



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Glamorgan 2004

July 3rd - 6th

Annual Reports
Resolutions
and Papers



General Assembly 2004

July 3rd - 6th Glamorgan



The
United
Reformed
Church

**Annual Reports,
Resolutions & Papers**

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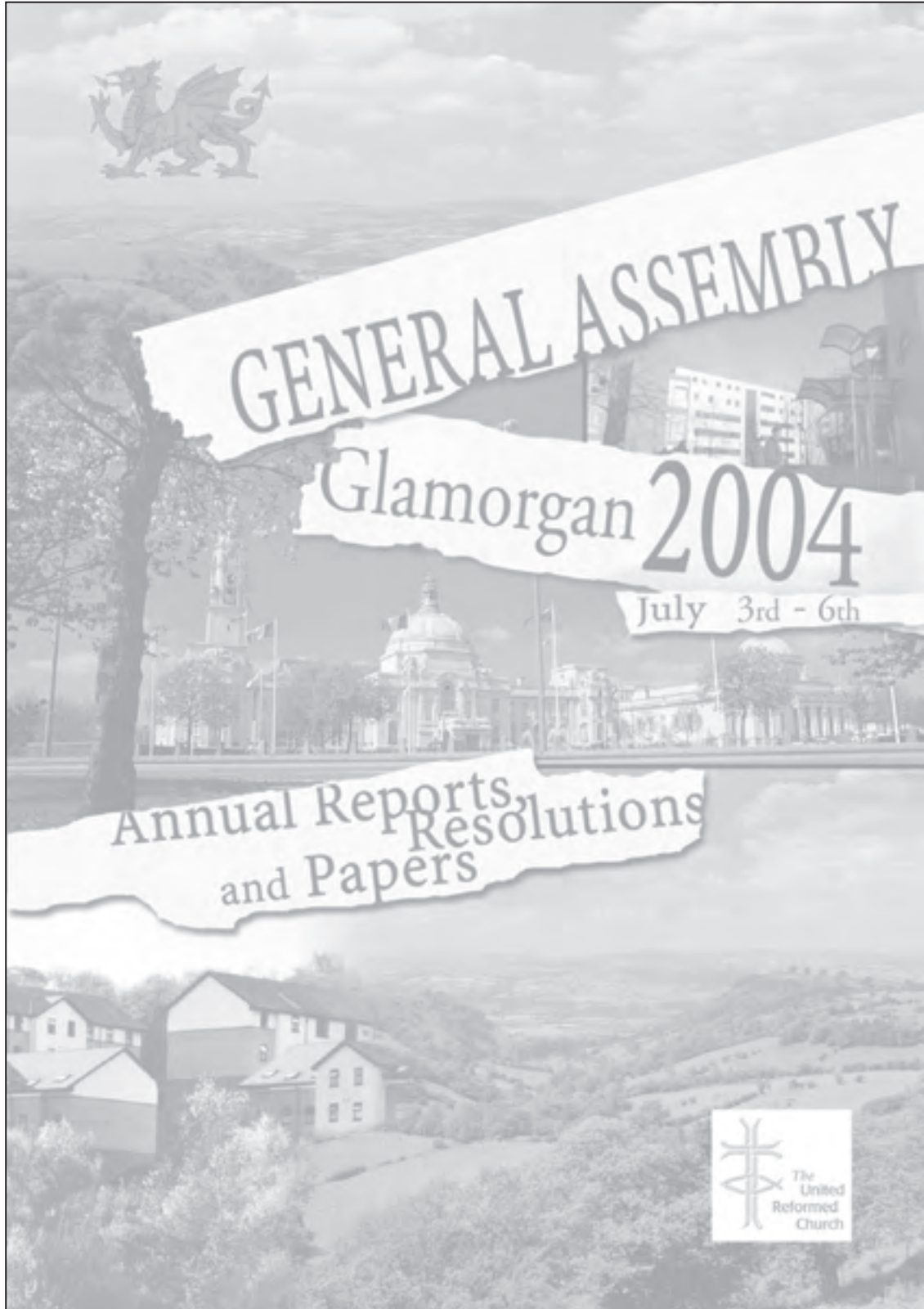
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Standing Orders



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, reserves 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. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 3k.

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.

3k. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3f, 3g and 3h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 6. (3.9.2b)

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 matters. 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 indicates by a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, then a paper ballot shall 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

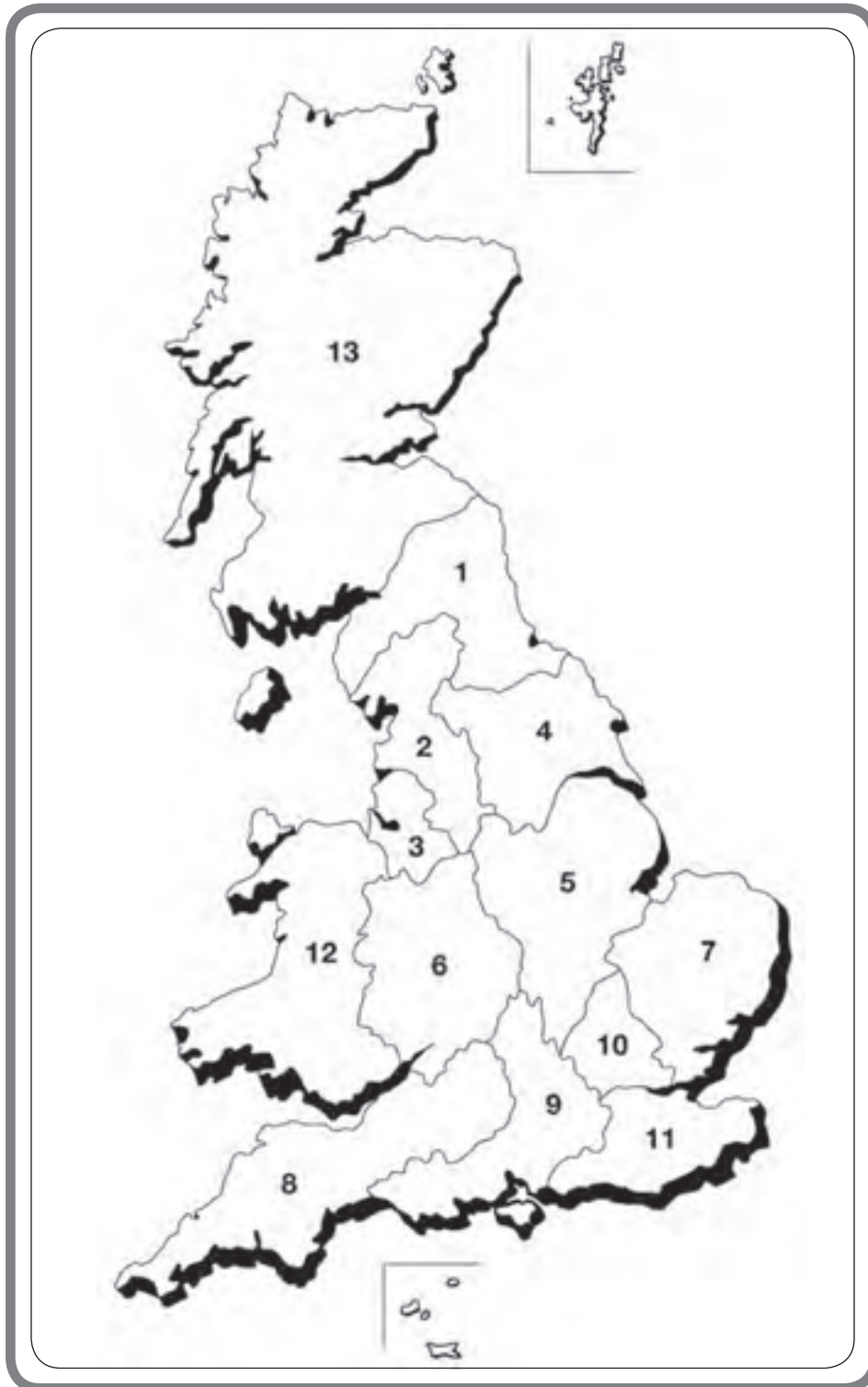
12a. In any case of urgency or upon motion made on a notice duly given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting so far as regards any particular business at such a meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

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.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Synods



- 1 Northern
- 2 North Western
- 3 Mersey
- 4 Yorkshire

- 5 East Midlands
- 6 West Midlands
- 7 Eastern
- 8 South Western
- 9 Wessex

- 10 Thames North
- 11 Southern
- 12 Wales
- 13 Scotland

Yorkshire Synod

1. Stories of hope and resurrection from the Yorkshire Synod

1.1 It is easy to be carried along on the repeated story of decline and in Yorkshire, just like everyone else we are plagued by thoughts about what we are not doing. It was at the end of the residential meeting of the Synod Executive last September that someone had the idea that we should each share a 'good news' story. Sitting round the room on that occasion must have been about two dozen people. We shared our stories, each one was different, each told of a church, a group of people, a link with a community or even an individual and each story gave a positive, even upbeat view of the church. Forget decline, here was a church which was alive and well and serving its various communities, working with children and young people, reaching out to the homeless, learning more about the faith and much else beside.

1.2 Subsequently at least one of our Districts has undertaken the same exercise at a District Council meeting and in both cases we noted how the tenor of the meeting changed as we realized that God's work was being enthusiastically undertaken in so many places and so many ways. As we thought about what we should be telling the rest of the United Reformed Church through the General Assembly we remembered this experience and asked our six districts to suggest some of the things which should be included (making no promises that we could include everything they thought we should!). It was good to receive back far more than we could possibly use and in selecting the six examples we know we have left out some stories which it would have been good to share. We could have told you about ecumenical initiatives, growing Pilots companies, or committed involvement in campaigning. As important as any of those things are, we wanted our selection to reflect the range of the church's involvement in and response to needs identified in local areas.

2. Brackenhall United Reformed Church, Huddersfield

2.1 Brackenhall is a very small (membership of 26) church which is on the verge of recreating itself. It has been very active in the community, which is one of the most deprived areas of the town. Many houses (indeed, whole swathes of the area) are in the process of being demolished and new (privately owned) houses are being built. It is quite incredible to see the changes that have been going on over the past few months and more are planned. Though initially some people in the church were upset by the proposed changes, now there is a real feeling that the church has to become a new beacon of light to what is basically a completely new community being built around it.

2.2 Recently, the church has taken the radical and exciting decision, with much help and advice from the local Council and the building company that is mainly responsible for doing the housing work at Brackenhall, to demolish the church and rebuild a brand new church and community centre. It's a scary but very courageous project for such a small church. The church firmly believes that there is a mission for them and 'where there's a will, there'll be a way'. At Brackenhall, there is most certainly a will and they believe that it is God's, not theirs.

3. Knottingley United Reformed Church, Wakefield

This church runs both The United Playcare Holiday Club and a newly opened After School Club. The United Playcare Holiday Club has recently been recognised by Barnardos as suitable and qualified to welcome children with physical disabilities so there is now extra funding from them to aid this objective. Both of these projects are enabling the church to reach out to young low income and lone parent families who are benefiting from now being able to go out to work and is also effectively helping a number of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and Autistic children. From these contacts made with young people, a Youth Fellowship has recently been set up at Knottingley and along with the Castleford Youth Fellowship both are currently busy doing the overnight sponsored Famine for World Vision.

4. Saltaire United Reformed Church

4.1 Built at the centre of his industrial village by the Victorian Wool manufacturer, Titus Salt, this Grade 1* listed building, Italianate in design, has a large circular tower at its entrance. The peal of bells that were housed there in the 19th century were last rung in 1918 to celebrate the Armistice of the First World War but were subsequently removed as the tower was not structurally sound enough to support them. In the 1980s one of the defunct woollen mills was bought by Jonathon Silver, an entrepreneur and friend of David Hockney. He used the mill to house a collection of Hockney paintings, opened a restaurant and various shops and revitalised the whole village through the large number of visitors that these changes attracted. In 2001 the village was awarded World Heritage status.

4.2 Jonathon Silver died in the late 1990s whilst he was in his early fifties. His widow decided to donate a peal of bells to the church in his memory. Her gift included the strengthening of the tower and all installation work and in September 2003 the work was completed and the first peal of bells was rung at a

festival held in the village. This makes Saltaire only the second United Reformed Church to have a set of bells – the other being at Port Sunlight.

5. Stainbeck United Reformed Church, Leeds: The Three Churches Project

5.1 For many years Stainbeck United Reformed Church and St Matthew's Church of England have been working together to serve the local community. In 2000 the Ripon and Leeds Diocese undertook an ecumenical Mission Audit which identified local estates where churches had little impact. From this grew a fresh vision for an ecumenical sharing of the task.

5.2 In July 2001 an Ecumenical Group began to meet on a monthly basis made up of members of the PCCs of St Matthew's, Chapel Allerton, and Holy Trinity, Meanwood, and Elders from Stainbeck.

5.3 At an early stage the Group was led into the area of Creative Arts in its widest sense. The vision was to set up short courses and opportunities to learn, and try and experience different things – art, music, drama, writing, cooking, gardening, etc – and in this way to meet local people 'on a level playing field'. This works across age groups and is inter-generational. It allows people to do fun and enjoyable things together while building relationships and trust. When questions and opportunities arise, faith can be shared in a very real way.

5.4 The Group has already organised various events, including a Creativity Day, a Fun Afternoon and a Peace Day, as well as forging links with local schools. Stainbeck Church has also successfully run two six-week sessions for local children called "The Scene", where Bible stories have been told through drama and art. It is envisaged that events will not only be held at Stainbeck Church but also in the community using other churches, schools and community centres.

5.5 Work has already been undertaken to make the buildings at Stainbeck more attractive, accessible and user-friendly. Plans are now being made to open a Community Café. A Management Committee has been set up and is currently raising funds to recruit a Christian Community Worker to lead the project.

6. St James United Reformed Church, Sheffield

6.1 This small church set in the northern part of Sheffield has a congregation of mainly West Indian origin. In the 1950s the local minister – Revd Gillespie – recognized some of the problems of newly arrived immigrants and one of the solutions was to request help from the United Church of Jamaica. This help came in the shape of Madge Saunders who had served the church in Jamaica for 17 years as a women's worker. From this beginning many of those immigrants have settled in the area and in the church. During Lent 2002 some of those who had immigrated, together with family and friends made the journey back to Jamaica where they experienced new things, visited familiar places and met Madge Saunders, now in her nineties.

6.2 Since returning a small book has been written by those who went and two quilts have been made. The purpose of the exercise in sewing the quilts was to 'draw together those who had been and those who had stayed; to bring back experiences and share them with others as we sewed; to think about the impact of the visit on our life as a community and to create a permanent memory of a unique experience'.

7. St Ninian's and St Andrew's United Reformed Churches, Hull

This church, over a three to four year period (along with other churches in the area) the victim of continual vandalism, initially responded by building fences, fixing grills and installing lights. They then realized that this action failed to tackle the real problem of young people, many of whom travelled into the area, gathering in groups with nothing better to do than damage buildings. The Avenues Youth Work project was formed – an initiative taken by the churches – to try to tackle the real problem. They have raised £10,000 from a variety of sources including central government and in July two detached Youth Workers are to begin work three evenings a week. Their task will be to talk to young people out on the streets, to try to determine what needs there are and to find ways of meeting the needs. The church is one of the only community buildings in the area and is hoping to be able to offer something positive in response to identified need.

East Midlands Synod

Mission-Shaped Synod

1. Mission purpose

Synod Aims to encourage and enable engagement in God's Mission in the East Midlands through its staff and committees, District Councils, local churches, people and ecumenical partners.

2. Mission Story

This is what is happening in the Northampton 'area', one of four parts of the Northamptonshire District developing greater self-determination:

- Ed Rawlings is offering non-stipendiary ministry as a part-time mission enabler.
- Abington Avenue United Reformed Church has just rededicated its worship area after extensive and exciting refurbishment, including a baptistery, tiered seating and built-in facility to project words, pictures and videos. This follows the earlier conversion of its halls which are now used extensively for community service especially to children and their carers. Four people are employed in a variety of specialist roles, including play leader and toy library organiser.
- The Headlands is a housing area in Northampton where a congregation of the United Reformed Church is looking for a minister who will also work half time in a youth project.
- Duston United Reformed Church is a village church committed to ecumenical partnership, particularly through becoming a stakeholder in a local church primary school. It also has an exciting group of young people, some nurtured through the uniformed organisations, who are creating alternative worship – see the website www.soultrex.org.uk.

3. Mission Means Me (MMM)

3.1 MMM was originally devised in response to the visit of the Mission Enabler, Prince Dibeela, from Botswana. MMM is a weekend for young people of FURY which looks at issues for young people and the church in a very practical and thought provoking way. The programme now also includes young people's activities taking place at the same time that Synod holds its meetings, as well as participation at those

meetings in worship and making presentations. The Synod Day activities have included looking at our relationship with God, the Structures of the United Reformed Church and most recently how the five marks of Mission affect us and what action our churches should be taking in response to them.

3.2 Now supported by the DfES grant, the programme has been developed significantly to enable young people who attend the weekend to look at the United Reformed Church in its widest context and how that affects us as a denomination and as individual Christians. Last year participants looked at choices in relation to beliefs – career choices, choices as consumers, and choices for the environment. This year participants looked at the United Reformed Church in the context of both other Christian denominations and other faiths. They visited a temple, a mosque, other Christian churches and a cathedral where they looked at the similarities and differences.

3.3 It's not all hard work, though, there is time to go ice skating, 10-pin bowling, dance the night away at the disco, or undertake a photographic treasure hunt around Derby City.

3.4 A day is already planned looking at the leadership skills young people have to offer the church and the next weekend will be looking at the positive action that can be taken in the world with particular reference to Fairtrade and third world debt.

4. Mission Character

At the meeting in March 2004 Synod agreed to develop closer links with the **Reformed Church in Croatia** as its European link, and the **United Congregational Church in Southern Africa in Botswana** as Global Partner within the Belonging to the World Church programme. These relationships began through personal links and the Synod seeks to develop them in the process of learning about engaging in mission. Synod also declared its intention to become a Fairtrade organisation, approved in principle the scheme for increased inter-synod **resource sharing** and, as a step towards sharing resources within the synod, agreed a **manse policy**.

5. Mission Structure

After several years of exploration through a Lifeline Group following up the work of the mission enabler, a new synod structure has been approved.

- **The Synod meeting** will refresh vision, set direction and determine priorities for engaging in mission.
- A Synod **Enabling Group** will co-ordinate, direct and reflect on synod strategy for engaging in mission. Once a year the group will meet with those in the Synod with special responsibilities in a mission conference to review progress and set mission targets.
- A **Mission in the World Group** will provide leadership and resources to Districts and local churches as they seek to transform and sustain themselves and the life of society, according to the insights of Christian faith.
- A **Ministries and Training Group** will resource the people of the Synod through support and training.

- A **Development Group** will work at resourcing and developing local churches.
- A **Youth and Children's Group** will be supporting and encouraging youth and children's work throughout the Synod.
- A **Finance and Property Group** will enable the effective sharing and use of material resources within the Synod.

6. Changes of personnel

6.1 We celebrated with Malcolm and Brenda Hanson in September as retirement beckoned with the prospects of a new home in North Yorkshire. Three weeks later we celebrated further as we welcomed Terry Oakley and his wife Joan to the Synod as a new period of service dawned for Terry as our Moderator.

6.2 The Revd Christopher White retired at the end of April after long service within the Synod, latterly as both Synod Clerk and Property Officer. We wish him well as his life takes a new direction and also welcome our new property officer Mr Robert White.



Eastern Synod

1. Centred upon the Gospel ...

1.1 A major focus has been under the heading of Mission, Ministry and Money. It began by asking the local churches to dream dreams, and moved on to a Synod meeting that considered worship, spiritual growth, understanding of ministry, changes to being Church, and what a mission-structured church might look like.

A subsequent one-day conference was followed by nine resolutions at the October 2003 Synod. We now have the exciting task of relating these to the *Catch the Vision* Statement.

1.2 Synod Celebration brought several hundred people to Bury St Edmunds on 21 June 2003. The theme of workshops was around mission and worship, with worship in the Cathedral at mid-day, and at Whiting Street church at the close.

1.3 Ministers' colloquium – this annual event has now been extended to provide for one complete day of silence and reflection.

1.4 Iona – we are grateful to Glyn Millington for volunteering to lead a visit to Iona in May this year.

1.5 The District Visit Guidelines have now been finalised, recommending an approach that separates administrative-related items from those directly mission-related.

2. Relevant to Today's World ...

2.1 The above-mentioned Mission, Ministry and Money resolutions encourage local churches to seek new ways of relating to the wider community, and ask the Synod's Church & Society Committee to support local church efforts.

2.2 Advocates for racial justice, inter-faith and rural links have been created, working under the umbrella of our Church & Society Committee.

2.3 Youth and Children's Work – it has been decided to experiment with a network rather than committee structure, with a small informal core group including the recently-appointed Scout Chaplain. An e-mail network for contact with FURY members has been set up.

2.4 Ethical investments – at the October 2002 Synod, the decision was taken to switch the Synod's investments to the Affirmative Funds for Charities.

2.5 Synod members have been the beneficiaries of many challenging and topical talks – on Racial Justice by Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, on the multi-faceted nature of rural Britain by the Bishop of Ely, on the leadership role taken by our special-category minister Chris Warner in the urban renewal at Great Yarmouth, and on prejudice within our region. A talk on globalisation – presenting it as a morally neutral phenomenon, driven by technology, but which nonetheless requires a moral response – left much to be reflected on.

2.6 Netherlands – the contact with our Synod has declined whilst the Dutch have been working through the birth-pangs of unifying three of their Reformed denominations. However, the Spring 2004 Ministers' Spring School is to be held in the Netherlands, and we are hopeful of strengthening the link again.

2.7 'Work in progress' includes consideration as to whether we can become a Fair Trade Synod.

3. Vibrant and Sustainable ...

3.1 Vibrancy is dependent on people – clay jars as Ray Adams reminded us last October, but used by God for the work of the gospel. Space constraints preclude us from mentioning all personnel changes.

3.1.1 We are pleased that the 2003 General Assembly agreed that Elizabeth Caswell should continue as Moderator. Within the review, it was noted that Elizabeth would have a key pastoral role with ministers as the Mission, Ministry and Money resolutions are pursued.

3.1.2 Philip Wade retired as Finance Officer in August 2003. Philip had been involved with the Synod's finances for many more years than those in which he had been a paid officer. His foresight and faith had led to a present situation of substantial resources available to support the work of local churches; he had shown a passion for an ethical investment policy.

3.1.3 Latterly, Philip had added Trust work to his tasks, with a part-time accountant being employed in support. There has now been a re-organisation of tasks, with Gordon Heald appointed as part-time Property Officer, and Andrew Perkins as Finance Officer. We are grateful to David Dones who has continued to give up his own spare time to provide book-keeping support.

3.1.4 Mick Barnes replaces Ken Woods as Synod Clerk. Ken's contribution to the Synod's life has been significant as he shouldered heavy administrative responsibilities and also pioneered the Natural Church

Development work in the Synod. We have also said farewell to Sue Easton who has been replaced by Penelope Davies-Brown as Moderator's PA and Revd Richard Church has replaced Lawrence Moore as Training & Development Officer, following Lawrence's departure to Windermere.

3.1.5 A very sad loss was through the death of John Pugh, who had given much devoted service to his churches in and around Stowmarket, and to District, Synod and Assembly Committees. The congregation's over-flowing beyond the sanctuary at his funeral says much for the extent of love for John.

3.2 The above-mentioned Mission, Ministry and Money resolutions contained much that was aimed at better structures. Team ministries, encouraging more lay preachers, and interim and specialist ministries are to be pursued. Ecumenical partnership is a priority. Slicker decision-making – e.g. by avoiding repetition of business at too many levels – is to be sought. Greater ownership of budgets will be encouraged e.g. by identifying ministry costs at the actual level where ministry is given.

3.3 New congregations – those mentioned in our 2001 report continue to progress. Cloverfield at Thetford (Norfolk) and Cambourne (Cambridgeshire) have been welcomed by General Assembly. Chafford Hundred at Grays (Essex), and Great Notley (Essex) seem to be moving towards that situation. Church Langley (Essex) is asking this year to be recognised fully as a local church within the United Reformed Church.

3.4 Natural Church Development – the Synod continues to support churches that elect to follow the NCD process. To date, 13 churches have undertaken the NCD survey, but it is recognised that a greater number have undertaken other forms of self-audit such as through the Church Life Profile. As always, the challenge is in addressing the issues raised by the self-audit results.

3.5 'Work in progress' includes a review of a new Manse Policy.



Thames North Synod

1. Open All Hours

1.1 Life in Thames North Synod has been challenged and shaped over the last three years by a list of qualities of openness. This list first appeared in the middle of a Mission Council report on small churches under the title, "Marks of Viability", offered to districts and synods questioning the future of some of their smaller congregations. We were not asking that question in Thames North, but we were concerned for the vitality of all our churches in their various settings, and we welcomed this list as containing the right challenges for us all:

Open to the Spirit
Open to one another
Open to people
Open to change
Open to the community around
Open to receiving help
Open to developing local leadership
Open to learning and nurturing
Open to listen

1.2 In October 2002 we launched a book of resource materials called *Open All Hours?! – Bible studies, articles, discussion starters and worship materials* to help each of our congregations explore new and relevant ways of living the gospel and being church in the 21st century. To the nine qualities above, we added a tenth, *Open to the workplace*, to encourage churches to support their members in living out their Christian calling at work.

2. Strategy

2.1 In the autumn of 2002 we undertook an intensive process to identify a strategy for the synod. We began with a one-day meeting for the ministers and Church Related Community Workers, describing the changing culture that is our context and reflecting together on how we as a Church should adapt and respond. It was felt strongly that the United Reformed Church has one too many layers of structure, and various alternatives were proposed. Conscious of the responsibility for the United Reformed Church's witness in London and the difficulties several of our districts face combining inner London and "shires" communities, we explored the possibility of a boundary change, perhaps along the lines of the three English regions in our area, and the creation of a "London Synod". We have had informal conversations with Southern Synod officers and ecumenical partners, particularly the Methodists, who have already agreed the formation of a "London District" with effect from 2006. We have suggested the idea to the "Catch the Vision" review group.

2.2 Following this meeting we held a residential meeting for the leadership of the synod, and agreed the outline for a Vision Statement and set of Goals. These are now in the hands of our synod committees to be turned into concrete aims and objectives. They are also highlighted on our synod website (www.urc10.org), where we have created an interactive space for reflections and contributions.

3. World Church connections

3.1 Our relationship with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren continues, with Thames North members regularly represented at their national Synod and a steady stream of Czech ministers and lay workers coming to the UK to improve their English. After the terrible floods in Prague in the summer of 2002 we asked all of the churches to take a special collection for the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren's flood relief work. This was followed in 2003 by further fund-raising towards a new church plant in a growing suburb of Prague. An enthusiastic Czech minister took part in our synod strategy residential, and in 2004 two Czech ministers will attend our Ministers' Spring School.

3.2 A new relationship is growing with the Karnataka Central Diocese of the Church of South India. Several Thames North members, including our Inter-Faith Advisor and Moderator, have travelled to Bangalore to learn about the life of their Church. In 2004 there will be return visits.

3.3 We enter into these relationships conscious that our synod is already a world church in its own right. Our congregations are international and worship is offered in many different languages across the synod. Discovering our unity in the midst of such diversity is a challenge and a joy. In particular, we are eager to enable new leadership for our ethnic minority congregations, and to identify people with gifts to offer to our life as a synod. Thanks to the contribution of two Racial Justice Advocates on our Nominations Committee, our synod committees are now much more reflective of the diversity of our membership.

4. Transfer

We formally give notice that at the October 2003 Synod, it was agreed to transfer St Martin's United Reformed Church from St Alban's District to West London District.

5. Personnel

Martin Hazell was appointed Synod Clerk in October 2002, and we have benefited enormously from the clear and visionary thinking he has brought to the business of the synod. In March 2004 we paid tribute to Valerie Ham, our long-serving Synod Treasurer, and appointed Michael Gould and Emmanuel Osae in her

place. We have also welcomed new members of staff: David Skipp, our Properties Officer; Cristine Smalligan, our Mission Projects Support Worker; and Meryl Court, appointed to serve as Pastoral Consultant when Bert Baker retired. Sue Russell has joined the office team, and we said good-bye to Mike Philpott who left the office at the end of 2003.

Vision Statement

Through confidence in the Gospel, with excitement about the United Reformed Church's expression of Christian faith, and by our belonging to one another, the Thames North Synod envisions a future of courageous discipleship leading to growth.

Our vision is founded on the following values:

commitment to the big picture of God's purposes for the whole created order;
a living Reformed inheritance, characterised by the centrality of scripture, courageous discipleship, freedom of conscience, openness to change, liturgical freedom, and conciliarity;
abundant life expressed in affirmation of diversity, inclusion of people of all ages and backgrounds, deep reflection, confident sharing of faith, reconciliation and healing, vitality and enthusiasm, and cherishing of the gifts of the whole people of God.

Synod Goals (2003 – 2007)

Encourage confidence in engaging with scripture and our changing society to nurture growth in Christian faith and life;
Explore alternatives to familiar patterns of church life, witness, structure and support so as to discern appropriate models for the future;
Strengthen existing ministries and extend the diversity of ministries, among the whole people of God;
Foster a greater sense of covenantal belonging to the Synod by the local churches;
Ensure that the structures and leadership of the Synod are truly representative of the diversity of local congregations and their communities.

Resolution 1**North Western Synod**

General Assembly expresses concern about the shortage of places in residential care and domiciliary support for the elderly and other vulnerable people, following legislation regulating provision of such care, and instructs the Church and Society Committee to consider the matter and take appropriate action.

Proposed: Revd Eileen Sambrooks
Seconded: Dr Roger John

1. Widespread public concern has been expressed, both nationally and in the North West, about the consequences of the Care Standards Act 2000, which had come into effect in April 2001. Although the Department of Health indicated that flexibility could be exercised in implementing the Regulations and Standards, many care homes for older people have had to close because of the costs involved. For financial reasons, further closures may well be expected. This has had an effect, also, upon people having to remain for care in their own homes. Preliminary enquiries for Lancaster District Council showed a substantial local problem which was likely to occur elsewhere in the country.

The district churches and the synod were asked to note that:

- a) This issue affects residential services (not restricted to those for older people) in all parts of the country
- b) The fewer the number of residential places the more emphasis will be needed in ensuring adequate domiciliary care

- c) Standards are important but, in a transitional period, flexibility in implementation is essential
- d) Social work professionals have provided useful sources of information (e.g. a programme of training for volunteers in advocacy on behalf of individual residents). The pastoral care provided by the churches is valued
- e) The respective responsibilities of the National Health Service, local authorities, and voluntary and private sectors need to be understood
- f) It is essential that this subject is reviewed not only by providers of care but also from the point of view of present and potential clients.

At its meeting in March 2004, the Synod recognised that the issue affected many communities and justified attention by the General Assembly leading to appropriate action on its behalf by the Church and Society Committee.

Resolution 2**Northern and North Western Synods**

General Assembly agrees to transfer the Local Churches at Bewcastle; Brampton; Carlisle; Silloth; Wigton; Cockermouth; Harrington; Workington; Penrith & Penruddock and Whitehaven from the Northern Synod to the North Western Synod and authorises the two Synods to effect this transfer at a date convenient to both.

