative of the National Synod of Scotland who will serve until 2001.

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
Synod Representative for forthcoming Assembly
Synod Representative for previous Assembly who is then replaced after 'review' meeting by
Synod 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
Mr George Morton [2001] Dr Sue Brisley [2002] Revd Ken Cox [2003]
Revd Raymond Singh [2003] Mrs Helen Warmington [2003] Mrs Marva Ward [2003]
Miss Catriona Waterson [2003] Revd Alan Paterson #

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Graham Cook [2003]
Secretary: Secretary for Communications
Revd Paul Brewerton [2001] Mr Richard Lathen [2001] Ms Kirsty Thorpe [2001]
Revd Michael Forster [2001] Mr John East [2001] Revd Peter Moth [2001]
Revd Roger Hall [2001] Miss Elizabeth Bruce [2004]** Mrs Melanie Frew [2004]**

2.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd Dr Colin Thompson [2001]
Secretary: Ms Kirsty Thorpe [2004]
Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2001] Mr Colin Ferguson [2002] Revd Thelma Cole [2003]
Revd Dr David Peel [2003] Revd Nadim Nassar [2003] Revd Charles Martin [2003]
Mrs Jenny Poulter [2004]** Revd John Young #

2.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Bob Andrews [2001]
Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Mrs Jackie Marsh [2001] Revd Richard Mortimer [2001] Revd John Rees [2001]
Revd Mary Buchanan [2002] Revd Philip Jones [2002] Revd Elizabeth Nash [2002]
Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reed [2004]** Revd Stuart Jackson representing the National Synod of Wales
Revd John R Smith #

2.5.1 ECUMENICAL - INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd John Crocker [2003]
Secretary: Secretary for International Relations
Mr Peter Bryant [2002] Revd John Humphreys [2001] Revd Keith Riglin [2002]
Revd Gwenneth Collins [2003]

2.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Revd Nannette Lewis Head [2003]
Secretary: Ms Ruth Norton [2003]
Ms Georgette Margrett [2001] Revd Wilf Bahadur [2001] Miss Stella Salmon [2002]
Revd Derek Hopkins [2002] Revd Susan Armitage [2003] Miss Sarah Moore [2004]**

2.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer
Secretary: The Secretary for Finance
Miss Catriona Waterson [2001] Mr Alan Duncan [2002] Mr Gordon Latham [2003]
Revd John Piper [2003] Miss Muriel Proven [2004]** Convener of the URC Trust

2.8 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Mrs Daphne Beale [2003]
Secretary: Revd Sally Thomas [2004]**
Mrs Linda Hopley [2001] Mr Matthew Bean [2003] Mr Alistair Ellefsen-Jones [2004]**
Revd David M Taylor [2002]

2.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Frank Beattie [2003]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mrs Tina Rook [2001]

Mr David Williams [2002]

Revd Peter Ball [2002]

Revd Suzanne Hamnet [2003]

Mrs Sheila Thatcher [2003]

Revd Eddie Boon [2003]

Revd Bob Warwicker [2003]

Revd Angela Hughes [2004]**

Revd Simon Copley [2004]**

Revd Kenneth Forbes #

2.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS - STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Keith Webster [2004]**

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mrs Susan Wilkinson [2002]

Mr Frank Dale [2003]

Mrs Sheila Yates [2003]

Mrs Anne Mitchell [2004]**

To be advised [2004]

2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Revd Graham Long [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Martha McLnnes [2001]

Revd Brian Jolly [2001]

Ms Sally Abbott [2002]

Revd Roz Harrison [2003]

Revd Tjarda Murray [2003]

Miss Marjory King #

Revd Peter Noble [2004]**

Convener of National Assessment Board

2.10.1 MINISTRIES - ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Robert Way [2001]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Julie McLaren [2001]

Revd Graham Robson [2001]

Mrs Frances Caldwell [2002]

Mr Peter Mann [2003]

Revd Roberta Rominger [2003]

2.10.2 MINISTRIES - CRCW Management Sub-Committee

Convener: To be advised

Secretary: Mr John Boddy [2001]

Revd Alison Hall [2002]

Revd Peter Cruchley Jones [2002]

Revd Clifford Wilton [2002]

To be advised

2.10.3 MINISTRIES - LAY PREACHING Sub Committee

Lay Preaching Commissioner: Mrs Carol Dixon [2003]

And four members elected by the Lay Preacher Commissioners Consultation

2.10.4 MINISTRIES - MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Geoffrey Wood [2003]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings [2003]

Mrs Jill Strong [2003]

Revd Roger Woodall [2004]**

Revd Pauline Parkin [2004]**

Mr Barry Swift [2004]**

The Treasurer

2.10.5 MINISTRIES - RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING - Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Simon Swailes [2002]

Secretary: Mr Clive Willis [2003]

Mrs Margaret Waller [2001]

Mrs Sheila Woodcock [2001]

Revd John Pugh [2002]

Revd Graham Cook [2002]

The Treasurer

Note: Properties are managed by a Company viz: 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

2.10.6 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mr Brian Evans [2001]

Retiring 2001 Revd Derek Wales, Revd Reginald Rooke

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 Helmn, Revd Lythan Nevard

Retiring 2004 Revd Marilyn Allen, Revd Craig Bowman, Revd Graham Hoslett,

Revd Kevin Watson, Revd Ray Adams

Retiring 2005 Mrs Joyce Sutcliff **, Dr Jean Stevenson **, Dr David Cutler**, Revd Rachel Poolman**

2.10.7 PANEL FOR ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES - CRCW - Sub-Section

Revd Bob Day [2003] Mr Andrew Edwards [2003] Mr Graham Ghaleb [2003]
Mrs Kathleen Stephenson [2003] Ms Allison Trimble [2003] Revd Susan Armitage [2004]**

2.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Glyn Jenkins [2002]
Secretary: Mr Desmond Curry [2001]
Synod Representatives: Miss Janet Turner [1], Revd Geoff Tolley [2], Mr Donald Swift [3],
Mr John Seager [4], Revd Christopher White [5], Mr Simon Rowntree [6], Revd Elizabeth Caswell [7],
Revd Ray Adams [8], Revd George Thomas [9], Revd Adrian Bulley [10], Mrs Christine Meekison [11],
Revd John Humphreys [12], Revd John Arthur [13], with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary

2.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd David Jenkins [2003]
Secretary: Deputy General Secretary
Dr Anthea Kaan [2001] Revd Arnold Harrison [2003] Mr Okeke Azu Okeke [2004]**
Revd Pat Hall [2004]** Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee The Treasurer
The General Secretary

2.12.1 PASTORAL WELFARE - Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Nelson Bainbridge [2003]
Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

2.13 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Proctor [2003]
Secretary: The Secretary for Training
Dr Tony Jeans [2001] Revd Ruth Ball [2001] Mrs Helen Brown [2002]
Revd Roy Lowes [2002] Dr Andrew Dawson [2002] Dr Graham Campling [2003]
Revd Carole Ellefsen-Jones [2003] Mrs Anthea Coates [2004]** Revd Paul Ballard [2004]**
Revd John Dyce #

2.14 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Revd David A L Jenkins [2001]
Secretary: The Director of Windermere
Revd Stephen Thornton [2001] Revd Douglas McFarlane [2003] Mrs Christine Millward [2004]**
Convener of Windermere Management Committee Convener of Life and Witness Committee
Minister of Carver URC

2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Derek Lindfield [2002]
Secretary: Mrs Soo Webster [2003]
Mr Gareth Curl [2001] Revd Margaret Collins [2001] Mrs Caroline Chettleburgh [2002]
Mrs Brenda Cheer [2003] Mrs Rita Joyner [2003] Revd Kathryn Price [2003]
Mrs Kath Lonsdale [2003] Revd Andrew Willett [2004]** Mr Lewis McKenzie [2004]**
To be advised FURY Chair FURY Council Member

2.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS - Commission Panel

Convener: Revd Donald Hilton
Deputy Convener: Mrs Helen Brown
Secretary: Revd Alasdair Walker

Members:

Miss Ina Barker	Ms Kate Breeze	Mr Keith Brooks	Revd K Chippindale
Revd Alison Davis	Mr R Forsyth	Mrs Wilma Frew	Mr Alan Hart
Revd R M Jones	Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC	Revd Julian Macro	Revd Ted Marley
Revd Denise Megson	Sir James Nursaw	Mrs Sheila Pratt	Mr Nicholas Pye
Mrs Sally Quilter	Revd Michael Rees	Revd John Slow	Revd Dr David Thompson
Miss Sheila Tweed	Mr John Moore	Mr Ray Holden	Mr Mike Garnett
Mr Donald Taylor	Mr Peter Mann	Mr Peter Jolly	Dr John Kennedy
Mr Ian Lloyd Parry	Mrs Barbara Martin	Ms Rachael Greening	Mrs Vera Maskery
Mrs Ruth Clarke	Ms Elizabeth Whitten	Revd John Chisholm	Revd David Main

Revd Raymond Singh	Revd David Skitt	Revd Dr Rick Mearkle	Revd Brenda Hill
Revd Margaret Taylor	Revd Joan Winterbottom	Revd Margaret Juhasz	Revd Shelagh Pollard
Miss Janice Jeater	Mr Martin Ballard		

3 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Moderators and three representatives from each Synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Synod Representatives:

Northern Synod	Dr Peter Clarke, Revd Pamela Ward, Mrs Roberta Wood
North-Western Synod	Revd Geoffrey Townsend, Mrs Margareta Batchelor, Mrs Janice Cockcroft
Mersey Synod	Mrs Lillian Covell, Dr Donald South, Revd Gwnfor Evans
Yorkshire Synod	Revd John Jenkinson, Mr Steve Wood, Mrs Val Morrison
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Jill Strong, Revd Clifford Wilton, Revd David Miller
West Midlands Synod	Mr Simon Rowntree, Revd Dr S F Ansa-Addo, Mrs Ann Sheldon
Eastern Synod	Revd Michal Burrell, Mr Ken Woods, Revd Richard Mortimer
South Western Synod	Revd Roy Lowes, Revd Paul Snell, Miss Angela Bebbington
Wessex Synod	Mr Graham Rolfe, Revd David Williams, Revd Simon Thomas
Thames North Synod	Mr Keith Webster, Revd Dr Robin Pagan, Mr Geoffrey Duncan
Southern Synod	Mrs Christine Meekison, Mr Ian Chalmers, A N Other (<i>To be advised</i>)
National Synod of Wales	Revd Kristin Ofstad, Mrs Delys Rees, Revd David Fox
National Synod of Scotland	Revd Ken Forbes, A N Other (<i>To be advised</i>), A N Other (<i>To be advised</i>)

4 TRUST BODIES

4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: Dr Brian Woodhall

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors:

Revd Tony Burnham	Miss Avis Reaney	Mrs Christine Meekison
Mr Graham Stacy	Mr Clive Willis	Dr Brian Woodhall [2004]
Mr John Squires [2004]	Ms Valerie Ham [2004]	Mr David Marshall-Jones [2004]
Mr Peter Ward [2005]	Revd Leslie Watson [2006]**	

4.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD - BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: Revd Alasdair Walker

Secretary: Revd John Martin

Members of the URC:	Ms Valerie Ham	Mr Ray Chambers [2001]
	Mrs Lindy Anderson [2002]	Mr Richard Nunn [2003]
Members of the Fund:	Revd John Martin	Revd Alasdair Walker [2001]
	Revd Jessie Clare [2002]	Revd Kenneth Graham [2003]

[*ex officio* Miss Avis Reaney, Mr Graham Stacy, Mr Victor Hughff, Mr Geoffrey Wood]

4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Dr Peter Jupp	Mrs Christine Meekison	Revd Maurice Husselbee
Mrs Mary Stacy	Mr Graham Stacy	Mr Arthur Smith
Revd David Hannen	Mr Hartley Oldham	Revd Peter Grimshaw
Revd John Taylor	Revd Geoffrey Setchell	

5 Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Peter McIntosh, Revd Kenneth Lynch
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Murdoch McKenzie
Methodist Conference	Revd Bob Andrews
Provincial Synod of Moravian Church	Revd David Tatem
Congregational Federation	Revd David Helyar

- 8.2 New College London
Foundation Trustees
Mr John Smethers
Mr Graham Stacy, Revd John Pugh
- 8.3 Northern College
Secretary for Training
Ms Bethan Galliers
Mrs Helen Brown, Mr Jim Wilkinson
Council of the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester: Secretary for Training
- 8.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors
Convener: Revd Dr David Thompson
Clerk: Mr Andrew Armour
Mr Don Taylor, Secretary for Training
Mrs Valerie Burnham
Revd Sandra Lloydlangston
- 8.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation
Mr Desmond Davies,
Revd Michael Dunford
- 8.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation
Convener Westminster College
Governors
Secretary for Training
Secretary for Training
Joint Academic Committee:
- 8.5 Homerton College Trustees
Mr John Chaplin
Lady Sally Williams
Mrs Elisabeth Jupp
Revd Dr David Thompson
- 8.6 Queen's College, Birmingham
Revd Elizabeth Welch
Revd Ken Chippindale
Mr Howard Bridge*
Secretary for Training in attendance
- 8.7 Aberystwyth (Memorial College)
Revd Dr Glyndwr Harris
Mr Leslie Jones

9 GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the URC is associated

- 9.1 Caterham School
9.2 Eltham College
Walthamstow Hall
Revd David Helyar,
Revd Clifford Charlton
Miss Margaret Vokins
Mr John Mathias *
- 9.3 Milton Mount Foundation
Miss Nan Mark*
Revd George Thomas
Mr David Butler
Revd Peter Grimshaw
To be advised
- 9.4 Silcoates School,
9.5 Taunton School
9.6 Wentworth College
9.7 Bishops Stortford College
Dr Clyde Binfield
Revd Ray Adams
Revd George Thomas
Mr Hugh Joscelyne

Resolutions 37-38

10 Miscellaneous

The URC is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund

Christian Education Movement Council
Churches Main Committee

Congregational Fund Board

Guides' Religious Advisory Panel
National Christian Education Council

Scouts' Religious Advisory Group
United Reformed Church History Society

URC Boy's Brigade Companies Council
Wharton Trust
Widows Fund of the Three Denominations

Mr Ken Meekison (Hon Treasurer)
Mrs Jill Strong*
Mr Laurence Macro
Mrs Margi Jenkins
Miss Avis Reaney
Mr Hartley Oldham
Mr Tegid Peregrine
Revd Cyril Grant
Revd Dorothy Havergal-Shaw
Revd Eric Allen
Revd John Taylor*
Mrs Susan Walker
Mrs Patricia Hubbard
Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Mr D Marshall-Jones
Mrs Mary Davies
Revd Peter Jupp
Mrs Carol Rogers
Revd Eric Wollaston
Revd Dr David Thompson
Revd Michael Rees
Mr Norman Fabb
Mr Ken Meekison
Mrs Jill Strong
Mr Laurence Macro

Resolution 37

Nominations

General Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 121 to 128 of the Book of Reports subject to the additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report before Assembly.

Resolution 38

Church Treasurer

General Assembly invites Mr Graham Stacy to serve as Treasurer for a further two years until General Assembly 2002.

Pastoral Reference

The purpose of the Pastoral Reference Committee is to consider the cases of ministers which are referred to it by Mission Council, synods, district councils, or their committees or by moderators of synods. (See GA 1999 reports p.122). 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 David Jenkins*

Secretary: *Revd John Waller*

*Revd Tony Burnham, Revd Jean Forster, the Revd Arnold Harrison,
Dr Anthea Kaan, Mrs Joan Staples, the Honorary Treasurer
the Convener of the Welfare Sub-Committee*

1 It is important that the Church should maintain the highest standards of pastoral care at every level. At Assembly level this committee deals with the pastoral needs of particular ministers who have been referred to them. Sometimes advice and action has to be offered and taken by the committee officers but in most cases the skills and experience of all committee members are brought to bear upon the particular problems of the individuals concerned. The committee continues to operate in a spirit of careful listening, sensitivity and confidentiality.

2 The Committee is grateful for the practical work of the Welfare Sub-Committee as its members deal wisely and generously with many requests for assistance.

3 The Committee commends to Assembly the pastoral care offered by Synods and District Councils and especially pays tribute to the work of Synod Moderators who carry a major responsibility in this regard. The Committee is sometimes called on for advice rather than intervention and is glad to offer its services in this way.

4 Two Committee members complete their terms of service and special appreciation is offered to them. Jean Forster and Joan Staples have brought skill and great wisdom and the committee will miss their contributions.

Welfare Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Nelson Bainbridge

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

1.1 One of the main concerns of the Sub-Committee during the last year has been the assistance given to ministers facing major problems of debt. We have consulted with a debt advisor from the Citizens Advice Bureau who was able to give us helpful advice as to how ministers experiencing serious financial difficulties could be supported and guided through their problems. This is being followed up in consultation with agencies which specialise in such matters, as a result of which it is hoped to make advice and support available as necessary.

1.2 During the last year gifts amounting to £139,500 were made. Included in this figure was £9,700 given to spouses of ministers following bereavement and £48,500 by means of Christmas gifts to widows, widowers and their dependants. £53,900 was sent to ministers for assistance in the education of their families.

1.3 The Sub-Committee would remind ministers and CRCWs of the funds which are available to provide assistance for general welfare purposes and in some respects for education. Details of these were circulated in 1998 and a revised issue of this paper is being considered for later in the year; in the meantime information may be obtained from the Committee Secretary at Church House. Applications for grants of a more routine nature (e.g. on the birth of a child or for education purposes) should be made direct to the Committee Secretary. Other requests for assistance should be made in the first instance through Synod Moderators, whose advice and co-operation are of invaluable help to the Sub-Committee in its work.

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, Ministries, Life 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, and in particular the Ecumenical Committee. It also gives oversight to the YLTO and YCWT programmes.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd John Proctor

Revd Ruth Ball, Mrs Helen Brown, Dr Graham Campling, Dr Andrew Dawson, Revd Sandra Dears, Revd Jack Dyce, Revd Carole Ellefsen-Jones, Dr Iain Frew, Revd Roy Lowes, Revd Dr John Parry

Secretaries: Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee (Secretary for Training) and
Revd Jean Black (Secretary for Continuing Ministerial Education)

I Introduction

1.1 The Training Committee has had a demanding and active year. A number of matters have emerged to claim our urgent attention. The task of supporting, managing and sustaining a busy and varied set of training ventures throughout the Church requires vigilance and energy. Yet we have tried to keep a clear sense of strategy and priority, so that both the crisis management and the maintenance work serve to develop a cohesive programme for the good of the whole Church.

1.2 Our strategy, presented at last year's Assembly and developed since, includes the following aims:

- i) learning for all in the Church, including a wide provision of opportunities for lay training;
- ii) excellence in initial education, and the expansion of continuing education, for certain defined offices in the Church - elders, lay preachers, local leaders, CRCW's, ministers;
- iii) integration of lay and ministerial training, wherever appropriate;
- iv) co-operation, both between synod ventures and national provision, and ecumenically;
- v) wide publicity of training opportunities, in order to prompt a broad response and interest throughout the church.

1.3 Against that background we have addressed the following issues.

2 Racial Justice and Theological Education

2.1 The Committee spent time during one meeting to consider, with Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper, how issues of race and culture are handled during theological training. A number of our training institutions wrote to tell us what they do, and while we noted much that was good, we acknowledge that this issue must receive continual attention. Responses from the Training Committee will include:

- i) Attention in the inspection and validation cycle to the Church's ninth criterion for recognition of colleges and courses: 'take seriously issues of race, class, gender and disability, and actively promote anti-oppressive practices' (*Record*, 1995, p 50).
- ii) Inclusion of racial justice issues in Continuing Ministerial Education.
- iii) Consideration of suitable lay training material. One synod is developing a training module on racial justice issues for use with churches in predominantly white areas and we hope that this will be suitable for use in other synods too.
- iv) Annual consideration of gains and needs in this area, as a major agenda item in committee.

3 Initial Ministerial Education

3.1 Validations and Inspections

3.1.1

- i) A system of validation and inspection has been developed by the Church of England and made available to other churches. Validation requires a theological training institution to submit a lengthy written account of what it aims to do and how it goes about this. This document is scrutinised by representatives of the churches, in order to confirm that the work is being undertaken to the churches' expectations.
- ii) A year or two after the validation, an inspection is carried out by the churches, to review the work 'in the flesh', against the background of stated aims and policy in the validation document. This inspection leads to recommendations, to which the institution is expected to respond. Senior inspectors remain in touch for a year or two, until the churches are satisfied with the response. Then the work continues until it is time for the process to begin again; the whole cycle takes about six years.
- iii) The Training Committee acts on behalf of the Assembly in contributing to this process and reviewing its results. All the institutions we use involve some ecumenical partnership, so we work with the training panels of other churches in these matters. The aim throughout is the sustenance of high standards in training, the encouragement of good practice, and the critical support of staff and students.

3.1.2 Plans have been made for the formal Re-Validation of the Partnership for Theological Education Manchester, and this exercise will take place in the coming academic year, leading on to an ecumenical inspection in a year or two's time.

3.1.3 We contribute to the inspection and validation process for the various regional ecumenical ministry courses which the United Reformed Church recognises - for example in this year the Validation of the South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE) and the Inspection of the Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS). These exercises have evoked admiration and approval of the educational work done on the churches' behalf.

3.2 Ecumenical Inspection of the Cambridge Theological Federation, 1999

3.2.1 An inspection was carried out between April and November, 1998 of the Cambridge Theological Federation (of which Westminster College is a member) by an ecumenical team representing the various churches which the Federation serves. They reported in Spring 1999. (See Appendix 8 for detail)

3.3 Mansfield College, Oxford

3.3.1 Last year's Assembly expressed a desire that the United Reformed Church continue to use the four colleges (at Birmingham, Cambridge, Manchester and Oxford) that it had long used for initial ministerial training. In the light of this decision the Committee has negotiated with officers of Mansfield College for the continuation of its programme of ministerial training, which had previously appeared to be under some threat.

3.3.2 During the autumn of 1999, Revd Dr Catherine Middleton had to give up her work as Acting Director of Ministerial Training at Mansfield, due to serious illness, and she subsequently took early retirement for that same reason. The Committee records its appreciation and gratitude to Catherine for her work at Mansfield, in particular for her energetic and effective leadership in the year 1998-99, when Mansfield's response to an inspection report indicated that it had much to offer the churches in the years to come.

3.3.3 In the academic year 1999-2000 Revd Dale Rominger has served as Acting Director of Ministerial Training, working on a short-term appointment, while the college and the churches made plans for the future. His abilities as a director of studies, and as a mentor and pastor to students have sustained important work through a difficult year, and the Committee acknowledges his contribution with warm thanks.

3.3.4 At the time of writing Mansfield is about to advertise for a Director of Ordination Training and Chaplain, to serve for seven years from the autumn of 2000. This is a college appointment, to be made by the Principal and Fellows, but the churches will have an important role in the interview and nomination process. Subject to a suitable appointment being made, ministerial training for United Reformed Church candidates will thus continue at Mansfield, for a guaranteed period.

3.3.5 From autumn 2000, the teaching will be closely integrated with the teaching at Regents Park College, a neighbouring Baptist foundation. The Mansfield Director will contribute academically to this

programme, within the Regents Park staff team. The Director will also provide specialist input for Mansfield students, and will advise and guide them in their preparation for Reformed ministry. This arrangement will allow some flexibility with regard to numbers. There will also be clear benefits for all parties in the enhanced ecumenical dimension of the programme, yet it is intended that the particular church commitments of the Mansfield theological tradition will remain evident.

3.3.6 Mansfield has asked that some financial guarantee be given by the United Reformed Church, and an appropriate arrangement has been endorsed by Mission Council, along with a sliding scale of academic fees. If we can send a reasonable number of students the training will be properly economical. The Committee has included Mansfield on the list of recognised colleges throughout the 1999-2000 cycle of Assessment Conferences. For we are keen that (as with all our centres) a viable number of suitable students may train there.

3.3.7 We have been very glad of the involvement and help of the Congregational Federation Training Board in these dealings with Mansfield, and we have welcomed this opportunity to collaborate with them.

3.4 800 Hour Placement

3.4.1 Assembly resolved in 1997 that all ordinands should complete at least 800 hours' practical placement work in the course of their training. Many ordinands, particularly those working on Full-time courses undertake at least this volume of placement work within the regular programme of their training institution. Some, especially those working on part-time courses, do not, and for them the 1997 resolution requires further work before ordination, for which Synods are responsible.

3.4.2 The Committee has produced guidelines to help Synods fulfil this role. These have been circulated to Synod Training Officers and to those training institutions most directly involved. Very little adverse comment has been received, and indeed this has concerned the resolution as such, not the specifics of how it might be operated. We therefore report to Assembly that guidelines are in operation, and that we intend to monitor their early use with special care.

4 Local Leadership Training

4.1 At last year's Assembly the Training Committee was asked what resources it could make available to support the varied initiatives in local church leadership being taken in different parts of the country. We offer a threefold response.

i) We commend a training course for local leaders developed by Mersey Synod. The Tutor Pack for this course has been acquired by training officers in most of the other Synods, and further copies can be obtained from Mersey. Mersey have stressed to us that this course can only be well used in places where there has first been careful thought about the kind of local leadership the churches need. It should not precede, and cannot substitute for, that kind of thinking.

ii) The *Training for Learning and Serving* (TLS) course can contribute very usefully indeed to the training of local leaders. While changes are coming in TLS (see further below), we shall keep in mind the potential of any revision or successor course to serve the needs of local leaders.

iii) We have written to the Moderators' Meeting to enquire about the nature, extent and likely development of this section of the Church's leadership. We have asked if there is anything the Training Committee, acting for the national Church, ought to arrange, in order to enable, extend or improve the initial and in-service training of local leaders. As responses come from the Moderators, we shall seek to plan a policy, and to work accordingly. We are not rushing our work on this matter; it does not seem to be that kind of need. But nor do we wish to neglect an increasingly important area of the Church's life.

5 Training for Elders

5.1 Mission Council asked us some time ago to consider this issue. We have found that practices and resources vary widely from place to place. In particular, a course has been developed in Wessex Synod, and the booklet *Refreshing the Elders Meeting* by Peter McIntosh and Graham Robson is on sale throughout the Church. We believe that there is need for: (i) preparation material for those becoming Elders; (ii) special days on special topics for experienced Elders - and where Elders take on special responsibilities. A small group has therefore been set up, to prepare some training material that can be made nationally available. We shall report further at Assembly in 2001, and hope to launch material not later than Assembly 2002. We have been reminded that a large number of elders serve in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and we should like our material to be versatile enough to include their need.

6 Church Related Community Work Training

6.1 The arrangements for training Church-Related Community Workers, which caused some concern in 1998-99 during a vacancy in the Church's CRCW Development Worker post, are now working well. Northern College and the Partnership for Theological Education Manchester are to be congratulated for the work that they have done to sustain this programme.

7 Continuing Ministerial Education

7.1 **Introduction.** The aim of CME is to create an ethos in the United Reformed Church of life long learning so that ministers can adapt their ministry to make it relevant in today's society, understand new theological thinking, be stimulated to preach the good news of God's love and also to enable them to encourage, inspire and teach the members of their churches. It is a programme for ministers but the benefit should be felt throughout the church.

7.2 This has been a busy and interesting year for the CME sub-committee as we have tried to implement the 1998 General Assembly proposal that all ministers would be encouraged to take up to two weeks Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) training each year. The benefit of CME is in the area of spiritual, personal, mental and professional growth. The aim of the CME sub-committee, with the Synod CME training officers, was that all ministers take at least one week CME in the year ending Sept 1999 and that by Sept 2000 they would take two weeks CME.

7.3 The CME programme consists of:

7.3.1 **Post Ordination Education Training Weekends.** In the first three years after ordination the POET programme is on offer to ministers. This year three national POET weekends have been run on Time Management; Minister as Educator and Conflict Management. Within these weekends there is the opportunity for theological reflection, personal and spiritual development, learning new skills and knowledge. POET is also run at Synod level. CME Training officers run three weekends a year so that ministers can choose from them.

7.3.2 **On-Going Education Training (ONET).** Three National ONET courses have been arranged for this year. The topics covered are; Reflecting on Ministry, The implications of the United Reformed Church joining the Scottish Congregational Church, and Understanding and Implementing the Equal Opportunities policy adopted by General Assembly 1994.

Other ONET courses have been run at Synod level, and ministers have applied for various courses that they have selected themselves and which they feel will enable them to have greater skill in their ministry.

7.3.3 **Refresher Courses** are held for ministers in their fourth, seventh, fourteenth years (and seven year period thereafter). Recently the CME sub-committee reviewed the ethos and structure of the Refresher courses and it was decided that a planning group would co-ordinate the courses in the future so that there would be consistency in the courses run.

7.3.4 **Sabbaticals.** Ministers are still being encouraged to take their Sabbaticals after ten years of service in the United Reformed Church. It is hoped that after the Sabbatical has been completed ministers will write a report illustrating their major learning and explaining how their Sabbatical has benefited them. These reports are read by the Secretary of CME and a copy is kept on file at Westminster College. The report may be available for wider distribution and publication.

7.3.5 **New Ministers Conference.** This is run to give new ministers the opportunity of learning more about the United Reformed Church, in particular its conciliar nature and how the National committees interact with each other.

7.4 **New Financial Proposals for CME.** This year the CME sub-committee alongside the Training Finance sub-committee have put in place the new proposals. Ministers applying for CME grants will make their request through their Synod CME training officer. At the end of the year the Synods are reimbursed by the national Finance Office.

7.5 **CME Opportunities Journal.** To enable ministers to keep abreast of the CME opportunities a journal has been published three times a year. The aim of the journal is to raise the profile of CME by giving information about courses that are available, publish articles that show the benefits of CME, and help communication throughout the church on CME matters.

7.6 **Guidelines for Interim moderators** have been amended such that they will include CME when they talk with both ministers and churches in vacancies.

7.7 **Record Keeping.** This year ministers are being asked to keep a record of their training so that they have a record of their own learning and in order that the Secretary for CME knows which courses can be commended to other ministers.

7.8 **CME and Growing Up.** In relation to the *Growing Up* report CME has a vital role in generating, sustaining faith, hope and love in obedience to God (as mission is defined in part of the report) and in the CME programme this can be done through re-igniting the fire of passion, curiosity and intrigue in the gospel which in turn can enable all people to grow in their love of Christ and witness to God in new and wondrous ways, as they move forward in faith.

7.9 **Future proposals for Continuing Ministerial Education**

- i) to continue to raise the profile of CME;
- ii) to develop communication and consultation with ministers regarding their CME needs;
- iii) to create a more efficient Web Site;
- iv) to review induction training courses for ministers who move to a new ministerial position;
- v) To continue to develop the POET programme. This will involve increasing the number of POETs to six a year. Also a rolling programme will be put in place. It will involve ten topics;

- Managing Time
- Minister as Educator
- Conflict management
- Minister as team player
- Mission in context
- Worship and preaching
- Ministry and identity
- Major pastoral issues
- Minister as theologian
- Minister as manager

(The word minister is used throughout to include stipendiary Ministers, non-stipendiary Ministers and Church Related Community Workers).

8 Lay Training

8.1 **Training for Learning and Serving: The Present**

8.1.1 The Training for Learning and Serving programme has continued its growth and is making substantial contribution to trained lay leadership in our churches. There are now 132 students on the Foundation Course, 22 students in the Worship and Preaching course and 8 people in the Pastoral Care Course. In the 1998/99 year, Completion Certificates were issued to 22 Foundation students and 27 on interest courses, including 16 for folk who have now been nationally accredited as lay preachers.

8.1.2 To sustain the growth of the programme and assure its security, a half-time Course Co-ordinator has been appointed with particular responsibility for TLS interest courses and administrative assistance is being provided. Development work continues with a new one-year course (Gods Jesters - the Performing Arts in Christian Outreach and Worship) being readied for launch in September.

8.2 **Training for Learning & Serving: The Future**

8.2.1 *Training for Learning and Serving* (TLS) has been a significant success story since its adoption by the United Reformed Church in England and Wales in 1995. It has served as our main training track for new lay preachers, and has been much more widely useful as an accessible, substantial, structured and integrated lay training programme. TLS was first developed, and is still owned, by the Scottish Churches Open College, (SCOC), based at St Colm's in Edinburgh. Although most of the teaching in England and Wales has been carried out by members of the United Reformed Church, we have been dependent throughout on SCOC, for licence to use the materials, and for marking of student work to the standards of Napier University in Edinburgh.

8.2.2 During the autumn of 1999, SCOC indicated to us that it must shortly revise its commitments south of the border. Pressures and opportunities in Scotland, its stated and natural constituency, have obliged SCOC to plan for withdrawal from involvement with us. In December 1999 the SCOC Council formally decided to discontinue delivery of the TLS Foundation Course in England and Wales from the autumn of 2001. This decision implies the discontinuance also of SCOC's TLS Specialist Courses.

8.2.3 The Training Committee has responded quickly to this news. We have entered into correspondence with SCOC, to explore the precise timing of withdrawal, and to enquire whether any overlap period should be allowed, to assist students who will be mid-course in summer 2001. But the main lines of the decision are set, and we shall need to make fresh plans.

8.2.4 We have therefore conducted an independent review of TLS, and have taken careful soundings among its students as to the strengths of the course. The following checklist has been compiled, of positive features of TLS which should be continued if at all possible in any successor course, and of cautions to observe in any new plans:

Positive Features

- i) It should continue to cater for interest, vocational and access students in an integrated way.

- ii) It should be structured so that theology, Bible study and practical experience are integrated throughout the courses. The use of a thematic rather than systematic style would be more conducive to this.
- iii) It should allow for an ecumenical approach, which can include people of other denominations.
- iv) It should be accessible and relevant to students with the widest possible diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- v) It should have open access, allowing for students with varied amounts of time to give to their study.
- vi) It should utilise the sharing of learning and discovery in the small group setting and encourage the development of the ability to express faith and learning.
- vii) It should include a flexible network for student support.
- viii) It must have a common element of residential weekends at a sufficient frequency to avoid relationships having to be re-built each time. The current pattern of 4 weekends a year also allows for frequent course feedback. This is to be encouraged.
- ix) It should operate within the framework of an on-going review and development across the whole programme.
- x) Accreditation at Certificate Level 1 should be an option for students. Ideally this would be achieved through the combination of a 2-year foundation course followed by a further year. The current three-year pathway seems to suit student needs.
- xi) It would be helpful if the successor course could utilise the current bank of tutors.

8.2.5 Following the review we have commissioned a planning group to bring recommendations to the Committee, about what might be done. We expect to plan for partnership with an educational institution, in roughly the way that we have already worked through SCOC and Napier.

8.2.6 We are determined to ensure that there will be a proper national training programme available for lay preacher candidates in the autumn of each year, without any gap. However we are also keen to make an opportunity out of this necessity, and if possible to expand our lay training still further, in ways that will be versatile, attractive, practical and effective. Major drafting of something new would certainly take more than 18 months. So we may need to make both short-term and long-term plans, and these might have to be quite different. We are certainly interested in ecumenical possibilities in the long-term, but prepared to go our own way if that seems best in the immediate future.

8.2.7 Several possibilities are before us. By the time Assembly meets we expect to have made some worthwhile progress in examining these. We therefore hope to bring forward some definite proposals, at least for the short-term, at General Assembly or to be taken to Mission Council in the autumn for decision.

8.2.8 On a number of occasions under this item we have referred to England and Wales. Our Scottish Synod is in a different position. It remains eligible for involvement in the continuing work of SCOC, and thus in any successor course to TLS that SCOC develops in Scotland. Thus the Synod may not wish or need to be included in the fresh arrangements further south.

8.3 Training for Learning & Serving: Personnel

8.3.1 While this is not the year for an extended retrospect, no lengthy reference to the work of TLS would be complete without mentioning the energetic leadership given by Revd David A L Jenkins, and the competent and committed involvement of many administrators, tutors and local support group members throughout the Church. In particular this year we welcome the appointment of Heather Skidmore to a half-time appointment as Administrator and the Revd Hilary Collinson to a half-time appointment as Specialist Course Co-Ordinator.

8.4 The Open Learning Centre

8.4.1 The Committee was sorry to hear in January that the Methodist Open Learning Centre might cease operating in its current form from August 2001. While this has been known as a predominantly Methodist enterprise, it has also been used and valued by lay preachers, ministers and lay people of the United Reformed Church for home study and in-service training. The Methodist Church is evolving an increasingly regional emphasis for its training strategy, and we intend to take time to understand this development. For there may be new opportunities for co-operation and mutual gain.

8.5 In-Service Training for Lay Preachers

8.5.1 The Lay Preaching Committee has asked us about in-service training for Lay Preachers. We know of a number of events, including an in-service weekend at Westminster College Cambridge (Sept 1-3) and the Joint Lay Preachers Conference at Luther King House, Manchester (Oct 20-22). The Windermere Centre and the College of Preachers also run courses. We understand that the Lay Preaching Committee hopes soon to print a booklet detailing such courses. There is also need, however, for serious home study material such as that offered by the Open Learning Centre. We intend to keep this in mind as we review our lay training provision and plan the successor to TLS.

9 Church Research Grant

9.1 The Church sets aside a limited sum of money each year, to support a small number of our ministers (the term here includes CRCW's) in academic research. The Training Finance Sub-Committee recommended during the year, and the Training Committee agreed, that the level of the United Reformed Church Research Grant should from now on match the Basic Stipend, in order to free one minister or CRCW to be devoted to advanced study for a stated period. The Grant will be held from this autumn by Revd Rachel Poolman, who will be researching Free Church worship at Birmingham University.

9.2 From time to time candidates for our ministry are recommended to undertake doctoral study during their training period. The Committee has appointed a panel to review proposals for such study, in order that there may be central consideration of research work undertaken at the Church's expense. We aim to promote a reasonable parity of expectation among our various training centres, and between ordinands and serving ministers, about the sort of research proposal that the Church is happy to sponsor.

10 The Youth and Children's Work Training Team

10.1 The Training Committee exercises Assembly's responsibility for the Church's Youth and Children's Work Training Team. These twelve officers are managed within their Synods, but are Assembly employees and available to use some of their time for national activity.

10.1.1 **Personnel.** During the year we have extended the period of service of John Brown as Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officer in Mersey Synod for one year from 1st September, 2000 until 31st August, 2001; of Leo Roberts as Youth and Children's Work Training Officer in North-Western Synod for a period of five years from 1st September, 2000 to 31st August, 2005; and of Henry Playle as Youth Leadership Training Officer in Eastern Synod for a period of five years from 1st October, 2000 to 30th September, 2005. In each case this decision has followed the recommendation of the Synod review group, and the Committee has heard with pleasure of the quality of work done in these Synods.

10.1.2 **Staff Development Policy.** The Team requested that their Staff Development Policy be reviewed, as a number of features in the document needed to be brought up to date. A new edition was therefore prepared, and was adopted by the Committee in February 2000. This written policy was submitted for accreditation by the National Youth Agency, and a meeting arranged for March 2000, at which detailed feedback could be given to the Committee by the Agency.

10.1.3 **Operation of the Team.** We have been aware of an increasing trend, now that these officers are synodically managed, for their work to dovetail with that of Synod Training Officers. Clearly there is much to be gained from co-operation, and from the common vision that this fosters. However there has been some pressure for the shifting of boundaries of responsibility, and this might need to lead in due time to a redrafting of job descriptions. Since these job descriptions arise from Assembly policy, we shall seek to keep Assembly informed of any important factors that might make us wish to change them.

11 Membership of the Committee

11.1 At this Assembly Revd Sandra Dears and Dr Iain Frew retire from the Training Committee. We thank them for their consistent hard work in the cause of the Committee, for the experience they have brought, and for their insight and wisdom in many complex pieces of business.

11.2 Two former members of the Committee have continued to help us in particular pieces of work after completing their committee service. Revd Elizabeth Nash has chaired the Training Fund Sub-Committee for a couple of years after leaving the main committee, and Revd Chris Warner has similarly convened the Continuing Ministerial Education Sub-Committee for a year beyond his period of committee membership. Both step down this summer, and we thank them cordially for work done with competence, energy and commitment.

Resolution 39

St Michael's College, Llandaff

General Assembly adds the non-residential course at St Michael's College, Llandaff, to its list of recognised colleges and courses for initial ministerial training.

1 During the year an approach was made by the Synod of Wales, to enquire whether the non-residential course at St Michael's might be recognised for the training of non-stipendiary ordinands. St Michael's is a Church In Wales foundation, in Cardiff. Members of the Committee have visited St Michael's and have studied the course documentation, and we have since written to indicate

that we should favour recognition, should the course meet the Assembly's criteria for this. This will require further attention by St Michael's to a couple of matters, chiefly in regard to ecumenical breadth. We have been encouraged to expect a positive response - in which case we shall put the above resolution to Assembly.

Resolution 40

**Westminster College, Cambridge:
Lewis and Gibson Scholarship**

General Assembly adopts, with immediate effect, the revised regulations for the Lewis and Gibson Scholarship, as drafted in the book of Reports.

1 The Committee has considered a request from the Governors of Westminster College that the rules for a long-standing scholarship fund be revised. By prior resolution of the English Presbyterian Assembly, this requires Assembly consent. The fund arises from a will that became operative in 1926, and the regulations by which the Church orders its implementation of the will were approved at that time. Circumstances have changed since then, in the Church, in academic life, and in economic matters too, and it is high time to re-order our use of the money - still according the wishes of the donors, but appropriately to current conditions.

1.2 At the moment the fund realises some £7000 pa. When a United Reformed Church ordinand is elected as a scholar, then the scholarship award to that person is offset against any award given from the Ministerial Training Fund. Thus the generosity of past Church members saves the present-day Church some money.

1.3 The principal revisions put forward in this draft, compared with the version of 70 years ago are these:

i) In Regulation 1, the expression **any primary or higher degree** replaces the previous wording, **honour degree in arts**. This change reflects developments in Cambridge University, and particularly allows us to support United Reformed Church candidates on the new Bachelor in Theology for Ministry degree.

ii) The old Regulations named £80 p.a. as a suitable level of scholarship, and we now need to award much higher amounts.

iii) The old Regulations also provided for Lewis and Gibson Undergraduate Scholarships, which were intended to support potential ordinands in their study for a first degree in a non-theological subject, before they moved on to Westminster to read theology. No such award has been made for some decades, and we see little reason in perpetuating regulations for a practice that has ceased. Should the need ever arise again, the Church would be able to amend its regulations accordingly.

iv) The old Regulations included rules on financial administration and on worldwide advertisement. The administration is presently in the hands of the Church's finance office, and - since the changes are designed to allow more regular award of the scholarship within our own Church - we think that worldwide advertisement should be at the discretion of the Electors.

1.4 The Church's legal and financial officers have given their approval. The enclosed revision is now put before General Assembly for resolution:

1.5 Lewis and Gibson Scholarships, Westminster College Draft Revised Regulations, July 2000

1.5.1 Mrs Margaret Dunlop Gibson (died 1920) and Mrs Agnes Smith Lewis (died 1926) bequeathed funds to establish Lewis and Gibson Scholarships at Westminster College, Cambridge. The purposes for which these funds may be used are outlined in the Will of Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson and in a Scheme annexed to the Will. The following Regulations govern the use of the funds for due purposes.

- i) The Scholarships may be used to support candidates for the ministry, from the United Reformed Church, and from any other church (not established by the state) in the United Kingdom or overseas which is a member church of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and which holds Presbyterian order. Scholars may pursue a course of study in Theology for any primary or higher degree of the University of Cambridge, or - in the case of a Cambridge graduate - for a diploma of the University of Cambridge.
- ii) In addition to the Senatus of Westminster College, who are appointed Electors by the Will, the Assembly has power to add to the number of Electors. The following shall be additional Electors: the Convener of the College Board of Governors, and the Convener and Secretary of the College Board of Studies.
- iii) Before electing any person to a scholarship, the Electors shall require:
 - a) Evidence of good standing as a ministerial candidate.
 - b) A declaration of intent to enter the ministry.
 - c) Evidence of ability, attainment and character.
 - d) Any other material the Electors may consider necessary.

- iv) A scholar's syllabus and progress shall be monitored by the College Senatus, and reported to the Electors, who may report to the candidate's sending church as they see fit.
- v) A scholar shall be expected to be a resident member of Cambridge University, and to take a due part in the religious and social life of Westminster College.
- vi) The tenure of these scholarships depends upon good conduct and diligent study on the part of the scholar, and of these the Electors are the judges by the terms of the Will.
- vii) A Lewis and Gibson Scholarship is by the terms of the Will tenable with any Exhibition, Scholarship, Fellowship or Studentship in the University of Cambridge any of its Colleges.
- viii) The Electors shall report annually on their work, through the Board of Studies to the College Governors.
- ix) Expenses incurred by the Governors in the administration of the Scholarship funds shall be chargeable to the general Scholarship fund.
- x) No alteration shall be made in these regulations relating to any aspect of the Lewis and Gibson Scholarship Funds, except by the General Assembly, on the report of the appropriate Assembly committee.