Proposed: Rosalind Fearon
Seconded: Ruth Clarke

1. General Assembly in 2002 received a report from visitors to Northern Synod who asked the Northern and North Western Synods to consider a change of boundaries so that Cumbria was no longer split between two synods. At a series of meetings this was discussed by representatives of the Synods and the Cumberland and Lancaster Districts, some meetings being attended by representatives of the

Methodist Cumbria District. It was accepted that since the United Reformed Church structures were set up in 1972 the creation of the County of Cumbria has resulted in a greater feeling of self-containment. A number of ecumenical initiatives could be strengthened if the United Reformed Church had a unit similar to those of the Methodist District and the Church of England diocese.

2. Discussion at Cumberland and Lancaster District Councils, with the comments from local churches, indicated general support for such a District, particularly for the ecumenical potential. It was agreed that the new Cumbria District should:

- be part of the North Western Synod for reasons of political links and transport convenience, and because the proposed pattern fits better with current moves for the organisation of structures in North Western Synod.
- exercise the functions of the United Reformed Church District Council plus some of those currently expected of the Synod

- be divided into localised groupings for fellowship, support and mission strategy
- be geared for ecumenical mission strategy with the Methodist Cumbria District and the Diocese of Carlisle
- be served by a leader/minister with no or limited local pastoral responsibilities.

3. At their March meetings, the Northern Synod and North Western Synod overwhelmingly approved that this resolution be sent to General Assembly.

Resolution 3	Yorkshire Synod
<p>General Assembly invites Local Churches and Church Members to adopt Sunday 3rd October, or such other date as may be more suitable, as a Day of Repentance and Rededication in which they may repent of their shortcomings and recommit themselves to Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">Proposer: The Revd Paul Breeze Seconder: The Revd Ray Stanyon</p>	

This Resolution is based upon the following resolution passed by the Yorkshire Synod on 6 March 2004,

“ The Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church calls on General Assembly to set aside a suitable date, preferably 3 October 2004, as a Day of Repentance and Re-dedication in the United Reformed Church, during which individuals and congregations can repent of their shortcomings and recommit themselves to follow Christ and Him alone.”

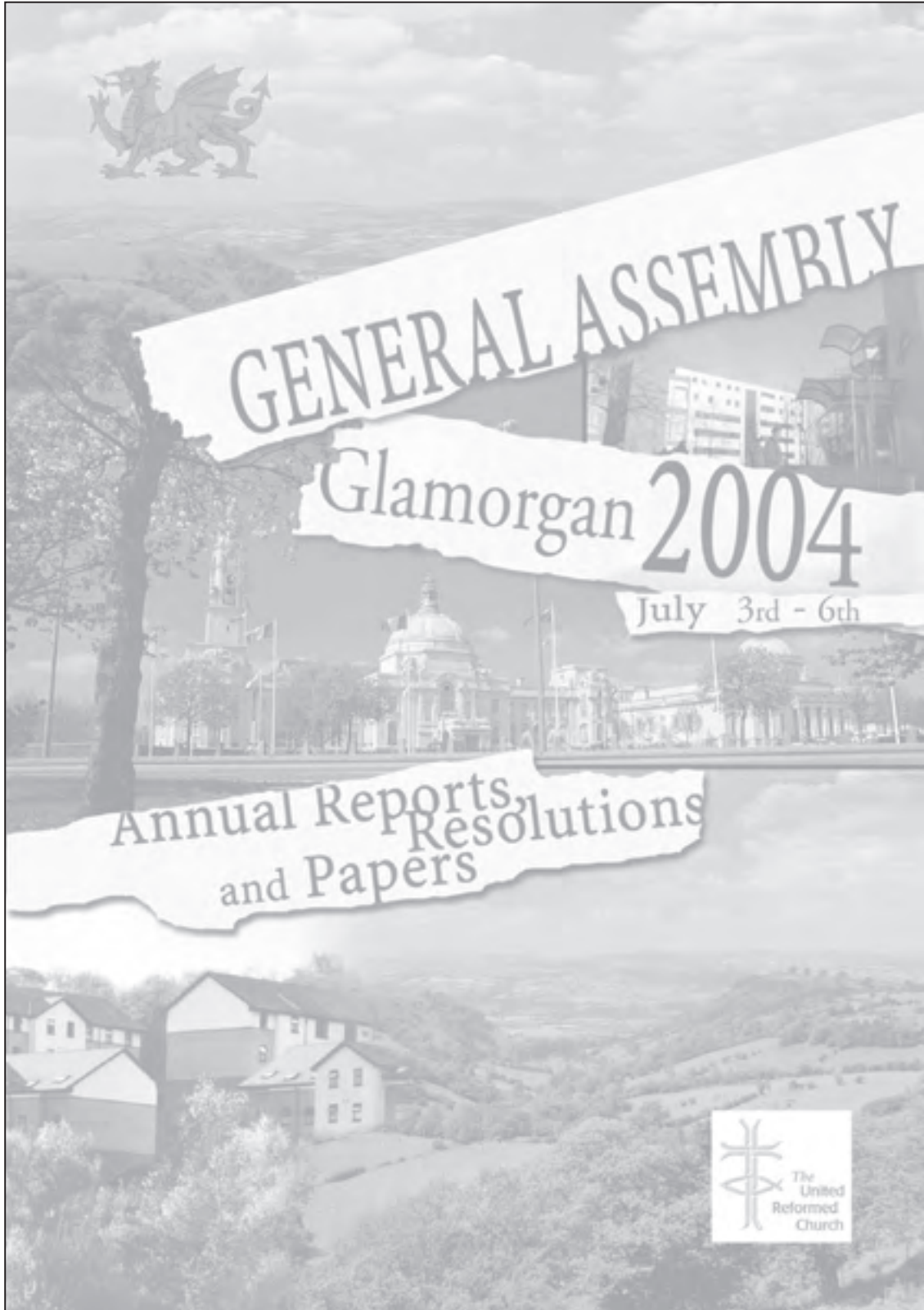
1. ‘Catch the Vision’ can only be successful as a process if there is a sense of spiritual change within the United Reformed Church as a whole and a day of repentance and recommitment would be a fine way to stimulate this.
2. The timing of this resolution fits well with this stage of consideration of the Vision Statement and churches’ responses to it.

3. This would help us place the Vision as God-centred rather than person or church-centred.
4. It would enable us to face up to our failures and shortcomings and move forward with renewed commitment and vigour.
5. To hold a re-commitment service in each Synod would be a revitalising task and experience.
6. It could be said, and indeed was said during the debate, that every service every Sunday should include repentance. However, it would be good for us as a denomination to do this collectively.
7. This could enable us to lift our eyes from our local church perspective and offer the process to God in a simultaneous and concentrated way.



The
United
Reformed
Church

Churches - Changes and Synod Moderators' Report



Churches - Changes

Resolution 4

New Church & Mission Projects

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

1. Mission Project

Ingleby-net

Northern

Ingleby Barwick is a fast growing private housing development on Teesside with a population heading towards 20,000. Social links and support networks take time to develop; and in a community that lacks necessary community facilities the only Church with dedicated premises is the Church of England. The Methodist and United Reformed Churches have joined in creating a project, *Ingleby-net*, which is an experiment in a new way of being Church. It will be a specific Christian contribution to building of community and the establishment of social and

support networks. It works alongside, and is specifically designed to complement, the work being done by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. In January of this year a Church Community worker was appointed to run the project under the Methodist Lay Worker scheme. The running costs of the five year project are being met by the Methodist Church. The Durham and Teesside District of the United Reformed Church have contributed £60,000 capital towards the house from which the project is run.

2. New Church

Church Langley Church, Harlow, Essex

Eastern

(Church of England, United Reformed Church, Baptist)

Church Langley is a new housing development of 3500 houses on the East side of Harlow – between Harlow and the M11 and the older villages of Old Harlow and Potter Street. Ten years in the build Church Langley is now about finished but there are another 2000 houses being built on adjoining land known as New Hall Farm.

The Church and Community Centre building was partly funded with grants from the Eastern Synod and the Chelmsford Dioceses. It has a Chapel, which is only used by the Church, and two halls, which we use as Church and Sunday School, but which is used by the Community Association throughout the week.

As a Community Association we run and maintain the centre, run 2 pre schools groups, an after school club and a Holiday club, and we have just started a Breakfast club. In addition to this we make the halls available for other activities and organizations.

As a Church we were founded in a Portacabin 10 years ago by the Church of England, The Baptist Union, The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church.

We have been in our building for 8 years. Church Langley Church became the Parish of Church Langley 3 years ago, a member church in the Baptist Union 2 years ago and has been a United Reformed Church Mission Project from the beginning.

The Church has 38 Members – 11 of whom are Free Church members – 2 would call themselves United Reformed Church. Methodist interest is now only through the West Essex United Area.

We have 3 Services a week on Sunday, Tuesday evening, and Thursday morning. Ministry is two thirds Church of England and one third Free Church split equally between the Baptists and United Reformed Church.

It is the unanimous decision of the Elders and Church Meetings that this is now the time for a change of status from being a Mission Project to being a local church within the United Reformed Church. This request is supported by the Anglican Vicar, The Baptist Minister, the West Essex United Area and the Eastern Synod.

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.

1. Claypath Church DURHAM**Northern**

The closure of Claypath Church in Durham City is probably unique in that it chose to close with a non-elderly membership of more than twenty, a worshipping congregation – in term-time – often approaching two hundred.

The history of the church goes back to 1662 when dissenting preachers gathered in Durham. The first church, Presbyterian, was established in 1689 and called its first minister, Jonas Blamire, in 1697. Throughout the 18th century, it catered for all Protestant Dissenters (two ancient silver communion cups in Durham Cathedral Treasury are inscribed, ‘...for the Dissenting Meeting’).

In 1783 a Congregational Church was established in Framwellgate Peth and in 1821, the two churches united as the Congregational Church in Claypath. The original church was rebuilt in 1751 and in 1886 (when Dissenters

were allowed to build fronting a main road), the present typical Victorian building was erected. In 1958, the gallery was closed off, in 2001 it was re-opened.

With the arrival of the Revd Bob Gordon in 1971, the fellowship began to grow dramatically, particularly to students in the rapidly expanding University. The two following ministers, however, were drawn from outside the United Reformed Church and, over the years, the church was distanced from denominational affairs. The most recent had centred his ministry on the students which had grown but the adult membership gradually dropped off.

Shortly after District’s declaring a vacancy in April 2003, a decision was taken by the congregation to close and most members now worship as an independent fellowship in the city, supported by the Newcastle-based Jesmond Trust.

2. Baker Street, Stockport**North Western**

The church was formed in 1893, as a Mission, and has been known as Baker Street Mission up to its closure in 2003. The premises were built by local people, after breaking away from another local Congregational church, to bring the Word of God to the community of Heaton Norris, Stockport.

The premises were extended in the mid-1950s to the current size. The premises were home to many organisations both church-based and secular, serving the local community, the longest of which, the

‘Grannies Club’ lasted over 80 years. With membership falling from its peak of over 200 in the early 1900s to just 14 in 2003, the decision to close was taken. The remaining members have now found a spiritual home in neighbouring churches thankful for the fellowship they shared as a family at Baker Street over many years.

3. Heywood URC**North Western**

The church had a 179 year history, formerly a Congregational church on two sites, York Street and a Sunday school on Rochdale Road East. In 1969 York Street closed and the churches joined together at Rochdale Road East.

Heywood URC was involved in several pastorates over the years with Castleton, Bamford, Norden, St Andrew’s and Hallfold United Reformed Churches. These links were much enjoyed and the support appreciated. The congregation was strong until recent years when

the numbers declined. The church supported District Council meetings, Synods and their local community. Over 200 people who had been associated with Heywood URC attended the final Service of Thanksgiving led by the Moderator on September 7 2003.

Following the closure members have found new spiritual homes at various churches locally and continue to serve and worship.

4. Lower Chapel Darwen 1687 – 2003

North Western

One of Lancashire's oldest Congregational/United Reformed churches, Lower Chapel has been standing on the same site since 1719 and has played a great part in the development of Darwen from a group of hamlets to a thriving industrial town in the nineteenth century. With its nearby primary school which opened in the 1850s, Lower Chapel has provided a powerful witness for over 300 years and at its zenith served over 1200 worshippers on a Sunday. In the 1930s it was discovered that the buildings were in desperate need of repairs and extensive renovations were carried out. These included the removal of the gallery, the re-siting of the organ and complete re-roofing. The work was carried out almost entirely by the members of the church.

When the school closed in 1974 the church lost its link with the local children and despite adaptation to a dual purpose building membership declined, the Sunday School closed and in early 2001 the members reluctantly decided that, should things not improve, the building should close in 2003.

The final service was held on the morning of Sunday 27 March 2003 led by Revd Tamas Sugar. The majority of members transferred and were welcomed into local churches. Thanks be to God for 300 years' witness and for the thousands of people whose lives have been influenced by the fellowship.

5. The Church on the Hill

(Stubbin Chapel / Elsecar URC 1839 to 2004)**Yorkshire**

The Yorkshire Synod, meeting on 6 March 2004, passed this resolution: "With regret and understanding, Synod endorses the resolution of the South Yorkshire District Council that Elsecar United Reformed Church closes with effect from 29 February 2004. Synod expressed concern for all those people affected and thanked God for the witness of that church."

Stubbin Chapel was born out of a Mother church in Masbro, Rotherham together with dedicated Christians from the West Melton church. In 1839 Queen Victoria had reigned barely two years. Gladstone and Disraeli were new upon the political scene and social and economic conditions were vastly different from today, but religious fervour and commitment in faith followed on from the early Congregationalists and the church prospered in this small mining community. The building cost £1,700! The first Minister was Revd William Orgar, from Leeds, in 1844.

In 1976 the members were devastated by the appearance of wide cracks in the stone walls of the church caused by mining subsidence. It was closed immediately for safety reasons and the church was demolished. Services were subsequently held over a

shop in the village. The members resolved to rebuild on the same site and two years later, at a cost of around £60,000, a new multi-purpose, one-level, church was opened. The generous giving of the members and village friends provided all the internal fittings. Finally, the graveyard at the rear was completely renovated in 2000 because of vandalism and dumping, and it now complements the church.

However, the members had serious concerns over recent years about the diminishing numbers of people attending worship and events. Endeavours have been made to introduce new initiatives without success. Now age and illness have reduced the attendance level to single figures.

The members are grateful to their sister church at Herringthorpe for their prayers and constant support, but they have had to make a realistic decision to close this house of God and to seek other ways of continuing their service to the Lord. This is only a fragment of this story, and they hope to publish a small booklet with more detail of the happenings at "Stubbin" Chapel.

6. **St Edith's United Reformed/Methodist Church, Wilton**

Wessex

St Edith's United Reformed/Methodist Church, Wilton, Wiltshire closed on 4 January 2004 after a number of years of gradual decline.

An active local congregation flourished for many years, and children's work alongside creative worship was always a top priority. Although the demand for children's work remained strong, as did the interest in new ways of worshipping, the declining adult congregation could not sustain the work.

It is possible that nonconformist worship began in Wilton in the early 18th century in Crow Lane. In the mid 1960s the then Congregational Church was joined by the local Methodists.

In 1981 when the church at Crow Lane became unsuitable for worship the joint United Reformed/Methodist Church was invited to join with the local Roman Catholic congregation at St Edith's, Kingsbury Square. It was in 1984 that a Shared Church Agreement between the three denominations was signed, being one of the first of its kind in the country.

It was during the past year that the United Reformed/Methodist congregation at St Edith's discerned that God was calling them to do something different and that they were to close their doors to enable them to work more ecumenically within their local community.

7. **Cockfosters United Reformed Church**

Thames North

Cockfosters United Reformed Church was established as a Congregational Church and held their first service on 10th September 1939. The membership consisted of the Minister and a substantial number of the congregation from the former Finsbury Park Congregational Church that had held their final service a week earlier. As with many other churches, it was most popular during and immediately after the war years 1939-1945. In fact, evening services were particularly well attended during that time as it was the one church in the area that could effectively be 'blacked out'.

In later years, from about 1975 onwards, the church became a prominent member of Southgate, Oakwood and Cockfosters Neighbourhood Group of Churches (now Churches Together in Southgate, Oakwood and Cockfosters) with the minister and some elders taking leadership roles in many of their activities.

Because of declining membership, the Church Meeting, last summer, took the decision to close and the final service took place on 21 September 2003 after 64 years of witness. The buildings were sold to what is now called Trinity Welsh Presbyterian Church and therefore Christian worship continues there.

8. **Paddington Chapel 1813-2003**

Thames North

There was a strong desire to respond to the spiritual needs of this rapidly developing West London area in 1800s. It was Thomas Wilson, one of the "Fathers and Founders" of the London Missionary Society among his many achievements who was to spearhead the building of a chapel in Old Marylebone Road. The first attempt to secure a site was frustrated because the freeholders would not lease the land for a nonconformist place of worship. However a more favourable site became available and then secured on a seventy-year lease. Work commenced in March 1813 and was completed in August. The first service was held on 10 September 1813. Following the setting up of Sunday School, the work of the church developed into Lisson Grove area which subsequently led to the development of the Earl Street Mission. Along with Old Marylebone Road site, the Paddington Chapel members ran all manner of groups and workshops for men, women and children on these sites. Other priorities over the years included substantial commitment and support

for lay and ordained members working in Christian mission overseas. Unfortunately the work in Lisson Grove ceased shortly after the Second World War and mission centred once again in Old Marylebone Road. This site was sold approximately thirty years ago and Paddington Chapel continued worship in St Marks Church, Old Marylebone Road following the close relationship, which developed with St Mary's Church Bryston Square. Paddington Chapel Ministry during the last few years focused on providing a regular act of nonconformist worship particularly for the many visitors to London. In 2003 the church members of Paddington Chapel agreed that they could no longer sustain a regular service and on 21 September 2003 the final act of worship was held when members of the United Reformed Church and friends of Paddington Chapel celebrated the work of Paddington Chapel and gave thanks for its past one hundred and ninety years of Christian service and ministry.

9. Wingrave United Reformed Church

Thames North

There have been Nonconformists in Wingrave since the mid 17th century, but the history of the present building, where the United Reformed Church members have worshipped, began with the bequest of a carpenter's workshop in 1813. The workshop was demolished and a new building erected when it formally became an Independent Church in 1817. This appears to have been a union of Baptists, Quakers and Congregationalists. Ten years later the graveyard was added, and the present Georgian Church was built onto the original building in 1832. Two classrooms were added in 1904 to complete the premises.

In a village with a population of about 2000, it is hardly surprising that, with the passage of time, it would no longer be possible to sustain three places of worship. The Methodist Church dates from the mid 1800s, whilst the Parish Church is about 800 years old.

For much of its life, Wingrave United Reformed Church has been linked, at various times, with other similar churches in Tring, in Aylesbury, in Winslow and in Wing. Sometimes these links meant giving support to other congregations, and sometimes it was the Wingrave people who received help. Like most churches it has had times when things have been going well, and times when there has been less success. There are many in the village who still recall the times when the church was full, but now, with an ageing and less mobile membership of less than ten; and buildings that need a considerable amount of upgrading and refurbishment, the time has reluctantly come to end the United Reformed Church presence in Wingrave.

The days of rivalry between the various congregations in Wingrave are now long past, and we have worked closely together for the last fifteen or twenty years. The United Reformed Church may itself no longer be present – but there are still active witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ here. The members are grateful for the pastoral care they have received and will continue receiving from the local Anglican vicar, the Revd Bob Willmott.

Moderators' Report

AS IF

1.1 Together with the whole United Reformed Church the Synod Moderators have been reflecting on the calling of the Church at this stage in its life and in this context in the Great Britain of the early 21st century. Our reflections have arisen from our regular task of working alongside local churches and ministers, in preaching and teaching and in sharing ecumenically in thinking and planning for the future. We have also had opportunities through the Belonging to the World Church programme and the synod twinning arrangements to make overseas journeys and to learn from the Church's experience in other contexts. We share a desire that the quest to catch a vision of God's tomorrow should shape our agenda at every level of the Church.

1.2 We believe that the Church is called to critique the prevailing culture, but that in order for this to be more than rhetoric we need to understand the situation in which we live and the nature of the contemporary church as being itself a sub-culture, or cluster of sub-cultures.

1.3 It has been said that 'culture is ordinary', it is the way we do things. It is why we feel at home in some places and alien in others; stimulated by some differences, threatened by others. Christendom gave a dominance to Christian culture across the western world which has given a particular tone to our experience of being Christian, even though that virtually mono-cultural phase has long since passed away. It leaves its after-glow as the sun sets on that era, and maybe we still hanker for the relative blandness and easiness of the days when the church was the hub of spiritual and community life; but we do well to remember that the centuries of dominance saw major division and persecution, as our own dissenting history bears witness; and the social and political history of Britain indicates that the veneer of Christianity was often very thin.

1.4 From the beginning the Christian faith has always been shaped by its cultural context, and has in turn questioned and re-shaped that context. It has often been the work of courageous pioneers to recognise and give voice to the Gospel's challenge to specific evils. There is no ideal cultural embodiment for the Gospel this side of heaven; every culture has its positives and negatives. The Church can learn from its surroundings as well as teach, but either way it does need to engage both intellectually and practically with the prevailing world-view.

2. The World as it is

2.1 We live in a secular society; that is, the values, attitudes and pre-occupations of the dominant world-view are rooted in this age, this time, now; it gives little space in its thinking or behaving for notions of God, let alone supposedly revealed notions of God.

2.2 The values which shape our lives are largely commercial; they revolve around a global economy and the capacity of the media via satellite television and the 'web' to increase demand for consumer goods. The half-hidden power struggles as nation-states give ground to multi-national corporations create a growing divide between high-consuming societies and traditionally land-based, self-sufficient ones. At a local level people are encouraged to find meaning through possessions (Tesco ergo sum), and work is linked with the capacity to enjoy a particular life-style rather than pride in using skills and contributing to society.

2.3 The prevailing culture which shapes our lives is this-worldly – 'eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die'. If this life is believed to be all there is then people become obsessed with their rights and their needs, sex becomes a recreational transaction, personal value is measured by wealth, and life becomes increasingly litigious in the blame culture where every error has to be paid for rather than forgiven.

2.4 Focused on this world we seek security through pre-emptive strikes and the power of force; whilst individually people who have dismissed the concept of eternity seek endless life here courtesy of the National Health Service. We are increasingly drawn into the desire for a risk free world, totally sanitised and insured. We have to be warned that boiling water is hot, wet floors slippery, and that you will not always wake up after surgery. If this life is all there is, then clearly to stay alive for as long as possible, as healthily and happily as possible, becomes the greatest good. But there is a growing dissatisfaction with these attitudes: altruism and hunger for justice have not been quenched, and many people see life as having a spiritual dimension.

3. Other worlds

3.1 Within the swirling pattern of contemporary life exist many sub-cultures. The aspirations of some – to be a millionaire, to own a villa in Spain – can be offset by the quest of others for a simpler life-style: to give up the rat-race, to be environmentally friendly, to earn

enough to live by and then spend one's time in making music or art. The Friday night binge-drinker, drugged-up, 'I am what I own' life may seem to dominate youth culture since it is fuelled by so many vested interests. But many, many sub-groups exist, among people of all ages, which resist and reject mindless hedonism.

3.2 There is a danger of pinning a Christian label on all virtue. Yet it is possible to recognise the memory of Christianity still influencing and nourishing the values of people who would not wish to be identified as 'Christians'. The spirituality of some contemporary film, music and theatre indicates that God is not left without witnesses. The search for simpler life-styles showing greater respect for the environment reminds us that there are many people of good-will.

3.3 We need as Christians to engage intelligently with the worlds in which we live, and affirm humbly, but confidently, the good news which gives us hope – preferably in a language comprehensible to the people who hear us. That affirmation will be made both through the articulation of the gospel in conversation and apologetic, and its incarnation in a peculiarly (but not exclusively) Christian way of living. In other words, we are called to be authentic.

4. Another world

4.1 One of the wise voices of modern biblical scholarship is Walter Brueggemann who calls us as believers to live 'otherwise'; to live God's alternative way, whatever the prevailing culture, as if that alternative prevailed. We can be signs, and perhaps even sacraments, of God's reign.

4.2 What might this alternative look like for us, as believers and as a Church? Surely the difference will be both hidden and obvious, private and public. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls his disciples to be salt and light; to influence from within, subversively one might almost say; and to shine out in obvious contrast with the world around us, not hidden but public. The life we live and the truth we utter need to be the same reality.

4.3 What does this mean for us as disciples? What is the Gospel alternative which we are called to embody? Here is one view – perhaps it will encourage further reflection since it does not claim to be exhaustive.

4.4 In place of **greed** let us live **contentment**. The apostle wrote in the letter to the Philippians that he had learned to be content, in plenty or want (Philippians 4:12). In a world dominated by material possessions and creature comforts Christians need to know how to accept and be grateful for their circumstances, discovering Christ's strength to live now, whatever 'now' may be like. Few of us are likely to experience extremes of poverty or wealth, but we may experience variations – older believers who have lived through times of economic depression or war have much to teach us.

4.5 In place of **blame** the Gospel calls us to the twin responses of **personal responsibility** and **forgiveness**. No-one is perfect, but the prevailing attitude of blame drives people to self-protection. Insurance premiums for professionals rocket as people hunt for those on whom they may exact revenge. Spiritual and emotional health lies in a recognition of our own responsibilities, and the willingness to say when we have made mistakes or exercised poor judgement. The other side of the same coin is the readiness to treat other people as we would like to be treated; to forgive other people's faults and ineptitude. This does not mean that we fail to confront wrongdoing and wrong-thinking. It does mean that such confrontation, when necessary, flows from a desire for the other's good. We speak the truth in love, not judgement. We stand with the Christ who does not condemn, who does not bind us to our sins, but who allows the truth to set us free. Michael Taylor, formerly of Christian Aid, once said that "the point of religion is coping with failure". Nothing brings us closer to the reality of God than the quest for the giving and receiving of forgiveness.

4.6 We live in a society in which many people feel desperately alone. In a world of **isolation** the followers of Christ can live a **shared life** (Romans 15:17). The extreme enjoyment of soap-operas is partly accounted for by this pain of isolation; the fictional characters become a surrogate family as we yearn for Friends and Neighbours. Of course the need for drama dictates story lines which constantly reinforce images of dysfunctional family life and betrayed friendship. "The mass of people (sic. *men*) lead lives of quiet desperation", wrote Thoreau. We believe in the God who is community and who calls us out of isolation and the despair it engenders into one-ness with God and our fellow creatures. We are created to live our lives in family and in fellowship – to share a common life of mutual acceptance. We are to live as those who can be together in harmony, healing each other's wounds, including and affirming.

4.7 In place of **fear** we practise **open-ness**, the welcome of the stranger and the breaking down of hostility which marks the community of the cross (Ephesians 2:15,16). So often we find it difficult to include and affirm because we are afraid of those who are different from ourselves. When people reach out in friendship across divides of language or faith they embody the Gospel. Such action can be dangerous in societies where people feel driven to defend the status quo, or where the inadequate seek to scapegoat outsiders in order to boost their own identity. Taking upon ourselves the pain of a fractured society, and pleading the cause of the voiceless is to enact the identifying of Christ with 'the least', of which Jesus speaks (Matthew 25:40).

4.8 We can be those who relinquish **instant** solutions and embrace an **eternal perspective**. Jesus endured the cross 'for the joy that was set before him' (Hebrews 12:12). In a world of short-termism it is tempting to look for quick fixes. We can have the courage to appreciate our rootedness in a historic faith which continues to nourish and sustain, whilst trusting the God who is eternal. We are not trapped in the past, but open to God's future, willing to be re-shaped. We can be those who live in the present, held in God's eternal 'now'. We can be those who plant for the future whilst trusting God to define that future's shape.

4.9 Overcoming **cynicism** with **hope** is a sign of the Gospel believed and practised. We live in a cynical age, and we may give in to cynicism as we view the sometimes yawning gap between these gospel aspirations and our own experience of contemporary Church life. We should not despair, either of ourselves or of the Church. St Paul, who lived through more change, disappointment and suffering than most of us could write, "yet always there is hope." (Romans 8:18-25). It is a personal hope and a shared hope rooted in the cross and resurrection of Christ, and the presence of God with us through the Holy Spirit.

4.10 This way of life to which our discipleship calls us arises from our intimacy with the God who has been revealed through Jesus Christ. This intimacy is maintained in prayer and in listening to God and for God. It is re-discovered as we meet God in worship and meet God's truth in scripture.

5. Being a Church in the 'other' world

5.1 The particular heritage of the United Reformed Church gives us certain distinctive characteristics which we should not lose. But that does not mean that we need to cling to the actual historical issues which gave rise to our separation from the wider family of the church (although some are still pertinent). We are born out of dissent and the desire that the church should be true to its origins in the Gospel as we keep going deeper into our source, expecting more light and truth, and as we keep on changing as the Spirit enables us to interpret and practise the truth in our own context. That attitude should shape us rather than the ecclesiological battle-lines of the past.

5.2 The Gospel always carries with itself the seeds of change. It always questions prevailing culture – and that includes the culture of the institutional Church, or a second-generation faith, or any claims that 'we always do it this way'.

5.3 The ecumenical venture – the journey towards God's goal of the unity of all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10), the recognition that we belong together in one household or family – that venture itself may

inadvertently blunt the edge of the distinctive witness of an irritant, dissenting, reforming Church. The imperative of the Gospel is that we keep on changing until we arrive in the future God has prepared. Living between Alpha and Omega we do not know how far through the alphabet of God's purposes we have yet travelled. But seeing in Jesus the revelation in human form of that creative and re-creative purpose, and reading in scripture the record of his subversive teaching and practice, we may feel that we have yet a long way to go!

5.4 The legitimate, Gospel quest for unity must not be allowed to weaken the subversive edge of the Gospel, or to silence the disturbing voice. That is one reason why we should not be ashamed of retaining our belief that the Church should be distinct from the State, free to shape its own life under God, and to speak in prophetic freedom.

5.5 True dissent unites the Church, and we should acknowledge gladly the prophetic voices of sister Churches, notably the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, who have spoken out against war and injustice in recent times. 'Dissent' no longer describes one strand of Church; it unites us across the inherited divides. We would do well humbly to acknowledge that our supposed non-conformity and dissent has become locked in the past whilst we have become, in many places, those who cling to tradition as to a security blanket.

5.6 As we seek to Catch the Vision of God's tomorrow and to be the kind of Church God needs let us be willing, individually and corporately, to live 'otherwise'; to understand, live and speak the Gospel 'in ever fresh obedience to our living Lord'.

6. Post script

6.1 Since the last General Assembly we have said farewell to **Malcolm Hanson** and **Graham Cook** on their retirements from the East Midlands and the Mersey Synods respectively. They each brought distinctive gifts to the Moderators' Meeting, and we miss them for their wisdom and experience, and their dynamic leadership. We wish Malcolm and Brenda and Graham and Jean many years of happy retirement.