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 and Society', 'Life and Witness' Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Derek Lindfield*

Secretary: *Mrs Soo Webster*

Mrs Brenda Cheer, Mrs Caroline Chettleburgh, Revd Margaret Collins, Mr Gareth Curl, Mrs Rita Joyner, Mrs Kath Lonsdale, Mr Lewis McKenzie, Mr John Marshall (FURY Council), Mr Huw Morrison (FURY Chair), Revd Phil Nevard, Revd Kathryn Price, Revd John Sanderson.

Pilots Development Officer: *Mrs Karen Bulley*

Centre Minister, National Youth Resource Centre: *Revd Liz Byrne*

Secretary for Youth Work: *Ms Lesley Anne Di Marco*

Children's Advocate: *Mrs Rosemary Johnston*

I Introduction

1.1 The Youth and Children's Work Committee has been enriched this past year with a significant number of new members who have brought with them enthusiasm, a diversity of experience, a 'hands-on' experience of youth and children's work and a fresh vision.

1.2 In our deliberations, mindful of the remit given to us by the General Assembly, we have examined how we perceive the present role of the committee. We are conscious that we cannot do everything. What we do, however, must be sharply focused with the real possibility of creative impact. At this time, therefore, we see ourselves:

- i) taking an overview of the whole picture of youth and children's work in the church;
- ii) providing a reference role for staff members on behalf of the United Reformed Church;
- iii) keeping the profile of youth and children's work to the fore in the church's consciousness;
- iv) providing ownership of youth and children's work for the whole church;
- v) seeking to ensure that youth and children's work does not stagnate;
- vi) suggesting ways in which youth and children's work can be developed as part of the church's overall mission.

1.3 The committee is well used to the concept of 'growing up' and is delighted that the term is being used for all ages of people within the church and is not seen as something peculiar to and associated only with children and young people. Nevertheless it sees its role as contributing to 'growing up' in the area of youth and children's work and furthering the five marks of mission.

2 To proclaim the good news of the kingdom - Tell!

2.1 The committee sees its role as contributing to help create the right conditions for proclamation. It cannot emphasise too much the responsibility of the whole church to ensure that children and young people are safe and secure. To that end it produced, a number of years ago, a 'Good Practice' pack. The committee has been disturbed by anecdotal evidence that there are still local churches oblivious to this. The United Reformed Church cannot stand still in this area and the committee is anxious to hold before it the absolute necessity of implementing good practice procedures. In addition it is also necessary to review our policies and it is envisaged that a new pack will be available for the 2001 General Assembly.

2.2 The committee is concerned to promote 'telling' models such as Pilots and the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings and is grateful for the significant work achieved by the management committees of both organisations. It was happy to re-appoint Bryan Thomas as Convener of the National Youth Resource Centre Management Committee for a further period of three years. It is good to be able to

report that the church has a resource of which it can be proud and reminds churches that it is there to be used.

The committee has been delighted with the way in which Pilots has continued to develop. It is a significant growth area in the life of the United Reformed Church and several churches have started new companies. The committee continues to support the Pilots Management Committee as it reviews the affiliation process.

2.3 The committee sees its role to help prioritise thinking in order to proclaim effectively. It has been encouraged by the success of the worship material 'Wholly Worship' published at last year's General Assembly and sees this publication as a contribution to the debate in prioritising issues for worship. It has been glad that sessions devoted to 'Wholly Worship' have been held at Windermere and elsewhere and that more are planned.

2.4 The committee believes that it is important to assist young people to help themselves proclaim the good news. To that end it has been encouraging and supporting FURY to implement its Action Plan and supports its campaign to encourage all churches to listen with seriousness to the voice of young people at a local level through the appointment of youth elders.

3 To teach, baptise and nurture new believers - Teach!

3.1 The committee sees its role as promoting and recommending resource materials for the church. It has been delighted to see the publication of 'The Compass' (resource handbook) for Pilots alongside further developments of the World and Worship programmes. The committee looks forward to the results of work presently being done to update and revise both Kaleidoscope and Spectrum (training material for children's and youth workers).

3.2 The church has a particularly valuable resource in terms of people dedicated to training youth and children's workers. These Youth and Children's Work Trainers are the specific responsibility of the Training Committee, but the Youth and Children's Work Committee has been charged by General Assembly to develop and specify the policy which they are to implement. It has been recognised that these two committees must work together with the youth and children's work trainers and their Synod managers and plans to that end are being implemented.

3.3 It is amazing how creative people can be in developing teaching, learning and worship resources. Through successful networking much material which, otherwise, would go no further than a local church, is made available through URCHIN, that is the United Reformed Children's Information Network costing £4.50 for three issues a year.

3.4 Some years ago the Youth and Children's Work Committee produced two leaflets - 'The Journey Begins for your child ...', 'The Journey Begins for children in the church ...'. It is clear to members of the committee that there is, within the church as a whole, a lot of discussion centred on infant baptism and non-church families. The leaflets mentioned were an attempt to help in this discussion. It is clear to the committee that more work needs to be done on this so that these leaflets can be revised and updated. It is hoped that they will be available by the next General Assembly.

3.5 The committee welcomes significant developments concerning new material for worship and learning, particularly a broader group preparing material including plans for a website. It recognises that not all of our churches use *Partners in Learning* and that some prefer the Scripture Union *SALT* programme. With this in mind tentative attempts have been made to establish relationships with Scripture Union, and suggestions made that that material should more accurately reflect our multi-racial multi-cultural society.

4 To respond to human need by loving service - Tend!

4.1 The committee is concerned to reflect accurately the concerns of churches concerning children and young people. The committee believes in the importance of networking and is anxious to encourage and support its staff members to engage in it. But members of the committee are also concerned to hear about and respond to issues raised with them. This past year this has happened and the committee has been alerted to issues as diverse as youth ministry, working with children in Romania and education and parenting.

4.2 With the Church and Society Committee, the Youth and Children's Work Committee last year brought a joint resolution to General Assembly. The result was that Assembly voted to join the 'Children are Unbeatable' Alliance. Proposed Government legislation falls short of what the Alliance has been advocating. The debate in Assembly revealed a real concern for help with parenting. The committee has spent some time in considering this, and has consulted with the Youth and Children's Work trainers

who have expressed a wish to be involved in parenting training. They do have materials which can already be used, but thought is being given to assembling others.

4.3 Much time and discussion has been devoted to the DfEE/URC Social exclusion project, which was explained at last year's General Assembly. The committee, however, has started to refer to it as the Social Inclusion Project because it is aimed at including-in those who presently are excluded in society. The project is to be understood in three distinct stages. The first came to an end in April and had consisted of a feasibility study undertaken by an education consultant, Tim Barnes. The second stage is one which we are presently in. This consists of preparation and identification of local churches which could be part of the programme. The third stage will be its implementation. The government funding under this scheme is available only to England but the Synods of Scotland and Wales have been included in the consultant's study and it is hoped that ways will be found to secure additional funding to meet the requirements in the two national Synods.

5 To seek to transform unjust structures of society - Transform!

5.1 The DfEE/URC Social Exclusion Project is a major piece of work. Those unjustly excluded in society are being focused upon. We have been grateful to the YCWT team which has been very helpful in its preparatory stages and it is hoped that they will play a pivotal role in helping churches identify possible projects and also assist with training.

5.2 At one of its meetings the children's worker from another denomination spoke about the United Reformed Church *Charter for Children*. She said that she thought that it was a real, insightful gift to other churches. The committee is aware that our denomination has moved a long way since that charter was adopted. It is concerned, however, that the whole church still does not have real ownership of it. Children and young people are now firmly on the church's agenda, but we still have to move some people away from the idea that they are to be encouraged and nurtured today because they are the church of tomorrow. They are not. They are the church of today.

5.3 This view, which has been articulated by the Children's Advocate, Rosemary Johnston, is one that the committee wants to hold before the denomination. It has been grateful for the fine work done by Rosemary and is delighted that she has been appointed to a further five-year term.

6 To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth - Treasure!

6.1 At a recent committee meeting the staff team was described in terms of being 'irritants'! It was meant in a positive way. The committee wishes to encourage its staff colleagues to act as irritants to enable its policies to be put into effect.

6.2 It was good that fourteen young people representing FURY, Pilots and their respective Synods participated in Pilgrim 2000. They now are a resource who can be used in follow-up arrangements made by Synods and will be able to be pro-active with such things as Commitment for Life, the National Youth Resource Centre and the dissemination of information to other young people. (Please see the Pilgrim 2000 appendix in the Book of Reports)

7 Membership of the Committee

Mention has been made that a significant number of the committee have been new to it. Our deliberations have been enriched through the continuity provided by people who have served on it for some time. Sadly their terms of service come to an end. We have had to say farewell to Phil Nevard whose insights and contributions have been very much valued. We thank him and the former FURY Chair, Neil Platt, who has also left. He too made a significant contribution to our deliberations. In his place we have welcomed the new FURY Chair, Huw Morrison.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Appendices



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Appendix 1

Financial Report and Accounts 1999

The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom
86 Tavistock Place
London WC1H 9RT

Assembly Officers

Moderator of the General Assembly (1999/2000) - Revd Peter McIntosh
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
Honorary Treasurer - Mr Graham Stacy FCA

Other Officers

Moderator Elect – Revd Bill Mahood
Immediate Past Moderator – Mrs Wilma Frew

Trustee

United Reformed Church Trust
(Chairman of Board of Directors – Dr. Brian Woodhall)

Bankers

HSBC Bank Plc
Holborn 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

RSM Robson Rhodes (formerly Robson Rhodes)
186 City Road, London EC1V 2NU

Investment Manager

HSBC Asset Management Europe Limited
6 Bevis Marks, London EC3A 7QP

Actuaries

Aon Consulting Limited
Carnegie House, Peterborough Road
Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2AJ

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

FINANCIAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1999

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 under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of synods, 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

Format of the report and accounts

The formal accounts for the year 1999 are set out on pages 6 to 19 and, with one important exception, follow the general layout used in previous years. The exception is that, in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7 and the Analysis of Expenditure on page 9, all expenditure is shown according to activities. The cost of Assembly appointed staff, previously shown as a separate item, is allocated to activities so that there is now a clear link between expenditure and specific committees or budget holders. This facilitates accountability, budget preparation and review.

Results for 1999

The results for 1999 are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7. This shows that there was an increase in funds in the year of £2,502,000. The breakdown of this increase compared with the increase for the previous year is shown below:

Net incoming resources for the year on:		
Ministry and Mission Fund and other funds		
covered by our annual budget	202,000	1,697,000
Restricted funds (net outgoing)	(388,000)	162,000
Capital funds	1,000	90,000
Increase in market value of investments	<u>2,687,000</u>	<u>1,913,000</u>
	<u>£2,502,000</u>	<u>£3,862,000</u>

Ministry & Mission Fund and other funds covered by our annual budget - £202,000 incoming resources

The 1999 actual amounts are compared in detail with 1998 and the 1999 budget on pages 22 and 23. The budget for 1999 showed a deficit of £251,000 so the actual result of £202,000 surplus represents an improvement of just over £450,000. This improvement is made up of a variety of items which demonstrate very clearly how difficult it is to predict all items of income and expenditure accurately at the time a budget is prepared, more than twelve months before the commencement of the year concerned.

The largest difference was in the cost of Ministry, a £332,000 saving which reflects a larger than expected reduction in minister numbers, a major change in the basis of calculating National Insurance contributions and a lower than normal level of resettlement grants. There were also improvements compared with budgeted income in legacies, £68,000, our interest in the disposal of St. Andrew's Hall, £176,000, shown within 'sundry income' in the Statement of Financial Activities, and the profit on disposal of certain retirement houses, £193,000. On the other hand, these improvements were partly offset by increases in expenditure in a number of areas, but the final outcome was still over £450,000 better than budgeted.

The policy of presenting budgets showing substantial deficits, which was introduced in 2000, is intended to take account of the effect of the unanticipated income and overall cost savings that are illustrated above. It is hoped that this policy will, over time, ensure that we achieve a closer balance of income and expenditure.

Restricted funds – net outgoing of £388,000

Restricted funds are funds which can only be spent on specific purposes. The net outgoing of £388,000 for the year comprises increases and decreases on different funds. The detailed changes on each fund or group of funds are shown on pages 10 and 11, but the salient amounts are also set out on pages 4 and 5 together with comments on the more significant items.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE CONTINUED**Increase in market value of investments - £2,687,000**

Stockmarket values were at a record high at 31st December 1999 and this contributed to the exceptional increase in investment values during the year. Market values fell back after the year-end and, although they recovered partially, they continue to fluctuate.

The breakdown of the 1999 increase in investment values by fund is shown in the Movement on Funds summary on page 10. This shows that £551,000 of the increase in value arose on investments held for capital funds which are not available to be spent but provide continuing income. A substantial part, £1,706,000, relates to investments belonging to restricted funds where, in most cases, expenditure in 1999 exceeded income so that a part of the investment value increase has been used to finance current activities.

The investment value gain on Ministry and Mission funds was £430,000. This increase in value strengthens our financial resources and gives us the confidence to continue the policy of adopting deficit budgets by providing a cushion against the possibility that in some years the deficit will not be eliminated by budget savings or unanticipated income.

Conclusion

The annual accounts attempt to show a picture of the finances of that part of the URC which is subject to the overall control of the General Assembly. They cannot be expected to give detailed information about every fund or situation. Those wanting more information or explanations about any aspect of the URC's finances are encouraged to address their enquiries to the Treasurer or Financial Secretary at the General Assembly or any other time.

Signed on behalf of the Finance Committee.

GRAHAM STACY

Convener

31st March 2000

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS

The major funds or groups of funds which are included in the URC annual accounts are shown on pages 10 and 11. Descriptions of these funds are set out below, with the total amount of each fund as at 31st December 1999 and the income and expenditure for 1999 shown in each heading.

Ministry and Mission Fund: £12,951,000	Income	£18,398,000
	Expenditure	£18,196,000

This is the General Fund of the Church through which the bulk of our income and expenditure, covered by the annual budget presented to the General Assembly, is passed.

Maintenance of the Ministry Fund: £783,000
Ministerial Training Fund: £181,000

Both these are capital funds which are invested to provide income towards the costs of Maintenance of the Ministry and Ministerial Training. Each year's income is taken up in the Ministry and Mission Fund which is responsible for meeting these costs.

Westminster College Funds: £2,605,000	Income	£78,000
	Expenditure	£34,000

About 18 accounts make up this group of funds, all of which are associated, in some way, with Westminster College. In addition to the College general fund, there are library funds, prize funds, scholarship funds, and other funds with a more specific use.

Church Buildings Fund: £3,775,000	Income	£89,000
	Expenditure	£411,000

This fund may be used in the upkeep and repair of the buildings of the local churches of the URC and the maintenance of the services therein; in the improvement and extension of the buildings of such churches; and in the provision and erection of buildings in England and Wales for use for the purposes of such churches or as residences for ministers of the URC.

The fund has been used mainly for the purchase of property for use by the Church centrally (as manses) and in loans to local churches for major works. However, more recently, the fund has also been used for grant-aiding certain local church developments.

The Retired Ministers' Housing Funds and the United Reformed Church Retired Ministers' Housing Society: £11,514,000	Income	£441,000
	Expenditure	£27,000

The whole of these funds is utilised by the Retired Ministers' Housing Committee in providing accommodation for ministers and ministers' widow/ers in their retirement. Most of the income comprises legacies and is invested in the purchase of houses.

The Welfare Fund: £668,000	Income	£28,000
	Expenditure	£86,000

This fund can be used to relieve cases of need among ministers of the URC, their spouses and other dependants. The main uses have been to provide a grant on the death of a minister to the surviving spouse, and to provide a grant at Christmas time to most of the widow/ers of URC ministers about whom we know. Medical assistance grants are now paid from this account, including counselling costs.

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDS CONTINUED

The Retired Ministers' Aid Fund: £1,175,000	Income	£42,000
	Expenditure	£100,000
The Retired Ministers' Fund: £6,446,000	Income	£243,000
	Expenditure	£574,000

These funds are used to supplement the pensions paid to ministers and ministers' widow/ers, principally by upgrading the pensions of former ministers of the Congregational Church and the Churches of Christ and the widow/ers of such ministers to a level of 95% of the pension that would have been paid if the minister's service had been to the former Presbyterian Church. The Church's actuaries advise that the balance on the Retired Ministers' Fund is approximately equal to the actuarial liability of the Church to meet these payments.

World Church and Mission Funds: £1,787,000	Income	£72,000
	Expenditure	£147,000

These funds have been building up over a number of years. The Ecumenical Committee is developing plans under the "Belonging to the World Church" programme to use these funds where the terms of the trust permit, and expenditure in 1999 was £105,000 higher than in the previous year.

The Windermere Centre Fund: £345,000	Income	£ nil
	Expenditure	£ nil
The Yardley Hastings Fund: £590,000	Income	£36,000
	Expenditure	£ nil

These funds were raised to develop the Windermere and Yardley Hastings Centres and are mainly invested in those properties. The income in 1999 on the Yardley Hastings Fund was a donation which was for investment in the building of a new conservatory at the Centre.

Commitment for Life Fund: £58,000	Income	£381,000
	Expenditure	£360,000

This programme involves substantial sums of money being collected through the Church and Society Office, and disbursed for various purposes. The balance held at 31st December 1999 represents monies received before the year end which had not yet been allocated.

Other Funds: £3,997,000	Income	£165,000
	Expenditure	£223,000

There are some fifty other funds in the care of United Reformed Church Trust, covering many different activities relating to the Church centrally, and some to the wider parts of The United Reformed Church. The income arising from the majority of these funds is being spent currently, but some funds are held in trust for purposes which are now difficult to implement. Progress has been made in freeing up some of these difficult-to-use funds but further work remains to be done.

Appendix I

ACCOUNTS page 6

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1999

1998 £'000		Notes (pages 14 & 15)	1999 £'000
	FIXED ASSETS		
	Tangible assets	2	
13,350	Houses for retired ministers		13,928
3,599	Houses for serving ministers		3,741
1,924	Other properties		2,208
18,873	Total properties		19,877
393	Cars and equipment		431
19,266			20,308
22,038	Long term investments	5	25,549
698	Loans and advances	3	758
42,002			46,615
	NET CURRENT ASSETS		
	Current assets		
94	Stock		110
943	Debtors	4	926
3,642	Short term investments	5	2,139
1,689	Bank balances and money on call		983
6,368			4,158
3,997	Less: Current liabilities	6	3,898
2,371	Net current assets		260
44,373	TOTAL NET ASSETS		46,875
	Representing:		
11,919	Unrestricted income funds		12,551
26,594	Restricted income funds		27,912
5,860	Capital funds		6,412
44,373	TOTAL FUNDS (see pages 10 & 11)		46,875

This page shows the combined total of assets and liabilities of all the funds administered centrally for the benefit of the whole Church. 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 1999**

1998 Total funds £'000		1999			Capital funds £'000
		Total funds £'000	--- Income funds --- Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	
INCOME					
16,712	Ministry and Mission Fund contributions	16,629	16,629		
1,114	Investment income	1,137	490	647	
883	Grants receivable	715	715		
1,869	Legacies	285	118	167	
571	Sundry income	801	253	544	4
164	Profit on sale of properties	406	193	213	
21,313	Total income (see page 8)	19,973	18,398	1,571	4
EXPENDITURE					
14,757	Ministry	14,942	14,078	864	
1,250	Training	1,491	1,454	37	
1,954	Other Mission Activity	2,281	1,286	995	
1,403	Support Activities	1,444	1,378	63	3
19,364	Total expenditure (see page 9)	20,158	18,196	1,959	3
1,949	Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	(185)	202	(388)	1
Gains and losses on investments					
9	Realised gains	152		152	
1,904	Unrealised gains	2,535	430	1,554	551
1,913	Total gains on investments	2,687	430	1,706	551
3,862	Net increase in funds in the year	2,502	632	1,318	552
40,511	Balances brought forward at 1st January	44,373	11,919	26,594	5,860
44,373	Balances carried forward at 31st December	46,875	12,551	27,912	6,412

This page shows the total of the income and expenditure accounts of all funds administered centrally on behalf of the whole Church. The total for 1999 is 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 22 and 23

ANALYSIS OF INCOME

1998 Total funds £'000		1999			Capital funds £'000
		Total funds £'000	--- Income funds --- Unrestricted Restricted £'000 £'000		
MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND CONTRIBUTIONS					
Synods					
1,080	Northern	1,082	1,082		
1,520	North Western	1,520	1,520		
1,120	Mersey	1,120	1,120		
1,110	Yorkshire	1,110	1,110		
1,087	East Midlands	1,087	1,087		
1,280	West Midlands	1,260	1,260		
1,454	Eastern	1,450	1,450		
1,105	South Western	1,085	1,085		
1,831	Wessex	1,823	1,823		
2,020	Thames North	2,000	2,000		
2,535	Southern	2,505	2,505		
570	Wales	587	587		
16,712		16,629	16,629	0	0
INVESTMENT INCOME					
713	Dividends	826	204	622	
401	Interest	311	286	25	
1,114		1,137	490	647	0
GRANTS RECEIVED					
546	Memorial Hall Trust	420	420		
254	New College London Trust	262	262		
83	URC Insurance Company Limited	33	33		
883		715	715	0	0
LEGACIES					
For					
1,192	Ministry and Mission Fund	118	118		
672	Housing Retired Ministers	164		164	
5	Other	3		3	
1,869		285	118	167	0
SUNDRY INCOME					
	CWM Mission Support programme	71	71		
486	Donations	489		485	4
85	Other	241	182	59	
571		801	253	544	4
164	PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES	406	193	213	
21,313	TOTAL INCOME	19,973	18,398	1,571	4

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of income shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7.

ANALYSIS OF EXPENDITURE

1998 Total funds £'000		1999			
		Total funds £'000	---- Income funds ---- Unrestricted £'000	Restricted £'000	Capital funds £'000
MINISTRY					
12,656	Local and special ministries and CRCWs	12,874	12,775	99	
391	Synod moderators - stipends & expenses	414	414		
592	Pension grants	763		763	
1,008	Pension Fund additional contributions	750	750		
110	Ministries committee	141	139	2	
14,757		14,942	14,078	864	0
TRAINING					
815	College training for stipendiary ministry	927	894	33	
81	Other training for stipendiary ministry	107	103	4	
93	Training for non-stipendiary ministry	107	107		
168	Central cost of Youth and Children's Work Trainers	220	220		
10	Support for Westminster College	0			
22	Lay training costs	32	32		
61	Training committee	98	98		
1,250		1,491	1,454	37	0
OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES					
794	Grants	862	364	498	
274	Ecumenical committee and international	404	261	143	
100	Council for World Mission	94	94		
430	Church and Society committee	421	67	354	
106	Life and Witness committee	102	102		
46	Windermere Centre	72	72		
15	Multi-racial/Multi-cultural worker	29	29		
104	Youth and children's work committee	143	143		
53	Yardley Hastings	84	84		
13	Pilots Development	59	59		
19	Other committees	11	11		
1,954		2,281	1,286	995	0
SUPPORT ACTIVITIES					
191	General Assembly and Mission Council	149	149		
217	Communication and Editorial	243	243		
265	Finance office	277	259	18	
170	Central secretariat	183	183		
70	Professional fees	78	72	6	
	Computer network	33	33		
48	Costs of conversations and union with the CUS	43	43		
231	URC House costs	249	249		
211	General church costs	189	147	39	3
1,403		1,444	1,378	63	3
19,364	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	20,158	18,196	1,959	3

This page shows the breakdown of the main headings of expenditure shown in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7.

**MOVEMENT ON FUNDS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1999**

Fund	Classification (see note 1(ii))	Balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Investment	Balance
		1st Jan 1999 £'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	value change £'000	31st Dec 1999 £'000
Ministry and Mission Fund	Capital Unrestricted	400 11,919					400 12,551
Maintenance of the Ministry Fund	Capital Unrestricted	685 0				98	783 0
Ministerial Training Fund	Capital Unrestricted	159 0				22	181 0
Westminster College Funds	Capital Restricted	1,113 1,289				113 120	1,226 1,379
Church Buildings Fund	Capital Restricted	184 3,680					184 3,591
Retired Ministers' Housing Funds	Capital Restricted	360 1,509					360 1,637
Retired Ministers' Housing Society	Capital Restricted	0 9,225					0 9,517
Welfare Fund	Capital Restricted	224 417				28 57	252 416
Retired Ministers' Aid Fund	Capital Restricted	185 825				27 118	212 963
Retired Ministers' Fund	Capital Restricted	14 5,940				2 808	16 6,430
World Church and Mission Funds	Capital Restricted	264 1,366				33 199	297 1,490
Windermere Centre Fund	Capital Restricted	0 345					0 345
Yardley Hastings Fund	Capital Restricted	0 554					0 590
Commitment for Life Fund	Capital Restricted	0 37					0 58
Other Funds	Capital Restricted	2,272 1,407				228 172	2,501 1,496
Totals (see page 7)		44,373	19,973	(20,158)	0	2,687	46,875
Comprising:	Capital	5,860	4	(3)	0	551	6,412
	Restricted	26,594	1,571	(1,959)	0	1,706	27,912
	Unrestricted	11,919	18,398	(18,196)	0	430	12,551

This page and the following page 11 are intended to be used as reference sources rather than to be read through at one go. This page shows the breakdown of the main totals in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 7 by major fund or group of funds

**DISPOSITION OF FUNDS
AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1999**

Balance 31st Dec 1999 £'000	Property £'000	Cars and equipment £'000	Investments £'000	Loans £'000	Net current assets £'000	Inter- -fund balances £'000	Fund
400	400						Ministry and Mission Fund
12,551	1,995	357	8,053	133	471	1,542	
783			783				Maintenance of the Ministry Fund
0							
181			181				Ministerial Training Fund
0							
1,226	702		524				Westminster College Funds
1,379		25	1,143			211	
184	184						Church Buildings Fund
3,591	1,786		1,198	599		8	
360	360						Retired Ministers' Housing Funds
1,637	1,092					545	
0							Retired Ministers' Housing Society
9,517	12,476				(211)	(2,748)	
252			252				Welfare Fund
416			389	26		1	
212			212				Retired Ministers' Aid Fund
963			941			22	
16			16				Retired Ministers' Fund
6,430			6,523			(93)	
297			297				World Church and Mission Funds
1,490			1,432			58	
0							Windermere Centre Fund
345	314	15				16	
0							Yardley Hastings Fund
590	517	34				39	
0							Commitment for Life Fund
58						58	
2,501	51		2,450				Other Funds
1,496			1,155			341	
46,875	19,877	431	25,549	758	260	0	Totals (see page 6)
6,412	1,697	0	4,715	0	0	0	Capital
27,912	16,185	74	12,781	625	(211)	(1,542)	Restricted
12,551	1,995	357	8,053	133	471	1,542	Unrestricted

This page shows the breakdown of the assets and liabilities in the Balance Sheet on page 6 by major fund or group of funds.

**CASHFLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1999**

1998 £'000		1999 £'000
	RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES SHOWN IN THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES TO THE ACTUAL CASH INFLOW / (OUTFLOW) FROM GENERAL ACTIVITIES	
1,949	Net incoming/(outgoing) resources (see page 7)	(185)
(29)	Increase in stock	(16)
17	Decrease in debtors	17
139	Increase in creditors	107
(361)	Decrease in sums held for synods and congregations	(206)
(164)	Profit on sale of properties	(406)
132	Depreciation	157
48	Amortisation of gilts	48
(21)	Interest added to loans	(28)
<u>1,710</u>	Net cash inflow/(outflow) from general activities	<u>(512)</u>

**STATEMENT SHOWING DISPOSITION OF CASH
RESOURCES IN THE YEAR**

1,710	Net cash inflow/(outflow) from general activities (above)	(512)
	Net amount of cash applied in investing activities	
800	Fixed assets sales	1,194
(1,948)	purchases	(1,987)
372	Long term investments sales	1,723
(2,198)	purchases	(2,595)
1,991	Net change in short term investments	1,503
(983)		(162)
	Cash applied in a net increase in loans and advances to congregations and ministers	
(311)	Loans made	(263)
184	Loans repaid	231
(127)		(32)
	Bank balances and money on call	
600	Increase/(Decrease) in balances	(706)
1,089	Balances at beginning of year	1,689
<u>1,689</u>	Balances at end of year	<u>983</u>

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 £706,000.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE 1 - ACCOUNTING POLICIES

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities" and applicable accounting standards. 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 under the overall authority of the General Assembly. They do not include funds administered by or on behalf of synods, 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 10. A brief description of these funds is given on pages 4 and 5.

(iii) Income

Income is brought into account as soon as it becomes receivable except for legacies which are not credited until received.

When a synod 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, Computers and Photocopiers	25 %
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. 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	Houses for serving ministers	Other properties	Cars and equipment	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Cost					
At 1st January 1999	13,350	3,599	1,924	921	19,794
Additions during year	1,215	277	284	211	1,987
Disposals during year	(637)	(135)	-	(52)	(824)
At 31st December 1999	13,928	3,741	2,208	1,080	20,957
Depreciation					
At 1st January 1999				528	528
Charged during year				157	157
Written back on disposal				(36)	(36)
At 31st December 1999				649	649
Net book value					
At 31st December 1999	13,928	3,741	2,208	431	20,308
At 31st December 1998	13,350	3,599	1,924	393	19,266

Rents for retired ministers' housing are set at levels estimated to cover maintenance costs only. Total rents received in 1999 were £225,000 (1998 - £222,000) and maintenance costs were £215,000 (1998 - £231,000). All properties are considered to have a remaining useful life exceeding 40 years.

At 31st December 1999 307 (1998 - 315) houses were owned for housing retired ministers and 29 (1998 - 29) 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

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Loans and advances comprise:		
To churches	599	540
To ministers	159	158
	<u>758</u>	<u>698</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

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Debtors comprise:		
Tax recoverable	47	54
Prepayments and accrued income	537	456
Other debtors	342	433
	<u>926</u>	<u>943</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

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Long term investments		
Investments held for the longer term comprise the following:		
Units in the Investment Pool at market value (see note 14)	22,357	18,805
Other listed securities at market value	2,293	2,500
URC Insurance Company Limited shares at cost (see note 13)	95	73
Other unlisted securities at cost	74	24
Investment properties at estimated market value	730	636
	<u>25,549</u>	<u>22,038</u>

All investments are in UK companies or properties.

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Short term investments		
Short term investments comprise:		
Money market term deposits	2,139	3,642
	<u>2,139</u>	<u>3,642</u>

NOTE 6 - CURRENT LIABILITIES (Amounts falling due within one year)

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Current liabilities comprise:		
Sums held for synods and congregations	1,817	2,023
Advance contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund	648	557
Other creditors	1,433	1,417
	<u>3,898</u>	<u>3,997</u>

NOTE 7 - REMUNERATION

During the year the following remuneration was paid to:

		1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Ministers: 697 (1998 - 715)	Gross	11,030	10,705
	Social security costs	927	993
	Pension contributions	1,195	1,151
		<u>13,152</u>	<u>12,849</u>
Lay staff: 108 (1998 - 93)	Gross	1,424	1,146
	Social security costs	121	99
	Pension contributions	97	77
		<u>1,642</u>	<u>1,322</u>

The numbers shown represent the average for the year, and staff working for part of the year are included at the appropriate proportion.

Individuals acting in a trustee capacity for the various URC trusts receive no remuneration in respect of their services as trustee, other than the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses.

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:

	1999 £'000	1998 £'000
Auditors remuneration	33	33

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS CONTINUED**NOTE 9 - ASSETS HELD IN TRUST FOR OTHERS**

At 31st December 1999 United Reformed Church Trust held investments with a market value of approximately £25 million (1998: £22 million) on behalf of synods, churches and trusts. The Trust also held property and other assets. All of these assets are held to the order of the synods, churches and trusts concerned and are not shown in these accounts (see notes 1(i) and 14).

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 1999 the Church contributed 11.75% (1998: 11.75%) 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 indicated that the shortfall on the long term valuation basis was £4.5 million. At that date the funding level was 90%, and the scheme assets were valued at £49.5 million. 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%. Following advice from the actuary, additional contributions of £750,000 per annum are being made, which should eliminate the deficit within nine years. These contributions will be reviewed on completion of the next actuarial valuation as at 1st January 2000.

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 1999 there were, in respect of the purchase of properties, commitments of £204,000 (1998 - £220,000), and contractual liabilities of £86,000 (1998 - £130,000). There were also commitments to make grants of £680,000 (1998 - £620,000).

NOTE 12 - INTERESTS IN TRUSTS

The Church receives income from a number of trusts. The most significant are described below.

Memorial Hall Trust - In 1999 the Church received income of £420,000 (1998 - £546,000) from this trust. The trust had owned 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 1999, the building has been sold and consideration is being given to a partial distribution of trust capital.

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 1999 the Church received income of £262,000 (1998 - £254,000) from this trust, which has been spent on ministerial training.

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 was added to during the year and now stands at £95,000. It 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 100% of its pre-tax profits; in 1999 this amounted to £33,000 (1998 - £83,000). 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 17. Of the total investment in the Pool, valued at £47.1 million (1998 - £40.6 million), only £22.4 million (1998 - £18.8 million) is held for central funds and is dealt with in these accounts (see note 5).

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. An alternative investment structure being promoted by Epworth Investment Managers is awaiting Charity Commissioners approval.

**UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST INVESTMENT POOL
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1999**

CAPITAL	1999		1998	
	1000 Units	£'000	1000 Units	£'000
Units in issue at 1st January 1999	595,583	40,572	594,750	36,344
Units issued in the year	35,950	2,635	33,011	2,244
Units cancelled in the year	(26,584)	(1,956)	(32,178)	(2,133)
Management fees		(89)		(82)
Increase in value of investments during the year		5,951		4,199
Units in issue to central funds	287,072	22,357	276,050	18,805
Units in issue to other funds	317,877	24,756	319,533	21,767
	604,949	47,113	595,583	40,572

REPRESENTED BY

	Cost £'000	Market value £'000	Cost £'000	Market value £'000
Investments				
British Government gilts	8,665	8,782	8,677	9,765
Other British fixed interest stock	2,775	2,666	1,777	1,862
British equities	21,281	35,280	19,461	28,698
	32,721	46,728	29,915	40,325
Cash and short term deposits		149		192
Sundry debtors		236		55
		47,113		40,572
Based on the underlying market value of investments and uninvested cash, the value of each unit was		7.79 pence		6.81 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
3 1st March	0.08	478	0.08	449
30th June	0.07	450	0.06	381
30th September	0.08	461	0.07	423
3 1st December	0.06	336	0.05	323
	0.29	1,725	0.26	1,576

The policy for accounting for income is as follows:

- income receivable from fixed interest securities is credited to income on a daily basis.
- 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 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;
- the Statement of Recommended Practice - "Accounting by Charities" and 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 6 to 17.

A G BURNHAM
General Secretary

GRAHAM STACY
Treasurer

C M FRANK
Financial Secretary

31st March 2000

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 6 to 17 which have been prepared on the basis of the accounting policies set out on page 13. These accounts deal with those trusts, companies and other funds which are administered for the benefit of The United Reformed Church under the overall authority of the General Assembly ('the Church').

Respective responsibilities of the Finance Committee and the auditors

As described on page 18, 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 1999, and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended.

186 City Road
London EC1V 2NU

RSM ROBSON RHODES
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditor

31st March 2000

The audit report by RSM 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.

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY

	1995 £'000	1996 £'000	1997 £'000	1998 £'000	1999 £'000
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS					
Income					
Ministry and Mission contributions	16,149	16,462	16,763	16,712	16,629
Investment income	1,355	1,327	1,171	1,114	1,137
Grants	800	821	922	883	715
Legacies	306	579	388	1,869	285
Other income	492	763	1,468	735	1,207
	19,102	19,952	20,712	21,313	19,973
Expenditure					
Ministry	13,176	13,469	13,445	13,749	14,192
Additional pension contributions	998	3,600	750	1,008	750
Training	1,139	1,006	1,088	1,250	1,491
Other Mission activities	1,544	1,654	2,047	1,954	2,281
Support activities	887	975	1,233	1,403	1,444
	17,744	20,704	18,563	19,364	20,158
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources	1,358	(752)	2,149	1,949	(185)
Investment gains	2,462	1,112	2,497	1,913	2,687
Net increase in funds	3,820	360	4,646	3,862	2,502

CASH FLOW STATEMENTS

Cash required for investment in					
Retired ministers' housing	1,244	568	571	673	205
Other properties	(24)	440	(8)	330	393
Cars, furniture and equipment	104	157	177	145	195
Loans to congregations and ministers	(239)	(171)	(137)	127	32
	1,085	994	603	1,275	825
Source of cash					
Net incoming/(outgoing) resources for the year (see above)	1,358	(752)	2,149	1,949	(185)
Adjustment for items not resulting in a cash movement	(977)	(383)	(848)	(239)	(327)
	381	(1,135)	1,301	1,710	(512)
Net decrease/(increase) in investments	144	1,936	(1,148)	165	631
Decrease/(increase) in bank balances	560	193	450	(600)	706
	1,085	994	603	1,275	825

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY CONTINUED

	1995 £'000	1996 £'000	1997 £'000	1998 £'000	1999 £'000
BALANCE SHEETS					
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets					
Retired ministers' housing	10,811	11,619	12,512	13,350	13,928
Housing for serving ministers	2,854	3,480	3,348	3,599	3,741
Other properties	1,770	1,729	1,846	1,924	2,208
Cars, furniture and equipment	239	307	380	393	431
	15,674	17,135	18,086	19,266	20,308
Long term investments	18,180	17,362	18,347	22,038	25,549
Loans to congregations and ministers	805	662	550	698	758
	34,659	35,159	36,983	42,002	46,615
Net current assets					
Current assets					
Debtors and stocks	1,038	1,064	1,025	1,037	1,036
Short term investments and deposits	4,690	3,038	5,633	3,642	2,139
Bank balances and money on call	162	1,539	1,089	1,689	983
	5,890	5,641	7,747	6,368	4,158
less : current liabilities	5,044	4,935	4,219	3,997	3,898
	846	706	3,528	2,371	260
Total net assets	35,505	35,865	40,511	44,373	46,875
Unrestricted income funds	10,677	9,131	9,951	11,919	12,551
Restricted income funds	20,876	22,312	25,241	26,594	27,912
Capital funds	3,952	4,422	5,319	5,860	6,412
Total funds	35,505	35,865	40,511	44,373	46,875

NON-FINANCIAL STATISTICS

Members	103,000	100,000	97,000	94,000	91,000
Stipendiary ministers	774	741	756	730	694
Non-stipendiary ministers	219	204	193	193	176
Churches	1,768	1,752	1,739	1,736	1,726
Retired ministers	735	729	742	759	777
Ministry and Mission contribution per member	£157	£165	£173	£178	£183

Information on this page and the preceding page is aimed mainly at the analyst rather than at the casual reader. However, it shows some interesting trends and brings out features that do not show so clearly in a single set of accounts.

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2001

	Actual 1998 £'000	Actual 1999 £'000	Budget 1999 £'000	Budget 2000 £'000	Budget 2001 £'000
EXPENDITURE					
MINISTRY					
Local and special ministries and CRCWs	12,581	12,775	13,123	13,397	13,735
Synod moderators - stipends & expenses	391	414	411	426	490
Pension Fund additional contributions	750	750	750	750	750
Ministries committee	110	139	126	177	221
	13,832	14,078	14,410	14,750	15,196
TRAINING					
College training for stipendiary ministry	782	894	804	1,025	1,074
Other training for stipendiary ministry	80	103	208	199	180
Training for non-stipendiary ministry	93	107	90	90	94
Central cost of Youth and Children's Work Trainers	168	220	187	197	249
Support for Westminster College	10	0	0	0	0
Lay Training costs	22	32	38	75	96
Training committee	61	98	102	121	122
	1,216	1,454	1,429	1,707	1,815
OTHER MISSION ACTIVITIES					
Grants	345	364	379	294	303
Ecumenical committee and international	275	261	244	357	310
Council for World Mission	100	94	100	50	50
Church and Society committee	92	67	90	91	93
Racial Justice programme	16	29	11	25	30
Life and Witness committee	110	103	128	85	99
Windermere Centre	46	72	40	40	43
Youth and children's work committee	104	142	106	134	210
Yardley Hastings	53	84	59	73	106
Pilots Development	14	59	41	78	66
Other committees	14	11	19	15	14
	1,169	1,286	1,217	1,242	1,324
SUPPORT ACTIVITIES					
General Assembly and Mission Council	191	149	129	223	199
Communication and Editorial	217	243	221	236	268
Finance office	244	258	251	290	288
Central secretariat	170	183	176	187	196
Professional fees	64	72	76	71	78
Computer network	0	33	0	39	41
Costs of conversations and union with the CUS	48	43	3	0	0
URC House costs	230	249	192	189	238
General church costs	136	148	124	134	125
	1,300	1,378	1,172	1,369	1,433
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	17,517	18,196	18,228	19,068	19,768

DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2001

	Actual 1998 £'000	Actual 1999 £'000	Budget 1999 £'000	Budget 2000 £'000	Budget 2001 £'000
INCOME					
MINISTRY AND MISSION CONTRIBUTIONS	16,712	16,629	16,700	17,201	17,717
INVESTMENT INCOME					
Dividends	139	204	128	459	269
Interest	354	286	300	350	306
	493	490	428	809	575
GRANTS RECEIVED					
Memorial Hall Trust	476	420	476	0	320
New College London Trust	254	262	245	266	273
URC Insurance Company Limited	83	33	75	78	50
	813	715	796	344	643
LEGACIES & MAJOR DONATIONS	1,192	118	50	50	50
SUNDRY INCOME					
CWM Mission Support programme	0	71	0	0	126
Other	3	182	3	4	4
	3	253	3	4	130
PROFIT ON SALE OF PROPERTIES		193			
TOTAL INCOME	19,213	18,398	17,977	18,408	19,115
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCE	1,696	202	(251)	(660)	(653)

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION FUND

	1999		1998	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME				
Contributions from ministers and central funds	1,601		1,514	
Transfer values received	<u>136</u>		<u>121</u>	
		1,737		1,635
Investment income		1,791		1,514
Allocation towards Actuarial Deficit	768		769	
Amount transferred from the Westminster College Teachers' Pension Fund	-		258	
Donations	<u>-</u>		<u>1</u>	
		<u>768</u>		<u>1,028</u>
		4,296		4,177
EXPENDITURE				
Benefits paid	3,382		3,232	
Transfer values paid	<u>-</u>		<u>13</u>	
	3,382		3,245	
Management expenses	<u>176</u>		<u>163</u>	
		<u>3,558</u>		<u>3,408</u>
NORMAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR				
		738		769
Realised profit on sale of investments		7,009		2,722
Increase in unrealised surplus on investment revaluation		<u>4,240</u>		<u>4,949</u>
TOTAL INCREASE IN RESOURCES IN THE YEAR				
		11,987		8,440
Balance of resources at 1st January		<u>66,321</u>		<u>57,881</u>
Balance of resources at 31st December		<u>78,308</u>		<u>66,321</u>
REPRESENTED BY				
Investments		78,129		65,310
Net current assets		<u>179</u>		<u>1,011</u>
		<u>78,308</u>		<u>66,321</u>

This account, which should be read in conjunction with note 10 on page 16, is a summary of the full accounts of the Pension Fund which have been audited by RSM Robson Rhodes, who have given an unqualified audit opinion.

The trustee's report and accounts, and also the rules of the Pension Fund, may be obtained from the central office of the Church.

Appendix 2

Pilgrim 2000

1 Pilgrimage is encounter: as a pilgrim what you visit should affect you. This was certainly the case with the 95 United Reformed Church pilgrims who visited Israel / Palestine from February 22 to March 2 this year. All returned more or less changed, in their knowledge, attitudes, understanding and even beliefs. This large party included representatives from the then 12 Synods, with a good mixture of young and old, women and men, leaders and those with no special office, white and black - and those who were always keen and those who, at least at first, wondered whether it was all a mistake. Their equally mixed testimony can be found in recent issues of *Reform* and on the special pages within the United Reformed Church website.

2 The intention was to meet people as well as visit places. The umbrella title under which our party went, "Pilgrim 2000", derives from the invitation extended by the Anglican bishop in Jerusalem, Riah Abu El-Assal, initially to Church of England dioceses and later to others, to join the Christian community in what he calls "The land of the Holy One" during the millennium year, in solidarity and friendship. The bishop brought greetings to the whole group one evening.

3 During a crowded and demanding programme, visits were made to most of the traditional sites in the Galilee and around Jerusalem where we often worshipped either together or in two coach-loads. These visits included Sebaste (the traditional hill-top city of Samaria), Nablus (Jacob's well) and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem (the Holocaust memorial) which are not on all itineraries. Of special significance were two services of holy communion on the Galilean lakeside and at the Shepherds' Fields site near Bethlehem, on the first and final days of our journey.