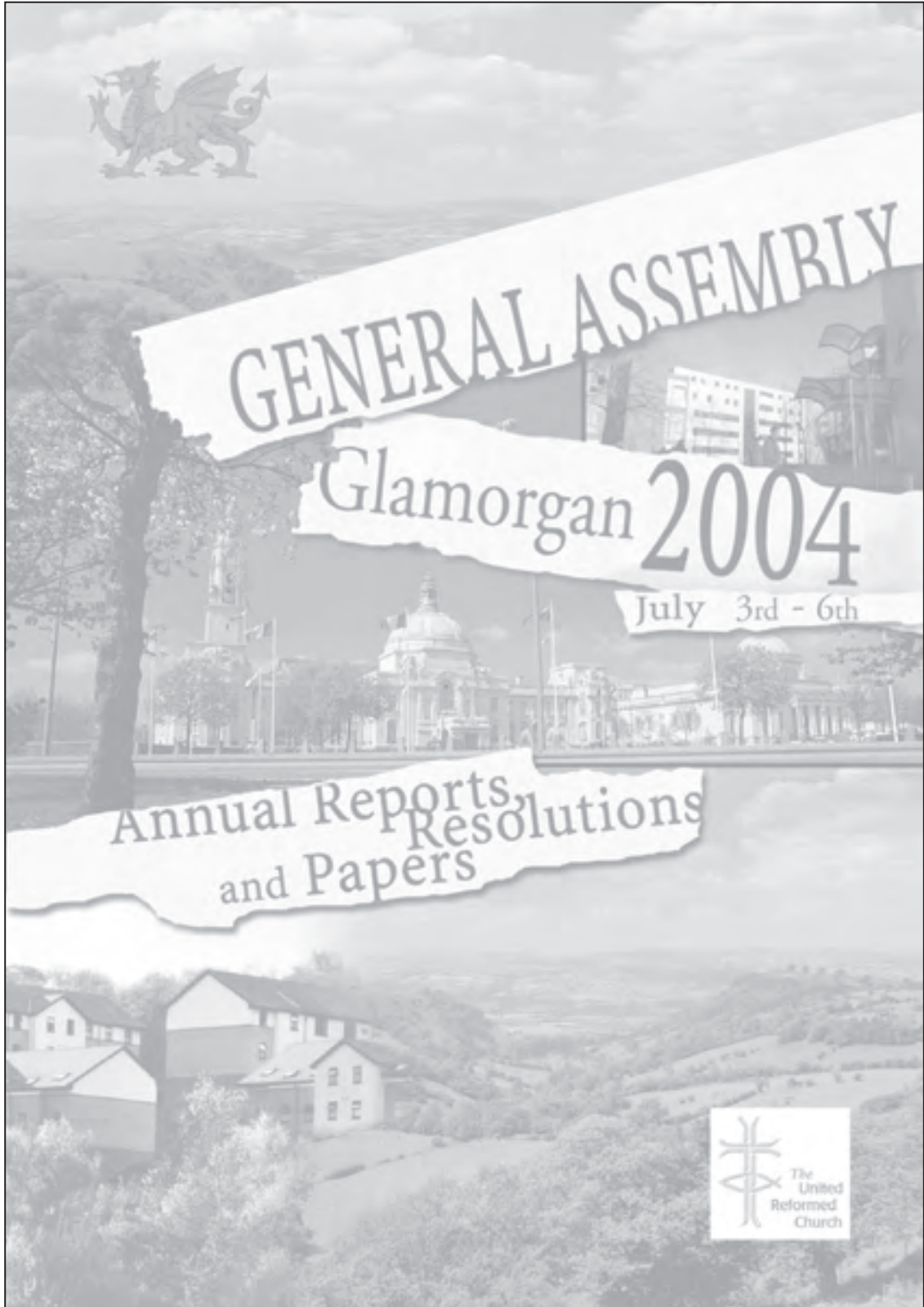
6.2 We have welcomed **Terry Oakley** and **Howard Sharp** in their stead and are already benefiting from their new perspectives.

6.3 People come and go, but the sense of mutual support and friendship in the Moderators' Meeting continues.



The
United
Reformed
Church

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 Adviser, 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.

The representatives of synods in March 2004 were:

<i>Northern Synod</i>	<i>Revd John Durell, Revd Colin Offor, Mrs Susan Rand</i>
<i>North Western Synod</i>	<i>Revd Chris Vermeulen, Mr George Morton, Mrs Janet Eccles</i>
<i>Mersey Synod</i>	<i>Revd Martin Hardy, Revd John Kingsley, Mr Donald Swift</i>
<i>Yorkshire Synod</i>	<i>Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite, Mrs Val Morrison</i>
<i>East Midlands Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Ann Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Revd David M Miller</i>
<i>West Midlands Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Simon Helme, Mr Simon Rowntree</i>
<i>Eastern Synod</i>	<i>Revd Victor Ridgewell, Mr Mick Barnes, Mrs Joan Turner</i>
<i>South Western Synod</i>	<i>Revd Roz Harrison, Revd Paul Snell, Miss Angela Bebbington</i>
<i>Wessex Synod</i>	<i>Revd David Bedford, Mrs Glennis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe</i>
<i>Thames North Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Helen Clapp, Revd Dr Roger Scopes, Revd Jane Wade</i>
<i>Southern Synod</i>	<i>Mrs Marion Bayley, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mr David Howell</i>
<i>National Synod of Wales</i>	<i>Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Stuart Jones, Revd David Marshall-Jones</i>
<i>National Synod of Scotland</i>	<i>Mrs Helen M Mee, Miss Catriona Smith</i>

1. Our meetings

1.1 During the year Mission Council has met residentially at Ushaw College, Durham; The Hayes, Conference Centre at Swanwick; and for a one-day meeting at the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh.

1.2 The Moderator has guided Mission Council to reflect on the biblical themes of freedom and hope, set in the context of worship led by the Moderator's chaplain, the Revd Carolyn Smith.

1.3 Theological reflection at the October meeting was offered by the Revd Dr Des van der Water (General Secretary of the Council for World Mission); and at the March meeting by the Revd Dr John Campbell, minister of South Aston United Reformed Church, Birmingham. Both theological reflectors reminded Mission Council of its primary task of discerning priorities for the whole Church, and focussing resources on those priorities.

1.4 Three headline themes emerge from the work of Mission Council: vision and review (3.1; 3.2); safeguarding (3.4; 3.5; 3.6); and the increasing recognition of being a multi-cultural church in a multi-cultural society (2.1; 2.2; 3.7)

2. Actions on behalf of General Assembly

2.1 In anticipation of local and European elections, Mission Council passed a resolution, on behalf of General Assembly, which noted with concern the rise in many European countries of extreme right-wing and racist political parties. The resolution stated that

2.1.1 'While we accept that such parties are entitled to operate within the democratic process we believe it is vital that they do not become accepted as part of normal political life. Within Britain we affirm that membership or any form of support for organisations such as the British National Party is incompatible with Christian discipleship.

2.1.2 As a Church we celebrate our increasing number of multi-ethnic congregations. In advance of the forthcoming local and European elections we call upon all local churches to continue to practise and promote racial justice and inclusion.

2.1.3 We call upon local churches to encourage voting during the local and European election in the light of these principles'.

2.2 Mission Council also agreed, on behalf of General Assembly, that the Moderator sign a Joint statement (prepared by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland) by Community Leaders of Faith Communities urging HM Government to legislate against incitement to religious hatred.

2.3 Assembly-appointed ministries

2.3.1 Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, re-appointed the Revd Arnold Harrison to serve as Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod from 1 September 2004 until 29 February 2008.

2.3.2 On General Assembly's behalf, Mission Council re-appointed the Revd Dr Janet Tollington to the Glendyne Chair of Old Testament Studies at Westminster College, Cambridge, for a further period of seven years, from 1 September 2004 until 31 August 2011.

2.4 Assembly-appointed staff posts

2.4.1 Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appointed Mr John Brown as Secretary for Youth Work for a period of five years from 1 January 2004 until 31 December 2008.

2.4.2 Mission Council agreed that the post of CRCW Development worker be renewed for two years.

2.4.3 In view of the impending retirement of Mr Hilary Gunn on 31 August 2004, a group was appointed to review the post of Office and Personnel Manager at Church House. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, consequently agreed to redesignate the post as that of Human Resources and Facilities Manager; and to make an appointment.

3. Other Actions

3.1 The review requested by Mission Council in 2002 of the United Reformed Church's programmes and priorities has resulted in the process '**Catch the Vision for God's tomorrow**'. Its steering group reported to Mission Council regularly during the year. The Group's major piece of work has been the production of a Vision Statement, which was discussed in Church Meetings during January and February 2004. A major meeting between the Group and synod 'listeners' took place at the end of March, and the responses from local churches were collated by the end of April. That meant that the Group was unable to meet the deadline for the production of the Assembly Reports. However a report, with proposals for the next stage of the review, will be brought directly to General Assembly in July.

3.2 In view of the thoroughgoing nature of the review process, Mission Council asked the Staffing Advisory Group to undertake a review of all staff posts at Church House, with the aim of presenting a report

to Mission Council in October 2005. It was expected that any redesignation of posts should be agreed by 2007. Staff members, whose posts would normally be reviewed before that time (and provided that the relevant committees are willing), should be offered a contract extension until July 2007.

3.3 Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority in the United Reformed Church

3.3.1 A task group convened by the Revd Rachel Poolman produced a report which was discussed by Mission Council at several meetings. As a result, the Council asked various Assembly committees to attend to issues which were raised: the Doctrine Prayer and Worship committee was asked to give further consideration to the section on the nature of the Church. It is anticipated that the final document will be a valuable resource for those in conversations with ecumenical partners. Ministries and Training Committees were asked to create a development policy for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers, which would include arrangements for continuing ministerial education and appraisal; and the Section O Advisory Group was requested to produce a middle range disciplinary procedure that matches the present grievance procedure.

3.3.2 The report asked (and Mission Council agreed) that all councils and meetings of the United Reformed Church should examine their nominations procedures to ensure that the breadth of the Church's membership is appropriately reflected, as far as possible.

3.3.3 That part of the report which considered the role of synod moderators within a conciliar understanding of the Church, led Mission Council to agree a revised procedure for introducing ministers to pastorates (which is printed in full in Appendix 1).

3.4 Time for Action: sexual abuse, the Churches and a new dawn for survivors: A working group was established to give initial consideration to this report published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; and brought initial suggestions to Mission Council about the United Reformed Church's response and action. The Life and Witness Committee was asked to convene a meeting of relevant groups, committees and individuals to help Mission Council develop a safe practice policy for the United Reformed Church. Further proposals will be brought to Mission Council in time for the 2005 General Assembly.

3.5 **Good Practice (version 3):** Mission Council agreed that a copy of 'Good Practice-3' should be sent to all local churches and Mission projects.

3.6 Mission Council also appointed a **Criminal Records Bureau (Churches Agency for Safeguarding) Reference Group** to advise on child

protection issues, to maintain an overview of the policy offered to local churches regarding Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, and to help synods when they support local churches respond to child protection concerns as they implement Good Practice.

3.7 Proposed Change of name of Racial Justice Committee (Resolution 8)

3.7.1 The changing scene in which we live as the United Reformed Church requires us to make sure that our structures keep up to date with new developments and are able to respond to new opportunities for mission.

3.7.2 The Racial Justice Committee has a developmental role, not least in relationships between the United Reformed Church and new migrant congregations. Historically, links with the Ghanaian chaplaincies and congregations have been sustained through the Ecumenical Committee, as have connections to Christian groups from Pakistan. The International Exchange Sub-Committee is currently responsible for overseeing a chaplaincy to Taiwanese students and others in the UK jointly sponsored by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the United Reformed Church and the Council for World Mission.

3.7.3 The Racial Justice Committee increasingly describes its work as multicultural ministry, and now wishes to include that term in its title. As new migrant congregations seek membership of the United Reformed Church, there needs to be a co-ordinated approach as committees (through their secretaries) work with congregations, district councils, synod moderators, and others to help congregations from non-United Reformed Church backgrounds relate to the Church, and to help the structures and people of the United Reformed Church be more welcoming and aware in an increasingly multi-cultural context.

3.7.4 Although the proposals before Assembly may be regarded as 'housekeeping', they are steps towards change, enabling new opportunities for mission while at the same time maintaining an overview and ensuring accountability to the wider structures of the Church.

3.8 Mission Council set the basic ministerial stipend for 2004 at £18,576.

3.9 Mission Council notes the impending retirement of Mr Hilary Gunn as Office and Personnel Manager at Church House, whose work has included responsibility for the practical arrangements of running General Assembly. The Council expresses its thanks and offers its best wishes for the future. Mission Council also thanks Mrs Barbara Hedgecock for her term of service as minutes secretary. She is to be succeeded by the Revd Ken Forbes.

4. Reports of Advisory Groups to Mission Council

4.1 Resource Sharing Task Group: When the Resource Sharing Task Group last reported to the General Assembly in 2001, it was to convey the good news that all the synods had agreed to share 10% of their investment income in the year 2001. Concern had been expressed in the previous year's report (in 2000 – p.28) about the wide variation in manse accommodation standards and, largely through the meetings of the Synod Property, Legal, Administrative and Trust Officers, progress has been made towards the introduction of manse policies in the synods that aim to ensure that ministers of word and sacrament do not experience different standards of accommodation depending on the synod within whose ambit they serve. Last year's General Assembly resolution (no. 24) to adopt manse guidelines greatly assists this objective.

4.1.2 The General Assembly in 2002 resolved, without dissent, to ask the Resource Sharing Task Group to initiate a consultation between the synods on the advisability and possibility of a more complete sharing of the financial resources of the synods, with a view to a more radical and equitable distribution of such resources across the whole church. Representatives of all the synods have consulted together on three subsequent occasions with the purpose of reaching a positive response to the Assembly's challenge. The meetings have not been easy but, based on the trust that has been developed since 1996 and on the experience which has seen the amount of shared income increase from 2% to 10%, those present at the consultation held in October last year reached the conviction that the synods ought to work more closely together to strengthen each other in mission. This was expressed in a commitment to the objective of sharing all the income received by each synod by the year 2013. It was recognised that a number of difficulties would be faced in achieving this objective and work has continued, and will continue throughout 2004, to overcome remaining obstacles.

4.1.3 At their March 2004 meetings, eleven synods resolved to work towards greater sharing between the synods (seven voting 'nem con'). Synods had chosen different words to express that commitment, most referring to the 2013 target of achieving a more equitable distribution of financial resources across the whole church. Concerns expressed in the synod debates ranged from the difficulties that would be faced in the process, to the long period for its completion. Two synods will address the matter at their October 2004 meetings but will not allow the delay to interfere with their participation in the ongoing process of resolving outstanding details and working towards an agreement for sharing in 2005. At a time when the United Reformed Church is seeking to clarify its vision of God's purpose for this part of the Church, and is being encouraged to "ensure that

power is released to the places where the work of mission is done”, the decisions of the March synods are very good news indeed.

4.1.4 At the Assembly, Tony Burnham retires from the convenership of the task group after an extended term of more than eight years. Tony has led the work of resource sharing with characteristic vision and pragmatism. He has chaired the consultations with good humour and wisdom and always in the context of his gifted biblical insights. As the work of resource sharing moves on, the United Reformed Church will want to recognise its debt of gratitude for Tony's contribution to what has been achieved so far. Mission Council has appointed the Revd Elizabeth Caswell to succeed Tony Burnham and the task group looks forward to her leadership in what is clearly a new, and perhaps even more challenging, phase of its work.

4.2 The Ethical Investments Advisory Group

4.2.1 Resolution 56 of the 2002 Assembly gave a clear steer for work on ethical investment. Mission Council's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG) is able to report progress in each of the main areas it identified.

Assembly's first request was for EIAG to examine, in the light of the current United Reformed Church guidelines, the more detailed research and policies of some sister churches. EIAG has studied these and held discussions with Anglican and Methodist colleagues. We are also seeking feedback from Synod Church and Society Committees and others about the subjects of most concern to our members. It is hoped to offer some revised policy guidelines to a future Assembly.

Assembly's second request was to consider the scope for greater United Reformed Church participation ecumenically. The EIAG has reassessed the effectiveness of our present engagements. EIAG members have actively encouraged a new approach by the Church Investors Group, which has now been agreed. The Church Investors Group consists of representatives of major Christian denominations. It is a great opportunity for working together in the field of investment, and thus working from a position of combined strength. The United Reformed Church is represented on a steering group established in 2003, which is reshaping the Group so that it develops both as a forum for sharing ideas ecumenically and as a platform for acting in concert on matters of mutual concern. The changes should make the Church Investors Group the key place for inter-denominational discussion and action.

Assembly's third request was to consider giving day-to-day investment decisions to managers explicitly committed to a Christian ethos. At the end of 2003, The United Reformed Church Trust transferred the funds previously managed by a commercial bank into a Charities Investment Fund managed by CCLA

Investment Management Limited. The EIAG welcomes this move as being in the spirit of the Assembly request. CCLA's clients include some of the largest Anglican funds as well as large and small charities. They are well aware of Church concerns. Investing in a pooled fund means that the individual investment decisions will be taken by CCLA, but the EIAG will monitor the work of CCLA and offer comment to the Trust.

Although individuals are free to make whatever investment decisions they wish, the work of the EIAG has to take account of the legal requirements on Fund Trustees. These are equally important for those making decisions relating to other Trust Funds in Synods and elsewhere in the Church's life.

4.3 Section O Advisory Group

4.3.1 During the year the Section O Advisory Group continued its detailed consideration of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (Section O in the Manual of the United Reformed Church, known as the Section O Process).

4.3.2 Paragraph 9 of Part I states that cases must be judged by reference to the Basis of Union and in particular Paragraph 2 of Schedule E. This in turn refers to the responsibilities undertaken by ministers at ordination and sets out the criteria which they must apply in the exercise of their ministry. There is no reference, either in Schedule E or in Paragraph 9, to pre-ordination conduct, which might, had it been disclosed during the candidating process, have led to a person's being rejected for ministry.

4.3.3 As a result, should any such hitherto undisclosed conduct come to light subsequently, that conduct, however serious, could not under the present wording of Section O form the basis of a disciplinary case against the minister concerned. The proposed resolution (Resolution 11) to add Paragraph 9.2 to Part I is designed to bring such a case within the ambit of Section O.

4.3.4 The Section O Advisory Group has been considering the question of a minister's right to resign from the Roll of Ministers and how this impinges upon the Church's right to remove a minister from the Roll on disciplinary grounds through the due operation of the Section O Process. It has reached two conclusions. The first is that a minister's resignation does not become effective until it has been accepted by the District Council under its appropriate procedures – see *District Council Function (viii)*.

4.3.5 The second conclusion is that no minister is able to resign once a Section O case has commenced in respect of that minister by the calling in of the Mandated Group. The resolution (Resolution 13) to amend District Council Function (viii) is introduced to remove any inconsistency between that function and the Section O Process.

4.3.6 When the relevant functions of the District, Synod and General Assembly were drafted on the introduction of Section O, it was assumed that the disciplinary process would commence with the issue of the Referral Notice. It became apparent later that the whole process begins earlier than that with the calling in of the Mandated Group to conduct the Initial Enquiry and Section O was amended accordingly. The purpose of the remaining resolutions, apart from the final one correcting a clerical error in Synod function (viii), is to bring the Structure into line with Section O on this point.

4.3.7 When first instigated, Section O carried an Introduction, which was later omitted when the Guidelines were prepared. However, the first part

of the Introduction set the disciplinary process in its Biblical context and will be re-instated when the Manual is reprinted.

4.3.8 During 2003 the Advisory Group completed the series of Guidelines mentioned in last year's Report and these can be accessed on the Church's website.

4.3.9 This year the Advisory Group is running a Training Day for members of the Commission Panel and a series of Training Days for the members of Mandated Groups which will cover all thirteen Synods.

Resolution 6

Non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers

General Assembly agrees to extend the principles of non-stipendiary Ministry to CRCW ministry. The Assembly resolves that:

- a) **non-stipendiary CRCW candidates would be expected to follow the same training path as stipendiary CRCWs;**
- b) **the minimum age for commencement for training for non-stipendiary CRCW candidates shall be 21 years of age.**

Resolution 7

Basis of Union

General Assembly resolves to amend the Basis of Union and Structure of The United Reformed Church as follows (with additions and amendments shown in italics):

- a) **Add to the end of paragraph 22 of the Basis of Union (as agreed by General Assembly in 2003):**
"Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a District of area Council and in a context it has approved."
- b) **Amend paragraph B2(3)(A)(iii) on page B6 (July 2000 edition of the Manual) to read:**
"to appoint, or to concur in the appointment of, non-stipendiary ministers and church related community workers to their particular service and to review this service at stated intervals;"

1. Since the ministry of Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) was recognised by Assembly in 1987, the various moves have been made to bring the policies for the CRCW ministry closer to those for Ministers of Word and Sacraments. The two ministries are not identical or interchangeable but Mission Council believes a closer alignment is desirable where this is possible and helpful. In particular, Mission Council believes that restricting the opportunity for non-stipendiary service to Ministers of Word and Sacraments is an anomaly that should now be removed.

2. Mission Council has considered a detailed paper on the practical implications of having non-stipendiary CRCWs and how their ministry could be integrated into existing structures. Copies of an updated version of that paper are available from the Ministries Office.

3. Key points in the detailed proposals included:

- (i) All non-stipendiary CRCWs would need to be called, trained and qualified in the same way as stipendiary CRCWs. Training Committee is content with the budgetary implications.

- (ii) The minimum age for the commencement of training for non-stipendiary CRCWs should be the same as for stipendiary CRCWs.
 - (iii) Like some non-stipendiary ministers, some non-stipendiary CRCWs could be people working in their home neighbourhoods under the guidance of the local church and for an agreed number of hours per week.
 - (iv) Like some non-stipendiary ministers, some non-stipendiary CRCWs could be employed by agencies other than the United Reformed Church and express their ministry through that work.
 - (v) All non-stipendiary CRCWs would be members of their local District or Area Council and Synod.
4. Assembly is invited to agree to the principle of having non-stipendiary CRCWs in Resolution 6. If this is agreed, Resolution 7 would then start the process of amending the Basis of Union and Structure to enable this change to happen. If Resolution 7 is passed at this Assembly and ratified at the 2005 Assembly, further resolutions will then be brought to amend other Assembly policies to enact the intention of Resolution 6.

Resolution 8 Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

General Assembly agrees that:

- a) **the Racial Justice Committee be renamed the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee, with the secretaries for International Relations and Ecumenical Relations becoming members 'ex officio';**
- b) **the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry and Ecumenical Committees should work together to develop relations with new migrant churches, recognising that there may be reallocation of committee responsibilities in due course, which will evolve gradually through practice. The Nominations Committee should be consulted and briefed about the specific gifts and skills required to equip the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry committee to develop its new role;**
- c) **in order to facilitate change and exchange, the Convener of the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee shall be a member 'ex-officio' of the International Exchange Sub-Committee, and that the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee shall be represented on the Ecumenical Committee;**
- d) **an inter-committee forum should meet occasionally to discuss issues arising from the United Reformed Church's developing commitment to multicultural ministries. This will help avoid duplication of work, and provide opportunities for mutual accountability;**
- d) **the Mission Partners programme shall remain within the remit of the International Exchange Sub-Committee.**

Resolution 9 Budget for the year 2005

General Assembly accepts the budget for the year 2005, set out in Appendix 7 to the Book of Reports.

Resolution 10 Ratification of Section O Part I changes

(Resolution 9 2003)

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 2003 to make the following changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 1.2. Insert 'disciplinary' after the opening words 'Once the'

Paragraph 2

Insert '(whether or not on appeal)' after the words 'particular case'.

Paragraph 3

Insert the following additional definitions in their correct alphabetical positions and amend the sub-numbering of the other definitions as required:

'Initial Enquiry' shall mean the enquiry conducted by the Mandated Group in conjunction with the Moderator of the Synod during the period beginning when it is called in by the Moderator and ending when it serves either a Notice of Non-Continuance or a Referral Notice in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. 'Notice of Non-Continuance' shall mean a Notice served on the Moderator of the Synod by the Mandated Group at the conclusion of the Initial Enquiry to indicate that it does not intend to proceed further with the disciplinary case against the Minister.

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 4.1 Delete the current paragraph and replace with:

'Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph 4.4, appointment to the Commission Panel shall be by Resolution of the General Assembly on the advice of the Nominations Committee (or such other committee as may in the future perform the functions of the Nominations Committee), who shall in considering persons for appointment take into account (i) the need for balance and for a variety of skills and specialisations, particularly in the following areas – experience in ministerial oversight, theology and doctrine, law, counselling, psychology, mental health, experience in conduct of meetings and tribunals, and (ii) the advantages of including on the Commission Panel persons from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds.

Paragraph 4.2 Insert the words 'Subject to the age limit imposed by Paragraph 4.4,' before the words 'Members of the Commission Panel'

Paragraph 4.4 Insert a new Paragraph 4.4 'When any member of the Commission Panel reaches the age of seventy, s/he must forthwith resign from the Commission Panel and shall no longer be eligible to serve on any new Assembly Commission, but any person who reaches his/her seventieth birthday whilst serving on an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.

Paragraph 6

Paragraph 6.4 Delete all and replace with: 'Those charged under this Paragraph 6 with the appointment of the Assembly Commission shall (so far as possible) (i) appoint at least one man and at least one woman onto the Assembly Commission, and (ii) have regard to the nature of the case, the need for balance and the skills, specialisation and cultural understanding of the members of the Commission Panel.'

Paragraph 7

Paragraph 7.1.1 Delete all.

Paragraph 7.1.2 Re-number as 7.1.

Paragraph 8

Delete all and insert 'Procedural matters arising under the Section O Process shall in every case be dealt with in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.'

Paragraph 11

Paragraph 11.3 Add a new Paragraph 11.3 'No-one other than the Parties has any right of appeal from a decision of the Assembly Commission.'

Paragraph 12

Delete all and insert:

12.1 'The Appeals Commission for the hearing of each such appeal shall consist of the following five persons:

- (a) a Convener who shall be a member of The United Reformed Church (but not necessarily a member of the General Assembly) with legal and/or tribunal experience to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and
- (b) the Moderator of the General Assembly or if for any reason he/she should be unable to serve, a former Moderator of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly and
- (c) three other members of the General Assembly to be selected by the officers of the General Assembly.

12.2 'The relevant date for ascertaining whether persons qualify for appointment under Paragraph 12.1 is the date on which under the Rules of Procedure the Secretary of the Assembly Commission notifies the General Secretary that an appeal has been lodged against the decision of the Assembly Commission.'

12.3 'In selecting persons for appointment to the Appeals Commission in accordance with Paragraph 12.1(c) the officers of the General Assembly shall, so far as possible, apply the same criteria as are set out in Part I, Paragraphs 4.1 and 6.4, in relation to appointments to the Commission Panel and to Assembly Commissions.'

12.4 'All persons proposed for appointment to an Appeals Commission, in any capacity, are subject to Part I, Paragraph 7.1.'

Paragraph 18

Delete 'shall, if requested to do so, appoint a representative to attend any hearing conducted under the Section O Process for such purpose' and insert 'shall appoint a representative to attend the Hearing for such purpose, unless his/her attendance has been expressly dispensed with by the Assembly Commission or the Appeals Commission as the case may be.'

Paragraphs 21 & 22

Delete all and insert a new Paragraph 21

Save only as provided in Paragraph 21.2, this Part I of the Section O Process is subject to Paragraph 3(1) of the Structure.

21.2 Mission Council acting in the name of General Assembly has authority by single resolution of that Council to make as and when necessary and with immediate effect such changes to Part I as are, on the advice of the legal advisers to The United Reformed Church, required to bring the Section O Process into line with the general law of the land consequent upon any changes in legislation and/or case law.

All such changes to the Section O Process are made by Mission Council under Paragraph 21.2 shall be reported to the next annual meeting of the General Assembly.

Resolution 11

New changes to Section O Part I

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part I of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Paragraph 4.2

Add the following words at the end of this Paragraph: '...but any person who reaches the end of the term of his/her appointment on the Commission Panel whilst serving as a member of an Assembly Commission in a case in progress may continue so to serve until the conclusion of that case.'

Paragraph 9

The existing Paragraph 9 to become 9.1 and a new paragraph to be added as 9.2:

'9.2 As part of such consideration, the Assembly Commission or Appeals Commission shall be entitled to have regard to any conduct on the part of a Minister occurring prior to his/her ordination to the ministry which, in the Commission's view and when viewed in the light of Schedule E to the Basis of Union, would have prevented, or was likely to have prevented, him/her from becoming ordained, where such conduct was not disclosed by the Minister to those responsible for assessing his/her candidacy for ordination.'

[This resolution, if passed, will be subject to the constitutional rule for reference to Synods and ratification next year]

Resolution 12

New changes to Section O Part II

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to Part II of the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline:

Section A

Change the heading of Section A from 'Introduction' to 'General' to avoid confusion with the Introduction to the whole of Section O, which is being re-instated.

Paragraph B.6.2

Alter the wording in the brackets at the end of the paragraph to '(see also Paragraphs B.8.2 and B.11)'.

Paragraph B.8.1

At the end of the paragraph, add the following words: '(as to the contents of the written notice of suspension, see also Paragraph B.11)'.

Paragraph B.11

Add a new B.11 as follows:

'The Notice of Suspension, whether issued under Paragraph B.6.2 or Paragraph B.8.1, shall inform the Minister that, in accordance with these Rules of Procedure, any conduct on his/her part which breaches or contravenes Paragraph 4 of Schedule E to the Basis of Union may be taken into account by the Assembly Commission in reaching its decision under Paragraph 10 of Part I.'

Paragraph B.12

The existing B.11 to become B.12

Paragraph C.1.6

Add a new Paragraph C.1.6 as follows:

'On receipt of the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and any documents which may accompany it, provide the Mandated Group with copies thereof.'

Paragraph C.1.7

Add a new Paragraph C.1.7 as follows:

'In any case arising as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, where comments are received from either of the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3, provide the other party with copies thereof.'

Paragraph E.3.1

Replace the existing Paragraph E.3.1 with the following:

'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:

E.3.1.1 provide the Convener and the other members of the Assembly Commission with (i) copies of the Referral Notice, (ii) the Minister's response under Paragraph C.1.2 and (iii) any documents which may accompany it and

E.3.1.2 in the case of any Assembly Commission appointed as a consequence of a Notice of Reference back, provide the Convener and the other members thereof with copies of (i) the Notice of Reference back, (ii) the documents, statements and information delivered to the previous Assembly Commission in accordance with these Rules of Procedure and (iii) any comments received from the parties as a result of the invitation contained in Paragraph C.1.3 and

E.3.1.3 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, decide thereupon.'

Resolution 13 Changes to Structure regarding Resignation of Ministers

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

Paragraph 2(3)A(viii)

Insert the words 'not currently the subject of any case within the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline referred to in Function (xviii) below)' after the word 'ministers'.

Paragraphs 2(3)A(xviii), 2(4)A(xiv) and 2(5)A(xxiii)

In all these paragraphs, delete the words 'following initial enquiry' on the first line and add the words 'at the appropriate time as specified in that Process' at the end of the Paragraph.

Paragraph 2(3)(B)

Delete the existing Paragraph 2(3)(B) and replace it with the following:

B.1 'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the District Council shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

B.2 'The responsibility for calling in the District Council's Mandated Group to conduct an Initial Enquiry which marks the beginning of the Disciplinary Process rests with the Synod Moderator acting in consultation with such officers of the District Council as s/he considers appropriate.'

Paragraph 2(4)(B)

Delete the existing Paragraph 2(4)(B) and replace it with the following:

'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, the Synod shall not exercise any of its functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

Final unlettered paragraph immediately after Paragraph 2(5)A(xxiv)

Delete this paragraph and replace it with the following:

2(5)(B) 'As soon as any minister becomes the subject of a case against a minister under the Section O Process for Ministerial Discipline, neither General Assembly nor Mission Council on its behalf shall exercise any of General Assembly's functions in respect of that minister in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the due process of that case, provided that the provision of such pastoral care as shall be deemed appropriate shall not be regarded as a breach of this Paragraph.'

Paragraph 2(4)(A)(viii)

Amend the reference in this paragraph from Function (xv) to (xiv).

[This resolution will be subject to the constitutional rule for reference to Synods and ratification next year]

Resolution 14 Ratification of Westminster College Bursar

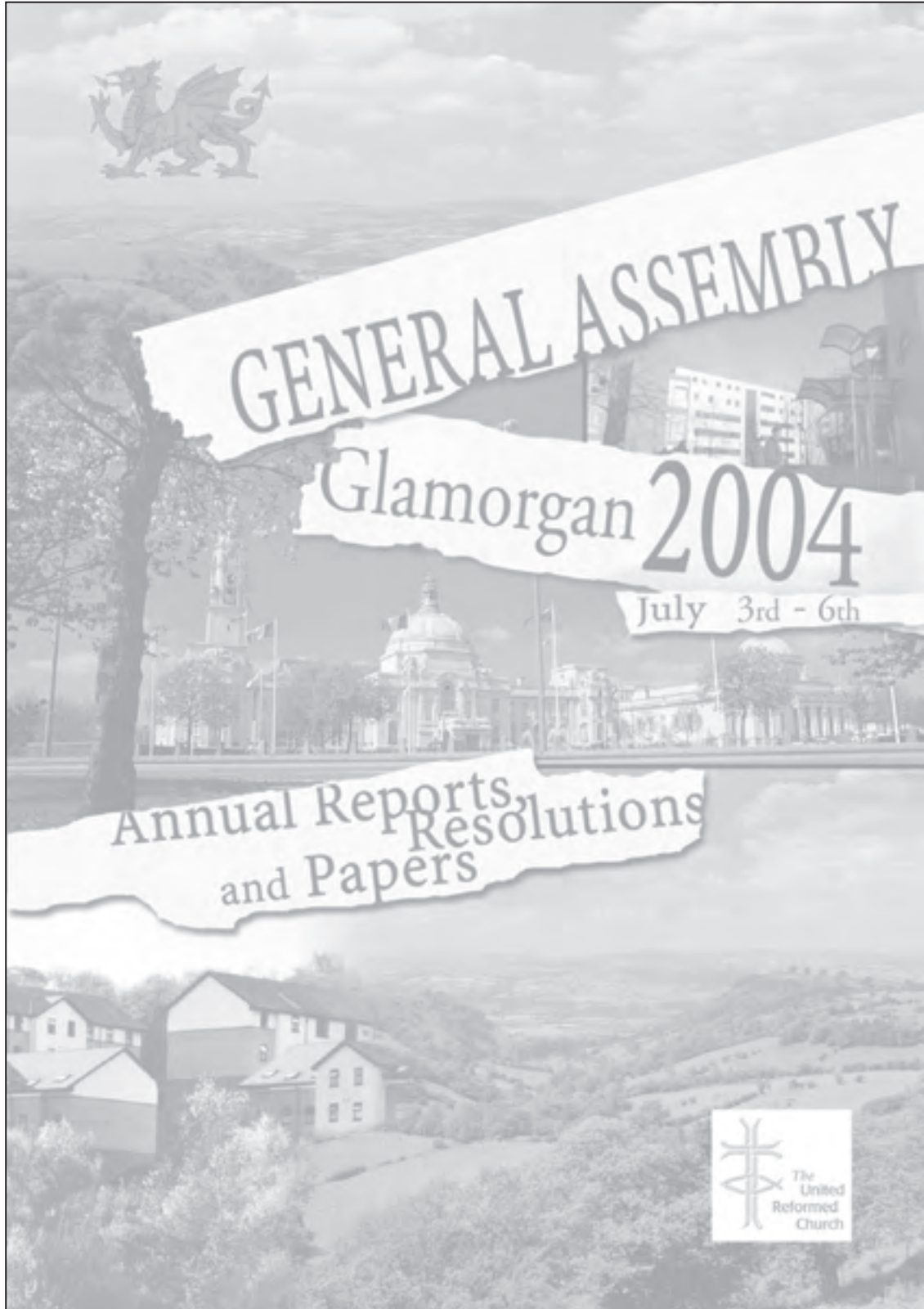
(Resolution 8 2003)

General Assembly agrees to ratify its decision of July 2003 to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church about the role of the Bursar of Westminster College.

Delete 'and Bursar' from General Assembly function (vi) and replace 'Board of Studies' and with 'Board of Governors' in that same function so that it reads:

'... to make regulations respecting Theological Colleges belonging to the United Reformed Church, to appoint the principal, professors and other members of the teaching staff, and Board of Governors, and to superintend their work'.

Committees



Assembly Arrangements

This Committee plans and budgets for General Assembly.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr William M McVey **Secretary:** Mr Hilary Gunn
Moderator, Moderator-elect, General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly,
Convener of Local Arrangements Committee for the relevant year

1. General Assembly 2006

The Committee brings a resolution that the Assembly of 2006 should be held at the University of Exeter from Friday 7th to Monday 10th July. **[Resolution 15]**

2. Mr Hilary Gunn – Secretary to the Assembly Arrangements Committee

Soon after the end of this Assembly, Hilary retires from the employment of the United Reformed Church following some 17 years of service. Others will want to pay tribute to his contribution to their particular area of responsibility. We note that four conveners of this committee, three General Secretaries, three Clerks of Assembly, numerous Moderators of Assembly, and about 11,000 members and guests of Assembly have – over the years – benefited from Hilary's contribution to the organisation of Assembly. In the main, Assembly runs smoothly; that it does so without too much apparent effort is a tribute to Hilary's accumulated knowledge and his steady hand on the details of the event. The committee, past and present, is very grateful for his service. We wish him well in his retirement.

3. The form of future General Assemblies

The committee has continued to address the form and cost of General Assembly. As the committee has stated before, we believe that any different arrangements for General Assembly should reflect a radical and comprehensive view of the governance of the church. Consequently the convener has made a submission to the "Catch the Vision" review group.

4. The cost of current General Assemblies – action taken

4.1 In the meantime the committee has been considering ways in which the cost of future Assemblies could be prevented from increasing at the current substantial rate. Assembly costs are:

York	2001	£185,000
St Andrews	2002	£265,000
Portsmouth	2003	£155,000
Glamorgan	2004	£248,000 (estimated)
Warwick	2005	£267,000 (estimated)

4.2 Various ideas have been considered but – either because they were more appropriately included in the radical and comprehensive view as noted above, or because they would have required an amendment to the Structure of the United Reformed Church – they have not been suggested.

4.3 Instead, the committee has implemented two immediate opportunities for Districts and Synods to reduce the financial cost of General Assembly:

4.3.1 Mission Council in January 2004 agreed to the proposal that:

"Mission Council requests district councils not to avail themselves of the right to fill vacant places in the General Assembly by making appointments from other districts within the province or nations."

This could achieve a modest reduction in the number of members of Assembly by abandoning the practice of filling vacancies in the District Council representation; such vacancies are habitually filled from within the Synod. The proposal does not require Districts or Synods to do something that is contrary to the instructions in the Manual or in Standing Orders. It merely requires synods not to pursue the opportunity that is provided.

4.3.2 Mission Council also agreed to the proposal that:

"Mission Council requests Synods to give careful consideration as to the necessity of filling all their allocated places in the General Assembly."

Synod membership of General Assembly consists not only of the Synod Moderator, the Clerk and the Treasurer – but also of three other people (there is a variation for the Synod of Scotland). This means that in total there are 72 people from the Synods (excluding Scotland) – over and above those coming from the Districts. We believe this to be excessively generous. We are aware that at least one Synod already restricts its number of representatives in the interest of economy. We applaud this.

4.4 At the time of writing this report, we do not know how many Districts and Synods have taken up these opportunities to save the church money.

**5. General Assembly 2005
– a more effective meeting?
better stewardship of our resources?**

5.1 The committee now makes a proposal that would return us close to the ratio of District Council representation that the United Reformed Church started with in 1972. This is a proposal which is capable of taking effect at General Assembly 2005 – that is, it does not require consideration under the 2-year rule as an amendment to the Structure of the United Reformed Church. **[Resolution 16]**

5.2 This resolution could result in a more effective Assembly and will moderate the very substantial cost of Assembly.

5.3 Membership of the United Reformed Church and representation at Assembly.

The number of possible members of Assembly has shown a net increase over the period 1972 to 2001 through the addition of further categories of members. At the same time the diminution in church membership has slightly reduced the number of members of Assembly. The reduction has been slight because the formula is linked also to the number of churches, which has not declined at anything like the same rate. The net result has been only a small total reduction in the number of those attending Assembly at the expense of the church.

Over the same period, membership of the United Reformed Church has declined from 192,000 members (1973) to 85,000 members (2003).

5.4 Ratio of representation

The ratio of representation at Assembly, which started at 3.65 per 1,000 church members, now stands at 7.65 per 1,000 church members.

Adoption of this resolution would result in a reduction of approximately 100 members of Assembly. The ratio of representation at Assembly would then become 6.47 per 1,000 church members.

5.5 Towards a more effective Assembly

This reduction in the size of Assembly could provide limited opportunities for adjustments to the style and practice of discussion; greater participation might be enabled. Fewer places might be easier to fill, but Synods and Districts would be challenged to ensure that their representation was wholly effective.

5.6 Cost

At 2005 costs, this reduction in District Council representation could save the church approximately £25,000. This might be regarded as only nibbling at the edges of the issue of Assembly. However, it does produce real savings at an early opportunity. More radical proposals could not take effect until 2007. By then, this measure alone could have saved the church about £60,000 – and our earlier measures could also have contributed additional financial savings.

5.7 Other members of Assembly

The committee has given consideration to the other categories of membership of Assembly and proposed various resolutions at Mission Council, which have been rejected. We are of the view that any other alterations can only be successfully accomplished as part of a radical and comprehensive review of the governance of the United Reformed Church. Consequently we do not propose any other adjustments at this time. Instead we remind Assembly of the suggestions set out in paragraph 4.3 above.

Resolution 15

General Assembly 2006

General Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2006 will meet at the University of Exeter from 7th-10th July.

Resolution 16

General Assembly Representation

General Assembly resolves, from the close of General Assembly 2004, to change the representation of district councils (ministerial and lay in equal numbers) from, “one representative per eight churches or part thereof plus one per 800 church members or part thereof” to “one representative per twelve churches or part thereof plus one per 1,200 church members or part thereof”.

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: *Revd Martin Camroux* **Secretary:** *Dr Andrew Bradstock*

Administrator: *Ms Wendy Cooper* **Programme Director, Commitment for Life:** *Mrs Anne Martin*
Mr Geoffrey Duncan, Revd Owiny Laber, Mr Simon Loveitt, Revd Alan Paterson, Revd Tjarda Murray,
Mrs Glenna Paynter, Miss Emma Pugh.

attending by invitation: *Mr Graham Handscomb (Free Churches Education Committee),*
Mr George Morton (CTBI Environmental Issues Network), Revd Brenda Russell (Churches Together for Healing).

1. Following up on Assembly 2003

1.1 Millennium Development Goals

1.1.1 The idea of a world without poverty has always seemed utopian, yet it is spoken of today as a serious possibility. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, which have informed our campaigning work for several years and to which we pledged our support as a Church at Assembly last year, set a target date for freeing the world from extreme poverty and hunger: 2015. They also commit signatories – most of the major global organisations and many governments, development agencies, faith movements and other bodies – to work to increase access to education (particularly for girls), reduce infant and maternal mortality rates, and combat AIDS, malaria and other diseases by, if not before, that date.

1.1.2 These Goals should give us renewed zeal as we work, through Commitment for Life and in other ways, to see God's kingdom reflected in our world. The God to whom both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures attest manifestly calls for justice rather than charity – for societies, not where the poor rely on the good will of the better off for their survival, but in which there *are* no poor to seek our charity [cf. Deuteronomy 15:4]. So to seek to make the Goals a reality is entirely consistent with our calling as people of God, as is our commitment to see poverty overcome in our country.

1.1.3 But 'making the Goals a reality' is easier said than done: what can a church, small in size and resources, do practically toward that end? One important task is to monitor progress towards the Goals and hold those committed to their realization to account for their action (or inaction). This we seek

to do through the **Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition** in which we have played an active role since its inception in 2001. Another is to keep alive the 'big picture' or 'vision' which can so easily fade when setbacks are encountered. A third is to step up our campaigning and lobbying. Since politicians maintain that 'political will' is the key ingredient in the Goals' success, then, with others of like mind, we should seek to show that there is *popular* will. An excellent model is Jubilee 2000 which provoked a phenomenal shift in popular knowledge and awareness of the issue of debt. Since tackling poverty is a complex business, involving action on debt, aid, trade justice, fair trade, arms sales and many other issues, we join enthusiastically in campaigns co-ordinated by the **Trade Justice Movement, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Fairtrade Foundation, Tobin Tax Network** and others.

1.1.4 2005 will be a key year in development terms: the G8 leaders will meet in the UK for the first time since that memorable weekend in Birmingham in 1998; the UK will have the presidency of the EU for the second half of the year; the Commission for Africa will report; and it will be twenty years since Live Aid and ten years to 2015. This should inspire us to double our resolve to achieve major breakthroughs in important areas. We shall certainly work to ensure that the churches' shared concern about the moral dimension of poverty will be clearly heard during that momentous year, particularly by world leaders. We also remember Clare Short's challenge to us at Assembly last year, not to be satisfied with doing a bit more campaigning and giving a bit more money but to seek to re-orient ourselves as a Church totally committed to justice.

1.2 Ethics of the new warfare

1.2.1 A no less challenging task was presented to the Church and Society Committee by the resolution asking us 'to explore and prepare a report on the ethics of warfare for the twenty-first century'.

1.2.2 Assessing work already being undertaken in this area has been an important first step, and, in the spirit of the resolution, material, advice and support from ecumenical partners here and overseas have been sought and obtained. Much invaluable work collecting data and making contacts has been done by the Secretary for International Relations, with whose committee we are working closely on this project. The involvement of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is also proving very helpful and constructive.

1.2.3 Although it is not possible to say what form the final report will take, or to what uses it will be put, the topic is an immensely important one about which the churches ought to, and will have, much to say.

2. JustShare

2.1 Taking the debate about globalisation and social justice to the City is a vital part of the Church's commitment to tackle poverty, and this we do through JustShare, a coalition of churches and Christian agencies founded in 2001. JustShare's programme includes public debates, boardroom discussions and 'street-level' events on May Day, which this year included a 'sermon for the City' on the steps of the Royal Exchange followed by an open forum, and, for the third year running, fair trade stalls outside City churches. Public lunchtime discussions in St Mary-le-Bow Church, Cheapside, have brought together politicians, bankers, academics, church and agency leaders and journalists to debate topics such as corporate social responsibility, debt and other development-related issues.

3. Assets for Life

3.1 Poverty, hardship and marginalization are experienced by people in our own neighbourhoods as well as in the developing world. With the Church Related Community Work programme and Toc H we have produced a valuable resource for churches wanting to become more involved in serving their own local community. By examining a variety of projects that churches are undertaking in their local areas, and presenting them in a workbook and video, 'Assets for Life' aims to resource, encourage and inspire churches already active in neighbourhood renewal, those considering being active, and those for whom the concept might still be unfamiliar. We look forward to launching this pack at Assembly and to its being available for churches to use.

4. Commitment for Life

4.1. Challenge

4.1.1 At Assembly last year Clare Short electrified those who heard her: 'Now is the time for people who say they believe in Jesus Christ to really mean it' she said, challenging us to rediscover a sense of purpose through the struggle for justice and fairness in the world. Commitment for Life has been galvanized to respond to that, knowing also that the General Secretary was inundated with messages following up on this topic. So began a process of strengthening the work of justice in our church, our task being to resource churches to campaign for justice and fairness. Our strapline is 'The United Reformed Church working for justice and peace in the world'.

4.1.2 The key areas for our focus include Fairtrade; Trade Justice; debt relief; poverty elimination (achieving the Millennium Development Goals) and recognising that global inequality also impacts on our own communities in the UK. Other issues we address are: the struggle for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine; HIV/AIDS; and environmental sustainability. We continue to update churches about our Christian Aid partners in one of four countries: Zimbabwe, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jamaica and Bangladesh. We recognise that churches might take up part, but not all, of this agenda.

4.1.3 The assertion in the 'Catching the vision' statement that we are called to be a Church which is 'centred upon the gospel and the proclamation of its message of freedom and justice' and the call to make a visible difference showed us that the context of our work is changing. Speaking in October 2003, David Cornick said 'We need to continually be reminded that being "in Christ" means transcending narrow nationalisms and cultural constructs – including economic and political systems which are intended to advantage me and disadvantage my sister.' We discover anew that our self-interest is not what counts in the eyes of God.

4.1.4 Over the past year, Commitment for Life has worked increasingly closely with the World Church programme, producing a series of 'Going Global' materials for harvest, Advent and Lent and a series of topical leaflets. This year we will jointly produce the Church's leaflet for 2004 under the heading 'The United Reformed Church working for justice and peace in the world, through Commitment for Life and Belonging to the World Church'. This offers an opportunity to explore the United Reformed Church's response to global issues and overseas partner issues and to see how material and information from the two programmes can build and support each other. We regard the covenant for justice produced by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as an important document to help us all reflect on our faith and our actions for economic justice and the environment. (See Appendix 3)

4.1.5 A World Church solidarity visit to Zimbabwe in April included a visit to Silveira House. A group of six Advocates are due to visit the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) and Christian Aid's other partners in April. These are dark and difficult times for both places but the sense of sharing with them is deeper. Our Bangladeshi partners visited the Synod of Scotland in September 2003 and toured churches. This October we shall have visitors from PARC to speak at two Synods. We are glad to have this opportunity to help people gain a deeper understanding of our partners.

4.1.6 During the year, Fairtrade gained an ever-higher profile amongst the general public and in our churches. We co-ordinated the Church Action Guide for Fairtrade Fortnight which was used by all the churches and agencies and helped to establish the criteria for being a Fairtrade Church as well as a Fairtrade Synod. By March 2004 all but one of our Synods had raised the issue of Fairtrade and were moving along a path to becoming 'Fairtrade Synods'. Many people from our Church are also involved in helping their town or city become Fairtrade. The contribution of the churches in this growing movement is readily acknowledged by the Fairtrade Foundation and we trust that our support will be sustained and develop.

4.1.7 Awareness of issues around Trade Justice is growing, as stories circulate of subsidized goods from the European Union and United States dominating markets across the globe and forcing local producers out of the business. At Cancun, the World Trade Organization meeting ended without agreement because the rich nations insisted on pressing forward on four new issues, before agreeing to sort out failures to implement reforms in the agricultural sector. One significant success has been the backing down of our Government on two of the new issues, including investment. The World Development Movement leads the campaign to keep water out of private control, which the EU is increasingly pressing for under GATS. This important campaign for economic justice carries on and will be a key focus in 2005.

4.1.8 As mentioned above (1.1.4), 2005 is being identified as a major year of opportunity in which to tackle poverty in the world. Challenged by the Chancellor to back his ideas for a doubling of aid money, the development agencies have come together to plan for a massive campaign for 2005 around the elimination of poverty. The objectives are higher levels of financing for development (lest we fail to achieve the Millennium Development Goals) and also trade justice. The intention is that this campaign should be *unprecedented in size and scope* and we feel that there is a unique role that the churches can play. At the time of writing, an overarching slogan had yet to emerge.

4.2 Giving, partners and administration

4.2.1 The number of participating churches has grown and at the time of writing (March 2004) stands at 610, with several churches in the Synod of Scotland now participating. Giving to Commitment for Life grew by 7% last year to £564,000, revealing truly sacrificial giving on the part of many churches. This increase has enabled a larger than ever sum to be sent to Christian Aid for the work of our partners, and to the World Development Movement for their advocacy in the corridors of power.

4.2.2 We continue to send fresh material to churches including a Lent resource this year. 'Moving Stories' is an e-mail resource we began compiling in 2003 to pass on the stories we receive, responding to the crisis in Israel/Palestine. We share, not only stories of suffering and courage, but actions by peacemakers and activists, such as the Ecumenical Accompaniers sent by EAPPI programme of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) to witness for peace amongst both Israeli and Palestinian organisations. With resources available on a range of issues, we encourage all churches (not just Commitment for Life ones) to raise awareness on global issues of justice and peace.

4.2.3 The programme remains lively and responsive. Thanks must be given for the wonderful support at the centre from Michael Hopkins; the hard-working committee members; and the energetic advocacy from a loyal and passionate team of some fifty Synod Advocates and others like Val Morrison who copy edits 'Moving Stories'.

4.2.4 Ecumenical links are increasingly strong, with Fairtrade as a valuable ecumenical tool. United Methodist churches receive materials from Commitment for Life and the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The Baptist Union of Great Britain will be launching 'Just Life', a joint scheme with Christian Aid, in October 2004. 'Just Life' has been modelled on Commitment for Life because of the success of our programme.

4.3 In conclusion

'One of the strengths of Commitment for Life has been the sharing of powerful stories about real people. Those stories bring home the issues of peace with justice in ways that engage interest and involvement. Commitment for Life is, therefore, truly a Kingdom programme. It reinforces the view that when people understand realities and see possibilities of change, they will respond. It is encouraging to know that increasing numbers of churches are taking part. Following Clare Short's prophetic challenge at 2003 General Assembly, I very much hope that the number of participating churches will continue to increase.'

Alasdair Pratt, Moderator of General Assembly 2003/4.

5. Peace and Peacemaking

5.1 Members of the United Reformed Church Peace Fellowship joined in the annual walk round the embassies of the 'Nuclear Weapons States', the three countries who have not signed up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the embassies of the New Agenda Coalition. We have publicized the 2003 Assembly resolution on the ethics of warfare among other peace organisations that have contributed to the report.

5.2 We were represented at a service of remembrance and reconciliation for those who died in the war with Iraq. Our annual conference was well attended and we were urged by Fred Kaan to speak out challengingly for peace and reconciliation. We took part in the Holy Innocents Day Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields, remembering child victims of war. We continue to urge the United Reformed Church and synods to dis-invest from companies in the business of arms trading. The United Reformed Church is now a member of the CTBI Decade to Overcome Violence Working Group. We are all called to be peacemakers in a world broken by violence and conflict.

6. AIDS Working Group

6.1 The group continues in its task of resourcing ministers and congregations in a greater awareness of the devastating affects of the HIV/AIDS virus both globally and in the UK. While promoting the excellent materials available through the Commitment for Life programme, and from other churches and agencies, the group has decided to focus its current work on the UK dimension.

6.2 Representatives of the Methodist Church have now attended two meetings and they are keen to work with us in the future. We produced a joint leaflet, 'Speak out about HIV/AIDS', containing information and a directory of resources. This was distributed to all churches earlier in the year. We are keen to continue and increase ecumenical co-operation. The Methodist representatives are informally exploring within their structures the possibility of this becoming a joint United Reformed Church-Methodist Working Group, hopefully becoming more ecumenical in due course.

6.3 In our churches, we are avoiding talking about sex, violence and sexuality, all of which are intrinsic to humanity, God and AIDS. In the Working Group we seek to provide opportunity for further exploration of these issues, possibly through an open event in Spring 2005.

7. Health and Healing

7.1 During the past year the group Churches Together for Healing, which now has representatives from eleven denominations, has been seeking recognition as a Coordinating Group within Churches Together in England. This recognition has now been

given and we are rejoicing that we are recognized as part of a much bigger ecumenical group. We go on seeking to encourage denominations that do not yet have a representative to appoint someone to come and share. Our representatives are the Revd Brenda G Russell and the Revd Delia Bond.

7.2 We have recently changed our Chairperson, from Brenda Russell to Christine Pocock (who represents Ecumenical Hospital Chaplaincy work), and Secretary, from Beatrice Brandon (one of the Editors of the Anglican, *A Time to Heal*) to Revd Elsie Howell (one of the Baptist Representatives).

7.3 Information is being gathered which gives a definition of each denomination's understanding of the Ministry of Christian Healing. With this information we shall have a better understanding of each other's way of working within this part of the churches' life.

7.4 Later in the year a meeting is planned between members of Churches Together for Healing and the coordinators within the Acorn Trust. We go on seeking ways to help those with an interest in the Healing Ministry and would value an indication of what might be helpful.

7.5 Alongside this work the Methodist and United Reformed Health and Healing representatives will be having a gathering in Stafford in May when we shall have speakers and share information and experiences, seeking to support each other.

8. Environmental Issues Network

8.1 The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Environmental Issues Network (EIN) provides the focus for United Reformed Church work on the environment. The EIN brings together representatives with environmental interests from the denominations and Christian environmental organisations. Global concerns about climate change have been dominant in discussions, particularly related to the revised World Council of Churches report *Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change*.

8.2 Churches are asked to take part in Operation Noah, an initiative of Christian Ecology Link, on climate change. This comprises a campaign for international action on global warming, individual action such as changing to electricity from renewable sources, and a commitment to increase public awareness of the dangers of global warming. Operation Noah will be launched at Coventry Cathedral on Saturday 9 October 2004.

8.3 Eco-congregation, the programme in which churches can improve their environmental habits, moves to a new relationship with the Arthur Rank Centre and the programme extends in Scotland and Wales. The related Black-Majority Churches Environmental Project developed environmental community work.

The Revd Dr David Pickering will end his work for Eco-congregation in 2004 after five years establishing the programme. His commitment and enthusiasm have been the reason for the successful development of Eco-congregation and the greater activity of the EIN.

9. Criminal Justice

9.1 The Churches' Criminal Justice Forum (CCJF) is a network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, receiving funding from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation's Rethinking Crime and Punishment project. Mrs Wilma Frew, a magistrate and former Moderator of General Assembly, was recently appointed to represent the United Reformed Church on this body.

9.2 One of the Forum's main concerns is prisons, with prison conditions, rehabilitation of offenders, education and training within prisons, the care of prisoners' families, prison chaplaincy and community chaplaincy dominating the agenda. A publication entitled *What can I do?*, detailing the many ways volunteers can help with the criminal justice system, was launched recently. It has been very well received and has been praised by, among others, the Minister for Prisons and Probation, Paul Goggins MP. The Forum has also considered the recently published Carter Report 'Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime' and the Government response to it. The Report gives a clearly presented overview of the criminal justice system at present and contains some proposals for changes in emphasis in sentencing for the future – moving from custody to more rigorous community penalties where possible. Its main recommendation is for one National Offender Management Service to integrate all the agencies currently involved in the various aspects of punishment and rehabilitation.

10. The rise of the extreme right

10.1 Aware that significant European and local elections were coming up in June, the Church and Society and Racial Justice committees jointly tabled a resolution at January Mission Council noting with concern the rise of 'extreme right-wing and racist political parties' and affirming that 'membership or any form of support for organisations such as the British National Party is incompatible with Christian discipleship'. The resolution also celebrated our increasing number of multi-ethnic congregations and called on local churches to continue to practise and promote racial justice and inclusion and encourage voting during the forthcoming elections. It was carried unanimously and has been circulated widely to churches and the press. Similar public statements around the same time were made by the Methodist Church and the Synod of the Church of England.

11. World Alliance of Reformed Churches Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life

11.1 At last year's General Assembly the following resolution (resolution 31) was passed:

General Assembly draws the attention of the councils and appropriate committees of the church to 'Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life', invites them (as a matter of priority) to find space to discuss and reflect on it, and instructs the Church and Society and Ecumenical Committees to collate responses to the document for report to the 2004 General Assembly.

11.1.1 In response the statement produced by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Appendix 3) was circulated to synods and districts through the networks of the International Relations and Church & Society offices with a request for comments. It was also discussed at the Ecumenical and Church & Society committees, at the Advisory Group on Faith and Order, and at the October meeting of Mission Council. The collated response below represents in the main the discussion at Mission Council (only two districts having submitted written responses), and the subsequent discussion in the Ecumenical Committee as it considered a draft response prepared by the Secretary for International Relations in consultation with the officers of the Church & Society Committee.

11.2 Response to Faith Stance Statement

11.2.1 The United Reformed Church welcomes the *Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life* statement produced by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) as a contribution to the *Covenanting for Justice* process. We have discussed it in our councils and committees and offer the following comment as our contribution to the ongoing debate.

11.2.2 Listening to the voices of our sisters and brothers in the South we hear their pain and their cry for justice, but find this somewhat obscured in the complexity of the statement's language. In particular the undifferentiated use of theological and economic reasoning (sometimes in the same sentence) often induced a negative response in many of those who read the statement as they misunderstood the point being made. That said, many commented that they felt compelled to engage with the statement even whilst its language was not their language.

11.2.3 Some concern was expressed that the statement was too simplistic in its analysis of the global economy and the part we all (from North and South) play in it. Whilst the majority of the victims of economic injustice are to be found in the South, they are also here in the North and likewise the beneficiaries are not confined to any

particular continent. Furthermore as churches we need to recognise our own complicity with the existing systems, being for the most part beneficiaries (Northern churches through their investments and Southern churches in receipt of funding derived from these investments – member bodies of the Council for World Mission being a particularly good example of this).

11.2.4 Some respondents felt that the statement reflected an ideology that was not helpful for engaging with present day realities.

11.2.5 Many felt that modelling the 'Our Covenant for Life' on the Ten Commandments was not helpful, preferring instead to have something more positive or constructive – a statement of what we commit ourselves to, rather than what we reject: an affirmation of life. Or, if we state what it is that we reject or repent of, what is it that we affirm in its place? What is our good news, our hope for the world today?

11.2.6 In this respect many noted some of the ways in which we, in the United Reformed Church, are seeking to respond to global injustice, in particular through our Commitment for Life programme. We also note our draft vision statement, which states: 'We are called by God to be a church which is centred upon the gospel and the proclamation of its message of freedom and justice ... We will seek, visibly and recognizably to make a difference to our communities and our society, in the name of Jesus Christ.' And the second of our three ecumenical principles, adopted at our Assembly in 2001 is 'to proclaim more clearly, in word and deed, that in Christ we are one World Church family living in a world which God loves, and to celebrate the rich

diversity of cultures, languages and church traditions, and to seek, as appropriate to work with members of other faith communities for the promotion of biblical values of love, peace and justice.'

11.2.7 In this context we offer our comment, recognising the real pain of many in the world today and our own commitment to work for justice. We therefore hope that WARC can arrive at a statement which simply and clearly offers a covenant which sets out our commitment to God and to one another to work for justice in the world. Micah put it most succinctly when he said 'what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8), which is why for many years we included it on United Reformed Church membership certificates.

11.3 Subsequent Developments

11.3.1 As part of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches Covenanting for Justice process the United Reformed Church, with assistance from some of the other British and Irish member bodies of WARC, hosted a WARC Members Gathering at London Colney in February, at which a new Faith Stance statement was agreed (Appendix 3, Document 2), which will be presented to WARC's General Council in Accra, Ghana in August for adoption by the World Alliance as its Faith Stance on Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth. This statement, which has been considered by the Church & Society Committee, is presented here in line with the spirit of last year's resolution, giving Assembly the opportunity to voice its views which will help inform our representatives to the WARC General Council.

Resolution 17 2005 Campaign to Double Aid and Make Trade Just

General Assembly

- a) **notes with approval plans for a major mobilization to fight poverty in 2005 incorporating efforts to ensure that the finance is available to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and a concerted campaign to make trade rules work in the interest of poor nations;**
- b) **pledges its support for this mobilization and for ecumenical action within it.**

1.1 Reflecting its concern for global justice, General Assembly 2003 formally endorsed the Millennium Development Goals. These Goals have been adopted by the global community and set targets to ensure that, by 2015, every child has schooling, avoidable infant and maternal mortality is prevented, more people have access to clean water and poverty is halved. The United Nations has estimated that, if the Goals are to be achieved, aid must be increased from the current level of just over \$50 billion per year to \$100 billion each year until 2015. The danger of not realising the international promises made is very real.