4 A distinctive feature of this pilgrimage was the opportunity for four structured meetings with Palestinian Christians. The group visited Ibillin near Nazareth and met with Abuna Elias Chacour whose

personal vision and energy has created a strong educational institution there, serving all faith communities. Sunday morning worship was shared with the Palestinian congregation at St George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem. The whole party journeyed into Gaza where one group spent time with the Middle East Council of Churches, visiting a refugee camp and training centre. Lastly both coach-loads were taken by leaders of Sabeel to see something of the current suffering of the Palestinian people.

5 On two other occasions visits were made to see at first hand work being done by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) which is a partner with the United Reformed Church through Christian Aid in the Commitment for Life programme. These visits concentrated on the women's rural development schemes, in Gaza and around Jericho. On another evening the whole party heard from a Muslim, a Reform Rabbi and an Armenian Christian their contrasting views on the current situation and on the significance of Jerusalem itself.

6 From Assembly and Synod funds and trusts, the United Reformed Church was able to offer subsidies for several participants, including the young people. There was considerable time devoted to the planning, as well as to the event itself, by five staff secretaries, Peter Brain, Carol Rogers, Lesley-Anne Di Marco, John Waller and Philip Woods as well as Bill Mahood and the Moderator of Assembly.

7 As a result, there are now almost 100 pilgrims ready to speak about this unique experience with local churches and District Councils etc. Others, too, have similar experience to share. They can be invited (though not as experts) to share in discussions around any of the above topics, including the dilemma over the 'chosen' land, the signs of hope in the work of PARC and others, the possibility of inter-faith understanding and the fresh insight into faith's journey which has left none of the pilgrims unchanged.

Appendix 3

Record of the Congregational Union of Scotland/United Reformed Church (UK) Liaison Committee 1990-2000

The Liaison Committee held its final meeting on Tuesday 29 February 2000. At that meeting the Convener, Revd Jack Dyce (who had also been co-chairman of the Joint Negotiating Group) linked the opening devotions to the forthcoming union and to the years of relationship between the two churches on which the union was based.

Quite independently, the Secretary, Revd Sheila Maxey, had prepared a paper for the meeting which reviewed the work of the committee, as it was reflected in the 10 years of minutes.

These two contributions are here combined, not only for the record but as an offering to all those who will build on the work of the Congregational Union of Scotland/United Reformed Church (UK) Liaison Committee.

..... Throughout our negotiations, we have been confident that the union will not mean absorption or surrender but rather a sharing, a commitment to one another, a desire to help one another be in a fuller sense. It has, of course, not been an easy road. We have had disappointment; we in Scotland have experienced schism.

When the first proposals did not secure the required majority, nonetheless we knew that we could not go back, we could not leave things simply as they were. We had committed ourselves to one another and the time would indeed come, the time of fulfilment. In Ros Lyle's famous phrase, from a less successful set of union talks, the requirement that we 'fancied each other' had been met. This committee has been a key means by which that hope and commitment were kept alive.

And perhaps indeed the earlier time was not right. The new set of proposals, crafted in a different social and political and cultural context, envisage a way of working together in three nations that, one hopes, will be a model for others in the church and beyond.

Of course, the hope and commitment is both to each other and beyond to a wider unity of the church. Yet, for the present, it is we who are bound together in a developing relationship and we ask God's blessing on a unification that is not completed on April 1, but rather moves forward and deepens as we live together within one church fellowship.

As we read the story of the marriage in Cana, let us in our hearts and minds sense Christ's presence with us and his blessing upon us in our coming together.

(Jack Dyce, Convener)

The beginnings in 1990

The committee first met in January 1990 at the Scottish Congregational College.

Those representing the Congregational Union of Scotland were: Revds Alan Paterson, Morgan Phillips, and Robert Waters (General Secretary) and Miss Carolyn Smyth (representing the Scottish Congregational College and acting as secretary to the meeting). Apologies were received from Mrs Sheena Paul (representing the Women's Union).

Those representing the United Reformed Church were: Revds Raymond Bade, Mary Barr, David Hannen, David Jenkins (Moderator of the Northern Synod who took the chair), David M Taylor and Mrs Ruth Clarke (representing the Youth and Children's Work Committee) and Mrs Muriel Garrow.

Its purpose was stated as: 'to explore means of co-operation, making use of present structures' (a reference, perhaps, to the recent failure of the CUS Assembly to obtain a large enough majority to pursue union with the URC)

The composition of the committee reflected then, and later, the expected areas of co-operation: training, women's work, youth work, and the Council for World Mission. The level at which this was expected to take place was in relation, firstly, to the Mid-Scotland District and then to the Northern Province. When Sheila Maxey, URC Secretary for Ecumenical Relations replaced Muriel Garrow on the committee in 1995 it was a signal, from the URC side, that the relationship should be recognised as between the whole URC and the CUS. In 1996 the CUS changed some of its representation on the committee in order to reflect both changes in its own structures and the need to have key denominational staff on the committee. It was beginning to look again towards union talks.

Themes from the minutes

1 Training

Co-operation in this area was considerable throughout the period.

- a liaison group between the Scottish Congregational College, the URC Ministries Committee and Northern College was in existence before 1990.
- the CUS sent an observer to the URC's Integrated Training Review from 1990 on.
- in 1991 a CUS/URC joint group on ministerial training was formed, and appreciation of the flexible, ecumenical nature of the Congregational College's courses was expressed.
- in 1993 John Clarke, the Principal of the College replaced Carolyn Smith on the committee.
- in 1995 both the CUS and the URC embraced the new Training, Learning and Serving course with enthusiasm.
- from 1995 CUS ministers were invited to the Northern Province Ministers' Summer School
- in 1996 the Principal of the Congregational College and the URC Secretary for Ministries had one (of several) meetings.

2 Women's meetings

There was a slow but steady increase in contact and cooperation between the Christian Women's Fellowship Annual Convention (formerly Churches of Christ) and the CUS Women's Bible Study annual meeting. Gradually attendance at one another's major events began to take place.

3 Youth work

Co-operation in this area seems mostly to have been wider than just between the two churches

- through membership of the CWM European Region both were involved in Youth in Mission workcamps.
- both were involved ACTS youth events, and in CUS/URC/CF/UF ongoing support for a Christian Aid project.

But 'youth work' appears only intermittently in the minutes as do the youth representatives!

4 Sharing other resources

- shared Vocations Days with the Northern Province took place, most successfully in 1991 and again, this time called 'Fools for Christ', in 1995.
- other Northern Province resources such as the Music Bank and team support for the SCC Mission Enabler were offered.
- the desirability of exchange of magazines and other publications appears often in the minutes but seems to have been difficult to

achieve.

- another good idea, a shared diary of events, seemed not to get off the ground.

5 Joint or cross-representation

- in 1990 the CUS appointed a member to the Mid-Scotland visitation team, which was assessing where the six United Reformed churches stood after the failed union vote in 1988.
- in 1993 it was reported that the CUS was representing the URC in some chaplaincy work and on some ACTS bodies and that the CUS had included the URC churches in its Junior Church Survey.
- once union talks were opened in 1997, cross-representation began: CUS representatives were invited to all URC Assembly Committees and the Mid-Scotland District was invited to send representatives to the appropriate Area Councils.

6 Sharing news and seeking closer co-operation

- in the early years, this focussed on the six URC churches and their relationships, some good, some not so good, with their CUS neighbours. This period culminated in the formation, in 1993, of Augustine United Church in Edinburgh.
- in the middle years, the news, on the CUS side, was largely about the process of becoming a church, and then dealing with the resulting painful split. On the URC side the news was mainly about the Northern Province, of which, of course, the Mid-Scotland was very much a part. The local focus for co-operation was the Solway area and the relation of those two SCC churches to the Cumberland District.
- most recently, the emphasis has been on the CUS and Scotland as a whole, and, on the URC side, news from the URC as a whole.
- between 1996 and 1998 there was an abortive search for an ecumenical officer who would also minister to two URC congregations.

7 The Council for World Mission

The minutes do not reflect as much shared work as was, at first, expected.

- in 1996 there was a joint visit of CUS and URC people to the CWM partners in Southern Africa.
- in 1995 there was a shared celebration in Edinburgh of the bi-centenary of the LMS.

The milestones on the road to union

September 1992 - the resolution before the CUS Assembly to form a church was not passed.

September 1993 - an amended form of the resolution was passed

From the moment of the announcement of the vote, churches began to walk out. Eventually 27 churches left, at first to form the Association of Scottish Congregational Churches, and then, individually, to join the Congregational Federation. The Scottish Congregational Church began to form the Area Councils.

March 1996 - CUS representation on the Liaison Committee reflected the restructuring centrally into Pastoral, Mission and Education committees with staff responsible for each.

September 1996 - the CUS Assembly voted to approach the URC to re-open union talks.

October 1996 - the URC Mission Council, on behalf of the General Assembly, agreed to do so.

The role of the committee during the union negotiations

Once the Joint Negotiating Group had begun work in January 1997, the Liaison Committee had a complementary role, with two new elements:

- to facilitate communication and partnership between the two churches in all areas of their life and work, **and to move that beyond the Northern Province.**
- to reflect on the work of, and make suggestions to the Joint Negotiating Group.

In relation to the second, the committee suggested that URC synods invite Area Council members for a synod weekend, that there should be particularly close consultation between the CUS and the Wales Synod, that Mid-Scotland URC speakers should be invited to the Area Councils to explain the URC, and that there should be better cross-representation between the Area Councils and the Mid-Scotland District Council.

The Liaison Committee has faithfully played its part in holding these two churches who 'fancied each other' together both when their shared future was unclear and when union came into view.

At the end of its 10 years of life, the membership of the committee was as follows:

Representing the Congregational Union of Scotland: Revds John Arthur (General Secretary of the CUS), Jack Dyce (Chairman of the CUS, Principal of the Scottish Congregational College and convener of the meeting), Ken Forbes, and Mrs Sheena Paul.

Representing the United Reformed Church (UK): Revds Mary Barr, Sheila Maxey (Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and secretary to the meeting), Terry Oakley, and David M. Taylor. During the 10 years other members came and went. Revd David Jenkins, as Moderator of the Northern Synod, played a key role in the life of the committee and in personally strengthening the bonds of friendship between the CUS and the URC(UK). The thanks of both churches are due to all those who served this committee faithfully and especially to Mary Barr, Sheena Paul and David Taylor who served for the whole of its life.

Appendix 4

Problem or Opportunity?

Christians and Local Inter-Faith Activity

In many parts of Britain and Ireland, Christians live and work alongside Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and other people of faith. This poses new challenges and opportunities for the churches in these islands. One response at local level has been a growth in inter-faith initiatives of various kinds – for example, the establishment of councils of faiths or inter-faith groups in many towns and cities. Advice and information about these can be found in *The Local Inter-Faith Guide* (1999, Inter-Faith Network for the UK in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council of the Department of Environment, Transport & the Regions).

How many?

The size of different religious communities in the UK is very difficult to gauge accurately, both because of the absence of reliable data, and because of the difference between counting active religious membership and measuring a broader sense of identification with a community. The following estimates of 'community' (as opposed to 'active') membership are given in the most recent (1997) edition of Religions in the UK: A Multi-Faith Directory, published by the University of Derby in association with the Inter-Faith Network for the UK:

Baha'is	6,000
Buddhists	30,000 - 130,000
Christians	40,000,000
Hindus	400,000 - 550,000
Jains	25,000 - 30,000
Jews	300,000
Muslims	1,000,000 - 1,500,000
Sikhs	350,000 - 500,000
Zoroastrians	5,000 - 10,000

Why are Christians involved?

Christians play a significant part in many of these initiatives, and people from other faith communities will invite our participation. Christian inter-faith involvement is often based on some or all of the following convictions:

- 1 If we love our neighbours and count them as our friends, then we will value that which is most precious to them. In the case of Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and other religious people, that means in particular honouring their faith. The New Testament shows God's love in Jesus reaching out across the barriers created by religion. We can prove ourselves to be Jesus' disciples today by forging trusting and respectful relationships with people of all faiths.
- 2 Christians have a responsibility to help build inclusive and welcoming communities, yet religious differences can easily become causes of division and suspicion. The health of civic life in many places will depend on good relations where people of different faith communities know and trust one another. We share many concerns and many values with people of all faiths. Our advocacy of peace, justice and a more humane society has more credibility when we speak and act together rather than separately.
- 3 If we wish to witness among people of faith to the truth which we have known in Jesus, we shall find that others want to speak to us of their faith. We have to be ready to listen as well as to speak - a genuine encounter is always a mutual one.
- 4 The Spirit cannot be limited by our restrictions. Many Christians have discerned the presence and activity of God among people of different faiths through open and trustful meeting and sharing with them. Inter-faith encounter can renew, enrich and transform our Christian discipleship.

Four Principles of Inter-Faith Dialogue

In 1981, the British Council of Churches adopted four 'Principles of Dialogue' for the encounter between Christians and other people of faith. Simple but far-reaching in their implications, they have been well-tested in inter-faith experience over the last two decades. The Four Principles are these:

- Dialogue begins when people meet each other.
- Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust.
- Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community.
- Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.

How are Christians involved?

Many Christians are already meeting people of different faiths on a daily basis – as neighbours, colleagues, friends, family members; in schools, shops, hospitals; through conversations, working together, helping one another out. All this informal meeting is the indispensable foundation for any local inter-faith activity. Here are ten suggestions of ways to develop involvement further:

- 1 Joining or helping to establish a council of faiths or inter-faith group. *The Local Inter-Faith Guide* offers a wealth of advice in this area.
- 2 Forging practical partnerships of faith communities - e.g., caring for homeless people; urban regeneration schemes; young people's or educational projects; joint groups to fight racism and other forms of injustice.
- 3 Building up links between a local church and a mosque, synagogue, temple, gurdwara, or other place of worship – perhaps arranging reciprocal visits, exchanging seasonal greetings, planning meetings on shared themes.
- 4 Using creatively the public role many Christian leaders have in local communities to ensure the voices of other religious groups are also heard.
- 5 Combatting misinformation, prejudice and bigotry about other faiths, particularly when such attitudes are expressed by church members.
- 6 Joining local or national organisations bringing together Christians and members of other religions. The attached list suggests some contacts for this.
- 7 Responding courteously to requests from other faith groups to use church halls, church schools and other premises. A positive response may help greatly in building good inter-faith relationships; where a church feels it is not appropriate to allow such use, the reasons should be carefully and sympathetically explained.
- 8 Organising twinning links between suburban or rural churches and inner-city parishes; this can help to make experiences of inter-faith encounter available to Christians living in areas with few other people of faith.
- 9 Studying inter-faith issues and reflecting theologically on them. Several academic centres offer good opportunities for individual or group learning.
- 10 Finding times and places where people of different faiths can meet in small groups to share their experiences in trust, friendship and prayer.

Four forms of dialogue

The word 'dialogue' is often used to describe the meeting of people of different faiths, but it does not refer to one kind of situation only. In 1984 the Vatican's 'Secretariat for non-Christian Religions' suggested that there were four different forms of dialogue, each with its part to play:

- 1 The dialogue of life, in which people of different faiths through living together enrich one another in practising their respective religious values.
- 2 The dialogue of collaboration in social involvement with a common commitment to justice and peace.
- 3 The intellectual dialogue of theologians and religious scholars seeking clearer understanding of the truth.
- 4 The dialogue of religious experience, relying on insights from prayer and contemplation in the different faiths.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A number of questions are asked frequently by Christians in relation to inter-faith activity. Convincing answers can only really be found through getting involved in meeting other people of faith; the comments here are just pointers to other ways of looking at things.

- 1 Isn't 'Inter-faith' all about compromising the Christian message?
Meeting between people of different faiths requires every party to be faithful to their own convictions, while respecting the convictions of others. Christians contribute best to dialogue when they are open and confident about their faith.
- 2 Is 'Inter-faith' trying to make a new religion?
Inter-faith dialogue is about recognising differences as well as finding similarities between faiths. The idea of creating a new religion is unwelcome to almost all people of faith.
- 3 Why does it always seem to be Christians who take the initiative?
Because of the long history of Christian settlement in these islands, churches often have more developed organisations than other communities, who may feel that inter-faith relations do not have an immediate priority among the many issues pressing on them. Some may also be initially suspicious of dialogue from past memories of aggressive missionary activity. Yet several initiatives have been taken by non-Christian faiths, and all inter-faith activity relies on active participation of people of all faiths.
- 4 We don't have that problem here; what's it got to do with us?
The presence of various faith communities is an opportunity, not a problem. People of different faiths have much to offer; together with us, they value peace and justice, and bring a challenge to an increasingly secular society. The faith map of Britain and Ireland is constantly changing, and religious diversity is now a feature of many suburban and rural areas, as well as inner cities. Moreover, we are all citizens of a multi faith world, and this is reflected in education, politics, and the media. Even in districts where other faith communities are not visibly present, churches can build awareness of inter-faith issues in a number of ways – visits, links with other churches, study programmes, etc.
- 5 Other faiths seem to be taking over here; aren't they too powerful already?
It can be painful for long-established residents to see traditional communities weaken as the character of their neighbourhood changes rapidly. Yet it is important for churches not to live in the past; ministry in multi-faith areas can be challenging and renewing. In many cities and towns, the Christian presence is that of one religious minority alongside other religious minorities in a largely secular society. Christians here are facing considerable difficulties, which may best be addressed through creative ecumenical initiatives. All faith communities have major problems to contend with; the best inter-faith relations begin from honestly acknowledging our shared position of weakness.
- 6 Shouldn't we try to convert non-Christians, not have dialogue with them?
It is the Holy Spirit who converts people, not us. There is a wide range of opinion within the Churches about the relationship between inter-faith dialogue and evangelism. All Christians can agree, though, that it is important to understand the beliefs and practices of other people of faith, that it is necessary to respect the right of others to disagree with us, and that witness to Christian faith is always part of Christian discipleship. A helpful discussion of these issues can be found in the Inter-Faith Network for the UK's document Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter (1993). This includes a 'code of conduct' for inter-faith relations which has been formally adopted, for instance, by the Methodist Church through their annual Conference, and endorsed by representative bodies of all the faiths represented in the Network, including the Christian Churches.
- 7 How can we have 'Inter-Faith' here when Christians are suffering overseas?
We rightly have a special concern for fellow Christians suffering in other countries, but it would be unfair to hold our neighbours here responsible for what happens overseas. Building good inter-faith relations locally can open up ways of influencing difficult situations abroad (for example, through mixed-faith visits or representations). We should also remember that, in different parts of the world, it is not only Christians who suffer for their faith: indeed, in some places, it is those who call themselves Christians who are the persecutors. Religious freedom for all faiths must be affirmed and protected.
- 8 We seem fine as we are, in our different ways; what use will inter-faith dialogue be to us?
Our lives interlock in so many different ways today that there are limits to how separate we can be. We all need to value and preserve the integrity of our own religious traditions, yet Christians firmly grounded in the faith can benefit greatly from the mutual understanding and enrichment which inter-faith dialogue brings.

Useful resources and contacts

The Local Inter-Faith Guide: Faith Community Co-operation in Action, published by the Inter-Faith Network for the UK in association with the Inner Cities Religious Council, includes addresses of national inter-faith organisations, as well as practical guidance about inter-faith activity. The Network staff can also give details of local inter-faith groups and offer advice :

The Inter-Faith Network for the UK, 5-7, Tavistock Place, LONDON, WC1H 9SN
Tel: 020-7388-0008; Fax: 020-7387-7968
E-mail: ifnet@interfaith.org.uk; website: <http://www.interfaith.org.uk>

In Scotland, advice can also be sought from:
The Scottish Inter-Faith Council, c/o St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, 2, Castle Street,
GLASGOW, G4 0RH
Tel: 0141-533-2557

A very valuable source of information on religious organisations throughout the UK is **Religions in the UK: A Multi-Faith Directory**, published (in association with the Inter-Faith Network for the UK) by the University of Derby:

Religious Resource and Research Centre, University of Derby, Mickleover, DERBY, DE3 5GX
Tel: 01332-622-222ext.2026; Fax: 01332-514-323
E-mail: e.fry@derby.ac.uk; website: <http://www.multifaithnet.org>

The ecumenical body resourcing the Churches' engagement in inter-faith relations is the **Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations (CCIFR)**. CCIFR is one of the commissions of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and is supported by 15 churches. It is a member body of the Inter-Faith Network for the UK. The secretary can be contacted at:
Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations, Church House, Great Smith St, LONDON, SW1P 3NZ
Tel: 020-7898-1477; Fax: 020-7898-1431

In Scotland, the Scottish Churches' ecumenical instrument, Action of Churches Together in Scotland, sponsors the **Churches' Agency for Inter-Faith Relations in Scotland (CAIRS)**. For further information, contact:
General Secretary, ACTS, Scottish Churches House, Dunblane, FK15 0AJ
Tel: 01786-823588; Fax: 01786-825844

For further information regarding ecumenical involvement in inter-faith work in Wales and Ireland, contact respectively:
General Secretary, CYTUN, 11, St Helen's Rd, SWANSEA, SA1 4AL
Tel: 01792-460876; Fax: 01792-469391

General Secretary, Irish Council of Churches, Inter Church Centre, 48, Elmwood Avenue, BELFAST, BT9 6AZ
Tel: 01232-663145; Fax: 01232-381737

CCIFR also supports the **Christian Inter-Faith Practitioners' Association (CIPA)**, a network of people in all the Churches actively involved in inter-faith activity in a variety of ways. CIPA organises an annual conference; details can be obtained from the CCIFR Secretary.

Several Churches supporting CCIFR have **denominational officers**, committees, or other networks with a designated responsibility for inter-faith relations. Within England, the Church of England maintains a network of **inter-faith advisers** in each of its 42 dioceses. These will often be well placed to advise on the local inter-faith situation. Contact details can be found through the appropriate diocesan office, or through CCIFR.

The published leaflet (available from The United Reformed Church International Relations office) lists some **other useful contacts** concerned particularly with encouraging Christians to build good relations with other people of faith. This list is not exhaustive; it would be helpful if further suggestions for inclusion could be sent to the CCIFR Secretary. *The Local Inter-Faith Guide* includes details of more broadly based inter-faith organisations. In addition, several universities and colleges offer academic opportunities to study inter-faith relations for groups and individuals.