1.2 The UK Government is committed to reaching the target of spending 0.7% of national income on aid. However, a co-ordinated effort by all donor governments is required to raise the levels of aid significantly in the short run so as to impact on tackling poverty NOW. The evidence is of good returns on aid spent on poverty reduction programmes, especially where recipient governments support such strategies. With other developed countries the UK Government is creating an International Finance Facility (IFF), designed to double global development aid from US\$50 billion today to US\$100 billion a year in the years to 2015.

The Facility would move the developed world closer towards the international target of spending 0.7% of national income on aid and help to improve the way aid works. Aid is needed to build the infrastructure, create an educated and healthy workforce, develop systems to deter corruption, and to create an environment where trade can be increased.

1.3 The 2005 campaign encompasses a concern to see fairer rules governing global trade, so carrying forward the work of the Trade Justice Movement which comprises 60 organisations including Christian Aid, the World Development Movement and ourselves. Talks at the World Trade Organisation will progress during the coming year, but a unique opportunity exists for the UK government to give leadership in this process

and ensure that the rhetoric of a 'development' round becomes a reality and the interests of poorer nations are safeguarded.

1.4 All the major development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are in the throes of planning a co-ordinated campaign for 2005, using existing plans such as Comic Relief Day, the Week of Global Action for Trade Justice (10-16 April) and the G8 Summit in the UK in June. The intention is that this campaign will be unprecedented in size and scope, be populist in its message but seek to see tangible results. At the time of going to print a catchy title had not yet been agreed on. We are working ecumenically towards a specific contribution from the churches to the 2005 campaign.

Resolution 18

Commitment for Life

General Assembly

- a) **welcomes the continuing and significant growth in the number of local churches participating in Commitment for Life and the consequent increase in funds raised and campaigning activity;**
- b) **recognizes the personal effort in promoting the programme put in by advocates in each synod and the effective work of the Director and Programme Assistant;**
- c) **notes that although there is a continuing focus on partners, through Christian Aid, in four countries, there is an increased and growing emphasis on campaigning for economic justice;**
- d) **notes the closer relationship between Commitment for Life and the International Relations office and commends to churches the new leaflet produced jointly by both programmes;**
- e) **agrees that the disbursement of Commitment for Life income shall remain at 75% going to our partners via Christian Aid, 10% for World Development Movement and 15% for Grants and Advocacy;**
- f) **therefore urges non-participating churches, large and small, to join the Commitment for Life programme, a mission priority of the church, and in the work for justice and peace.**

Resolution 19

The Environment

General Assembly

- a) **affirms its commitment to the Five Marks of Mission with their call to the people of God to be faithful stewards of God's creation and to seek to sustain and renew the life of the earth;**
- b) **welcomes and endorses 'An environmental policy for the United Reformed Church';**
- c) **commends churches that have engaged with the United Reformed Church 'Roots and Branches' pack and the subsequent ecumenical 'Eco-Congregation' project; congratulates Zion United Reformed Church Northallerton and Christ Church URC/Methodist Church Ross-on-Wye on gaining the Eco-Congregation Award; and encourages other churches to follow their lead;**
- d) **pledges its support for Operation Noah, an initiative of the Christian Ecology Link seeking to raise awareness of, and promote action around, the issue of climate change.**

An Environmental Policy for the United Reformed Church

1 Introduction

1.1 For the past five or more years the United Reformed Church has been engaged in a thorough examination of its ideas of mission and the degree to which ideas are turned into reality in the life of the Church. One of the tools used has been *The Five Marks of Mission*, first formulated by the Lambeth Conference of 1988 and then endorsed in their present form in 1997 by the Forum of Churches Together in England:

- to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom;
- to teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
- to respond to human need by loving service;
- to seek to transform unjust structures of society;
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

1.2 General Assembly adopted the Five Marks in 1999. These principles need to be translated into policy and an agenda for the church. Church and Society has prepared the following environmental policy in response to the fifth 'mark', 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation; to sustain and renew the life of the earth'. It is offered to Assembly for discussion and (hopefully) adoption.

1.3 It is clear from all that we affirm that care for creation, a just sharing of the world's resources, and a concern for the environment are fundamental gospel commitments. We acknowledge the work and effort already undertaken by some of our local churches on environmental/creation care issues and, noting the significant impact that this has had on their mission, believe that a far greater number should be encouraged to give expression to their Christian faith in this way. Assembly is therefore invited to reflect upon and to affirm the following policy statement in order that it may guide thinking and practice within our local churches, districts, synods, colleges and national church life and practice.

2 Our Stewardship of Creation

2.1 The Basis of Union, paragraph 17, affirms that the United Reformed Church believes '...in the one living and true God, creator, preserver and ruler of all things in heaven and earth, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...' God entrusts creation to our stewardship (Genesis 1-2), and in Christ wills to reclaim it from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:19-25). Discipleship involves caring for creation so that future generations (whom God also loves) can enjoy it and benefit from it.

2.2 **We affirm** that Christian mission includes caring for God's earth and of all creation. It includes sharing in putting right the relationships within God's creation that have gone wrong, and working within the

church and with partners outside the church to grow towards justice and good stewardship as envisaged in the Biblical vision of the world as it is meant to be.

2.3 **We know** that human activity has contributed to the degradation of the earth in its land, seas and atmosphere, and that this is not the will of God. **We believe** that this degradation limits the attainment of the fullness of life that God wills for all creation, and is a sin for which we should seek forgiveness. It also imposes most heavily upon the peoples of the developing countries of the world and is part of the intrinsic injustice to which we bear witness.

2.4 In fulfilling our commitment to our calling **we challenge and encourage** our churches and members to care for the earth by following sustainable practice and by taking into account global and local environmental considerations for present and future generations

- in the conservation and use of resources in church life and at home;
- in following a more sustainable lifestyle;
- in active involvement in community initiatives aimed at sustaining and renewing the environment;
- in concerns for action on global environmental issues.

2.5 To this end we should have regard to

- the challenge of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs;
- the potential for harnessing the skills, expertise and enthusiasm of the members of our congregations;
- the opportunities for co-operation in joint initiatives with other congregations, including ecumenical joint action, schools and secular organisations;
- the actions in one place that may have an effect in other places;
- the valuable contribution of small steps by individuals as well as major initiatives.

3 Our Environmental Objectives

3.1 In order to work out our faith and fulfil our responsibility for the stewardship of God's creation, we commit ourselves to the following actions:

3.2 Awareness and Commitment

- promoting awareness among our congregations of these principles and objectives and of the values underpinning them;
- ensuring that all staff members of the United Reformed Church, its synods and colleges are familiar with this environmental commitment and its objectives, and encouraging them to work towards its implementation;

- encouraging United Reformed Churches in their activities to comply with all relevant environmental recommendations for good practice.

3.3 Energy and Water

- ensuring energy is used efficiently and whenever possible conserving and reducing its use;
- encouraging the increased use of renewable energy, especially green electricity using water efficiently and with care;
- preventing pollutants from entering the drainage system.

3.4 Waste

- reducing the production of material waste including unnecessary packaging;
- encouraging the re-use, repair and re-cycling of materials including organic waste;
- disposing of waste in a safe and responsible way;
- adopting environmentally sensitive purchasing policies, for example recycled paper.

3.5 Materials and Resources

- buying products which are made in accordance with the principle of using material in a sustainable way and using locally-made or produced goods and food as far as this is possible and practicable;
- buying products from sources that adhere to principles of fair trade, especially mindful of those within poorer countries;
- taking into account the lifetime costs and embodied energy of materials when repairing, altering or rebuilding premises;
- offering electronic communication as an alternative to paper for those who are suitably equipped.

3.6 Natural and Built Environment

- taking appropriate opportunities to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment;
- engaging with local planning developments where these affect the environment;
- encouraging the renewal and enhancement of the urban environment;
- being sensitive to the impact of church activities on the local environment;
- ensuring church-owned land is used in ways that will protect the environment.

3.7 Travel

- making every effort to reduce air pollution and energy consumption resulting from the use of cars and planes by avoidance of unnecessary travel and the use of energy-efficient vehicles;
- exploring undertaking the work of the denomination and local church in ways which reduce the need for travel, particularly by car and plane, and encouraging the use of public transport;
- sharing car transport whenever possible.

3.8 **We affirm** that the earth belongs to God and hold to a vision of a world that reflects the glory of God. So together we will celebrate all that is done and achieved in fulfilling our human responsibility for the care and stewardship of creation.

3.9 We recognise and commend

- *Eco-Congregation*, an environmental toolkit for local churches which was established by the partnership of the Environmental Issues Network of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and ENCAMS. Eco-Congregation now operates in England and Wales from the Arthur Rank Centre and in Scotland from a partnership between the Church of Scotland's Society, Religion and Technology Project and Keep Scotland Beautiful. (www.ecocongregation.org)
- *Operation Noah*, an initiative of the Christian Ecology Link seeking to raise awareness of, and promote action around, the issue of Climate Change. (www.christian-ecology.org.uk/noah)

3.10 These projects supply materials and assistance in raising the awareness of congregations to our stewardship of creation, for enhancing worship and Bible study, for working with children, young people and adults, and for taking action of a practical nature in our church life and within our communities. We encourage their use amongst our churches as a way of living out our environmental policy. We also commend the *Roots and Branches* pack produced by the Church and Society Committee of the United Reformed Church in 1999.

We thank the Baptist Union for permission to model the above Environmental Policy on theirs.

Resolution 20

Israeli Separation Barrier

General Assembly:

- a) **views with deep indignation the Separation Barrier currently being constructed by the Government of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.**
- b) **believes that the Barrier is causing profound social and economic problems for the Palestinian population as well as seriously hampering efforts to find a just and long lasting peace in the region.**
- c) **condemns unreservedly terrorist attacks upon innocent Israeli civilians but believes that the best way for Government of Israel to provide long-term security for its people is to engage in a peace process that will result in the end of the occupation in accordance with long-standing UN resolutions.**
- d) **calls upon the UK Government to use its influence to see that construction of the barrier is halted, that existing sections are dismantled and that confiscated land is returned to Palestinians along with compensation for any damage caused.**
- e) **pledges itself to support the work of peace groups within Israel and the Occupied Territories and UK based advocacy groups, such as Christian Aid and EAPPI in their work in the Occupied Territories.**

1.1 Background The building of a barrier was originally proposed by the Labour Party in 1989/90 and opposed by Ariel Sharon, then in opposition. The idea was for a barrier to follow the Green Line, thus demarcating the border, and for settlements to be dismantled. In April 2002, the Israeli Cabinet approved a plan to 'improve and reinforce the readiness and operational capability to copy with terrorism'.¹ Significantly, Prime Minister Sharon approved construction providing the barrier did not follow the Green Line, so as to avoid legitimising the border. Many Palestinians see the Barrier as creating a *de facto* border between Israel and a future Palestinian state.

1.2 The route of the barrier The barrier rarely follows the Green Line demarcating the West Bank from Israel. By deviating from the Green Line, the barrier has cut off communities from their land and Palestinians from their villages, even snaking into Palestinian territory to encompass Israeli settlements. Of the proposed 350km, 140km has been completed. The mainstream Israeli press has revealed plans to extend it to the Jordan Valley, one of the region's most fertile agricultural centres and the heartland of Palestinian agricultural production and exports, and to restrict travel to neighbouring Jordan.

1.3 The cost of the barrier It is estimated that the cost of the wall is £1 million per mile.

1.4 Impact on the Palestinian Population The barrier is devastating every aspect of Palestinian life. Already many communities have experienced the

loss of land, water, and resources which provide their sustenance as well as the destruction of community and personal property. Palestinian villages and towns near the barrier have become isolated ghettos where movement in and out is limited, if not impossible, thus severing travel for work, health, education, and visits to friends and family. For instance, in the 18 communities surrounded into an enclave in the Tulkarem district the inability to travel due to the Wall and Israeli military 'closures' has brought the unemployment rate up from 18% in 2000 to an estimated 78% in the spring of 2003. In Qalqiliya, where the barrier seals the city with one Israeli military controlled checkpoint, it is estimated that nearly 10% of the 42,000 residents have been forced to leave due to the city's imprisonment, closure of the market, and inability to find work. In the future the situation will get much worse. B'Tselem, a leading Israeli human rights organisation, calculates that over 210,000 Palestinians living in 67 towns, villages and cities will be directly harmed by it. Almost 12,000 people living in thirteen communities will be imprisoned in isolated enclaves to the west of the Wall, with another 128,500 residents cut off on the east side. Tens of thousands of Palestinians will be separated from their farms. Not only is the barrier carving out Palestinian land while incorporating settlements on the Israeli side of the barrier, but it has psychological consequences. As Alison Kelly, Head of Christian Aid's Middle East team, wrote last October, 'the Wall is effectively making the area into a giant prison camp'.

¹ Chris McGreal, 'Barricade or prison? A journey along Israel's security fence' *Guardian*, September 2003.

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 all media relations.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Martin Hazell **Secretary:** Mrs Carol Rogers

Editor of Reform and Media Officer: Revd David Lawrence

Mrs Elizabeth Bruce-Whitehorn; Ms Eleri Evans; Mrs Melanie Frew; Mr Peter Knowles; Mr Phil George; Revd Bob Maitland; Revd Peter Moth; Revd Martin Truscott; Revd Martin Whiffen.

1. Introduction

1.1 Communication is at the heart of the Gospel and without communication the Church will die. We communicate with one another within the church to encourage, share, and revitalize. We communicate with the world, challenging it, changing it and sharing the love of God with it. The world communicates with us, challenging us and changing us, too. We communicate with God and God communicates with us.

1.2 Now, the message can be conveyed through a staggering number of new methods and each day brings with it another brilliant piece of technology. That technology not only changes the way we do things; it can change the message too. Texting, for example, creates a new language and by doing so, changes the message. No longer is it thought 'high-tech' to fax, electronic communication – from internet to mobile phone – is changing lives at a phenomenal speed. Families can have small children easily learning the skill to 'surf the net' putting the older members at a distinct disadvantage. Churches can communicate through emails with sister churches around the world in an instant. Possibilities abound.

1.3 Many of us in the church are only just realising the implications of all this new technology, some are fearful and some have grabbed it with both hands, drawing on the mass of new material so easily available. Some of us still like to pick up a book; others take a handheld computer to work with six books contained on a minidisk. The challenge for the church is to keep up with this technology and also retain more traditional forms of communication.

1.4 The Committee believes that this new technology can serve the church well, opening up communication and helping all our members to be heard. This openness will challenge us and inspire us. It doesn't mean losing the traditional methods of communicating and you will read here of the many

published books that have come from Communications and Editorial. The bookshop, an essential visit for those near to Church House, or at our Synods or through the webpage, continues from strength to strength providing an excellent service to all our members and to those outside our church – the number of books purchased from overseas through the cyber bookshop is incredible. Reform – probably the smartest monthly church magazine in the country – remains the best contact for the average church member with issues of the day, both inside and outside the church, in the UK and across the world. All these give the church its identity and a way of reaching out. But in a global context, we need to learn to reach further.

1.4 This report comes at a time when we are on the edge of that new world – serving a broad church in the broadest way we can!

2. Publishing and Publications

2.1 The annual publication of the United Reformed Church Year Book, Diary and Prayer Handbook continues, together with new promotional material.

2.2 During the past two years there have been several new publications. 2003 saw the publication of the first part of a new service book, *Worship – from the United Reformed Church*. The first print run sold out with 4 weeks of publication and the second part will be published in time for General Assembly. *Being Biblical* by John Campbell and *Reformed Ministry* by Tony Tucker were added to the series on the Reformed tradition and this will be added to in 2004 with the publication of *Daughters of Dissent* by Elaine Kay, Kirsty Thorpe and Janet Lees. These titles have received considerable interest from ecumenical partners. Under the Granary Press imprint *Take, Bless, Break, Give* by Vaughan Jones was published in 2003. Forthcoming titles include *Wholly Worship Too*, *A Place for Us*, an anthology by Geoffrey Duncan, and *Credo* by Edmund Banyard.

A Gift Box : a box of resources to develop Christian Faith and enlarge understanding of the United Reformed Church is now available.

2.3 The design and production of material continues to be of a very high standard, thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication shown by the two staff members in this area, who continue to produce excellent results despite others constantly missing deadlines and severe difficulties of limited space for equipment and storage.

3. Bookshop and Distribution

3.1 The Bookshop must be seen as an asset to the church. The Books-on-Line operation has increased sales and it is encouraging that many of these are from overseas. The Assembly Bookstall is always well received. Material has been provided for many events including CTE Forum, and following General Assembly, the Bookshop at the World Convention of the Churches of Christ will be provided by the United Reformed Church.

3.2 The range of stock carried and the speed of turn round of orders is favourably commented upon regularly. The number of customers who visit the shop is relatively small, but the mail order operation is of a very high standard.

4. Website

4.1 In our last report in 2002, we noted that usage of the United Reformed Church's website continued to increase. That trend has continued unabated and it now seems clear that in the foreseeable future the website and associated electronic services will become the primary means of disseminating information within the Church.

4.2 Since our last report there has been a substantial increase in the amount of material held on the site. At the same time, design has been standardised throughout the majority of the site, making it easier for users to navigate the material. Recently, a new secure section has been added for synod moderators to exchange material and further such specialist sections are being investigated.

4.3 Technically, the main URC site has made little progress in the last two years. There are a number of urgent matters that require attention in order to ensure the full potential of the site can be realised. However, the intention is to review the present situation and explore possibilities by the summer of 2004 in order to be ready to move forward on an exciting programme of ideas, which, as the resolution to Assembly makes clear, will improve and expand communications, disseminating material more widely, and in ways that are readily accessible.

5. REFORM

5.1 Though *Reform* continues to achieve remarkable percentage sales in its target market – a percentage which implies that in a larger denomination it would generate a significant surplus for the Church – it has not been immune to the continued decline in membership over the last two years. It is a truism of the magazine world that the vast majority of the costs of publication fall on the first copy and the profits, if any, come from the last copies off the press. The decline in sales, which appears now to be matching the shrinkage in membership, inevitably means that the shortfall in the magazine's finances has increased. The Committee will continue to make strenuous efforts to control costs but it must be understood that many major costs, such as postage and the price of paper, are beyond its control.

5.2 On the brighter side, *Reform* continues to attract favourable comment, both from within and without the United Reformed Church and provides an invaluable national forum for information and debate. Its contribution to ensuring widespread awareness of the Catch the Vision process has already been considerable and will, hopefully, be maintained over the subsequent years of that process. The recent redesign of the magazine's layout, intended to provide a more contemporary feel and to improve accessibility, appears to have been well received. As a result, *Reform* continues to be the single most effective means of mass communication within the United Reformed Church.

6. Press and Media

6.1 The Church's relatively small membership and lack of name recognition continue to be a dominant factor in relations with the media – for both good and ill. Lack of media interest in stories relating to the United Reformed Church has been a continuing theme – at times a frustration when the Church wishes to be heard but somewhat of a blessing on the relatively rare occasions when more salacious stories involve the Church's name. The Committee continues, through the work of the Press Office, to seek to raise the profile of the Church and discussions have been undertaken with a view to enhancing the Church's ability to make timely responses to national events and stories – a particular difficulty in a denomination which views personal authority, and therefore the ability to speak on behalf of the Church, with suspicion.

6.2 Despite these obstacles we continue to see success stories such as the coverage of Claire Short's speech to Assembly in 2003 and the favourable response among the ethnic minority media to the recent resolution of Mission Council on the issue of Christianity and racist politics.

6.3 As always, the Committee would like to stress that the press officer is there as a facility for all who find themselves – whether willingly or not – thrust into the role of a spokesperson for the church by the media.

Resolution 21

Ensuring that the Church's point of view is heard clearly and unambiguously is often not easy and the Committee has been encouraged by the increased willingness of both synod moderators and others who may find themselves in the media spotlight to seek advice and support from the press officer. Equally encouraging has been the positive feedback from those who have sought such support.

6.4 In January the Committee arranged for a one-day course on crisis management and the media for synod moderators. Feedback from the course, which was run by the Church of England Broadcast Training Unit together with the United Reformed Church Press Office, has been favourable.

7. CHRISTIAN RESOURCES EXHIBITION

The United Reformed Church will no longer have a denominational presence at these exhibitions, but will share in a publishing stand with other Church publishers.

8. COPYRIGHT

In co-operation with Christian Copyright Licensing International work continues to help local churches to understand and work within copyright regulations.

9. ECUMENICAL WORK

Churches' Media Council

The United Reformed Church through the Revd Martin Hazell continues to support the work of the Council.

Church Publishers Network

The Secretary continues to serve as a member of the Church Publishers Network. Her period of service as Convener ended in March 2004.

ROOTS: Worship and Learning for the Whole Church

Now in its second year, Roots continues to thrive and grow. The Secretary serves as a member of the Board of Management.

10. THANKS:

Since the Committee last reported in 2002, the following people have completed their service with the Committee: Graham Cook, Convener, John East, and Richard Lathaen, and in July 2004, Mel Frew, Elizabeth Bruce-Whitehorn and Peter Moth will also complete their service. We are grateful for all that these people have given to the Church through their work with the Communications and Editorial Committee.

Thanks is due too to the staff of Communications, all of whom work with dedication and interest.

Resolution 21

Communications

General Assembly recognising that Communication is at the heart of the Gospel reaffirms the commitment of the United Reformed Church to openness and accessibility in all its discussions and decisions. Accordingly General Assembly instructs the Communications and Editorial Committee, in co-operation with the other committees of General Assembly, to work towards:

- a) **providing open access to all documents and resources not considered to be confidential;**
- b) **the facility for interest groups within the church to engage in discussions at a distance;**
- c) **a framework of common email addresses throughout the church.**

1. One of the exciting possibilities raised by the advent of new technologies is that the Church can be brought closer together and our sense of community reinforced. The limited resources of the Church sometimes make it difficult to work at the technological cutting edge but there are practical ways forward which are within our means:

- a) One gap which new technology can help the Church to bridge is the sense of distance between members at the local level and those who make decisions within the Church. The Committee believes that it would be in accordance with the ethos of the United Reformed Church to use the new technology to re-affirm and extend a policy of openness and accessibility. The wealth of information produced within the Church can, for the first time, be made more widely available through

the addition of internet access. Such a policy requires a presumption on the part of all those who serve the Church that the information they originate should be in a form suitable to be communicated widely.

- b) As the membership of the United Reformed Church has become more sparsely spread geographically, those with shared interest often find it more difficult to communicate freely with each other. Through the medium of devices such as email lists and bulletin boards, groups – such as children's workers or CRCWs – can be enabled to carry on conversations and share information at a distance. Such a development could make a major contribution to reducing a sense of isolation and increasing the effectiveness of our work.

- c) A shared system of email addresses, allowing churches, officers and individuals to participate in the 'urc.org.uk' domain would not only enhance our sense of identity as a national

community but would, in many cases, smooth the transition when responsibilities are transferred from one individual to another.

Resolution 22

Get Noticed

General Assembly recommends to the churches the leaflet "Get Noticed" as a basis of enhancing their visibility in the community.

1. The first stage of the rolling Communications Strategy resulted in the leaflet "**Get Smart**" which highlighted the importance of the appearance of buildings and notice boards. The second stage produced a leaflet "**GET TALKING – LOUD AND CLEAR**" which emphasised the need to communicate with each other within the church. The leaflet for

the third stage "**GET NOTICED**" is available at this Assembly. This stage concentrates on getting the name of the United Reformed Church recognised, locally, regionally and nationally to make the fullest possible use of the opportunities available in the media especially at a local level.



Equal Opportunities

The Equal Opportunities Committee was formed in 1994:

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

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Wilf Bahadur* **Secretary:** *Miss Ruth Norton*

Miss Gloria Bujan, Mr Derek Estill, Mr Hilary Gunn (staff link), Mr Alan Hart, Revd Derek Hopkins, Revd Sue MacBeth, Miss Sarah Moore

1. Programme

1.1 The work of the Committee to monitor the implementation of the Church's Equal Opportunities Policy continues by carrying out regular surveys on General Assembly attendance and Church membership together with others requested by Mission Council.

1.2 During the last two years the challenges to ensure equal opportunities within the Church and our communities have increased considerably. Some of these challenges have become more demanding by the increase in legislation, especially in the area of Human Rights.

1.3 To help Churches to understand the work of the committee briefings have been carried out at some Synods and District meetings. We endeavour to provide assistance to any Church or individual who seeks our help.

2. Monitoring at General Assembly

2.1 For the survey of the attendance at General Assembly 2003, 578 monitoring forms were sent to representatives. There were 395 responses – 185 from Ministers (47% of Ministers attending) and 210 from Lay Representatives (53 % of those attending)

2.2 The results of our survey, together with a comparison of the survey in 1999, are tabulated below:

	General Assembly		Elders	Churches
	1999	2003	2001	2001
Male	56.1%	53%	43.5%	30.8%
Female	42.8%	45.9%	56.5%	69.1%
Ethnic origin				
White	96.8%	96.1%		
All white congregations				68.3%
Black				
Caribbean	0.7%	0.5%		1170
African	1.2%	1.5%		882
Black Other	0.2%	0.7%		139
Irish	0.7%			
Indian				104
Pakistani				16
Bangladeshi				8
Chinese				73
Other	0.4%	0.7%		164
Disabled	9.1%	8.3%		

3. Equal Opportunities Policy for Local Churches

This Policy document has been updated at the annual review and is now available on the United Reformed Church web site. Included with this document are some useful addresses for enquiries and for the provision of up to date information.

4. Recommendations from the report of the Task Group on Personal and Conciliar Leadership and Authority to Mission Council

Two of the recommendations from this Task Group were referred to the Equal Opportunities Committee.

4.1 The first was to 'arrange for an audit to be taken of those exercising personal leadership throughout the United Reformed Church with a view to discovering if any imbalances exists in the type of people appointed to particular roles.'

To carry out this audit, the Committee is producing a proforma in consultation with Synod Clerks.

It is envisaged that the information on people in Synod and District leadership roles will provide details for this audit through their Synod Clerk. We are grateful for the help, constructive and useful comments, and agreement to assist in this survey from Synod Clerks. Details on Synod Moderators, Conveners of Assembly committees and staff holding Assembly appointments have been obtained from the relevant sections at Church House.

4.2 The second area for investigation was to 'take account of imbalances that are found to exist in the membership of our councils or in the range of people appointed to leadership roles and consider how procedures, patterns of meetings, job descriptions and advertisements can be altered to help us achieve our declared ideas of inclusivity.'

A method to gather the information and to analyse the results is being discussed in Committee. Work is being undertaken to assess the areas for investigation and the most effective way of collecting and presenting information on membership of the different councils of the Church.

This survey needs to be carried out at every level within the Church and we are looking at these areas with a view to suggesting specific areas from which Mission Council may be able to guide us in prioritising the start.

5. Placement of Ordinands

Some investigations were carried out into this subject in 1998. However a letter from the Convener of the Westminster College Board of Governors, forwarded to the Committee by the General Secretary, raised some current concerns on this matter. A limited survey has been carried out, for the past two years, with the help of the Synod Moderators Meeting and the committee is investigating setting up a system to monitor the process for the Ordinands leaving College in 2005. We are aware that discussions are taking place on the movement of ministers and that any change in the process may affect Ordinands.

6. Representation at and working with other Committees

6.1 A member of the Committee continues to be present at the Annual National Assessment Conference Training at Windermere to give advice and guidance to ensure that all applicants are treated in the same manner and given the same opportunities to present to the Interviewing Panel their sense of 'call' to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

6.2 Two members of the committee facilitated a workshop at the 2003 Fury Assembly.

6.3 Two members gave a presentation on the work of the Equal Opportunities Committee at a Training Committee meeting at Westminster College.

6.4 The Convener of the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Secretary for Training are discussing some areas of interest and how both committees may improve communicating these in the future.

6.5 Discussions are ongoing with the Life and Witness Committee so that matters of joint interest may be addressed together.

6.6 Our work on issues of race is carried out in conjunction with the Racial Justice Committee.

7. Membership of the Committee

This year, Ruth Norton, our Secretary for the past five years and Sarah Moore, our Youth representative, complete their term as members of the Committee. Hilary Gunn our staff link and a founder member of the Committee is retiring. We are grateful for their contributions and their work to promote and monitor the implementation of The Equal Opportunities Policy within the Church. We wish them every blessing as they continue to make their contribution to the life of our Church in other ways.

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 Eric Chilton (Honorary Treasurer) **Secretary:** Ms Avis Reaney (Financial Secretary)
 Revd David Dones, Mrs Alison Holt, Miss Muriel Proven, Mr John Rowatt, Mrs Marie Whitman
 Dr Brian Woodhall (Convener, United Reformed Church Trust) and Mr John Woodman.

1. Our remit

1.1 We have reviewed our role and, in particular, its implications for our working arrangements with the Resource Planning Advisory Group of Mission Council and the Review Group. We believe a better understanding has been reached on our respective roles and this should improve the management and planning of our financial affairs.

2. The budget process

2.1 Further guidance has been given to budget holders on the preparation and management of budgets. This was well received and this has already led to better management and control of our expenditure.

3. Risk Assessment

3.1 The Financial Secretary has given a full presentation on the statutory and audit requirements to the members of Mission Council Advisory Group who have overall responsibility as the Church Trustees. Steps are being taken to manage more proactively this important area of governance.

4. Financial appraisal

4.1 Advice has been given to committees on some capital and revenue expenditure projects. However some proposals still get launched before the opportunity is taken to obtain an adequate financial appraisal. In the end this can only delay the consideration of the project. It should be appreciated that the role of the Finance Committee is to advise on the financial aspects of proposals and not make a judgement on their wider merits.

5. Personalia

5.1 This year we thank Muriel Proven, John Rowatt and Brian Woodhall for their services to Finance Committee as they stand down having completed their term of office. In particular we would like to record our gratitude to Brian Woodhall who has also been a Director of the United Reformed Church Trust, latterly as its Chairman.

5.2 We must also give an especial tribute to the staff. Last year was quite difficult as two staff resigned unexpectedly and this year another member has been away on extended sick leave. Despite these shortages deadlines have been met and the staff have continued to give a high standard of service politely and cheerfully.

Resolution 23

Accounts

General Assembly adopts the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2003.

1. 2003 Accounts

1.1 The 2003 accounts are set out in Appendix 7 and include a report from the Finance Committee commenting on the result for the year and the financial position as at 31 December 2003.

Resolution 24**Auditors**

General Assembly resolves that RSM Robson Rhodes LLP be re-appointed auditors of the United Reformed Church, to hold office until the conclusion of the next meeting at which accounts are laid before General Assembly and that their remuneration be fixed by the Finance Committee.

1. Appointment of auditors

1.1 The United Reformed Church is required to appoint auditors at each General Assembly at which accounts are laid before the members. The auditors are appointed from the conclusion of the forthcoming General Assembly until the conclusion of next year's General Assembly.

1.2 As part of our continuing review of all our professional advisers, this autumn we will be reviewing our auditors.

Resolution 25**Ministry and Mission Fund**

General Assembly gratefully acknowledges the giving of the churches in 2003 to the Ministry and Mission Fund and the work of the local church, district and synod treasurers.

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

1.1 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.

1.2 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, the committee would also wish to acknowledge that largely unthanked group, the treasurers, in local churches, and also at district and synod level.

The Life and Witness Committee, although not due to report this year, sought permission to bring the following resolution about seeking approval for an appeal for the Windermere Centre. The Assembly Arrangements Committee asked Mission Council to advise them about whether this should be included 'as a matter of urgency'. Mission Council advised inclusion so that the mind of the Assembly could be tested.

The Windermere Centre Appeal

1. The Paper ...

1.1 At the request of the Life & Witness Committee (which has oversight of the Windermere Centre), Mission Council commissioned the first review of the Centre since its opening in 1984 under the convenership of the Reverend Tony Coates. The Windermere Centre Review Group reported to Mission Council in March 2003 and the recommendations that were received by Mission Council came to General Assembly 2003 as part of the Mission Council Report. Members of General Assembly are referred page 34 of the General Assembly 2003 Reports (where the recommendations are listed) and in particular to recommendations 2, 3, 7 and 8.

1.2 The United Reformed Church has a vision of becoming 'a vibrant and sustainable Church within the next ten years'. The Life & Witness Committee sees the Windermere Centre as crucial to this process because it is the place 'where the future pattern of life and witness of the United Reformed Church can be explored' (recommendation 3). To this end, the Committee has been taking forward the recommendations to develop the Centre building into a place that can adequately accommodate and provide conference space for its 33 guests. The existing conference room cannot accommodate more than 20-25 in comfortable, creative layouts.

1.3 The Life & Witness Committee seeks the permission of General Assembly to launch an appeal throughout the United Reformed Church for money to develop a Conference Centre in the existing Carver Church hall complex. Stringent planning constraints mean that the existing Centre buildings cannot be developed and extended to meet these needs and the development of the hall complex represents the only viable option open to the Committee. An appeal will be made to the Synods, Districts, churches and individuals of the United Reformed Church. At the same time, appeals and applications will be made for community, government and charitable funding elsewhere.

2. The Place ...

2.1 The Windermere Centre is the United Reformed Church's own residential training centre in the heart of the Lake District. Founded in 1984, it was to equip the whole Church to develop a faith and life relevant to its context. The Centre has assumed a pivotal place in the life of the United Reformed Church. It provides an imaginative and wide-ranging programme of approximately 100 courses and events annually. An average of 2000 members of the United Reformed Church from across England, Scotland and Wales, together with international visitors, come to the Centre each year to develop their life-in-mission, both as individuals and communities of faith. There are testimonies to the transforming moments that people, groups and local churches have experienced while at the Centre. It is a place where God is found to be very close.

3. The Purpose ...

3.1 The Centre belongs within a bold vision – a vision in which the United Reformed Church has a significant future in God's mission. It belongs within a vision of God who is active in the world and calling the Church to renewed discipleship. It belongs within a vision of a Church that is not dying but seeking to respond in new and faithful ways to that call.

3.2 The Windermere Centre Review Group confirmed that the Windermere Centre is the space within which the Church can develop its life-in-mission at every level. This is the place where there is co-ordinated, sustained and strategic exploration of how to move beyond a 'survivalist' mindset and practice, reconnect with society, and manage the resultant changes. The Centre has the resources to enable the Church to:

- i) understand and engage critically with contemporary society and culture
- ii) develop missiological thinking, theology, practice and structures
- iii) facilitate communication throughout the United Reformed Church and share thinking and best practice

- iv) encourage ecumenical thinking and engagement
- v) be exposed to leading thinkers and practitioners in different fields
- vi) develop spirituality that will nourish and sustain life-in-mission
- vii) be refreshed, renewed, encouraged and revitalised
- viii) relax, play, pray and develop gifts and talents.

4. The People ...

4.1 The Centre belongs to the United Reformed Church – its people – and must meet their needs.

“I never knew the Bible and God could be so exciting!”
(Church weekend)

“This has changed my theology!”
(Stewardship Advocate)

“We have come back again because we need to develop further what we started as a result of being here last year. Our church hasn’t been the same since.” (Church mission audit)

“The peace and stillness; the beauty of the gardens and the mountains – just what I needed! I feel like a new person!” (Easter Retreat)

“I always thought theology was complicated and boring. You’ve taught me why it matters – and how exciting God can be!” (‘The Minister as Theologian’ POET course)

“The idea that we only have to be faithful and that the future of the Church is God’s problem is immensely liberating. An awful burden has been lifted and I feel I can begin to be courageous and experimental.” (‘Theology of the United Reformed Church’)

“The fellowship and nightly prayer have been amazing! I have never felt so close to God. I am not the same person who came here.” (Advent Retreat)

5. The Problem ...

5.1 The Conference Room is too small to accommodate more than 20 people in comfort, or for anything other than lecture-style layout; its size and shape frequently limits effective course work because leaders are prevented from using café-style, free seating or other layouts with more than a dozen or so people.

5.2 The present lounge is too small to accommodate more than 15 people. It is useful as a meeting room, but there is no place for 33 guests to relax and socialise as a group.

6. The Proposal ...

6.1 Stringent planning constraints mean that the present Centre buildings cannot be developed to solve the problem.

6.2 However, Carver United Reformed Church has a hall, kitchen and office complex adjoining the church, which they are prepared to lease to the denomination in the same way as they currently do the Windermere Centre. By retaining eating, sleeping and socialising in the Centre, and moving all conference activity to the Carver hall complex, we will be able to:

- i) construct a purpose-built conference room above the church hall, seating 40 people in the full variety of layouts and combinations
- ii) install an adjoining library with on-line facilities, housing United Reformed Church publications and papers and a mission collection
- iii) create a Director’s office and 2 smaller meeting rooms
- iv) link the hall complex with the church building via an open-plan building with reception, refreshment and break-out facilities, together with a bookshop
- v) have access to the remodelled church building for prayers and larger public meetings associated with the Centre’s programme
- vi) link the new conference centre to the Centre building via an enclosed walkway
- vii) develop the basement/cellar area into a storage and recreation area, especially suitable for young people. Install a hot-desking office for community use
- viii) refurbish the church hall. The church hall and meeting rooms will be available for church and community use and the rental income will be used to offset costs
- ix) extend the present conference room to provide a proper lounge for larger groups to relax and socialise in comfort and housing the Centre bar.

7. The Price ...

7.1 Planning approval has been received for the proposals. Building will be able to proceed, subject to funding. With General Assembly’s approval, we will launch a Church-wide appeal to raise the money. It is important to note that General Assembly is *not* being asked to find the money from within the budget; rather, the appeal will be made to individuals, local churches and the various councils of the Church, as well as to outside funding bodies.

7.2 The project has been costed by Telford Hart Associates, a local firm of Quantity Surveyors with a proven track record in project management. The costs that appear here are based on present prices and allow for the reasonable duration of the project. Should the project be significantly delayed, prices will rise accordingly.

Windermere Centre Alterations	Convert existing lounge into 2 single en-suite rooms; convert Director's Office into single en-suite room; reduce existing ground-floor rooms from 4 to 2 fully-equipped disabled rooms; provide egress to link corridor; convert existing Conference Room into lounge with bar; build extension to lounge.	£ 149,000
Conference Centre	Link existing church and halls with open plan reception, bookshop, refreshment & entrance building; construct new Conference Room and library above existing hall; construct office and meeting rooms; install new toilet facilities; install lift from basement to first floor; modify existing cellar.	£ 645,000
Link corridor	Link Centre and conference facilities via a covered walkway; install a wheelchair lift in Centre.	£ 196,000
APPEAL TOTAL		£ 990,000

8. The Plan ...

8.1 An appeal committee will be responsible for raising money. There are 3 sources of funding:

- i) The United Reformed Church – individuals, local churches, districts and synods
- ii) Community and specially designated funding for the public buildings
- iii) Carver Church, which is redeveloping their sanctuary to be a more flexible worship space and more suitable for use by the wider community and the Centre. The Carver-funded development will facilitate the total development of the Conference Centre.

8.2 The development will be phased so as to minimise disruption to the Centre's programme. The final phase of the building will include the conversion of the present lounge into 2 single bedrooms and the Conference Room into the Centre's lounge. This will ensure that the Centre does not have to close in order to complete the building.

9. Frequently Asked Questions

i) Why does the Centre want to expand at present? Why don't we carry on as we are for the present and see what happens in the next 5 years or so?

We are not expanding. There are no plans to increase the numbers of people the Centre caters for. This plan provides what is necessary to do what the Church has set up the Centre for and affirmed in the recent Windermere Centre Review. At present, we cannot do that properly because the facilities are inadequate. We are losing trade because people are going more and more to places that can provide the accommodation and conference facilities that they desire. That trend will only increase during the next 5 years.

ii) Doesn't it make sense to wait until the Catch the Vision group has reported before embarking on something as significant as this?

The 'Catch the Vision' review process was never intended to put the ongoing work of the Church on hold. The proposed developments are needed to enable the work that the Church has asked the Centre to do – and that work is about enabling and resourcing the Church to become all that it is supposed to be. Putting the work on hold will only make it considerably more expensive in the long run.

iii) This is a time of cutting back. Surely it makes no sense to be spending such sums of money?

This is a time for reassessing our priorities. We need to spend money strategically in order to achieve our vision for ourselves as a Church. The Vision Statement envisions a Church that is 'vibrant and sustainable' within the next 10 years. The Centre exists to facilitate that; in addition, the Centre itself needs to be vibrant and sustainable.

iv) The legal arrangements could be very complicated. Who will own the buildings?

The United Reformed Church will lease the buildings from Carver Church under the same legal arrangements as it does the Centre (which used to be the Carver manse). The Church will effectively 'own', develop and maintain the buildings. Carver will lease back the hall from the Centre and the Centre will receive all income from rental of the rooms to the Windermere community.

v) Does this mean you are effectively asking the wider United Reformed Church to fund a local church development?

No. The opposite is the case. Carver is funding the redevelopment and refurbishment of their church building, but doing so as a contribution to the overall plan. They have already contributed nearly £61 000 to the project and are raising further funds towards it.

- vi) Is this a sound investment?**
 Yes. The capital value of the buildings – Centre and Church – increases by more than the money spent. It not only increases their resale value, but their desirability as a saleable property. And property is always at a premium in this area.
- vii) The sort of estimates you provide are usually hopelessly optimistic, both in terms of time and expense. How can we be sure these will not spiral?**
 We have been scrupulous about costing this as accurately as possible. Telford Hart and the architect, Clifford Patten (of Lewis Patten Chartered Architects), have proven track records in foreseeing all eventualities and in minimising actual costs. The first phase of the Centre development, estimated at £131 000, was achieved for £120 000 – on time and within budget.
- viii) You talk of funding from outside the Church. How much of the project cost do you expect to have to raise from within the Church?**
 We don't know. Our research indicates that there is significant money potentially available from government, European and community sources. This is important because we see the provision of a suite of buildings suitable for community use as part of the Church's mission locally.
- ix) What happens if you can't raise all the money?**
 We will have to make choices about how much of the project can be achieved. You will see that it is phased. The phasing allows us to make these judgments.
- x) Isn't the timing remarkably insensitive in the light of the closure of Yardley Hastings?**
 There is no good reason to think so. The Centre exists for the whole Church, not just for the older members. The closure of Yardley makes it the primary residential centre for children and young people. We are grateful for the expressions of enthusiasm and support that we have received from the individual members of FURY whom we have consulted. We are involved in negotiations with FURY to determine how the Centre may be of best use to children and young people. It is now all the more important that the facilities are adequate for the task.
- xi) What if General Assembly refuses the request to launch the appeal?**
 The Centre exists to serve the Church, not vice-versa. We have made this proposal in order to implement the recommendations of the Review Group and carry out the role that General Assembly 2003 agreed. This is what makes the development necessary. If General Assembly does not want to see this development, we will carry on offering imaginative, high quality training and development within the current limitations, but the Church needs to recognise that we will not be able to provide what it has asked of the Centre as the United Reformed Church looks towards the next ten years of its life.

Resolution 26

Windermere Centre

General Assembly gives approval for a financial appeal to individuals, local churches, districts and synods during 2005 in support of the development of the Windermere Centre's facilities.

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. It also deals with applications for Special Category Ministries.

Church Related Community Work Programme Sub-Committee

It is responsible for supporting the Church Related Community Work Ministry and Programme under the terms agreed in the Church Related Community Work Covenant. This includes the accreditation of Churches-in-Community.

Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee

It is responsible for the advocacy of lay preaching and support of lay preachers in the United Reformed Church.

Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee

Advises on the level of stipend and ministers' conditions of service through the Plan for Partnership. It is also concerned with pensions through its associated Pensions Sub-Committee.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Works in association with the United Reformed Church Ministers Housing Society Ltd.

Committee Members

Convener: Mr John Ellis **Secretary:** Revd Christine Craven

Mrs Alison Biggs, Mrs Joan Trippier, Mrs Darryl Sinclair, Revds Pauline Barnes, Stuart Brock, Peter Noble, Paul Whittle

Our Work

1. When the Ministries Committee meets, we usually give the largest share of time to a major issue affecting the future shape of the Church's various ministries. Through Bible passages, our prayers and discussion together we seek to discern what God would say to us, given our resources and context. Much of the rest of our meetings is taken up with servicing existing programmes.

2. This balance between preparing for a new future and servicing current structures is paralleled in our report to Assembly. The report of the Future Patterns of Ministries Working Party, Equipping The Saints, (Appendix 2) offers a vision of how our ministries might evolve. We hope Assembly will make this a main focus of its attention.

3. Our other resolutions seek to tidy up particular issues that have arisen from experience. Our Sub-Committee reports outline some of the detailed work they do on the Church's behalf.

Chaplaincies

4. At least a third of our ministers exercise some form of Chaplaincy, although this work is often unsung. By Resolution 37, the 2001 Assembly asked us to review the support given to Chaplains. We have had helpful meetings with representatives of the Chaplains.

5. Not all the ideas which emerged are feasible given our limited staff resources, but several practical steps are in train. We are encouraging Synods to recognise the Chaplains in their midst. We are encouraging Chaplains in the same sector to establish their own networks. Our workplace Chaplains now have

an opportunity to join in the annual training conference for their Methodist counterparts. We will continue to keep the question of support under review.

6. One of the many responsibilities of the Secretary for Ministries is to represent the United Reformed Church on the United Board. The Board brings together senior armed forces chaplains with representatives of the Baptist Union, the Congregational Federation and ourselves. The Board offers support to forces Chaplains through a prayer letter and an annual conference. The 2003 and 2004 conferences were salutary experiences as several of our Chaplains have been on duty with their units in Iraq.

7. Members of Assembly are encouraged to attend the fringe meeting where some of our Chaplains' stories will be unpacked.

Special Category Ministry

8. Ten of our full-time Chaplains are supported under the Special Category Ministry scheme which allows stipendiary ministers to be appointed to work outside normal deployment quotas. One of the most exciting parts of our Committee's work is hearing of the progress of imaginative, pioneering ministries under this scheme and we welcome enquiries about possible future posts. Current work ranges from research on rural ministry in Northumbria through ministry from a lightship in Cardiff Bay to work in Liverpool city centre.

Church Related Community Workers

9. While twelve of the thirteen Synods make use of the Special Category Ministry scheme, several still do not have any Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs). The programme grows more slowly than we would like and we hope that our joint project with the Church and Society Committee, Assets for Life, being launched at Assembly, will stimulate new awareness and enthusiasm.

You and Us

10. While we are glad to talk to members of Assembly about our work, we are disappointed at our limited contact with Ministries Committees (under that name or another) in Synods, Areas and Districts. We would welcome more contact. If your local Committee would like to invite a member of the Committee to visit you to hear what are the key concerns and opportunities in your area, we would be glad to see what might be possible. Please contact the Ministries Office if you do not know any member of the Committee personally.

Squadrons of Saints

11. If we do visit you, we could also set out more fully the range of tasks undertaken on your behalf. The denominational work of the Committee relies on six paid staff and over sixty volunteers who give their skills and energy to work of sub-committees and related bodies. We are grateful to God for terms of service recently completed, not least by the following colleagues: Peter Cruchley-Jones, Carol Dixon, Diana Herbert, the late John Pugh, Clifford Wilton and Geoffrey Wood.



Accreditation Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Ken Chippindale **Secretary:** Revd Christine Craven

Mrs Judith Booth, Mrs Darryl Sinclair Mrs Sheila Telfer, Revds Keith Argyle, Adrian Bulley, Tony Wilkinson

1. During the past year the usual pattern of the work of this committee has substantially changed and a new area of responsibility has been added.

2. Because of the Assembly decision of 2003 that the target number of ministers on the payroll should track the number of members of the United Reformed Church, and the projection of the target number as far as 2008, based on candidates accepted for training for the ministry, it has not been possible to grant any Certificates of Eligibility in relation to stipendiary ministers since April 2003. However, the committee has decided that applications for Certificates of Eligibility by ministers not seeking a stipend will be considered.

3. In view of the reduced workload resulting from this situation, the committee has been given the task of assessing applications for Special Category Ministry posts, and any appropriate reviews, work hitherto carried out by the Ministries Committee as a whole.

4. The committee has reviewed the procedure regarding applications for re-instatement to the Roll of Ministers after deletion or resignation. As a result of this review we are making our proposed revised procedure the subject of a resolution for the approval of Assembly.

5. **Admissions to the Roll of Ministers** (from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004)

- a) By Ordination and induction: -
 - i) to stipendiary service: Deborah Anderson, Edward Butlin, Peter Clark, Andrew Coyne, Richard Eastman, Kate Gartside, Kate Gray, Susan McKenzie, Brian Norris, Colin Phipps, David Poulton, Robert Sheard, Janet Sutton, Christopher Tolley, Susan Walker, Michael Walsh, Robert Weston
 - ii) to non-stipendiary service: Franziska Herring, Edward Rawlins
- b) By Transfer from other Churches to non-stipendiary service: Kenneth Blanton, Carla Grosch-Miller

6. **Changes within the Roll of Ministers** (from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004)

- a) Non-stipendiary to stipendiary service: Neil Eldridge, John Mackerness, Deborah McVey, Jay Phelps

7. **Deletions from the Roll of Ministers** (from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004)

- a) By Resignation and/or Transfer to other Churches: Phillip Jones, Ian Knowles, Brian McDowell (transferred to Church of Scotland), J Howard Reed (transferred to Presbyterian Church, USA), Brian Sturtridge, Marie Thistle, Christopher Tonge

8. **Admission to the List of Church Related Community Workers** (from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004)

By Commissioning: Dennis Neville, Helen Stephenson

9. **Lay Preachers**

The following members have successfully completed their course of study and have been Nationally Accredited between 1 April 2003 and 31 March 2004.

Northern Synod:- Carole Durose, Tony Porter, Tim Rogers

North Western Synod:- Eddie Allman, Michael Aspinall, Elizabeth Brueck, Douglas Clements, Carol Sutcliffe

Mersey Synod:-

Yorkshire Synod:- Anne Parker

East Midlands Synod:- Betty Werry, Sheila Yaxley

West Midlands:-

Eastern Synod:- Andrew Davidson, Gordon Doyle, Ann Eland, Andrew Mann

South Western Synod:- Barbara Cory, Geraldine Mann, Peter Scott, John Stones, Pauline Tiller

Wessex Synod:- Margaret Bridgett, Peter Pay, David Smith, Martin Stock

Thames North Synod:- Lilian Evans, Anne Graham, Jo Prior, Dorothy Stanton, Tony Thomas

Southern Synod:- Emma Brothwood, Terence Cooke-Davies, Debra Miles, John Stewart

Wales:- Edwina Davies, Astrid Drennan

Scotland:- Dorothy Donald

Assessment Board

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Mrs Darryl Sinclair **Secretary:** Revd Christine Craven

Revds Susan Armitage, Marilyn Allen, Craig Bowman, Graham Hoslett and Kevin Watson, Prof David Cutler, Dr Jean Stevenson, Mrs Joyce Sutcliffe, Revds Rachel Poolman, Tom Heggie, Michael Mewis, Peter Poulter and Hilma Wilkinson, Miss Sarah Dodds, Mrs Wilma Frew and Ms Pat Poinen, Revds Roy Fowler, Diana Cullum-Hall, Nigel Uden and Simon Walker

1. Since the report to General Assembly 2002 there have been several changes in the membership of the Assessment Board and the Ministries Committee wishes to record appreciation of the commitment of all who serve on the Assessment Board.

2. Six Assessment Conferences and four Re-Assessment days were held between September 2001 and June 2003.

2.1 72 candidates attended the Assessment Conferences in this period:

36 for stipendiary service
18 for non-stipendiary service.
4 for Church Related Community Workers
4 Re-Assessment (transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service)

2.2 61 were finally accepted for training or transfer as a result of Assessment Conference recommendations and Synod decisions:

30 for stipendiary service
15 for non-stipendiary service
3 Church Related Community Workers
3 for transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary service

3. Criminal Record Bureau disclosures are now a requirement at the start of training and at the point of call to a church or other post. This is in line with Government directives and the process now works smoothly.

4. A concern over the financial implications of training for candidates formed part of the agenda at the 2003 Board Meeting. For a few students this becomes a matter of some difficulty. The Board recommends that each Synod appoint a person who could have an informal discussion about financial matters with each candidate at the beginning of the process. Just as the need for the required educational qualifications can prolong the candidating process, it may be that some candidates need to take time to sort out their financial affairs. This may well avoid problems during training.

5. The annual November consultation at Windermere continues both to provide valuable training for those involved with candidates and to develop co-operation between the Board and Synod Committees.

6. Because the Assessment Board works on behalf of Assembly for the United Reformed Church in three nations the word National will not in future be part of the name.

Church Related Community Work Programme Support Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: Revd Alison Hall

Revd John Burgess, Mrs Janet Holden, Mr Chris Lawrence (CRCW), Mrs Adella Pritchard (CRCW), Mr Pete Twilley

1. Church Related Community Work Programme

1.1 In the past two years, the number of Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) in post has risen from fifteen to eighteen. However unless four students start this year, we shall have difficulty in achieving the target of two CRCWs in each Synod by 2008. Transfers via Certificates of Eligibility may solve the problem. Four accredited posts are currently vacant. For the first time an application for accreditation came from a District Council rather than a local church for what is an innovative project. We also saw an application from a project in a setting more rural than the usual inner city one.

1.2 Mission Council accepted in February 2003 a proposal (originating from the Sub-Committee) that the model of devolution of management to Synods it agreed in October 1998 should be modified to a model of partial devolution. We are convinced that this decision will have a beneficial effect on the running and the development of the Church Related Community Work Programme.

1.3 The Development Workers have taken forward new proposals for the Church Related Community Work Programme.

- A proposal to open up the possibility of having Non-Stipendiary Church Related Community Workers will be put to Assembly by Mission Council.
- A new Training for Learning and Serving Programme for volunteers involved in community work is being devised in conjunction with the Training for Learning and Serving Co-ordinator.
- A joint project with Church and Society and ToCH, "Assets for Life" will be completed in time for its findings to be launched officially at the General Assembly. Its aim is to enthuse churches not presently engaged in community ministry to take up the challenge and to help them identify methods and resources which will enable them to do it effectively. It is also looking to provide churches who wish to develop their existing ministry with further ideas.

2. Staffing

We are pleased that Mission Council has agreed that the Development Worker post will continue in existence until at least June 2006, and that both

Development Workers are happy to continue with the job share arrangement. This will allow them to drive forward Mission Council's policy of embedding the Church Related Community Work Programme in every Synod; maintain consistency of standards; develop the practical implications of the 2002 General Assembly decision to integrate CRCW Work as a ministry in the United Reformed Church; and analyse the impact of this ministry on the Church.

3. Certificates of Eligibility

At the 2002 General Assembly, Resolution 7 was carried:

"General Assembly asks the Ministries Committee to re-examine the way in which the criteria for the issue of Certificates of Eligibility to potential Church Related Community Workers are applied, to consider whether any changes are needed and to report to the Assembly."

The matter was discussed by the Sub-Committee, which submitted comments to the Accreditation Sub-Committee. After considerable discussion, the Accreditation Sub-Committee came to the view that there was no need to change the present system, which had allowed four people to transfer from other denominations.

4. Consultation Day

All CRCWs in training, as well as representatives of all Local Management Committees and members of the Programme Sub-Committee are invited to this. In 2002, we went to South Wigston United Reformed Church, Leicester, where we heard about the CRCW project there. We also held two workshops: on the Core Competencies required of a Church Related Community Worker; and on the Concerns, Support and Development of Local Management Committees. In 2003, a well attended Consultation Day was held in Hallwood Ecumenical Parish in Runcorn, Cheshire, when the keynote presentation was given by Jim Robertson of the Churches Community Work Alliance.

5. Church Related Community Work Residentials

It is helpful for all CRCWs to be given the opportunity of meeting up with each other for reflection and discussion. Two very successful residentials have been held in October 2002 on Lindisfarne and in September 2003 in Badger House, Shropshire.

Lay Preaching Support Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Dr Phil Theaker* **Secretary:** *Mrs Judith Johnson*
Mr Bernard Bentley, Dr Graham Campling, Dr Berta Doodson, Mrs Debbie Ensor, Mrs Ann Simcock,
Revd Dr Janet Tollington

1.1 Following the survey carried out to help understand the depth of involvement of Lay Preachers in the worship of our Church, a strategy to develop the lay preaching ministry and recruit new Lay Preachers was accepted by Assembly 2002 and is now under the responsibility of the Synods to implement. Each Synod will develop its own ideas and those that are implemented successfully will be shared. To recruit eight hundred people for training by the end of the decade is a tremendous challenge.

1.2 The annual consultation meetings of the Synod and District Commissioners have covered topics affecting the support and development of individual lay preachers and their ministries.

- a) In-service training is important but has not necessarily been emphasised in the past and should be carried out so that it encourages, affirms and supports.
- b) Co-operation in teams and worship groups is vital and needs to become something to look forward to, not viewed with reluctance.
- c) Being able to carry out an appraisal of one's ministry also aids development. Not everyone is comfortable with this, but it brings greater self-understanding, rather than self-criticism.

1.3 A range of guidelines to support the lay preaching ministry have been developed and published:

- a) Guidelines to help the individual and the District/Area test and affirm a call to lead worship.
- b) Guidelines to help Districts/Areas to search out, train and recognise Lay Preachers.
- c) Self-Reflection Guidelines: this process enables Lay Preachers to reflect on their ministry and their own spiritual journey with the goal of enriching them, affirming their gifts and identifying areas for further development.

1.4 The use of modern methods of communication has been discussed and information about Lay Preaching is now available on the United Reformed Church web site. It is hoped to make these pages available from Synod web sites as well.

1.5 Following close co-operation between the Sub-Committee and the Training Committee we were delighted to see the publication of Training for Learning and Serving 'Local Introductory Training Experiences'. This material will enable those with time constraints or unsure about training to get involved in a very practical and challenging way.

1.6 On the ecumenical front, the United Reformed Church has been involved in meetings to redefine the remit of the Joint Lay Readers/Preachers Committee set up some years ago by Churches Together in England. The Sub-Committee is also represented on the Executive of the College of Preachers, a body involved in training of all types, from sessions for Lay Preachers to MTh studies.

1.7 The Sub-Committee intends to make two changes in terminology: 'National Accreditation' should become 'Assembly Accreditation' and that the 'National Lay Preaching Commissioner' should become the 'Assembly Lay Preaching Advocate'. Now that the United Reformed Church exists in three nations it seems more inclusive to use a term other than 'National' and since Accreditation is something authorised by General Assembly the term Assembly Accreditation seems an appropriate alternative. In the same way the post now known as National Lay Preaching Commissioner has responsibility within the entire United Reformed Church and is appointed by General Assembly. The title Advocate rather than Commissioner accurately reflects the nature of this post, which is one of advocacy.

Retired Ministers Housing Sub-Committee

Sub-Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Simon Swailes* **Secretary:** *Mr Tony Bayley*
Mrs Edith Tolley, Mrs Pauline Mewis, Revd Elizabeth Caswell, Mr Malcolm Lindo

1. This Sub-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. During 2003 20 properties were purchased and 10 were sold increasing the number of properties under management to 358 at the year end.
3. Properties are normally purchased in the name of 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. The maximum contributions made by the Society are determined annually on a county by county basis by reference to average house prices during the preceding year.
4. In 2003 the standard rent payable was £78 per calendar month. Existing tenants will pay £86 per calendar month in 2004, while new tenants in 2004 will pay between £100 and £150 per calendar month depending upon the amount of capital employed by the Society.
5. The Committee is particularly grateful for the donations and legacies received during the year which amounted to approximately £503,000.
6. It is expected that during 2004 assistance will be required for 15 retiring ministers. After allowing for re-housing and the needs of widows/widowers it would be prudent to anticipate up to 22 applicants in all. This could involve an outlay of up to £2.5million and thus the importance of a continued high level of receipts from donations and legacies cannot be over-emphasised.
7. During 2003 visits were made by the officers of the Society to approximately 110 applicants, tenants and other properties. In addition, 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.
8. Retirement Housing continues to figure prominently in the Pre-Retirement Courses run at the Windermere Centre by Ministries. In 2003 three courses were run 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: Revd John Piper **Secretary:** Ms Avis Reaney

Messrs Eric Chilton, Victor Hughff, Barry Swift and Patrick Hickey, the Revds Pauline Parkin and Roger Woodall

1. Level of the minister's stipend

The Sub-Committee advises each year on the level of the basic stipend. Mission Council, at its autumn meeting, sets the stipend for the following year on behalf of General Assembly. It is a difficult challenge to set the stipend at a level that is both fair to the ministers and affordable within what churches are willing to pay. The Sub-Committee has come to the view that there is no single inflation index that is ideal and it is reviewing the way in which it reaches its annual recommendation on the level of the stipend.

2. Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

The Sub-Committee keeps the Plan under review and is proposing a number of changes this year. These are all matters of clarification rather than changes of policy or principle.

Resolution 27

Equipping the Saints

General Assembly:

- a) welcomes the report **Equipping the Saints**
- b) challenges every congregation to respond locally to recommendations 1 and 2;
- c) invites comments on recommendations 3 to 13 from churches, Area/District Councils and Synods to be sent to Ministries Committee by 31st December 2004; and
- d) requests further work to be done by Ministries Committee in co-operation with the Catch the Vision Review Group and others so that formal proposals can be brought to the 2005 meeting of General Assembly.

The report appears as Appendix 2

Resolution 28**Entry Qualifications**

- a) **General Assembly reiterates its belief that ordination to the stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments should take place by the age of 55 and to non-stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments by the age of 60. The same ages should apply to the commissioning of Church Related Community Workers.**
- b) **General Assembly notes that given the current candidating and training procedures, these maximum ages imply that the large majority of candidates will need to have made formal application five years before. Thus normally the latest date for application for stipendiary service will be age 50 and for non-stipendiary service age 55.**
- c) **General Assembly nonetheless recognises that occasionally candidates have prior qualifications and experience that might shorten training. If any Synod wishes to present an application from a candidate who is already less than five years from the maximum age of ordination, Assembly requests that Synod contact the Secretary for Training before doing so, in order to gain an indication of whether a shorter period of training is a realistic option.**
- d) **General Assembly, having set minimum ages for commencing training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, confirms that the minimum age for commencing training for Church Related Community Work ministry shall be 21 years.**

1. After full discussions at its 1996 and 1997 meetings, Assembly agreed age limits for candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. The minimum age for training for stipendiary service was set at 18 while for non-stipendiary service it was decided it should normally be 25. The maximum ages for ordination were set at 55 for stipendiary service and at 60 for non-stipendiary service.