Appendix 5

Students sent by Synods

As at 29th February 2000

NORTHERN

Stipendiary

Kirsty-Ann Burroughs (Mansfield), Chris Hucker (Mansfield), Jane Rowell (Northern), David Salsbury (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

David Walton (NEOC)

CRCW

Linda Granville (Northern), Helen Ogilvie (Northern)

NORTH WESTERN

Stipendiary

Carole Allison (Northern), John Bradbury (Westminster), Jason McCullagh (Westminster), Brenda Moore (Northern), Peter Nunn (Northern), Michael Thomason (Northern), Mike Walsh (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Lorraine Mycroft (Northern), Marshall Sherlock (Northern), Lena Talbot (Northern)

MERSEY

Stipendiary

Elizabeth Blair (Northern), John Brown (Northern), Gary Gotham (Northern), Martin Hardy (Northern), Chris Ray (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Christine Davies (Northern)

YORKSHIRE

Stipendiary

Helga Cornell (Northern), Louise Franklin (Westminster), Catherine Morrison (Northern), Heather Pollard (Northern), Peter Sharp (Northern), Robert Sheard (Northern)

CRCW

Gwen Smithies (Northern)

EAST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary

Jason Askew (Westminster), Ed Butlin (Queens), Trish Davis (Mansfield), Malcolm Fife (Westminster), Lynn Fowkes (Westminster), Michael Hopkins (Mansfield), Heather Whyte (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Neil Eldridge (Northern), Ed Rawlins (Northern)

WEST MIDLANDS

Stipendiary

Jacqueline Embrey (Queens), Pauline Rate (Westminster), Susan Walker (Queens)

Non-Stipendiary

Bob Ash (Queens), Peter Christie (WMMTC), Franziska Herring (WMMTC), Colin Ofor (WMMTC)

CRCW

Joanne Ellis (Northern), Maureen Thompson (Northern)

EASTERN

Stipendiary

Andrew Berry (Westminster), Connie Bonner (Westminster), Yolande Burns (Westminster), Susan Challis (Westminster), Peter Clark (Westminster), Dilys Corbin (Northern), Richard Eastman (Westminster), Timothy Jackson (Westminster), Les Mather (Westminster), Susan McKenzie (Westminster), Jon Morgan (Westminster), Helen Pope (Mansfield), Bruce Upperton (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Lorna Bantock (EAMTC), Carole Pearl (EAMTC), Trevor Williams (EAMTC), Geoffrey Wright (EAMTC)

SOUTH WESTERN

Stipendiary

Sian Collins (Westminster), Colin Phipps (Mansfield), Yvonne Stone (Synod), Mary Thomas (Mansfield)

Non-Stipendiary

Hazel Allen (SAOMTC), Hazel Starritt (STETS), Angela Steele (STETS)

CRCW

Susan Lincoln (Northern), John Saunders (Northern)

WESSEX

Stipendiary

Jan Adamson (Northern), Nick Adlem (Mansfield), Sarah Hall (Mansfield), Stuart Nixon (Northern), Jill Thornton (Northern), Christopher Tolley (Northern), Robert Weston (Northern)

Non-Stipendiary

Maria Hooper (STETS), Tim Meachin (STETS), David Poulton (Northern), Lynda Spokes (WMMTC)

Appendix 5

THAMES NORTH

Stipendiary

Susan Chapman (Northern), Iona Christie (Northern), Geoff Felton (Westminster), Debbie Hodge (Westminster), Janet Llewellyn (Westminster), Janet Sutton (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Bruce Allinson (Westminster), Jayne Bazeley (Westminster), June Colley (Mansfield) Meryl Court (Northern), Clare Davison (EAMTC), Ann Jack (Northern), John Mackerness (Northern), Bridget Powell (SAOMTC), Edward Sanniez (Northern), Jenny Simmons (EAMTC), Erna Stevenson (Mansfield), Martin Wheadon (Northern)

SOUTHERN

Stipendiary

Andrew Coyne (Westminster), Roger Jones (Mansfield), Martin Knight (Northern), Nicholas Mark (Northern), Romilly Micklem (Westminster), Peter Stevenson (Westminster), Nigel Warner (Westminster), Kathy White (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

Beatrice Buabeng (Westminster), Christine Jefferies (SEITE), Leena Knowles (Northern)

WALES

Stipendiary

Kate Gray (Northern), Brian Norris (Northern), Robert Pope (Westminster)

Non-Stipendiary

David Marshall-Jones (Northern)

SCOTLAND

Non-Stipendiary

Paul Jupp (Scottish Congregational and URC College), Linda Rice (Scottish Congregational and URC College), Gordon Smith (Scottish Congregational and URC College), Mary Taylor (Scottish Congregational and URC College).

ORDINAND TRANSFER

Stipendiary

Klaus Gutwein (Westminster)

Appendix 6

Statistics of Students

As at 29th February 2000

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service		
	Feb 1997	Feb 1998	Feb 1999	Feb 2000	2000	2001	2002
STIPENDIARY							
Full Time Courses							
Mansfield	16	18	18	10	2	4	4
Northern	25	26	24	28	6	8	7
Queen's	3	2	2	3	-	-	2
Westminster	29	27	28	32	11	7	6
Part Time Courses							
Synod				1	-	1	-
Sub total	73	73	72	74	19	20	19
CRCW							
Salford Urban Mission*	2	-			-	-	
MCI/Northern		3	5	7	1	3	3
NON-STIPENDIARY							
EAMTC	2	3	1	6	5	-	1
EMMTC	6	4	-	-	-	-	-
MCI/Northern	12	17	19	14	4	4	4
NEOC	1	-	1	1	-	-	1
SAOMC	6	6	6	2	1	1	-
SEITE	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
STETS	5	3	5	4	1	2	1
SWMTC	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
WMMTC	1	-	3	4	-	-	3
URC*	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
SC/URC				4		4	
Mansfield				2	1	1	-
Queens				1	-	1	
Westminster				3	1	1	1
Sub total	37	38	41	42	13	14	11
Total	112	111	113	123	33	37	33

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 Ministerial Training Course
URC	United Reformed Church Non-Stipendiary Ministry Training Programme*
SC/URC	Scottish Congregational and United Reformed College
*	<i>These courses have been discontinued</i>

Appendix 7

Reports from Colleges

Mansfield College

1.1 The academic year began with both good and bad news. In July 1999 General Assembly voted to maintain four URC colleges, which meant that ministerial training would continue at Mansfield College. Unfortunately, Revd Dr Catherine Middleton was unable to continue as Acting Director of Ministerial Training and Chaplain due to the effects of another cancer. Thus the new academic year began with both hope and sadness.

1.2 Because of the unexpected vote by General Assembly we have been busy planning for the future. We are currently discussing the possibility of forming a relationship with Regents Park College that would enable the sharing of ministerial training and the worship lives of our communities. The development of a more formal association would increase the quality of our programme and community. We are also beginning the search for a permanent Director and Chaplain. It is hoped an appropriate person can be found to begin a seven-year appointment in September 2000. If plans to share ministerial training go forward with Regent's Park, the Director of Training at Mansfield will also have teaching responsibilities at Regent's Park.

1.3 Such an arrangement would continue a long relationship between Mansfield College and Regent's Park. Regent's was originally founded in Oxford precisely because Mansfield College was here. At one point the two colleges actually discussed merging into one institution. And during the war years, Mansfield College moved its operations to Regents Park.

1.4 We are very grateful to our ecumenical friends in the other Oxford Colleges for their help in teaching our students in the various degree programmes available. Of course, much of ministerial training takes place at Mansfield College and will continue to do so in the future. The Revd Betsy Gray-King teaches Spirituality and Liturgy and has brought new life to these subjects. Dale Rominger is acting Director of Training and Chaplain and is responsible

for Preaching Class. Betsy and Dale have co-ordinated the teaching of preaching, liturgy and spirituality to offer a more holistic and realistic experience. Students have placements in local churches, hospitals, and in "Living the Kingdom" they explore their faith and theology in a variety of societal settings. Revd Dr Susan Durber continues as Chaplain to the ordinands for which we are very thankful.

1.5 Despite the fact that we have no first year students due to last year's assumption that ministerial training would be withdrawn from Mansfield College, the URC community of ordinands is thriving. The ordinands themselves have some responsibility for the ethos of the community and direction of the training programme. They assess the quality of the Mansfield experience with integrity and intelligence. Wednesday evening and Friday morning services are led by both students and staff. The spirit is good, the journey of faith exciting and the educational opportunities strong.

1.6 Mansfield College is a community that includes some 300 students, including graduates, undergraduates, and visiting students, reading in English, Geography, History, Mathematics, Engineering, PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics), Physics, Jurisprudence, Human Sciences, Theology and more. The Ministerial Training Programme is a part of this larger community and has little chance and no desire to become a religious ghetto.

1.7 Mansfield College is looking to the future with imagination and hope. It is innovating changes in the Oxford University system. We plan to be a part of the College's future through the possible forming of new relationships, the welcoming of a permanent Director-Chaplain and creatively keeping alive the Reformed tradition in Oxford, not by living in the past, but by making that tradition relevant to the College and to the world in which we live.

Northern College

2.1 At the start of the 1999-2000 session the profile of the student body was as follows: 7 preparing for Church Related Community Work (CRCW) ministry, 13 preparing for non-stipendiary ministry (NSM) and 31 preparing for stipendiary ministry (SM), including one person from the Congregational Federation.

2.2 In order to respond to the needs of our NSM and CRCW candidates we have appointed Alison Micklem as CRCW Course Co-Ordinator and the Revds Paul Brewerton, Norman Riley and Margaret Tait as part-time pastoral Tutors. Meanwhile, the Revd Bob Day completed his tenure of the Mona Powell Fellowship, and for the next three years the Mona Powell legacy will be used to fund three people to study for Masters degrees, the first of whom is the Revd Stuart Scott.

2.3 The Revd Dr John Parry and the Revd Dr David Peel have been offered, and have accepted, invitations to serve the College for further periods.

2.4 The Faith in Living Course is used by all our students to prepare for their ministries. The number of participants on the course continues to grow, with the part-time mode now having been expanded from six to twelve weekends. New modules continue to be devised to meet the needs of the churches, and many of them are ideal for Continuing Ministerial Education (CME). Last year's results produced two First Class and four Upper Second Class honours graduates, some of whom had little by way of educational qualifications when they came to Luther King House.

2.5 In collaboration with the URC and adjacent Synods we are setting up Research Fellowships in certain appropriate URC pastorates. The purpose is to study the mission of congregations in urban, suburban, and rural areas and thus provide the churches with analysis and proposals, which will enable us to be more effective in mission. The holders of the Fellowships will work with the missiologists who are already teaching at Luther King House, and consequently the seeds have been sown for the creation of a School of Contextual Missiology here in Manchester.

2.6 The Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester, to which the College and the URC are very committed, has continued to develop. It now includes ten denominations and seven colleges who

network together to provide a wide spectrum of theological education. We are learning from one another and valuing our distinctive experience. Visitors to Luther King House witness dramatic changes to the building. Increasingly, we are moving away from the traditional image of a college and university hall of residence as we seek to become a theological resource for the whole church. We now provide a full range of services including accommodation, conference facilities, catering and theological learning resources.

2.7 The importance of the world church is never far from view at Northern College. We have been pleased to welcome the Revd Li Hau-Tiong from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan as our overseas guest this session. Meanwhile some of our students have been away in such diverse places as South India, Israel, and Taiwan. Three Northern College students were selected for the PTEM educational visit to El Salvador in March, when they shared in the events to mark the twentieth anniversary of the murder of Archbishop Romero.

2.8 During this year all the colleges and courses based at Luther King House will be seeking Ecumenical Validation. This will be followed by an Ecumenical Inspection based on the aims and objectives established during the validation process. It will provide a further challenge to effect even greater ecumenical collaboration and to developing further innovative patterns of provision in theological education.

2.9 This year all those who use the Faith in Living course will have been involved in a joint ecumenical Valedictory Service. Scheduled for June 10th and hosted by the Roman Catholic Salford Cathedral, this will have been one of the many occasions organised by the churches to display our oneness in Christ, and it powerfully reflects the ecumenical spirit within PTEM.

2.10 There will be the usual opportunity for former students, and ongoing friends, of the College to meet informally during Assembly at the College lunch, details of which appear in the Assembly Programme.

Queen's College

3.1 Queen's and the URC

3.1.1 Two developments in the current academic year (1999-2000) have helped to strengthen the mutual involvement of Queen's with the URC in the task of theological education and ministerial training. First, the Charity Commission have agreed that The United Reformed Church (in common with the Church of England and the Methodist Church) should have right of nomination to a Governorship of the Foundation. Mr Howard Bridge has accepted nomination and will serve on the Governing Body alongside the Revd Elizabeth Welch, Moderator of the West Midlands Synod. The Revd Pat Nimmo, a URC minister with experience of inner-city ministry, of teaching and theological education, has been appointed as a full-time tutor (specialising in missiology). The Revd Dr Neil Messer remains the Foundation's staff member responsible for care and oversight of URC ministers in training and for liaison with the Church's other ministerial training agencies. Meanwhile, the understanding reached in the light of the Training Review - that a small number (normally 2/3) of candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament should enter training here each year - was maintained this year. The result is that the number of URC students continues to increase gradually: there are now 10 in the Foundation as a whole, eight ordinands and two training for continuing lay ministry.

3.2 Other Developments

3.2.1 There have been three other appointments to the academic staff of the Foundation. The Revd Dr Adam Hood (Church of Scotland) is the new Deputy Director of Research; the Revd Rod Burton (Methodist Church of South Africa) is Pastoral Theology tutor, in succession to Helen Cameron; Mr Anthony Reddie (a Methodist Lay Person) is a Research Fellow with special concern for Christian Education. Anthony Reddie has already done pioneering work in relation to the religious education of black young people.

3.2.2 The total number of students of the Foundation is now 125, of whom 57 are full time; this represents another slight increase over previous years.

3.2.3 The College Old Building has now been completely re-furnished. Study/bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms have been transformed and some new facilities, including an IT room equipped for use by students, have been introduced. The Chapel now has excellent new lighting as a result of the first phase of the Chapel refurbishment scheme.

3.2.4 Changes in the College's daily timetable for teaching and worship have been welcomed by students and staff: the changes encourage more integration between part-time and full-time members and also make it easier for non-residents to participate fully in our common life.

3.3 Courses of Study

3.3.1 The University of Birmingham has approved our proposal for a new Doctoral programme - the ThD - planned primarily for part-time and work-related study. The first intake on this programme is expected in September 2000. Candidates for the doctorate will usually begin by undertaking an MA course with the Foundation. The combined MA/ThD will normally take six years of part-time study. The programme aims to serve ministers and lay Christians wanting to undertake serious continuing theological study and research and to relate the study to their own sphere of work.

3.3.2 The Foundation also offers Certificate, Diploma and BA programmes for full-time and part-time study.

3.4 Guests

3.4.1 The annual visits of the Moderator of the General Assembly and the President of the Methodist Conference are both major events in the Foundation year. Last Spring it was a particular pleasure to welcome Mrs Wilma Frew as Moderator: she also serves as a member of the Oversight Committee, which assists the Foundation in the guidance and care of URC candidates. In addition to the visit of the Revd Peter McIntosh as Moderator, this term we are also welcoming the Revd Marjorie Lewis-Cooper to lead worship and preach.

Scottish Congregational and United Reformed College

4.1 The history of the College and its role in the education and training of ministers may be traced back to 1811 and the foundation of the Glasgow Theological Academy, later to be the Theological Hall of the Scottish Congregational Churches and in due course the Scottish Congregational College.

4.2 The life of College and Union has been a close one throughout their common history. In 1897, the affairs of the College have been reported to the Union's Annual Assembly - indeed before they were submitted to the College's own annual meeting! Since 1917, the College has been in "as close association with the Union as possible"¹

4.3 This long-standing development continued with the formation of the Scottish Congregational Church in 1993 which brought together the Congregational Union of Scotland, its Women's Union and the College in a voluntary association.

4.4 The United Reformed Church Act 2000 has now made provision in relation to the College's undertaking of ministerial training with the new URC and the Unifying Assembly has afforded the necessary recognition to the College.

4.5 The pattern of education, training and formation for stipendiary ministry in the Congregational Union of Scotland has been that candidates undertake full-time studies within the Faculty of Divinity of one of the Scottish Universities (most commonly Edinburgh and Glasgow) and concurrently follow a professional, practical and denominationally-related programme at the College as well as receiving guidance and support from the College.

4.6 Non-stipendiary candidates (e.g. those who were seeking accreditation as pastors or who are now transferring from the CUS pastorate to NSM) follow a part-time modular programme with the College, which involves academic and applied studies and placement.

4.7 There is currently one member of staff, the Revd John W Dyce, BA LLB MA(Ed) MSc, whose background was previously in community based adult learning. The College is in the process of appointing a number of part-time staff tutors. The Principal also has acted in an honorary capacity as Education Secretary of the Scottish Congregational Church and the new synod organisation continues this arrangement.

4.8 There are currently no full-time stipendiary ministry candidates, but four CUS pastors are in the course of additional training with a view to accreditation as ministers.

4.9 The College, through the Scottish Congregational Church, is in membership of Scottish Churches' Open College, an agency of ACTS.

4.10 The College, with the Scottish Synod continues to be in conversation with other denominations in relation to the ecumenical dimension of ministerial education, training and formation within this nation.

4.11 The College looks forward eagerly to continuing the close relationship it has had with the Congregational Union of Scotland in a new relationship with the synod and with the wider URC.

¹ Escott H(1960) *A History of Scottish Congregationalism*
Glasgow, Congregational Union of Scotland

Westminster College

5.1 The Centenary

5.1.1 This has been a year of great blessing. Centenaries can sometimes be triggers of introversion and nostalgia. Ours wasn't. Due honour was paid to the past and rich and varied memories were the occasion of thanksgiving, but the dominant note was of to-day and to-morrow. So, the student led event for young people of the church took the opportunity to explore the nature of God's call, with Christian rock groups, Kathy Galloway and a series of speakers from a variety of Christian aid and mission agencies. Professor Walter Brueggemann's Reid lectures were given to packed audiences who revelled in his unique ability to fuse the themes of Old Testament theology and post-modern culture. Professor Graham Stanton's Commemoration Day sermon was a symbol of fruition, for it was the Lewis and Gibson scholarship that first brought Professor Stanton to England from New Zealand as a young post-graduate student. He left us with stirring words which should be our inspiration for the 21st century - 'The gospel Paul proclaimed and the Gospel proclaimed by the College's benefactors cannot simply be repeated word for word. The Gospel must be grasped, lived, obeyed, and articulated afresh for each new generation.'

5.2 'The future of Reformed theology'

5.2.1 The first week in September saw the College taking Professor Stanton seriously as the Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies within the College launched at its first international conference on the theme 'The future of Reformed theology'. Our dream had been to bring together professional theologians, ministers and lay people and students, and that dream became reality over three days of papers, discussion and conversation. Jürgen Moltmann set the dominant theme of the conference, challenging us to explore what the Reformed contribution might be 'to a universal theology for the common future of the Christian Churches, the world religions, the groaning creation and the coming of God'. Other speakers responded by analysing specific Reformed emphases, the nature of tradition, faithfulness, heterodoxy, and the nature of community. We look forward to the eventual publication of the conference papers, and express our thanks to Dr Peter McEnhill for all the administrative work which makes such an event possible.

5.3 Comings and goings...

5.3.1 During the year we said 'Congratulations' and a sad farewell to our Bursar, Mrs PA Shuler, as she moved on to become the Domestic Bursar of Girton College. We have been delighted to welcome Mrs Maureen Barrett-Small as her replacement, and Mrs Margaret Thompson as Principal's PA and Administrator

of the Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies. A college is a place of continual movement, for preparing people for ministry is at the heart of our work. This year's leavers were Ruth Allen to Congleton and Haslington and Crewe, Catherine Hare to St Neots, David Rees to Rayleigh, David Simpson to Saffron Walden and the Stansted Group, David Downing to the Hackney Group, Rosemary Pullen to Hindhead and Elstead, and David Sebley to Hockley and Hawkwell. We are pleased to commend them to the church, and offer them our prayers and good wishes.

5.4 Inspection Report

5.4.1 Inspections, if carried out properly, should be constructive but not comfortable experiences. They should ask the difficult questions and probe weaknesses, yet at the same time offer encouragement and suggests paths that might be travelled. The Cambridge Theological Federation and Westminster have reason to be thankful to their 1998 ecumenical inspectorate for their rigour and far-sightedness. They paid tribute to the Federation's 'remarkable' progress over the past decade, noted the evident momentum for further development, and drew attention to their opinion that 'a critical stage has now been reached'. By that they means that it would be easy to rest and re-trench rather than move forward to grasp tomorrow's opportunities. Their report is intended to help the Federation move beyond that 'critical' stage by finding new ways of resource sharing and co-operation in a climate where funding is more likely to diminish than increase. They also encouraged the devolution of financial responsibility to the College, in accordance with the 1996 Assembly resolution.

5.4.2 The Federation Council and the Westminster Board of Governors are both responding actively to the Inspectorate's recommendations. We are pleased, however, to draw Assembly's attention to their conclusion, that the Federation's 'ecumenically planned and taught educational programme provides a unique and excellent opportunity for the training of men and women for ministry'.

5.5 The future

5.5.1 The Board of Governors remain mindful of the need to strike a balance between the college's main contribution to the church through initial ministerial education, and the desire to support other essential programmes, both in their stewardship of the building and in the deployment of staff time. To this end the College are seeking to respond both to new directions in continuing ministerial education, and the Inspector's recommendation that more be done to provide opportunities for lay persons and ordinands to learn together. We hope to report on our progress next year.

Appendix 8

Inspection of the Cambridge Theological Federation

1.1 An inspection was carried out between April and November, 1998 of the Cambridge Theological Federation, (of which Westminster College and the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course are members) by an ecumenical team representing the various institutions which make up the Federation. They reported in Spring 1999. The inspectors were:

For the House of Bishops, Church of England:

The Revd Bob Langley (Canon Residentiary, Newcastle Cathedral);
The Revd Canon Martin Coombs (formerly Team Vicar, Dorchester);
Mr Brian Gates (Lecturer Department of Religion and Social Ethics, University College of St Martin, Lancaster);
Professor Elaine Graham (Samuel Ferguson Professor in Social and Pastoral Theology, University of Manchester);
The Revd Canon Maureen Palmer (Canon Residentiary, Guildford Cathedral)

For the Methodist Church, Formation in Ministry Office:

The Revd Dr Kenneth Wilson (Tutor, The Queens College, Birmingham);
Miss Joan Charlesworth (Formerly Head of Careers Service, University of Kent);

For the Training Committee, United Reformed Church:

The Revd Dr Jack McKelvey (Formerly Principal, Northern College, Manchester);
The Revd John Slow (Retired Minister)

For the Roman Catholic Church:

Dr Helen Forshaw FHCJ

1.2 Between April and mid-November 1998, members of the inspection team made a number of visits to various Federation meetings. They also addressed several aspects of the life of the member institutes, including meeting members of governing bodies.