2. Given these maximum ages, and the normal length of time taken from first candidating to the completion of training, Assembly also set the maximum ages for candidating at 50 for stipendiary service and 55 for non-stipendiary service. In practice a few candidates with qualifications and experience which could shorten their training have come forward after the maximum age set by Assembly for candidating and there has been uncertainty about their treatment.

3. The Ministries Committee believes that there should be some flexibility in the maximum age for candidating to take account of such people. The first purpose of our resolution is therefore to make clear that such flexibility exists.

4. However, we need to emphasise that the normal routes through training mean that it will take five years and exceptions are likely to be few. To avoid generating false hopes and the possibility of deep disappointment later, we would want Synods to consult the Secretary for Training at the earliest possible stage if they were contemplating putting forward a candidate who was above the normal maximum age for candidating. In some cases a conversation with the Secretary for Training may make clear that an accelerated route is not a realistic possibility. Of course, no guarantees about training could be given at this stage. Nonetheless, the second purpose of the resolution is to underline the importance of this informal discussion.

5. Assembly has never set explicit ages for the ministry of Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), although informal guidelines have developed in practice. We believe the opportunity should be taken to remedy this anomaly. Setting clear ages for CRCWs is the third purpose of the resolution.

Resolution 29**Reinstatement of Ministers**

General Assembly approves the following procedure regarding applications for reinstatement to the Roll of Ministers of the United Reformed Church.

- a) **Ministers who have been removed from the Roll of Ministers by resignation or by Assembly decision, and who wish to apply for re-instatement, shall in the first place consult the Moderator of the Synod of the area where they reside. The application procedure may not normally commence until five years have elapsed from the date their name was removed from the Roll.**
- b) **The Secretary for Ministries shall be informed by the applicant, who will be advised of the procedure to be followed.**
- c) **The Secretary for Ministries will notify the relevant Synod officer where the applicant resides of the application, and will ask the Synod and District/Area Council to arrange an interview with the applicant. The Secretary for Ministries will ask the Synod that the following documents be obtained by them:**
 - i) **A personal statement from the applicant which covers :**
 - l **the reason(s) for the deletion or resignation, and a reflection on the circumstances surrounding it**
 - l **an outline of the applicant's personal development and journey of faith since the deletion or resignation**
 - l **current employment**
 - l **the reasons for seeking reinstatement, including their current conviction of call to the ministry.**
 - ii) **At least two personal references in support of the applicant**
 - ii) **A commendation from the applicant's local church**
 - iv) **A statement from the Moderator of the Synod where the applicant resides, or an equivalent officer in an overseas church, where appropriate**
 - v) **A medical report**
- d) **The Synod will forward these papers (except the medical report) to the District or Area Council where the applicant now resides, and ask them to interview him/her and report their observation as to his/her suitability for re-instatement.**
- e) **It should be noted that where the applicant has moved into a different Synod or Area/District since their name was removed from the Roll, the Synod handling the application will seek the observations of the present Moderator of their previous Synod, and of their previous District. The purpose of this enquiry is to place the present application in the context of the exercise of the applicant's last ministry.**
- f) **All these papers (except the medical report) will be sent to the Ministries Committee of the Synod where the applicant now resides, who will interview him/her, and report to the Secretary for Ministries.**
- g) **All these documents, including the medical report at this stage, will be made available to the Accreditation Sub-Committee, which will interview the applicant. Following this final interview the Sub-Committee will decide whether or not to re-instate. The Secretary for Ministries will inform the applicant and his/her Synod of the decision as soon as possible.**
- h) **On receipt of the decision of the Accreditation Sub-Committee, it shall be open both to the applicant and to the Synod to request a further hearing by the Ministries Committee. This hearing will be before a group from the Ministries Committee composed of members who have had no previous involvement with the reinstatement request. Such an application must be made to the Secretary for Ministries not more than 21 days after the date of the notification of the decision of the Accreditation Sub-Committee to the applicant. There shall be no appeal from the decision of the Ministries Committee.**

Resolution 30

1. A small number of ministers are removed from the Roll of Ministers as a result of a disciplinary process or because they resign. These people cease to be ministers of the United Reformed Church and can only return to the Roll of Ministers if they apply successfully through a reinstatement procedure. This resolution relates to that procedure.
2. Other ministers leave the roll as a result of asking for a transfer to another denomination. If they seek to transfer back onto the United Reformed Church roll at a later date they may be asked to work through this procedure, although we expect that in some cases the Accreditation Sub-Committee would decide that this is unnecessary.
3. The current reinstatement procedure predates the introduction of the Section O process for ministerial discipline. It has therefore been reviewed by the Ministries Committee and we seek Assembly approval for a revised process as set out in the resolution. The principal change is to introduce an interview with the Accreditation Sub-Committee.

Resolution 30

Plan for Partnership

General Assembly amends the Plan for Partnership by inclusion of the words in italics, as follows:

Para 6.1.4 Pulpit supply fees: when the Maintenance of the Ministry Office has been advised that a minister remunerated under the Plan is unable to work due to ill-health or is on maternity leave or is absent on a sabbatical term which lasts for a period of more than four weeks *or is suspended under the Section O Process* or is the Moderator of General Assembly, the actual pulpit supply costs incurred by the church arising because of the absence will be reimbursed to the limit shown in Appendix A. In group pastorates and part time pastorates, reimbursement will only be in respect of services which would have been conducted by the absent minister. Claim forms for the reimbursement of pulpit supply costs can be obtained from the Maintenance of the Ministry Office.

Para 6.3.4.5 Where, following an introduction by a Synod Moderator, a minister / Church Related Community Worker visits a pastorate or community post in vacancy other than in connection with a preaching engagement, the cost of travel shall be paid by the pastorate visited. The pastorate shall be reimbursed from the Ministry and Mission Fund *the actual costs of travel, not exceeding the recommended lower Inland Revenue mileage rate, of the minister / CRCW and spouse within the UK for a maximum of two visits.*

Para 7.1 (currently Para 7) Ministers / Church Related Community Workers are entitled to 5 weeks holiday in each calendar year and one further Sunday away from the pastorate. When a minister / Church Related Community Worker only serves for part of a year the holiday provision should be pro rata. One week of holiday may be carried forward to the following year. Holiday entitlement is not affected by sick leave, in-service training courses or sabbatical leave. *Such periods of leave / absence may result in more than one week's holiday being carried forward into the following year.*

Para 7.2 *If a minister / Church Related Community Worker resigns from a pastorate or post immediately following any such period of leave / absence, stipend should be paid for any outstanding holiday entitlement untaken at the date of resignation, which may include outstanding holiday entitlement from the previous year, always provided that District Council concurs with the arrangements.*

Para 9.1.2 Except at the time of a minister / Church Related Community Worker's initial induction (when a full resettlement grant is payable) where the pastorate is part-time the grant shall be pro rata according to the scoping of the pastorate to be served. A full retirement resettlement grant will be paid to ministers / Church Related Community Workers who have completed 10 years service up to their retirement date, *whether this is at the age of 65 or earlier.* The grant will be reduced *pro rata* where the minister / Church Related Community Worker has not been in stipendiary service for 10 years, or the years of service have not been full-time.

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 suggests names of the United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It also recommends the people to make up appointment groups for synod moderators and Assembly appointed staff.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006] **Secretary:** Revd Hazel Martell [2005]

Synod Representatives:

I Revd Peter Poulter II Revd Ruth Woolaston III Mr Donald Swift IV Mr John Seager
V Mrs Irene Wren VI Mr Simon Rowntree VII Revd Elizabeth Caswell VIII Revd Roz Harrison
IX Mr Graham Rolfe X Revd Martin Hazell XI Mrs Christine Meekison XII Dr Jean Sylvan-Evans
XIII Revd John Arthur with the Immediate Past Moderator and General Secretary.

1. ASSEMBLY STAFF APPOINTMENTS

1.1 The Nominating Group, convened by Revd Peter Noble, recommended the appointment of Mr John Brown to serve as Secretary for Youth Work for 5 years from 1 January 2004 until 31 December 2008.

1.2 The Review Group, convened by Revd David Jenkins, recommended the re-appointment of Revd Arnold Harrison to serve as Moderator for Yorkshire Synod from 1 September 2004 until retirement on 29 February 2008.

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 2003 are indicated by one asterisk (*), two asterisks (**) denotes those whom Assembly 2004 is invited to appoint for the first time. (#) indicates a **Convener Elect** who will become Convener in 2005. (☞) indicates a **Secretary Elect** who will become Secretary in 2005.
- 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.
- 5 In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations have been made by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.

2.1 ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS

Convener: Mr William McVey [2006]

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

2.1.1 Tellers for Election of Moderator for 2006**

Revd Roz Harrison [Convener], Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Martin Hazell

2.2 CHURCH and SOCIETY

Convener: Revd Martin Camroux [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Church and Society

Revd Alan Paterson [2005]

Revd Owiny Laber [2005]

Mr Geoffrey Duncan [2006]

Mr Simon Loveitt [2006]

Revd Tjarda Murray [2007]

Mrs Glenna Paynter [2007]

Miss Emma Pugh [2007]

2.3 COMMUNICATIONS and EDITORIAL

Convener: Revd Martin Hazell [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Communications

Revd Bob Maitland [2005]

Mr Peter Knowles [2005]

Revd Martin Truscott [2005]

Ms Eleri Evans [2005]

Mr Philip George [2006]

Revd Martin Whiffen [2007]

Revd Paul Snell **[2008]

Revd Janet Sutton **[2008]

Ms Julia Wills **[2008]

2.4 DOCTRINE, PRAYER and WORSHIP

Convener: Revd John Young [2005]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Dr Robert Pope [2005]

Revd Alistair Smeaton [2005]

Revd Prof Alan Sell [2007]

Revd Geoffrey Clarke [2007]

Revd Hilary Collinson [2007]

Revd Dr Susan Durber #[2009]

Miss Sarah Lane [2007]

Dr John Turner [2007]

Mrs Chris Eddowes **[2008]

Revd Jason McCullagh **[2008]

Revd Peter Trow **[2008]

2.5 ECUMENICAL

Convener: Revd Elizabeth Nash** [2009]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith & Order

Revd Bryan Shirley [2005]

Revd Cecil White [2005]

Revd Rowena Francis [2006]

Mr Malcolm Porter [2006]

Revd Lindsey Sanderson [2006]

Mrs Ann Shillaker [2007]

Mrs Pat Gurr **[2008]

Revd Stuart Jackson representing the National Synod of Wales

Revd Mary Buchanan representing National Synod of Scotland

2.5.1 ECUMENICAL – INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Chris Baillie [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for International Relations

Revd Birgit Ewald [2005]

Mrs Heather Barnes [2006]

Revd Nigel Uden [2006]

Mrs Eileen McIlveen [2007]

Revd Michael Thomason [2007]

2.6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Convener: Revd Wilf Bahadur [2006]

Secretary: Revd Derek Hopkins [2008]

Ms Gloria Bujan [2005]

Mr Derek Estill [2006]

Mr Alan Hart [2006]

Revd Sue MacBeth [2007]

Dr Ruth Shepherd **[2008]

Mrs Louise Sanders **[2008]

2.7 FINANCE

Convener: The Treasurer

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Mr John Woodman [2005]

Ms Alison Holt [2006]

Revd David Dones [2007]

Mrs Marie Whitman [2007]

Mr Errol Martin **[2008]

Mr Graham Law **[2008]

Convener of the URC Trust

2.8 INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

Convener: Revd Dr John Parry [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Jean Potter [2008]

Miss Marie Williams [2005]

Revd Peter Colwell [2006]

Dr Iain Frew **[2008]

Revd Helen Pollard **[2008]

2.9 LIFE and WITNESS

Convener: Revd Brian Jolly [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Revd Kenneth Forbes [2005]

Revd Peter Hurter [2005]

Revd Linda Elliott [2006]

Mrs Sheila Brain [2007]

Mr Colin Ferguson [2007]

Revd Ian Fosten [2007]

Revd Michael Hodgson [2007]

Revd Kate Gray **[2008]

Mr Emmanuel Nkusi **[2008]

2.9.1 LIFE and WITNESS – STEWARDSHIP Sub-Committee

Convener: Mr Ray McHugh [2008]

Secretary: Secretary for Life and Witness

Mr Mick Barnes [2005]

Revd David Legge [2006]

Mrs Jackie Haws [2007]

Mrs Susan Wilkinson [2007]

Revd John Durrell **[2008]

2.9.2 WINDERMERE ADVISORY GROUP

Convener: Mr Jim Wilkinson [2005]

Secretary: The Director of Windermere

Dr Peter Clarke [2005] Revd Bernard Collins #[2009] Mrs Irene Wren **[2008]
Convener of Windermere Management Committee, Convener of Life and Witness Committee,
Representative of Carver URC

2.10 MINISTRIES

Convener: Mr John Ellis [2006]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Mrs Alison Biggs [2005] Revd Stuart Brock [2005] Revd Pauline Barnes [2006]
Mrs Joan Trippier [2007] Revd Paul Whittle [2007] Revd Terry Oakley **[2008]
Convener of National Assessment Board

2.10.1 MINISTRIES – ACCREDITATION Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Ken Chippindale [2005]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Revd Keith Argyle [2005] Mrs Sheila Telfer [2005] Mrs Judith Booth [2006]
Revd Adrian Bulley [2007] Revd Tony Wilkinson [2007] Revd Gwen Collins **#[2009]

2.10.2 MINISTRIES – CRCW Programme Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Bob Day *[2008]

Secretary: The CRCW Development Workers

Mr Chris Lawrence [2005] Revd John Burgess [2006] Mrs Janet Holden [2006]
Mr Peter Twilley [2007] Revd Tracey Lewis** [2008]

2.10.3 MINISTRIES – LAY PREACHING Sub Committee

Lay Preaching Commissioner: Dr Philip Theaker [2007]

and four members elected by the Lay Preacher Commissioners Consultation

2.10.4 MINISTRIES – MAINTENANCE OF MINISTRY Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd John Piper [2007]

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Mr Patrick Hickey [2007] Mrs Lyn Allford **[2008] Mr David Hayden **[2008]
Mr David Taylor **[2008]

The Treasurer, Convener of Pensions Executive

2.10.5 MINISTRIES – RETIRED MINISTERS HOUSING – Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd David Bedford * [2009]

Secretary: Secretary Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd

Mr Malcolm Lindo [2007] Mrs Edith Tolley [2005] Mrs Pauline Mewis [2006]
Revd Elizabeth Caswell [2008] 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 Tony Bayley at Church House

2.10.6 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT BOARD

Convener: Mrs Darryl Sinclair [2005]

Retiring 2005 Prof David Cutler#, Revd Rachel Poolman, Dr Jean Stevenson, Mrs Joyce Sutcliff
Retiring 2006 Revd Thomas Heggie, Revd Michael Mewis, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Hilma Wilkinson
Retiring 2007 Revd Diana Cullum-Hall, Miss Sarah Dodds, Revd Roy Fowler, Mrs Wilma Frew, Mrs Pat Poinen, Revd
 Nigel Uden, Revd Simon Walking
Retiring 2008 Mrs Judith Harris, Mrs Barbara Lancaster, Dr Cameron Wilson
Retiring 2009 Mrs Tina Ashitey**, Dr Peter Clarke**, Mr Hugh Abel**

2.11 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Dr Stephen Orchard [2006]

Secretary: Revd Hazel Martell [2005]

Revd Elizabeth Brown **☺[2009]

Synod Representatives: Revd Peter Poulter [1], Revd Ruth Wollaston [2], Mr Donald Swift [3], Mrs Val Morrison [4], Mrs Irene Wren [5], Dr Anthony Jeans [6], Revd Elizabeth Caswell [7], Revd Roz Harrison [8], Mr Peter Pay [9],

Revd Martin Hazell [10], Mrs Christine Meekison [11], Dr Jean Silvan Evans [12],
 Revd John Arthur [13], with the Immediate Past Moderator and the General Secretary.

2.12 PASTORAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Convener: Revd Keith Forecast [2007]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary

Mrs Irene Brunskill [2005]

Revd David Grosch Miller [2007]

Revd Meryl Court **[2008]

Mrs Sharn Waldron **[2008]

Convener of Welfare Sub-Committee

The Treasurer

The General Secretary

2.12.1 PASTORAL WELFARE Sub-Committee

Convener: Revd Alan Wharton [2007]

Secretary: Mrs Judy Stockings

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, The Treasurer, Convener Pastoral Reference Committee]

2.13 RACIAL JUSTICE

Convener: Revd Andrew Prasad [2007]

Secretary: Secretary for Racial Justice

Revd John Campbell [2005]

Mrs Sandra Ackroyd [2007]

Mrs Elaine Patrick [2007]

Revd Norman Setchell [2007]

Revd Carla Grosch Miller *[2007]

*another** [2008]*

*another**[2008]*

2.14 TRAINING

Convener: Revd John Humphreys [2007]

Secretary: The Secretary for Training

Revd Principal John Dyce [2005] Mrs Susan Brown [2006]

Revd Sue Henderson [2006]

Revd Malachie Munyaneza [2006] Mrs Valerie Burnham [2007]

Dr Ian Morrison [2007]

Revd Rachel Poolman **[2008] Mrs Kate Breeze **[2008]

Revd Richard Church **[2008]

2.15 YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

Convener: Revd Kathryn Price [2006]

Secretary: Revd Steven Faber **[2008]

Mrs Daphne Clarke [2005]

Ms Lorraine Downer [2005]

Revd John Sanderson [2005]

Mrs Elaine Thomas [2005]

Mr Huw Morrison [2006]

Mrs Hannah Middleton [2007]

Mrs Doreen Watson [2007]

Mr Augustus Webbe [2007]

Revd Tim Meachin **[2008]

FURY Chair

FURY Council Member

2.16 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS – Commission Panel

Convener: Mrs Helen Brown [2005]

Deputy Convener: Revd David Helyar [2007]

Secretary: Mr Brian Evans [2005]

Revd Alison Hall ☞** [2010]

Members:

retiring 2007

Dr Noreen Baillie

Miss Ina Barker

Mr Keith Brookes

Revd Ken Chippindale

Revd Jessie Clare

Mrs Janice Cockcroft

Miss Kathleen Cross

Revd Alison Davis

Revd John Du Bois

Mr Ralph Forsyth

Mrs Wilma Frew

Revd Joan Grindod-Helmn

Mr Alan Hart

Revd Peter Killick

Miss Elizabeth Lawson QC

Revd Julian Macro

Revd Ted Marley

Revd Denise Megson

Mrs Sheila Pratt

Mr Nicholas Pye

Revd Michael Rees

Revd Dr David Thompson

Mrs Shelagh Tweed

retiring 2009 **

Mr Martin Ballard

Revd Jim Brown

Mrs Ruth Clarke

Mr Peter Jolly

Mr Peter Mann

Mrs Vera Maskery

Revd Shelagh Pollard

Revd Raymond Singh

Mr Don Taylor

Mrs Lynne Upsdell

Revd Joan Winterbottam

Ms Elizabeth Whitten

3 MISSION COUNCIL

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the Officers of Assembly, the Provincial Moderators and three representatives from each Synod together with the Conveners of Assembly Committees.

Northern Synod	Revd John Durell, Revd Colin Offor, Mrs Susan Rand
North Western Synod	Miss Kathleen Cross, Mrs Janet Eccles, Revd Chris Vermeulen
Mersey Synod	Revd Martin Hardy, Mrs Wilmer Prentice, Mr Donald Swift
Yorkshire Synod	Mrs Val Morrison, Revd Pauline Loosemore, Mr Roderick Garthwaite
East Midlands Synod	Mrs Ann Ball, Mrs Barbara Turner, Mrs Irene Wren
West Midlands Synod	Mrs Melanie Frew, Revd Simon Helme, vacancy
Eastern Synod	Mr Mick Barnes, Revd Victor Ridgewell, Miss Joan Turner
South Western Synod	Revd Roz Harrison, Mrs Janet Gray, Revd Richard Pope
Wessex Synod	Revd David Bedford, Mrs Glennis Massey, Revd Clive Sutcliffe
Thames North Synod	Mrs Helen Clapp, Revd Dr Roger Scopes, Revd Jane Wade,
Southern Synod	Dr Graham Campling, Revd Lesley Charlton, Mr David Howell
National Synod of Wales	Mrs Janet Gray, Mr Stuart Jones, vacancy
National Synod of Scotland	Mrs Helen M Mee, Revd Alan Paterson, vacancy

4 TRUST BODIES

4.1 UNITED REFORMED CHURCH TRUST

Convener: *to be advised*

Secretary: Mr Tony Bayley

Directors

Mr Peter Ward [2005]	Revd Leslie Watson [2006]	Revd Paul Bedford [2008]
Mrs Fiona Smith [2008]	Mr Malcolm Littlefair [2009]	Dr Geoffrey Sides *[2009]
Mr Ernest Gudgeon **[2010]	Mr Donald Swift **[2010]	

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, General Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary-Retired Ministers' Housing Society]

4.2 THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS' PENSION TRUST LTD – BOARD MEMBERS

Chairman: *to be advised*

Secretary: Financial Secretary

Members of URC:	Mr Richard Nunn [2005]	Mr Philip Sheridan [2006]
	Mr Brian Moere [2008]	Mr Michael Goldsmith [2009]
Members of Fund:	Revd Kenneth Graham [2005]	Revd Gwen Thomas [2007]
	Revd Michael Davies [2008]	Revd Graham Spicer **[2009]

[*ex officio* Financial Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Convener MoM sub-committee, Convener MoM Pensions Executive]

4.3 CONGREGATIONAL MEMORIAL HALL TRUST

Revd Peter Grimshaw	Revd Dr Peter Jupp	Mr Hartley Oldham
Mr Graham Stacy	Dr John Thompson	<i>another</i>

4.4 THE AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER SERVICES CHARITABLE TRUST

Mr Clem Frank

Mr Brian Wates – joint appointment with Uniting Church in Australia

5. Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH to Meetings of SISTER CHURCHES

Presbyterian Church in Ireland	Revd Alasdair Pratt
General Synod of Church of England	Revd Fleur Houston
Methodist Conference	Revd Elizabeth Nash
General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note 5]	Revd Alasdair Pratt, Revd John Arthur, Revd Mary Buchanan
Presbyterian Church of Wales [note 5]	Revd Alasdair Pratt
Union of Welsh Independents [note 5]	Revd Stuart Jackson
Congregational Federation	Revd Richard Mortimer
Church in Wales Governing Board [note 5]	Revd Stuart Jackson
United Free Church of Scotland [note 5]	Mr Alan K Smith
Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	Revd David Tatem

6. Representatives of the UNITED REFORMED CHURCH on ECUMENICAL CHURCH BODIES

The following have been nominated as United Reformed Church representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

Note: A list of representatives to other ecumenical bodies, commissions and committees, co-ordinating groups and agencies, who are appointed by the relevant committees, will be distributed to all members of General Assembly. Additional copies are available, on request, from the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations.

6.1 Council for World Mission Assembly 2003

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Olive Bell, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith
Secretary for International Relations

6.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting 2003 – 2006

Revd David Coleman, Mrs Olive Bell, Ms Catherine Lewis-Smith, Secretary for International Relations,
Deputy General Secretary

6.2 WARC General Council 2004

Ms Sarah Hall, Ms Emma Pugh, Revd David Pickering, Secretary for International Relations, General Secretary

6.3 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Assembly 2002

General Secretary, Convener of the Ecumenical Committee
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Secretary for Church and Society
Revd Ray Adams, Miss Nikki Andrews, Mrs Ruth Clarke, Miss Lorraine Downer, Mrs Wilma Frew,
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, Mrs Jackie Yeomans, Revd John Young.

6.3.1 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Church Representatives Meeting

General Secretary Mrs Wilma Frew

6.4 Churches Together in England – Forum 2003**

General Secretary, Secretary for Ecumenical Relations, Mr Mark Argent,
Revd Bernie Collins, Miss Alison Micklem, Mr Dan Pipe, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Andrew Prasad, Mrs Helen Renner,
Revd Kirsty Thorpe, Mrs Darnett Whitby-Reid

6.4.1 Churches Together in England – Enabling Group

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

6.5 ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) see Note 5 Central Council

Revd John Arthur

6.6 CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales) see Note 5

Council The Synod Ecumenical Officer (alternate Synod Moderator)
Mrs Jackie Yeomans (alternate Mrs Eileen McIlveen)

6.7 FREE CHURCH COUNCIL for WALES see Note 5

Synod Ecumenical Officer (alternate Synod Moderator)

7. United Reformed Church Representatives at formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees

7.1 METHODIST/URC Liaison Committee

The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations together with: Ms Rachel Greening, Revd Peter Poulter, Revd Roy Fowler,
Revd Harry Lanham, Mr Kevin Lewis

7.1.1 HEALTH and HEALING DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Revd Brenda Russell, Dr Margaret Moore, Mrs Jackie Ballard, Revd Delia Bond

7.2 Anglian/Moravian Contact Groups

Revd David Tatem

7.3 ENFYs (The Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales) see Note 5
 Synod Moderator Synod Ecumenical Officer Mrs Ann Shillaker
 Revd Dr Robert Pope

7.4 SCOTTISH CHURCH INITIATIVE FOR UNION [SCIFU] see Note 5
 Synod Moderator Revd Alan Paterson Synod Ecumenical Officer
 Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

8. URC Representatives on Governing Bodies of Theological Colleges etc.

- 8.1 Mansfield College
 Ministerial and Educational Training Committee Professor Malcolm Johnson [2006]
 Revd Rachel Poolman [2006]
 Convener of the Training Committee
 Secretary for Training

- 8.2 New College London
 Foundation Trustees:
 Mr John Smethers [2006]
 Mr Graham Stacy [2007]
 Mr Philip Wade [2007]
alternate Mr Colin Howard *[2008]

- 8.3 Northern College
 Secretary for Training
 Revd David Jenkins [2005]
 Mr Bill McLaughin [2005]
 Miss Margaret Atkinson [2007]
 Mrs Helen Brown [2007]
 Revd Dr Robert Pope *[2007]

- Council of the Partnership for
 Theological Education, Manchester
 Secretary for Training

- 8.4 Westminster College: Board of Governors
 Convener: Revd Dr David Thompson [2008]
 Clerk: Revd Clifford Wilton [2006]
 Mrs Sally Abbott [2006]
 Revd Craig Muir [2009]
 Mr John Kidd [2009]
 Mr Brian Long **[2010]
*another **[2010]*
 Secretary for Training

- 8.4.1 Cheshunt Foundation
 Mr David Butler

- 8.4.2 Cambridge Theological Federation
 Convener Westminster College Governors

- 8.5 Homerton College Trustees
 Mr John Chaplin [2005]
 Mrs Elisabeth Jupp [2006]
 Lady Sally Williams [2007]
 Revd Dr David Thompson [2008]

- 8.6 Queen’s College, Birmingham
 Revd Elizabeth Welch
*another ***
 Secretary for Training in attendance

- 8.7 Aberystwyth (Memorial College)
 Mr Leslie Jones

9. GOVERNORS of COLLEGES and SCHOOLS with which the United Reformed Church is associated

- 9.1 Caterham School
 Revd Nigel Uden **[2007]
 Mr John Mathias **[2008]
- 9.2 Eltham College
 Revd Derek Lindfield [2007]
- 9.3 Walthamstow Hall
 Miss Margaret Vokins

Resolutions 31, 32

9.4	Milton Mount Foundation	Revd George Thomas [2006] Mrs Clare Meachin [2006] Revd David Cuckson [2006] Mr Graham Rolfe **[2008] <i>another **[2010]</i>
9.5	Silcoates School	Dr Peter Clarke [2005] Revd Arnold Harrison [2005] Revd Brenda Hill [2006] Dr Clyde Binfield [2007] Mr David Figures [2007]
9.6	Taunton School	Revd David Grosch-Miller
9.7	Wentworth College	Revd Brian Rawling
9.8	Bishops Stortford College	Revd Nigel Rogers

10. Miscellaneous

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund	Mr Ken Meekison Mrs Jill Strong Revd Julian Macro **
Christian Education	
Board of Trustees	Mrs Patricia Hubbard
Publications Development Group	Mrs Rosemary Johnston
Churches Main Committee	Ms Avis Reaney Mr Hartley Oldham
Congregational Fund Board	Revd Margaret Taylor Revd Eric Allen Revd John Taylor Mr Anthony Bayley Revd David Helyar
Guides' Religious Advisory Panel	Mrs Susan Walker
Pilots Management Committee	Mr Huw Morrison
Samuel Robinson's Charities	Mr Tony Alderman**
Scouts' Religious Advisory Group	Revd David Marshall-Jones
United Reformed Church History Society	Mrs Mary Davies Revd Michael Hopkins Mrs Carol Rogers Revd Kirsty Thorpe**
Wharton Trust	Revd Dr David Thompson Mr Norman Fabb

Resolution 31

Nominations

General Assembly appoints Committees and representatives of the Church as set out in pp 77–84 of the Book of Reports subject to additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary report before Assembly.

Resolution 32

Appointment of Synod Moderators I

Assembly notes the following guidance, adopted by Mission Council, for the Appointment of Synod Moderators and the Review of their Appointments.

The Appointment of Synod Moderators and the Review of their Appointments

1. In 2001 the Nominations Committee, struck with the contrasting methods of appointment used for senior Assembly appointments, invited the General Secretary to review the appointment of Moderators of Synods. In the course of three appointment procedures carried out subsequently the General Secretary sought confidential comment from all involved in the process and consulted with colleagues in other denominations about comparable procedures. The Nominations Committee received the General Secretary's report at their October meeting 2003 and resolved to bring proposals to General Assembly in 2004 for a revision of the guidance given for the appointment and review of a Synod Moderator.

2. The review and the proposals for change do not arise from any dissatisfaction with the actual appointments made using the existing guidelines. It is the process itself which is flawed. We could find no-one to advocate keeping so large a group as 20 people to make a recommendation to General Assembly for appointment. The collecting of names to be considered for appointment as a moderator does not conform to the Church's own equal opportunities commitments. The Review Group, as it is called, even those considering new appointments, has to meet stringent requirements to be representative but there is no requirement that any members be skilled in the way that members of an Assessment Panel are expected to be. The Nominations Committee considered these and other less obvious shortcomings in the present guidelines and decided that they needed to be withdrawn and new ones agreed.

3. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the present guidelines the Nomination Committee presumed that the issues of vocation were determinative in their design. It was agreed that whatever changes were advised in procedures should not exclude from consideration potential candidates who would not initiate an application for a senior post in the Church but would wish the call of God to be mediated to them through other people.

4. The Nominations Committee endorsed the following strengths of the present system.

- its thoroughness and seriousness as a process of discernment and waiting on God
- the bringing together of synod and national minds as is proper in the appointment of church leaders who have both regional and national roles
- wide consultation within the Synod concerned

5. The major changes which the Nominations Committee propose are to introduce an element of advertising and application to the process, to reduce the size of the nominating group, to encourage a greater

synod involvement in drawing up a job description and person profile and, finally, to establish a national panel of people from whom the Assembly representatives on the nominating group will be drawn.

6. Consequent upon changes in the appointment procedure the Nominations Committee consider there should be changes in the review process for moderators already in post. Fundamental to this is a need for regular appraisal within the synod. The accumulated experience of such appraisals is then available at the point of review and can be taken into account by both the review group and the moderator concerned. Since the Assembly is the appointing body the ultimate decision on re-appointment should lie with the Assembly and this needs to be reflected in the process of review.