1.3 In the period of residence in Cambridge, the Inspectors attended a wide range of occasions in the life of the Federation, the Council, the Executive and its committees. They experienced a variety of teaching sessions and met with cross-sections of the teaching staff and supervisors concerned for different elements in the educational and formational programme. They saw students, and spouses drawn from across the Federation. They met with individuals from the Cambridge Divinity Faculty.

1.4 In relation to member institutes (such as Westminster College), they had discussions with members of staff and students; they attended in-house teaching courses, worship and other specific events of the institutes. They considered the administrative and financial aspects of the different institutions and spoke to those responsible.

2 Summary of the Inspection Report of the Cambridge Theological Federation

2.1 'There is much to celebrate about the achievement of the Federation since the last inspection both in terms of the development of its own identity, and the benefits it has brought to its member institutes and those training for ministry.' (*Inspection Report Page 3 1.1*)

2.2 'The Cambridge Theological Federation's ecumenically planned and taught educational programme provides a unique and excellent opportunity for the training of men and women for ministry. Its development over the last decade has been remarkable. The evident momentum for further development driven by powerful theological, educational and economic considerations. A critical stage has now been reached.

2.3 'This report takes the two elements of purpose in the Mission Statement, "the provision of education, training and formation for lay and ordained ministry" and "within an ecumenical fellowship" as central criteria in looking at present practice. Likewise the main recommendations are designed to enable the Federation to draw out of the Mission Statement the great potential which still remains to be mined. They seek to help it to move forward in a coherent fashion to the next stage, to find still more effective ways in which the variety of Christian tradition and educational approaches can interact with one another to the advantage of all. They are concerned to enable the Federation to develop its own identity without losing the diversity of the constituent parts, and to serve the region more effectively.'

(*Cambridge Theological Federation Inspection report page 2*)

2.4 The Training Committee considered the Inspection Report and wishes to congratulate the Cambridge Theological Federation on its achievements to which, it is evident, Westminster College has made a considerable contribution.

3 Summary of the Recommendations to the Cambridge Theological Federation

3.1 We recommend that the Federation Council carries out a comprehensive review of its aims and objectives. *(A working party has been set up to consider these)*

3.2 We recommend that attention is given as to how the particular contribution offered by the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology can be further appropriated by other member institutes. *(In hand)*

3.3 We recommend that from next year the roles of President and Vice-President should be filled by Principals. *(Under discussion)*

3.4 We recommend that there should be a new post of Administrative Officer. *(Agreed subject to funding)*

3.5 We recommend that the governing bodies of the institutes within the Federation explore how communication between them might be enhanced. *(In hand; cross-representation on governing bodies, in place and occasions when governing bodies and staff meet together being discussed. Liaison Committee meets annually)*

3.6 We recommend the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Committee responsible for bringing about a greater degree of co-ordination and support across the Federation in relation to staff:

- appointments
- deployment, especially in relation to specialist subject areas and sabbaticals
- development
- equalisation of policies with regard to Faculty supervision and examination fees
- appraisal
- quality control/standards

and in relation to the educational programme: attending to the streamlining and rationalisation of courses, and a more co-ordinated approach to the validating authorities. *(Committee now established)*

3.7 We recommend that the President and Principals meeting uses a consultant at appropriate intervals. *(In hand) (Useful process in progress as part of 3.1)*

3.8 We recommend a review of the arrangements for the support of students and families through the process of ministerial formation, and the identification and communication of best practice across the institution. *(In hand; a working party which includes students, has worked on this)*

3.9 We therefore recommend that the Directors of Pastoral Studies in each institute set in train a collective review of the In-House Courses on behalf of the Federation, and under the auspices of the Teaching and Learning Committee. *(Will happen as the Teaching and Learning Committee starts on its work)*

3.10 We recommend that consideration be given to extending the Induction Programme for students entering the Federation to help them to locate themselves better within the ecumenical history as well as in their own tradition, and in the context of Cambridge and their house in the Federation. *(Object being pursued in other ways)*

3.11 We recommend the consideration of a post-graduate qualification in ecumenism. *(Not at the present time.)*

3.12 We recommend that the Federation reviews the relationship, and roles in course development, of institutes and supervisors in attachments and placements. *(In hand, pending new appointments at Westcott and EAMTC)*

3.13 We recommend that the full development of the Information Technology infrastructure is pursued as rapidly as possible to facilitate communication and student and staff learning resources, and that IT training is made available to all. *(considerable progress has been made)*

3.14 We recommend that the level and number of administrative staff is kept under review in order to ensure, in institutes and Federation, effective and efficient organisation and administration. *(In hand) (Has been reviewed in each case)*

3.15 We recommend that the denominational authorities consider how best to resource the Federation to move into the next phase of its life.' *(URC has devolved financial responsibility to Westminster College; Anglican and Methodist Churches still to reply)*

4 Summary of the Inspection Report of Westminster College

4.1 The College is an enthusiastic member of the Federation, contributing to its life and work in numerous ways. It has coped well with changes in the academic staff, the appointment of a new Principal and Bursar. The newly established Board of Governors is getting into its stride and addressing a range of important concerns. The setting up of the Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies and the relocation of the United Reformed Church History Society Library at the College marks the beginning of what could become a significant resource for the churches, while the location of the Henry Martyn Library and the North Atlantic Missionary Project has increased the international profile of the College.

4.2 Staff development and appraisal procedures are now operating. The staff is fully occupied with the diversification which has become a feature of the Colleges work. Lay training, conferences, summer schools take place on a regular basis and the staff play an important role in the national Training for Learning and Serving course.

4.3 Since the previous inspection many improvements have been carried out at the College. The library now has two computer terminals which are linked to the University Library and have internet facilities. There are also 24 points for students to connect personal lap-top computers to the internet. A new computer network has been installed and a room furnished as a student IT facility.

4.4 The Inspectors commend the College for the attention it is paying to the criteria for ministerial training set up by the General Assembly in 1995 and are pleased in particular with the increased attention being paid to placements, integration and collaboration in teaching and learning.

4.5 The decision of the 1998 General Assembly of the United Reformed Church that the College will be part of its long-term training strategy has enabled the staff and governors to give their attention to working on ways and means of assisting the Church in providing training for new forms of ministry, developing continuing ministerial education and post ordination training. Similarly, the possibility of increasing teaching, seminar, tutorial space and additional studies for tutors is being explored by the Board of Governors.

4.6 The Inspectors are impressed by the work being done by the academic and administrative staff which is additional to their responsibilities for the training of theological students, but they express concern over the workloads being carried by the staff.

Ironically, the use being made of computers and word processors is proving to be a mixed blessing for the teaching staff in as much as it has resulted in their doing much of their own secretarial work.

5 Summary of the Recommendations to Westminster College

The Inspectors made the following recommendations to Westminster College: (The recommendations are printed in heavy type subsequent action taken by the College is note in light italic type).

5.1 **We recommend that the College explore with other members of the Federation further ways of fostering ecumenism.** (*In hand*)

5.2 **We recommend that the Governors are encouraged to have the United Reformed Church complete the transfer of financial responsibility to the College.** (*Helpful sessions are continuing with the Finance Office*)

5.3 **We recommend that the staff are encouraged to work with the staff of the Federation to reduce the number of courses and pastoral studies units on offer.** (*Recognition of the Pastoral Studies component of the BTh degree is already in hand*)

5.4 **We recommend that the administrative staff are increased by providing the Principal with a personal assistant who will work half-time and devote the other half of their time to secretarial work.** (*An assistant has been appointed*)

5.5 **We recommend an increase in the hours of the part-time work done by the Bursar.** (*Done*)

5.6 **We recommend that the provision for pastoral care of students and their families is reviewed.** (*The Governors have agreed that such a review will be undertaken*)

5.7 **We recommend that security arrangements at the College are reviewed, and the method used to admit callers at the front door of the College be improved.** (*In hand*)

5.8 **We recommend that more off-site accommodation for married students be acquired.** (*The Governors acknowledge that there may be a need for more such accommodation, though they note that not all married students wish to move their families to Cambridge. It may be necessary to make hard choices between investment in further development of the teaching facility on the main site and purchase of further properties.*)

Appendix 8

5.9 We recommend that the steps being taken to conserve the archival material be discussed with the University of Cambridge. (*In hand; a part time appointment has been made*)

5.10 We recommend that further ways are found of making it possible for lay persons and ordinands to undertake learning together.' (*Most of Cambridge University is lay; the MA is open to lay people. The Governors would prefer to encourage greater exploitation of the opportunities which already exist rather than to try invent new ones*)

6 Summary of Recommendations to the East Anglian Ministerial Training Course

6.1 All the members of the Inspection Team were greatly impressed by the progress made by the Course since the last inspection, its clarity of direction, its drive and energy, its organisational efficiency, the innovation of the Peterborough Project, the ever-increasing links with theological education at all levels in East Anglia, and its quite justifiable sense of being at 'the leading edge of theological education and ministerial formation'. (*Cambridge Theological Federation Inspection Report page 28*)

6.2 We recommend that the Course addresses the questions raised by the increasing number of students, and either considers capping the total number the Course can take or devises different approaches. (*EAMTC prefer to discern and develop the advantages of a 'mixed economy' of strategies*)

6.3 We recommend that the Council explore further the matter of staff housing, and set in train quinquennial inspections of the properties for which they have responsibility. (*In hand*)

6.4 We recommend that an academic post should be filled by a non-Anglican as soon as the opportunity arises. (*Fulfilled by staff appointment, April 1999*)

6.5 We recommend that the present arrangements for local tutoring be reviewed. (*In hand*)

6.6 We recommend that the remuneration of local tutors and part-time teaching staff be reviewed. (*Visiting speakers receive fees*)

6.7 We recommend that the purpose and size of the various groups, and the roles of staff and students within them, be reviewed. (*In hand*)

6.8 We recommend that the administrative support to the Principal be increased. (*In hand*)

7 Training Committee Response

7.1 The Training Committee considered the Inspection Report and wishes to congratulate the Cambridge Theological Federation on its achievements to which, it is evident, Westminster College has made a considerable contribution. The section of the Report dealing specifically with Westminster College is also very positive and notes such developments as the setting up of the Cheshunt Institute for Reformed Studies, the relocation of the United Reformed Church History Society Library and the locating of the Henry Martyn Library and the currents in World Christianity Project at the college.

Appendix 9

Report of the URC's Multi-Racial, Multi-Cultural Development Programme 1997-2000

I Management

1.1 The **objectives of the programme** were agreed as follows:

- a) To help the United Reformed Church at every level to be more open and integrated culturally and racially.
- b) To explore the task of mission in our Multi-cultural society.
- c) To foster awareness of issues of racism and racial justice in congregations and councils of the United Reformed Church.

1.2 The **arrangements** for the post and the management of the programme have been the responsibility of a Management Committee representative of various committees together with people with particular insights into the issues involved.

1.3 **Databases** have been established to facilitate communication with minority ethnic ministers, ordinands, members and adherents, with the Advocates and with multi-cultural congregations across the church.

2 Visits

2.1 Between 1997 and 1998, considerable time was spent observing and analysing the multi-racial/cultural nature of the URC in its local, district and synodical structures. Visits were made to the twelve synods and discussions were held with local congregations, district council meetings, synods and key individuals, groups and committees. Draft Reports of the visits have been circulated within the respective synods for comments and amendments.

2.2 The visits and reports cover a range of issues related to the URC's programme, including:-

- Contextual analysis and strategic planning.
- Manifestation of racism and the level of participation of minority ethnic persons in the life of the church.
- Mission.
- Relationships with other minority ethnic Christians, people of other faiths and community-based racial justice programmes.
- Participation in the promotion of racial justice in the wider society.

3 Events

3.1 A number of conferences, courses and meetings were held including

- Training for a newly established network of Racial Justice Advocates meeting together twice a year. The advocates have begun work in several synods, notably in promoting Racial Justice Sunday.
- Meetings with minority ethnic ministers and lay persons. Of particular concern is the racist behaviour directed at black members in multi-cultural congregations and the rejection of minority ethnic ministers by some congregations.
- Consultations and meetings with synodical Moderators, staff at Church House, young people in the URC and theological institutions that train URC ministers. There has been an improvement in the number and quality of applications for Church House posts following a decision to advertise in minority ethnic papers.
- Meetings with some General Assembly Committees to explore the relationship between the committees and the Multi-racial, Multi-cultural Development Programme. Of particular concern is the lack of representation of minority ethnic persons on most Assembly Committees. There is also a need for committees to reflect on the impact of their work on minority ethnic persons.

4 Consultation

4.1 The programme has benefited from **consultations with ecumenical colleagues** in Britain and overseas including:

- The Methodist Church Racial Justice Office
- The committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns [CMEAC]
- The Catholic Association For Racial Justice [CARJ]
- The London Baptist Association's Racial Justice Programme
- The African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance [ACEA]
- The Churches' Commission for Racial Justice [CCRJ]
- The world Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism [PCR]
- The Caribbean Conference of Churches [CCC]
- The Racial Justice Office of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

These consultations have been important sources of information and opportunities to identify areas for ecumenical collaboration. All these discussions have taken place in the context of a current broader debate about racial justice in British society.

5 Future

5.1 In light of the initial expectations and on the basis of the work being done, the Management Committee were unanimous, and Mission Council agreed, that the United Reformed Church continue with a major programme around racial justice which would hold to the same aims set out above.

5.2 The elements of the continuing racial justice programme should be to:

- a) Develop the advocacy work across the church, recruiting, training and supporting some advocates in each synod.
- b) Oversee the availability of regular racism awareness training for URC leaders, Assembly staff, committees etc. and to ensure racism awareness training is an element in URC ministerial and other training programmes.
- c) Encourage, strengthen and empower minority ethnic URC members and leaders in the practice, application and manifestation of their faith and to promote adequate resources for projects involving minority ethnic people and groups within the church and society.
- d) Collaborate with the Ecumenical Committee and its officers in the development and welcome of "single ethnic congregations".
- e) Liaise with Assembly Committees in monitoring the participation minority ethnic members in all the committees and councils of the church.
- f) Represent the United Reformed Church on ecumenical and civil bodies.

6 Previous Statements

6.1 Declaration on Racism, passed at Assembly 1987

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image, free and equal in his sight. Racism results where prejudiced attitudes of superiority over others are combined with the power to shape society.

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.2 Other Assembly Resolutions

General Assembly passed resolutions on racism in 1978, 1980, 1981, 1987 and 1994. For example:

6.2.1 1978: *The Assembly endorses the Affirmation in the British Council of Churches statement on Racism and urges all members to make a public stand against racism in all its forms and in support of the reconciliation which is so integral a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

6.2.2 1981: *The Assembly expresses its opposition to the British Nationality Bill and urges HMG to withdraw it, and it calls upon churches to make their views known to their MPs; to work actively to combat racism; to contribute to the Project Fund of CRRU.*

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Information



The
United
Reformed
Church

URC History Society

1 The Society's Study Day took place in September at Union Chapel, Islington. Members of the Congregational History Circle were invited to attend as the Annual Lecture was given by Dr Clyde Binfield and commemorated the centenary of the founding of the Congregational Historical Society. Dr Binfield brought figures from our past to life with a wealth of fascinating detail. The day also included a tour of the Abney Park Cemetery, with its Isaac Watts and 19th Century Congregationalist connections, and visits to local churches of historic interest.

2 The first "Study Day in the North", held at the old Northern Congregational College at Whalley Range, was attended by over 40 members and friends. Dr Elaine Kaye gave a lively lecture on the history of the Northern College focussing on the personalities and peculiarities of the various Principals.

3 Some concentrated work on the Library and Archives, now held at Westminster College, Cambridge, put them in better order following their move from London. Those wishing to use the Library are advised to contact Mrs Margaret Thompson on 01223 741300 first. Any queries should be addressed to the URC History Society at the College address. Correspondence for the Secretary should also be sent to the College and not to her private address.

4 In accordance with the 1997 General Assembly Resolution, in October 1999 the Northern Synod archives were sent to the Tyne and Wear Archives Service for distribution to other relevant

record repositories in the north. The Society wished to record its thanks to the Newcastle District for financial assistance towards this work and to Mr and Mrs Richard Potts for their specialist advice and help. The work of dispersal was continuing, following the pattern used for the Northern Synod, and it was expected that archives from churches in the former Manchester and Liverpool Presbyteries would be dealt with in the first half of 2000.

5 The Journal continued to flourish and the editor had a good pool of publishable material to choose from. A Supplement to mark the R W Dale Centenary was produced in co-operation with Carrs Lane Church.

6 The lecture at the Society's General Assembly Lunch at Southport had a local theme, "Chapel Boothroyds - a Southport Perspective", and was given by Dr Clyde Binfield. About 25 members and friends were present.

7 The Society is happy to receive copies of local church histories. The present membership comprises both professional and amateur historians and all who have an interest in the history of the URC are warmly welcome to join.

URC Musicians' Guild

1 There have been a good number of new hymns written for the Millennium. One, which is relevant to us all at this time, is that by Bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith "Here on the threshold of a new beginning....." which goes to a new tune, "Threshold", by William Llewellyn. Hymns will continue to be written as long as there are people to sing them and also organists and musicians to play them. The same goes for the URC Musicians' Guild as we enter a new era. We, as a team of Church Musicians, continue to be at the disposal of every musician inside or outside the denomination to help and encourage the ministry of music in our churches and to build up and continue the tradition of singing in worship to the greater glory of God.

1.1 If you should ask an organist of a United Reformed Church in a remote village in deepest Devon or in the Dales of Yorkshire, if he or she knows about the Musicians' Guild, the answer is more than likely to be "Never heard of it"! One might add that you will also find the same situation in some of our town and city churches. A case in question comes to mind when a village church was deciding on the future of its pipe organ; had they known of the existence of the Guild and of its Organ Advisory Service, then perhaps there would have been a different decision made relating to the future of an organ in that church.

1.2 This concern has been one of the main talking points at Committee level during the past year. Several ideas are now being discussed as to how we may inform the churches up and down the country of the Guild's existence. A new poster is being prepared which should catch the eye of those receiving it; we can only hope that this will reach the eyes of any who provide music in churches.

1.3 The Guild is divided into branches roughly corresponding to the Synods of the URC. Regular meetings of these branches have again been held during the year visiting Cheveley, Billingham, Exmouth, Romsey, Headingley, Saltaire, Diss, Leicester, Howden-le-Wear, Minehead, Leek and Coventry. Each meeting consists of a programme of events covering choral music, organs of interest and more recently other instruments being used in worship; a workshop was held on this subject in Dorchester.

1.4.1 Our 1999 Celebration Day was held on 23rd October 1999 at Bloomsbury Baptist Church which had recently undergone a complete refurbishment. We were given a warm welcome and as is usual at these annual meetings members from all over the country renewed friendships and shared experiences.

1.4.2 Philip Luke, their enthusiastic organist, demonstrated the three-manual organ and led a choral session using material from various sources. There was also a choral concert given by "Bloomsbury's Musicians" which included the first movement of Neruda's trumpet concerto. The Assistant Minister Revd Barbara Stanford gave a short history of the Church. The retiring Chaplain of the Guild, Revd John Filsak conducted the final Act of Worship using material that had been rehearsed earlier.

1.5 Our 2000 Celebration Day is to be held at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham on 28th October 2000; we welcome all who have any kind of interest in music to come and join us in fellowship. The Honorary General Secretary will be pleased to send you details.

1.6 And so, as we enter this new Millennium, we will continue to pursue our aim to make the music of our worship more worthy and meaningful and for this we ask your prayers and support by encouraging others or Churches to join us or even by joining us yourself.

1.7 Membership of the Guild is £4 per annum - £10 for Corporate (Church) membership. Membership forms and other information including details of the Organ Advisory Service and Redundant Organ Register are available from the Honorary General Secretary - John L Harding, Rainbow's End, 105 Humber Doucy Lane, Ipswich IP4 3NU (Tel: 01473 725075).

Schools

1 The Schools value their links with the United Reformed Church, of which this Report to Assembly is a symbol, and they remain mindful of their original purpose, which was to educate the daughters and sons of ministers, missionaries, and others active in the life of the churches. They would draw attention to the bursaries which remain available for this purpose, particularly those provided through the generosity of the Memorial Hall Trust and the Milton Mount Foundation.

2 The following reports draw attention to school achievements in the past year and a half.

3 Caterham School

3.1 Five years ago Caterham merged with the nearby Eothen School and became fully co-educational. This was one of the defining moments in the history of the school. Others have included the removal from Lewisham to Caterham, the admission of day boys, and then more recently the admission of girls into the sixth form some years before co-education became the norm rather than the exception at the school. The change from direct grant to independent status was also momentous. All these changes took place over a relatively long period of time.

3.2 Many would have hoped that change would now be a much more gradual thing rather than what seems to have happened. It is now woven into the very fabric of the life of the school. The pastoral system based, as it has been for decades, on the Houses, has been changed. Now the academic and pastoral well-being of pupils has become the responsibility of year heads. The Houses now serve as a focus for competitions in sport, debating and music. The academic curriculum in the sixth form is being changed and much thought and planning has gone into preparing for the new advanced supplementary courses coming 'on stream' in September 2000. The nature of boarding is changing. Boarding for girls is becoming more popular. In less than a decade the number of girls boarding at Caterham has grown from three to almost fifty. And in order to cater for the interest in boarding for girls at the sixth form level the school has recently opened an extension to its Beech-Hanger boarding house comprising of thirteen rooms with en-suite facilities. The boys have not been left behind. Architects have drawn up plans for the complete refurbishment of the boys' accommodation which also includes rooms with en-suite facilities for sixth form students. It is hoped that work will start on this during the summer holiday.

3.3 These are changes which are planned. Some are unplanned. No one imagined that we would be renovating the Humphreys Hall, the assembly hall opened just eleven years ago. But misfortune struck one October afternoon last year and the interior of the building was all but destroyed by fire. We are informed that it will cost over a million pounds to renovate it. Fortunately the cost will be borne by our insurers. The school has had to soldier on without an assembly hall and looks like being without it until well into next year. This has presented many problems. It is amazing how resourceful you can be.

3.4 There have been changes in personnel. The school was sorry to have to say farewell to a number of people. David Charlesworth, a local URC elder, had to stand down as Chairman of Governors because of work commitments. The school engineer, Roy Milliams, retired in 1999 after forty years of service to the school. The school chaplain, Derek Lindfield, after thirteen years of service at the school received and accepted a call to become minister of St John's URC, Orpington.

3.5 Fortunately some things do not change: the importance of the Christian ethos in the school; the quality of the education given to our pupils; the emphasis of not accepting second best in all fields of endeavour. It seems that change has become part of the landscape in a way that it never was before. In the midst of it staff and students continue to strive for excellence in all areas of our life.

4 Eltham College

4.1 On 19 January 2000 several strands came together: one of Britain's best known contemporary poets, Brian Patten, opened the Mervyn Peake Library at Eltham College in the same week as Peake's celebrated novel *Gormenghast* was transmitted on television. The Library is a most attractive and spacious new facility for the school, appreciated and used by all.

4.2 Mervyn Peake, the son of a missionary in China, had been a pupil at the school during the 1920s. Like so many famous people before and since, Peake's academic performance while at school was modest, but he excelled at sport, setting a new high jump record, and, more significantly, as an artist. The Art Master at the time, Mr McIver, championed him to the rest of his staff room and deemed him to be a genius - a shrewd judgement which has proved perceptive in the context of the artist-writer's subsequent stature.

4.3 This has proved a successful year all round, with some outstanding examination results once more at "A" level and GCSE, and a total of nineteen Elthamians entering Oxford and Cambridge last October.

4.4 A series of high class concerts and plays has embellished the calendar, while all areas of the school have been used to display the colourful dynamism of the Art Department. The sporting banner has been carried to South America by the Rugby players and to South Africa by the Cricketers, while the explorers have climbed as far afield as Nepal.

4.5 August will see the departure of Mr and Mrs Malcolm Green after ten years at the helm, to be succeeded by Mr and Mrs Paul Henderson, acceding from the Deputy Headship of St Albans School.

5 Silcoates School

5.1 The Schools of the Foundation are flourishing. Sunny Hill House continues to be full, and the pupil numbers at St Hilda's reached a new high of 171. Silcoates itself moved into the year 2000 with the pupils numbering 666.

5.2 The A level pass rate of 93% was our best ever, as was the GCSE pass rate of 92%.

5.3 As the termly calendars show, the School terms are packed with activity. Much goes on in the holidays too. "Hardy annuals" include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions, boating on the Norfolk Broads, skiing in the Alps, the middle-school adventure holiday at Club Corrèze and our European exchanges. The holiday highlight of 1999, however, was the senior girls' hockey tour of South Africa - a wonderful experience.

5.4 We were very pleased that the Revd Tony Burnham, an Old Silcoatian and for many years a Governor of the School, was inducted as Moderator of the Free Churches' Council. Two distinguished Governors, both Old Silcoatians, retired from the Board this year. Alan Menzies was a Governor for thirty-five years and Honorary Treasurer for thirty-three of them. John Gilbey, missionary in Madagascar, highly significant figure in the URC and pillar of Sion, was a Governor for over twenty years and similarly gave great service to the School.

6 Taunton School

6.1 Another year has drawn to a close, one that has been both busy and productive. We were delighted with yet another set of good "A" level results. The pass rate of 97% was better than that of last year and it was encouraging that thirteen out of twenty departments in the school had a 100% success rate.

Eight students achieved three or more A grades and four candidates were successful in their applications to Oxford and Cambridge. At GCSE although this was not a vintage year in respect to percentage pass rates (90%) and the number of A and A* (42%), many pupils worked hard and excelled themselves in achieving grades beyond their expectations.

6.2 Pupil involvement in artistic endeavours has been a resurgence. The Choral Society further enhanced its reputation by its splendid St Cecilia's Day Mass. Meanwhile, Tanner's Band and the Jazz Choir were invited to participate in the Hazelgrove Jazz Festival - an overseas tour is planned for the former next year. Those who attended the School play in December were privileged to see a lively and "openly theatrical" production of *Animal Farm* making extensive use of Brechtian staging techniques. In March two pupils produced and directed Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. It was an outstanding success. The summer term saw a lively performance of the musical *The Boyfriend*.

6.3 Four pupils achieved international status on the sports field this year. One represented England in the Women's U20 Home International Heptathlon Championships, which she duly won; two were selected to play hockey for Wales U18 and U16 and one was chosen to play for the England U14 Rounders team. We were also delighted to hear that the England selectors saw fit to call upon the services of Aftab Habib (Wills West 1985-1989), the Leicestershire cricketer, to play against New Zealand. In addition a pupil played Netball for the West U23 team, two were selected for England U19 Netball trials, a third was part of the West U17 Hockey Squad and a fourth the 15 Squad, a fifth came 3rd in the South-West Heptathlon Championships and a sixth became the first girl to play golf for the school team. These outstanding individual performances are indicative of the very high standards being achieved in sport across the school. The introduction of Girls' cricket in the summer was greeted with enthusiasm and the Girls' Hockey tour to South America was a success both on and off the field.

6.4 The School year drew to a close with Commemoration celebrated in style on the Front. Our guest, Mark Getty (Wills East 1975-1979), utilising the experience he has gained as founder of the world's biggest media company, spoke eloquently about the impact of new technologies and the need for school to prepare pupils for a rapidly changing world.

7 Walthamstow Hall

7.1 1999 brought the centenary celebrations of our flourishing Old Girls' Association. A moving Service of Thanksgiving began the reunion in June with music and readings by Old Girls and an address

by the Reverend Dr Susan Ramsaran. Lunch was in the Dining Hall, the refurbishment of which was the centenary gift of the Association.

7.2 The tenth anniversary of the opening of our Ship Theatre by Sir Geraint Evans in 1989 was celebrated with a week-long festival of music and drama. Choirs, orchestra, girls and staff from Senior and Junior Schools gave a succession of concerts, a workshop production of *As You Like It*, House musicals and an evening of words of *Wit and Wisdom*.

7.3 Other drama during the year included our annual Greek tragedy production, this time Euripides' *Elektra*, and a comedy, also with a Greek theme, *The Rape of the Belt*, based on Theseus and the Amazons.

7.4 Our European links continue strong, with exchanges to Hamburg and Pontoise, work-experience for sixth-formers in France and Germany, and the Advanced Level study visit to Paris and Rouen. We are delighted that the link with the Collegio Valdese, affiliated to our URC Six Schools, has been further strengthened by the visits of four more students.

7.5 We have been particularly successful in lacrosse this year: our First Twelve and our U15s both won Kent county championships. The "double" is a record, and has inspired imaginative planning for next year's lacrosse tour in the United States.

7.6 Work for a large number of charities, both in fund-raising and in practical ways, has been intense: the Christian Fellowship has encouraged us to support a school in Mozambique, the Houses have raised money for hospices, Children in Need and others, and the whole school continues to make a major contribution to the work of the Peckham Settlement where inner-city problems are severe. Groups and individuals are committed to the Voluntary Service Unite locally, and help with literacy in a neighbouring primary school.

7.7 Headmistress and Governors enjoyed fellowship, discussion and worship at the Six Schools Conference hosted by Wentworth College, glad of the opportunity to renew our ties with schools that share a faith and an ethos.

7.8 Five daughters of missionaries (three from the Baptist Missionary Society and two from the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and four daughters of ministers (two Anglican and two United Reformed) are at the school.

8 Wentworth College

8.1 In June 1999 delegates from all six URC linked schools met at Wentworth College to discuss how they might move "Forward With Faith Into The Future". The conference included delegates from the Collegio Valdese of the Waldensian Church in Italy. We were privileged to welcome the Reverend Gregory K Cameron, Director of the Bloxham Project, who addressed us on the topic of "Discipline or Discipleship? - Spirituality in Schools Today". On the second day the speaker was Mr Graham Handscomb, of Essex County Council, whose thought-provoking talk was entitled "Open Worlds - Religious Education for the Millennium". It was a useful conference and all participants enjoyed having the opportunity for discussion, both business and social, with Heads, Governors and Chaplains from the other Six Schools.

8.2 We have been pleased to welcome a number of girls from the Collegio Valdese over the past few years. As I write we have two girls enjoying two weeks in our sixth form boarding community.

8.3 Wentworth College is the product of the happy and successful merger between Wentworth School and Milton Mount College - two independent girls' schools with similar principles. At last summer's Old Girls' Association reunion and then again in September, we celebrated the Centenary of Wentworth School. 14 September 1899 was the date that the first pupils were admitted to the Bournemouth Collegiate School for Girls - the name by which Wentworth was originally known. In *Beyond the Best* - Mrs Terry Carlyle's history of our school - we learn that in its original advertisement: "...would-be parents and pupils were enticed by the fact that the school would be run on 'Modern principles of Educational Science' with religious instruction that was 'Scriptural but Unsectarian'".

8.4 The educational aims were clearly stated because at that time "there were all too many girls' schools providing little of educational value". Miss Parker-Gray was the first Headmistress and the Chairman of the Council was the Reverend Dr J D Jones who was the Congregational minister at Richmond Hill Church, Bournemouth for the thirty-nine years before his retirement in 1937. He was a pioneer; an innovator and his strong leadership helped to mould the ideals to which in this school we still aspire. We strive for excellence and high standards and not just in academic and intellectual endeavour, for the education we provide is about more than examination results. Our greatest strengths arise from the spirit of community which we work hard to preserve, while valuing the differences in our individual girls, and from the caring society, with strong, common, shared values, which we provide.

8.5 Our Speech Day Guest in September was Peter White, the BBC Disability Affairs Correspondent who delighted guests with tales of his fight to overcome his own disability. On that occasion we were pleased to congratulate those girls who achieved public examination success last summer: thirty-seven girls in the fifth form were entered for a total of 311 GCSEs and 96.5% of these were graded A* to D. (It is our policy to enter candidates for each of the subjects they have studied for the two-year GCSE course and not just those in which they are more or less guaranteed a high grade). We were very pleased with the year group as a whole, especially with those girls who are less physically robust or who have dealt with the added challenge of a specific learning difficulty.

8.6 Twenty-four Upper Sixth students entered for a total of sixty-eight Advanced levels. Between them they achieved an 87% pass rate and fourteen of the eighteen subjects for which we entered candidates recorded a 100% pass rate. One student gained four grade As, and will take up a place at Churchill College Cambridge in September 2000 to read Chemical Engineering. One member of the Lower Sixth sat A-level Mathematics, Further Mathematics and Physics: she was awarded a grade A in each of those subjects and in September she took up a place to read mathematics at Pembroke College, Oxford.

8.7 Wentworth pupils and staff enjoy a challenge and this was evident in last year's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*. It was Wentworth's second attempt at a musical and, again, pupils rose to the challenge. Their

determination, talent and dedication, along with wonderful costumes and an excellent musical accompaniment gave us two thoroughly enjoyable evenings. The combination of drama and music complemented each other well, as was also seen in last year's Creative Arts evening, the theme being "One Hundred Years of Excellence". As usual girls worked together, along with the help of the staff, to produce a varied and entertaining evening. It was also the first performance we had by the newly formed Chamber Choir, which has been established to allow the exceptional singers in the school to push their ability to the limits. Pupils are always encouraged to use their strengths and talents to their full potential at Wentworth, and in July our Junior Recorder Group did that when they travelled to London's South Bank to compete in the National Festival of Music for Youth.

8.8 Community service events included the annual MS Party at Christmas, and three afternoon tea parties organised through the charity "Contact the Elderly". A large number of girls are involved in Task Force, a project which enables us to maintain the strong link we have with the Victoria School for the Disabled in Poole and therefore regularly to entertain their pupils with activities such as sailing and canoeing.

8.9 Over the last year our Outdoor Education department had continued to flourish and the activities it has offered recently, in addition to the canoeing, include sailing, caving and climbing. Many girls continue to work for their Duke of Edinburgh's award. Girls are always busy and productive at this school.

Silence and Retreats Network

Core Group Members

Convener: Mike Playdon

Nelson Bainbridge, David Bunney (treasurer), Peter McIntosh, Helena McKinnon,
Jack Thompson (membership & subscriptions)

1 Precisely because it is a network, the Silence & Retreats Network is not an organisation. The core group exists to promote silence and retreats and the deepening of spiritual life throughout the Church. To this end it publishes an introductory leaflet and three times a year the journal *Windows*, liaises with the Synod 'link persons' and holds an annual consultation and retreat with them. During the past year it has run a training course at the Windermere Centre for those who lead quiet days and retreats. It is represented on the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, which continues to provide invaluable financial assistance.

2 Membership of the Network is via subscription to *Windows*. During the past year it has been encouraging to note the increase in the number of subscriptions, and to improve the somewhat precarious financial situation more subscriptions are welcomed from congregations, theological colleges, and training centres as well as from individuals. We have been delighted this year to welcome Coleg Trefeca to the Network. Around the country, in congregations, Districts and Synods there has been a growing number of retreats, quiet days and training opportunities, many of them in co-operation with our ecumenical partners.

3 Each of the Synods appoints a 'link person' to act as an advocate and co-ordinator within the area of the Synod. During the past 12 months we have welcomed Meriel and Ken Chippindale for West Midlands in succession to Mary Buchanan, Julie Hopkins for Wales in succession to Henry Gordon and Jack Dyce for Scotland. We look forward to the new opportunities being presented by the recent union of the Congregational Union of Scotland with the United Reformed Church.

4 After many years as a member of the core group, for some of them as its convener, Henry Gordon is standing down. Keith Green also comes off as he relinquishes his responsibility as editor of *Windows*. They have both made an outstanding contribution and we are much indebted to them. At the time of writing we still await the appointment of a new editor. While still on personalia the core group expresses its delight that one of its number has served the General Assembly during the past year as Moderator!

5 For the future we are concerned to develop ecumenical co-operation wherever possible. We value enormously our membership of the Retreat Association (which has recently elected the core group's convener its vice-chairman). We are exploring how we may work more closely with our ecumenical partners in various regions.

6 There is a growing interest in many places in the deepening of spiritual life and the value of retreat opportunities of many kinds. Much of it seems to take place at the margins of the life of the institutional Church, and for some this creates a tension. So one other concern for the future is the relationship between the margins and the centre. We invite all who will to join us in this on-going pilgrimage.

Women's World Day of Prayer

URC representative on the National Committee: Mrs Josie Owens

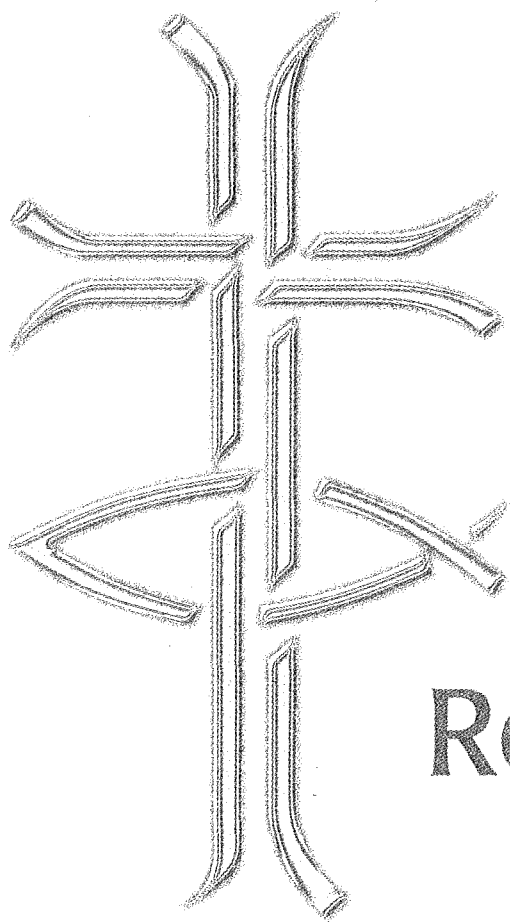
1 The service this year was prepared by the women of Indonesia. This beautiful island, once known as the 'Spice Islands' has been very much in the news for sometime with the problems that the country is facing. The national committee were very pleased last year to be able to meet one of the writers of the service, the Revd Detja Tiwa, who was able to describe to us the conditions that the service was prepared under. It was written at a time of great danger in the country. Whilst the Pacific Asian ladies were meeting for their conference there was a Military coup and they only just managed to reach the airport before it was closed. The Island of Indonesia and the writers of the service have been very much in thoughts and prayers.

2 Services were held in many places including: Churches, Hospitals, Cathedral Halls and the chapel at Gatwick Airport. The day conferences and preparation days are becoming more popular,

with over 55 being held this year and many already arranged for the year 2001. In addition to the conferences this year we have a Millennium conference at High Leigh from July 11th - 13th where over 100 ladies from all parts of the country share in two days of worship, Bible study, workshops including dance, drama and music and preparation for the service next year.

3 The service in 2001 comes from Western Samoa with the theme 'Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action'.

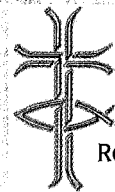
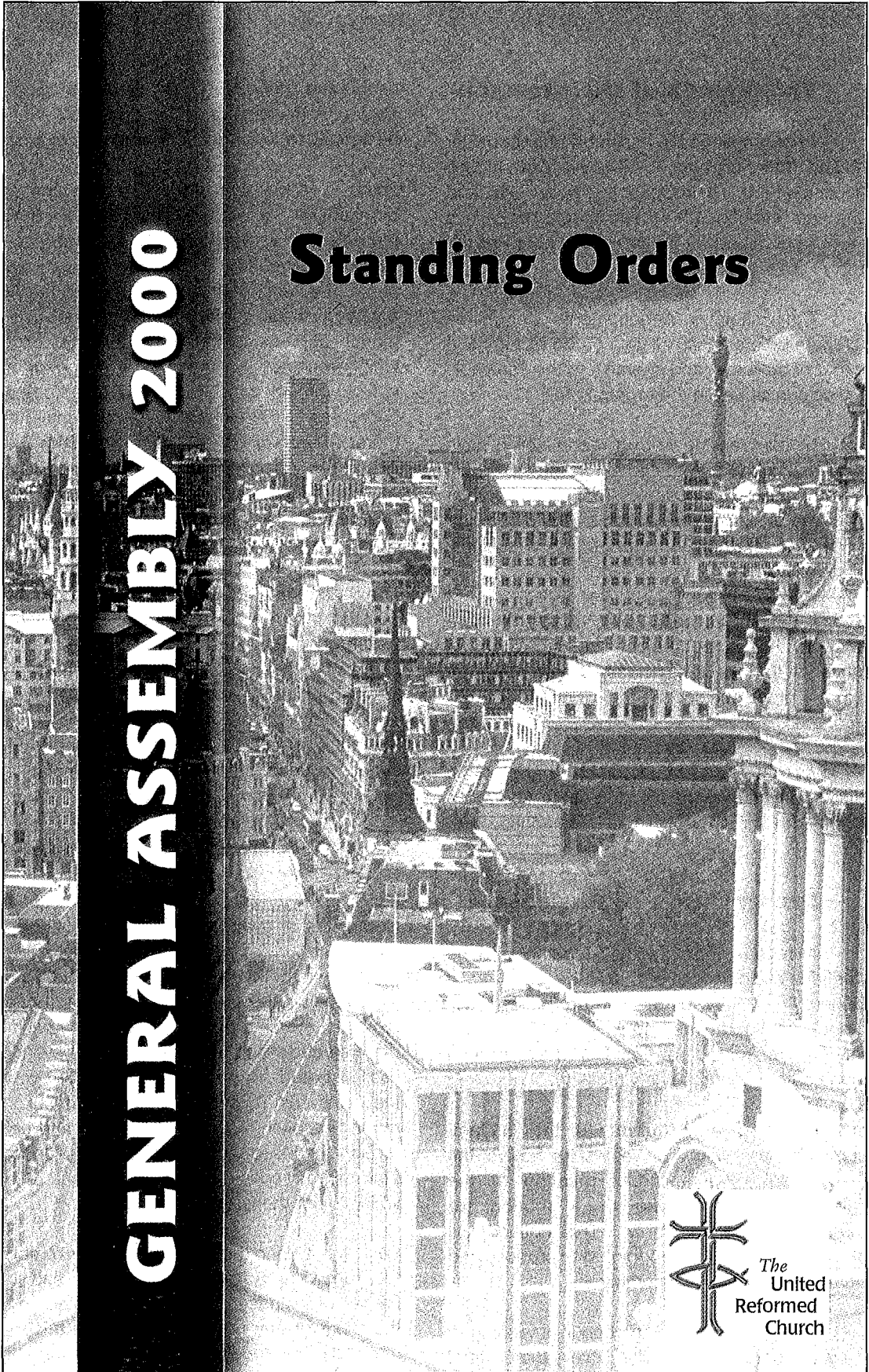
4 More information about services and conferences can be obtained from the office, Women's World Day of Prayer, Commercial Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2RR.



The
United
Reformed
Church

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2000

Standing Orders



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Standing Orders of the Assembly

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its Committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

1b. 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.

1c. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 3b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

1d. 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.

1e. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

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 synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve 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.

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 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 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, or
- (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 prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed 5 minutes.

4b. 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.

4c. 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.

4d. 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.

4e. 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.

4f. The foregoing Standing Order (4e) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

5. Closure of Debate

5a. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. 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(l) 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

- (i) If the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or
- (ii) 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 building in which the Assembly is meeting.

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.

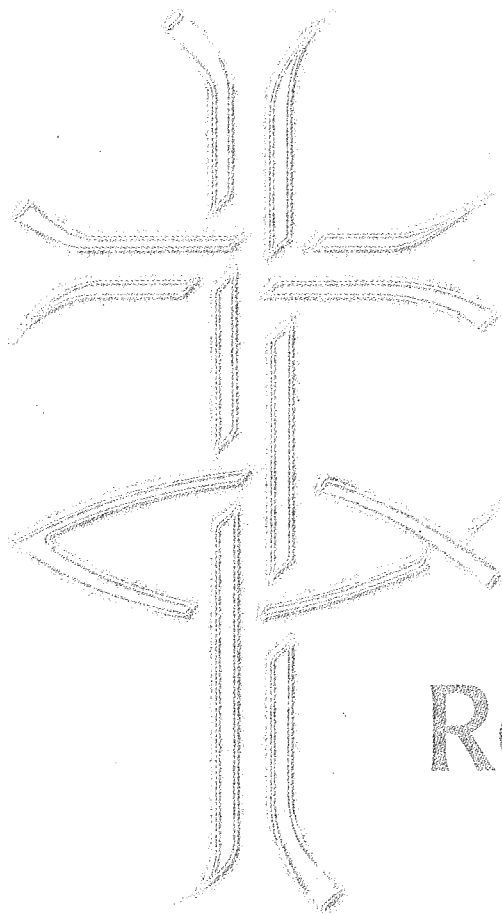
11c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.

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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