A. New appointments

1. Preparing for meeting

1.1 The Nominating Group for an initial appointment by General Assembly will consist of eight people. Four people, including the Convenor of the Group, will be appointed by the Nominations Committee from a panel elected by the General Assembly. Four people will be appointed by the Synod where the vacancy exists and will be responsible for ensuring that the views of church members throughout the area of the Synod are given proper consideration.

1.2 The General Secretary will normally act as secretary to the Group and will arrange the dates and places of meetings. The beginning of the process will most probably be in the September prior to the Assembly at which the appointment will be made.

1.3 All costs will be met by the synod to which the appointment is being made, except the out of pocket expenditure of those appointed by the Nominations Committee, which will be a charge on the General Assembly. The services provided by the General Secretary and his/her office shall not be a charge on the Group.

1.4 The Synod Clerk will ensure that a comprehensive process of consultation is carried out within the Districts and churches of the Synod and among ecumenical partners before the Group holds its first meeting. The Synod Clerk may serve as a voting member of the Nominating Group.

1.5 The Convenor of the Group and the Synod Clerk will circulate to members of the Group a draft job description and person profile, incorporating the appropriate national and local requirements. The Group will normally approve these by correspondence

and will only meet to consider these documents when the Convenor judges there is a serious disagreement. The Synod Clerk will advertise the vacancy in *Reform* and within the synod. The advertisement should also be posted on appropriate web sites. The advertisement will make it clear that both applications and nominations will be welcomed. The Synod Clerk will oversee the process of issuing details to enquirers. Where the Synod Clerk is advised of a nomination the nominee will be contacted by letter and invited, if willing to be considered, to supply appropriate documentation. All nominees shall receive what is essentially the same letter and be advised who has made the nomination. The closing date for applications will allow details to be circulated to members of the Nominating Group before the short-listing meeting.

2. The meetings of the Nominating Group

2.1 The Nominating Group will agree a short list of applicants to be interviewed. If, in the judgment of the Group, there are no suitable applicants, the Group may re-advertise the post and invite applications from people, or nominations of people, who have not yet been considered.

2.2 The second meeting will carry out interviews with the short-listed candidates and arrive at a name for nomination to the General Assembly. In the event of failure to reach unanimous agreement the support of three Synod and three General Assembly members of the Group is an acceptable basis for a nomination but a simple majority decision is not.

2.3 The Nominating Group will normally bring its recommendation to the Nominations Committee for presentation to the Mission Council in March, there to be confirmed or not. This will enable the General Secretary to arrange preparation for the Moderator-elect and a formal reception at the July General Assembly. However, circumstances may require a different time-table.

B. The re-appointment of a serving Synod Moderator

3. Preparing for meeting

3.1 Before a Review Group is appointed the General Secretary will ascertain from the Moderator concerned whether she/he wishes to be considered for a further period of service. This consultation should take place in time for a Review Group to be formed, consider the matter and reach a conclusion no later than eight months before the end of the current appointment. The Review Group, appointed by the Nominations Committee, will consist of five people from outside the synod concerned. The General Secretary or, in his/her absence, the Deputy General Secretary, will provide services to the Group.

3.2 The synod will appoint its own internal Review Panel, consisting of one representative from each District or equivalent structure under the convenorship of the Synod Clerk. The members of this group would be charged to consult as widely as possible within their constituency. They should meet with the synod Moderator to discover the Moderator's view of the way his/her work has developed and her/his vision for a possible further period of service. The records of any appraisal system should be made available for such a meeting. The panel will then arrive at the synod's view of whether an invitation should be issued for a further time of service.

4. The meetings of the Review Group

4.1 The Review Group will receive written submissions from the Moderator and the Review Panel. They will then meet separately with the Moderator and the Review Panel, or its representatives, and interview them on the basis of their submissions. The Review Group will then reach a conclusion on the re-appointment and inform the Nominations Committee who will bring it to Mission Council no later than six months before the conclusion of the appointment.

4.2 If either the synod or those appointed to act on its behalf between meetings (e.g. an Executive Committee) or the Moderator concerned wishes to challenge the decision of the Mission Council they must enter an appeal within one month of the decision being made. The Mission Council shall then appoint a group of five people to hear the appeal and a member of its staff to provide services. The decision of that group will be final.

Resolution 33**Appointment of Synod Moderators 2**

Assembly resolves that the Rules of Procedure governing the appointment of Moderators of Synod be amended to read:

7.4 All appointments by the General Assembly to the office of moderator of a synod shall be made on the nomination of a committee consisting of four members appointed by the synod concerned and four members appointed by the Nominations Committee from a panel elected by the General Assembly. The Nominations Committee shall also name the Convener.

7.5 In selecting this representation the synod and Nominations Committee shall have regard to the need to make their selection both widely representative and possessing the necessary skills.

Note: For the procedure to be followed in the appointment and reappointment of moderators of synod see Minutes of Assembly 2004 [page reference].

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; 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, in particular the Ecumenical Committee. It also gives advice to the YCWT programme.

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd John Humphreys [2007]* **Secretary:** *The Secretary for Training*
*Revd Paul Ballard [2004], Mrs Anthea Coates [2004], Revd Dr John Parry [2004], Revd Principal John Dyce [2005], Mrs Susan Brown [2006], Revd Sue Henderson [2006], Revd Malachie Munyaneza [2006], Mrs Valerie Burnham** [2007], Dr Ian Morrison** [2007]*

1. OUR ASSEMBLY REMIT – RECENT HISTORY AND CURRENT WORK

1.1 Our remit given by General Assembly when the Committee took its present form in 1994 was amended by Mission Council in March 2003.

1.2 Since the mid 1990s the Training Committee has been engaged in three phases of activity.

1.2.1 In the mid to late 1990s a number of creative initiatives came to birth, not least the Continuing Ministerial Education programme and the Training for Learning and Serving programme, both of them developments of earlier training provision. At the same time, the committee wrestled with the perennial difficulty of the relationship between the numbers of students for ordained or commissioned ministry and the provision of training institutions. Initiatives to alter the number of institutions used by the church were not, however, taken up by the Church's councils.

1.2.2 Then from 1999 a great deal of detailed consolidation of the new programmes was undertaken as well as negotiating the terms of our relationship with training colleges in the light of the decisions referred to above.

1.2.3 In the last year or so, a new phase has begun. Building on the previous work it seems clear that this period will be marked by a radical review of training provision. This process of review coincides with the reviews being undertaken by the United Reformed Church itself, (Catch the Vision) by the Ministries Committee (Equipping the Saints) and the major review of training undertaken by the Church of England (*Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*, often referred to as *Hind*) – a close partner for us in England in many aspects of our training – and in which the Methodists are involved.

1.3 The Training Committee largely, though not entirely, provides training for the ministry that the church requires and does so in the context of the mission strategy in which the United Reformed Church is engaged. In that sense its review will seek to be responsive to the results of the other reviews being undertaken whilst ensuring the outcomes of its own work remain flexible enough to respond to the training needs the church elsewhere decides it requires.

1.3.1 It ought also to be noted (as the Committee's remit above indicates) that the Training Committee does not carry direct responsibility for all training within the church. Apart from the training that individual committees may undertake for their particular agendas for example Racial Justice or Resource Sharing, the Life and Witness Committee carries responsibility for Christian Education (including the Windermere Centre) and the Youth and Children's Work Committee for training in that sphere of the church's life.

2. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

2.1 The heart of this report is the interim Training Review which immediately follows these paragraphs. It is divided into three sections. The first expands on paragraph 1.2 above and indicates the **Pressures and Opportunities** which have led us to undertake such a review. The second delineates some theological and other **Principles** on which we have based our work and the third outlines some provisional **Pathways** for the future.

2.2 The paragraphs that follow the Training Review describe the ongoing work in which the Committee is engaged as the Review proceeds.

3. TRAINING REVIEW

3.1.1 The Training Committee is engaged on a major review with the intention of bringing resolutions to General Assembly in 2005. The Committee submits this interim review paper to Assembly 2004 after considerable reflection over the last year and more, for discussion and comment. It hopes that reactions will help to inform our presentation in 2005. The committee is also engaged in other avenues of communication. A consultation with representatives of training institutions, synods and ecumenical partners was held in February 2004 and another is planned for the autumn.

3.1.2 This paper, therefore, is presented in three parts:

1. **Pressures and opportunities** – current issues and demands.
2. **Theological Principles** – the big vision.
3. **Possible Pathways**

(Please note: in this paper, our use of the term 'theological education' is very inclusive. Some hear 'theological education' as if it only referred to training ministers or as if it was only about academic study of a sophisticated (– ivory tower? –) type. Instead we are using it to refer to all of the ways in which people think and speak about God (theos = God, logos = word) and the ways in which we need to learn, share and develop that thinking to equip our discipleship, which will include training in particular skills).

3.2 Pressures and opportunities

3.2.1 In March 2003, a paper was presented to Mission Council, which outlined the Training Committee's intention to undertake a review of the resources for training at the disposal of the United Reformed Church. The impetus for such a review was a range of pressures and opportunities of which the training committee was forcibly aware.

3.2.2 The previous lengthy discussion in our central councils about resources for training was in the 1999 Assembly of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, when Assembly voted not to reduce the list of institutions to which it sent trainee ministers. Not for the first time, the Training Committee had invited the councils of the church to consider the issue not least because of an over capacity of provision of colleges against the number of students. At the Union Assembly in 2000 the church decided, although without debate, to go on using all of the training institutions that had been used by the two uniting churches – twelve in all. It has been important to live with those decisions for a few years, for they led to planning and commitments in the institutions, which we could not fairly expect to be reviewed hastily. (For a note of the institutions currently used see the paragraph in parenthesis at the end of this review).

3.2.3 It could now look as if we are simply returning to these questions. However, whilst these concerns remain real and need attention **we cannot narrowly focus on the number of institutions we use to train ministers** (Church Related Community Workers and Ministers of Word and Sacrament). There are other needs also to be considered too such as:

- our provision of lay training;
- the training needs emerging from Catch the Vision and the Ministries Committee's report entitled Equipping the Saints;
- the impact and opportunities afforded by the Church of England's 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' (Hind) programme, (for more information see paragraphs under 8.1 in this Training report).

Indeed, we cannot simply focus on the number of training institutions we use because though a vital resource for the church they are not the only means by which we deliver training. As well as through i) colleges, training is also delivered ii) regionally though synods (occasional courses, elders training, ministers schools) through ecumenical courses (part time ministry training) and iii) through Assembly's Training Committee, of which the Training for Learning and Serving Programme (for all the church and as the main recommended route for lay preacher training) is the most obvious example. **We believe that we must review the provision of training via all three of these means and reflect on the relationship between them.** (For details of the wider training responsibility of the committee see the range of material in the rest of the Training Committee report. We acknowledge that yet more training is delivered in the church such as through the Windermere Centre and the Youth and Children's Work Training and Development Officers. These fall under the responsibility of other committees – Life and Witness and Youth and Children's Work respectively – with whom we collaborate carefully. They nevertheless fall outside of the remit of this report).

3.2.4 In light of the above the following provides a list of those pressures and opportunities that led us to embark on this process and continues to both stimulate and influence our thinking. These are not listed in any particular order of priority, nor are they a closed list; they are simply some significant issues of which we are aware and are set against the vital background of our church's primary ecumenical commitments.

3.2.4.1 *The 'Catch the Vision' Review of the life of the United Reformed Church.*

As indicated above the work of training partly flows through Assembly committees and synods. The purpose of our training is to help equip the church for the vision it has of its mission. We seek to be ready to do that. We seek to be responsive to any changes in the next few years and to any disparity in training resources (human, ecumenical and financial), across the councils of the church.

3.2.4.2 *The 'Equipping the Saints' process of our Ministries Committee.*

This may well offer some re-definition or re emphasis of the ministries of the church. If it does, there will be consequent demands on the training committee to provide appropriately amended training.

3.2.4.3 *Quite apart from the Ministries Committee's work, there is a developing range of ministries that we have in the church.*

These will need to be equipped and supported appropriately.

3.2.4.4 *The numbers of candidates we expect to come forward for ministerial training inevitably influences our strategy.*

3.2.4.5 *The need for institutions and programmes to be educationally, socially and financially viable.*

We currently use (as well as part time courses) five colleges, mainly to train ministers. (See note at end of paragraph 3.7 for more details). They cost two thirds of the training budget and yet because of the small number of ordinands, all four institutions in England are on a very precarious budget.

There is also a related question about whether we are spending a disproportionate amount of the training budget on ministers of Word and Sacrament, and to what extent we take into account synod budgets/ contributions to training.

Four of the five colleges are independent; the United Reformed Church 'owns' one. All are deeply but variously, engaged with ecumenical partners. However the colleges, and the ecumenical courses also, have barely sufficient students to create viable United Reformed Church student cohorts. Nevertheless, in our deliberations over student numbers and finance in recent years, we have discovered good arguments for using these institutions and some tremendously deep ties to them.

3.2.4.6 *The wider value of these institutions as theological resources for the training of the whole church.*

All our institutions currently serve the church well beyond their particular remits.

3.2.4.7 *The needs of the people who work within training institutions.*

The Training Committee is well aware of the dedication of those teaching in our training institutions and does not wish to be care-less in how it relates to these people at this time of great uncertainty.

3.2.4.8 *The Church's responsibility to its people to make available good lay training programmes.*

3.2.4.9 *The secular environment of life long learning which is appropriately influencing our church culture.*

3.2.4.10 *The place of ecumenism in training policy.*

In this we need to address and balance our aspiration to be increasingly United and our character as Reformed. All of our training is done ecumenically and in many ways we are dependent on the Church of England. The ecumenical commitment can however, make us vulnerable to the decisions and policies of more powerful partners. It needs to be balanced with the difficult but important responsibility of bearing witness to the reformed heritage in the pilgrimage of the church catholic. This task is to be undertaken from a shrinking and minority base and with a prior calling to ecumenism.

3.2.4.11 *The different opportunities for educational and ecumenical partnership in the nations we serve.*

Scotland and Wales are at different places in terms of ecumenical engagement and training patterns and Assembly policy must be assiduous in relating as a church across these islands. The Training Committee is planning a consultation with the National Synods of Wales and Scotland as the affect of ecumenical developments in England Scotland and Wales are different in each nation.

3.2.4.12 *Current Church of England progress in implementing 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' (The Hind Report).*

This programme is in the process of re-forming the English ecumenical training scene. It will directly affect the four colleges and all the courses that we use in England and to some extent Wales. With the Methodists we are partners in the implementation process of which the Church of England is the lead body.

3.2.5 Many of the above developments and not least the United Reformed Church 'Catch the Vision' process will not be completed before decisions have to be made about educational and training resources. Therefore, the United Reformed Church must travel towards being adaptable and flexible in the ways in which training is operated.

3.2.5.1 In particular it may want to focus on the opportunities posed by the pressures or difficulties of some 'loose ends':

- Does regional variation merely reflect a response to the variety of contexts in which the church operates or is there something to be explored in terms of standards and consistency?
- There are a variety of 'loose' training networks into which some parts of the church opt more strongly than others. Should there be a greater cross-fertilisation of ideas/ experience/ insights and issues/ challenges across the whole denomination? (Some acknowledgment of a need for a school for theological education, or some manner of theological education faculty in which all involved are embraced)

- Does the United Reformed Church take on board the insights of educationalists and also the experience in training and education of those with whom the system interacts?
- Where does the United Reformed Church create space for theological enquiry? There is much pressure on people and there is much business and busy-ness, yet we need to address and be addressed by our fast changing context.

3.3 Theological Principles – the Big Vision

The committee recognises the pressures of limited resources and the need to work within severe constraints. It believes, however, that such pragmatic decisions that have, at all levels, to be taken, together with the constraints of history, must be viewed in the light of fundamental Gospel principles.

3.3.1 The primary task of the Church remains to be a witness to the saving reality of God as given in Jesus and to be a people found by the love of God in Christ, mediated by the Holy Spirit:

- through the proclamation of the Gospel in the whole world;
- as a priestly fellowship of praise, worship and intercession in and for the whole world;
- as a community of faith, love and hope in the world;
- in the service of the broken and marginalized throughout the world;
- by prophetic commitment to justice and peace and healing for the world;
- as those who discover and share liberation, openness and the fullness of humanity in and through Christ.

The Christian calling, as a pilgrim people, both personally and corporately, is to be with Christ, in the power of the Spirit, serving the Kingdom of God, wherever we have been set, whether in or beyond the Church, in ecumenical solidarity and with those of true heart of any faith or none, believing that creation and history are under the lordship of Christ and will find completion and fullness in the mystery of his love.

3.3.2 Within the calling of the whole Church the United Reformed Church has been given its own special but not exclusive calling in the service of the Kingdom for our own time:

- to witness to the ecumenical journey of sharing in the search for that 'unity that Christ wills' in a renewed and reshaped Church;
- to affirm creatively, in fresh and relevant ways, the heritage and insights of the Reformed tradition, founded on Scripture informing the highest levels of intellectual learning and practical wisdom;
- to work through a conciliar understanding of the Church, at every level from the local

to the national, as the pilgrim People of God journeying together;

- to recognise that Christians are undividedly bound together in the Body of Christ, so that we all, in our own calling, work together and are supportive of each other in our common task;
- to recognise the ministry of the whole people of God exercised corporately and strengthened through the particular ministries of eldership and word and sacrament;
- to be inclusive and welcoming, in the name of Christ, of all, especially of the marginalized and oppressed, and to seek how all manner of people can find Christian freedom as disciples of Christ.

3.3.3 This charge has to be worked out in our present. This is a time of accelerating social change, the outcome of which it is impossible to discern. All that can be done is to try to be faithful to the Gospel (as did our forebears in the faith) as we see it in response to contemporary trends and events. In a time of confusion, there will be many siren voices clamouring for attention. The challenge is to be both discerning and flexible, open to new insights yet recognising the treasures of the past and still to be able to hold fast to the Christian vision. As ever God will bring new things to light as old forms crumble, but even these will be embedded in the ambiguity of the world.

3.3.4 Perhaps it is possible to point to three broad areas that will dominate Christian thinking and action in the immediate future:

- A. Cultural and religious pluralism and the marginalisation of the Church in our society; but at the same time, a post-modern, romantic rediscovery of spirituality (often in the form of paganism) and the hardening of identities (sometimes as what is called 'fundamentalism').
- B. The rapid advances in technology and science, especially in IT and medicine, challenging the perception of what it means to be human and raising new, acute moral issues.
- C. The apparent triumph of rampant capitalism and economic globalisation which, on one hand, raises the issues of poverty and ecology and, on the other, turns us all into consumers with all the consequences for social cohesion, belonging, responsibility and personal identity.

3.3.5 Each of these has consequences for the Church from the global to the local, at the theoretical, practical and pastoral level. They are not just happening to the Church's environment but affect it and are experienced within it. It is also important to look at what has happened to the Church in recent years.

- A. Most obviously and painfully there has been the near meltdown, as with so many other inherited social structures.

- B. The ecumenical vision has transformed inter-church perceptions and relations (of which the United Reformed Church is the major British example), but this has also thrown up its own problems of change, identity and confusion. We also now find ourselves at a point where across the churches there is little consensus on ecumenical direction.
- C. Reflecting political and social change there has been a re-visioning of mission both internationally and locally. There have been pioneering developments in ordination education, pastoral structures, community work and now the need to come to terms with the sexual/gender issues and youth culture.
- D. As part of the end of an assumed Christian culture, the churches have rediscovered the understanding of the 'whole people of God' with its concomitant stress on the diversity of ministry and the nature of the 'laity'. This has both set free new initiatives and raised problems of catholicity, authority and recognition.

The result is that the Church lives in an heightened tension (which is always present in some form) between increased diversity and flexibility, as the response to change elicits retrenchment as well as (desperate) responses to crises, and a need to sustain structures of working and authority that will enable commonality and unity, allowing corporate shared thinking, planning and use of resources. It is here that the Training Committee, in collaboration with others, has to work out its aims and objectives and structures in an attempt to be faithful stewards.

- 3.3.6 The committee is clear:
- that there ought to be a drawing together of the different strands of theological education (including lay) to make best use of resources and for mutual reinforcement without improper confusion;
 - that there is also an issue of the importance of institutions and place;
 - that we must make new skills available at professional levels;
 - that 'training for training' is an aspect of the 'learning Church'. This includes upgrading supervision practices.

3.4 Furthermore, the Training Committee believes that the United Reformed Church needs a pattern of theological education and training which is accessible, has internal integrity, promotes the growth of communities and individuals, is disciplined, flexible and promotes the highest possible intellectual rigour. The six principles below have under girded our praying, thinking and planning and are presented now as signposts on the way forward to a new pattern of working.

3.4.1 Open Access, diversity and unity
 Training and education are not merely for the privileged. It is a gospel imperative that all people should have access to courses (geographically, educationally and ecumenically) as they engage theologically in preparation for a variety of formal and informal ministries within the United Reformed Church or none. Theological education needs to stretch and nourish people in the whole of their development. It therefore needs to be provided in different ways and at different levels for different people learning alongside each other and learning to respect each other's gifts and skills. Theological education should promote and be an experience of diversity, learning to live in unity.

3.4.2 Integrity, enrichment and confidence
 We look to an internal integrity in the training we offer to the church. It should tackle both the continuities and the fractures between training and education for membership, for elders, for worship leadership and all that Training for Learning and Serving offers as well as preparation for the variety of ministries developed or being developed by the church.

Theological education is a mutually enriching activity. Teachers are taught and the taught are teachers. This is particularly true as people engage in theological education with a wide variety of life experiences and skills. Theological education can never be completed. Formal continuity needs to be built in to recognise the need for life-long learning.

Theological education should stimulate confidence in the Christian faith and the journey of discovering the biblical text in a way which is disciplined and open in a multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. There needs to be a direct and honest connection between theological education and other means by which the church seeks to equip the people of God.

3.4.3 Inspiration, transformation and community
 We look to the growth of community and of individuals as the Spirit liberates and the reading of Scripture inspires. Both community and individuals can be 'led out' or 'brought out' (from the Latin word 'educare') in ways they could not have imagined. People and communities can be led to somewhere new, beyond their particular experience or expectation. Theological education should aid the transformation of individuals in communities engaged with the search for justice.

3.4.4 Discipline and dialogue
 Theological education is disciplined and develops discipline and self-discipline, individually and collectively so that communities discover unity in diversity and are freed to rejoice in that diversity. This type of education will better enable the church to be in dialogue with other faiths and with other communities with integrity to our calling as the whole people of God.

3.4.5 Flexibility

Theological education will be flexible as the church learns to rejoice that people offer for training and seek theological education from a variety of contexts and a variety of life experience as well as for a variety of motives. It cannot be a matter of 'one size fits all'.

3.4.6 Intellectual

Theological education should always promote the development of intellectual skills. Each person should be helped to fulfill her or his own potential and should be valued as part of the learning landscape of the church. The United Reformed Church needs to encourage future teachers and academics as well as to equip people with the whole range of skills needed by the church. The United Reformed Church has a history of introducing individuals to the world of academia and to ecumenical pilgrimage. The present review should ensure that this valuable contribution continues and that these people and all people are affirmed in their vital ministries. But it should also resist any pressure to concentrate on 'academic' achievement as an end in itself rather than as a fulfillment of God given potential for service in the church.

We wish to promote the ethos of the United Reformed Church as a Learning Church, learning to be disciples in an increasingly complex world, learning together, learning with and from each other and learning in the power of the Holy Spirit of God who leads us into all truth.

3.5 Possible pathways

3.5.1 The training committee paper addressed to Mission Council in March 2003 (which is the foundation of the **Pressures and Opportunities** section above) offered the prayer that in our review of training we might be 'Visionary, Sensible and Wise'. We need to offer sensible, wise ways forward, which build on the successes of the past and take us into visionary ways of nurturing the whole people of God in the twenty first century. We also need to be speedy. For the sake of staff, present and future students, other denominations with whom we work and the institutions and courses which may be affected by any future Assembly decision based on our recommendations, we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of putting off decisions. Indeed the Church of England's implementation of its 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' is already proceeding with pace.

3.5.2 In this paper, we are putting forward five possible pathways into the future. Within these models we will need to discover the contribution of each synod and course, each college and the Assembly training programmes and this in turn will depend on how the implementation of 'Formation for Ministry...' will affect those very organisations. The Training Committee suspects that, with regard to ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community

Workers, the United Reformed Church will want to ensure educationally viable and denominationally supported cohorts of students and that it will not be able to fund training from the training budget to present levels. We suspect that some colleges may cease to be used for initial ministerial training in the way we currently use them. However, the possibilities of institutions developing specialisms or finding life and work in the regional training partnerships that are coming to life under the 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' process are real. We know that both colleges and ecumenical courses, to varying degrees, are used for other than ordination or commissioning (for Church Related Community Workers') training and we are keen to see this accelerated. We know that the developing regional training partnerships are founded on the principle that they will deliver training across the board of need. The immediate future is uncertain and we will need to hold our nerve as new arrangements take shape but in any event, we should prepare to bring resolutions to the Assembly in 2005.

3.5.3 There have been many changes since 1999. The Union in April 2000 brought the distinct educational and cultural environment of Scotland into the United Reformed Church as a separate Synod, bringing with it well established and firmly rooted ways of working and the legacy of the Scottish College. Additionally, the Assembly of Wales and the Parliament of Scotland hold education as part of devolved power. It is therefore likely that our three educational contexts will become increasingly distinctive. The particular ecumenical contacts of the three nations will bring new and divergent possibilities. The Training Committee has planned conversations with representatives of these national synods to ensure that its agenda and review is properly reflective of a tri-national denomination.

3.5.4 In what follows everything is up for discussion and there are many issues to be explored. The period of discussion will be an uneasy period for many people within the church including those involved in and concerned for theological education. However, the Training Committee believes that the anxieties could well be even greater if discussion were confined to the committee until the production of its recommendations. We also recognise and welcome the prospect that in the discussion that will follow the circulation of this paper greater insights and greater challenge will emerge. Nothing is decided in advance; there are no hidden agendas. We seek the will of God for the future of education and training in nurturing the People of God in the love and service of our Lord. We invite comments both at Assembly and in written form before and after Assembly, the sooner comments come to the Training Committee the better.

3.5.5 Status Quo versus Change

3.5.5.1 The stark choice before us is either for the United Reformed Church to continue with the present patterns for the provision of training or to change. The decision to change cannot be simply for change's sake. If there is to be change then the Training Committee seeks to work towards a model for the provision of theological education suited to the requirements of the principles in section 2 of our paper and taking account of the context outlined in section 1.

3.5.5.2 At present there are colleges, courses, synod programmes and Assembly generated programmes such as Training for Learning and Serving, what is at the time of writing called Continuing Ministerial Education and within that Post Ordination Commissioning Education and Training as well as district and local initiatives. All of these make up a large part of the total picture of training within the United Reformed Church. We are being challenged from within and without the church to make radical responses to the realities of church and religious life. The church's traditional approach is 'nothing changes here' and we have a history of retreating from thorny issues. But we hope that the range of pressures and opportunities indicated in the first section above has shown clearly that to do nothing is to risk our current provision creaking under the pressures and to miss the creative opportunities that presently abound to equip the church for its missionary task. If the church continues its previous patterns of not grasping nettles then we could be stung far more than we might be by reaching out to new possibilities – however sharp they seem.

3.5.5.3 What is more, fractures in theological education – especially between lay and ordination training – are not addressed by the maintaining the status quo. If we are not prepared to change, we not only ignore our own current problems but allow the Church of England to develop its training initiative without our influence. Given our dependence on the Church of England in some quarters that could give us serious difficulties. Failure to change might also allow the 'market economy' to dictate which college(s)/ courses survive to serve the church. In other words, Assembly could declare its intention to use the colleges available, as required, but without accepting responsibility for their financial support (except Westminster, the only college that is not independent). The Training Committee, for all its concerns about its budget, is of the mind that this would not be a satisfactory way of approaching the development of theological education for the future of the church and society. Nor does it feel it would be a just or acceptable way to treat those serving in these institutions or to recognise the way the institutions themselves are vital resources for the life of the church.

3.6 Against the above background we present five possible pathways for the future from our own discussion and research. The Committee recognises that these pathways are not necessarily mutually exclusive but offers them in this way as an indication of the particular characteristics that are emphasised in the pathways.

3.6.A Pathway A

Maintain Assembly and synod programmes much as they are, perhaps continue to use ecumenical courses for part-time ordination training (however these are reconfigured by the Church of England) and reduce the number of colleges from 5 to 3 (or even 2)

3.6.A.1 It might be agreed that significant change would not be in the church's interest and that the key problem remains one of college over provision. Assembly would be invited to return to the recommendations it made in the 1990s, namely that the United Reformed Church should reduce the number of colleges to which it sends students for training for ministry. Each time this was recommended the move was to reduce from four to three colleges. To follow this option would imply a reduction from the present five colleges to three, though already the decline in the number of students in training might well provide the case for a reduction from five to two. Such retrenchment would lighten the financial load considerably and in full time training concentrate the number of students into larger groups.

3.6.A.2 The Training Committee is doubtful whether taking this road would be the most constructive or imaginative way of meeting the demands and challenges of theological education and training in the future. Section 1 of this paper outlines many of the challenges and questions before us as a denomination with regard to training and this option fails to address these, with the exception of easing the financial situation and the size of student cohorts. This approach would appear to suit a church in constant retreat and we are uneasy about recommending a strategy of decline and withdrawal.

3.6.A.3 The other major disadvantage is that this pathway concentrates proposed change exclusively on full-time ministerial training – a very small part of the whole educational enterprise. It does not address the vast range of theological education available and being delivered in the United Reformed Church and ecumenically.

3.6.B Pathway B

Maintain Assembly and synod programmes much as they are, perhaps continue to use ecumenical courses for part time ordination training (however these are reconfigured by the Church of England – but see below) and reduce the number of colleges from 5 to 1 institution

3.6.B.1 A logical extension of Pathway A would be to accept that now is the time for the United Reformed Church to operate with one college only. This one college would be responsible for the oversight and provision of all the training currently undertaken by the five colleges and possibly all/some of the courses. A denomination of our size could easily place all its theological education eggs into the one basket and expect that the one institution would carry the burden and be the beacon of Reformed theology in England and contribute to the Reformed scene in both Scotland and Wales. The National Synods of Scotland and Wales would be asked to develop the partnerships necessary to operate ecumenically. General Assembly could decide on this route based on the number of students that are to be available for full time theological training. This would carry and extend the advantages and disadvantages of pathway A

3.6.C Pathway C

Ceasing to use all the designated United Reformed Church institutions that we now use and working in 9 English Regional Training Partnerships (Church of England ‘Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church’ – Hind) plus Scotland and Wales

3.6.C.1 This option focuses totally or almost totally on participating in the ecumenical developments in England. By the time General Assembly meets, the process of restructuring that the General Synod of the Church of England has embarked on will have already decided on the precise definitions of the regions within which theological education is to be arranged. The United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church are partners in the Committee that is defining the regions. This ‘Hind’ process of the Church of England (for details see elsewhere in this training committee report) calls for theological education to be provided in a way that closely links with many of the principles which the Training Committee has been emphasising. These include:

- repairing the fragmentation between ‘lay’ and ‘ordained’ training;
- healing the fracture between training for recognised ministries and the increasing range of ministries and activities for which people are being trained/ employed within the church, and

- emphasising continuity between pre-ordination and post-ordination training and CME;
- expressing most completely our ecumenical vision;
- allowing us the probability of financial saving and enable us to concentrate student numbers;
- enabling an integrated organisation of all our training (college, synod and Assembly programmes) through regional partnerships (colleges, ecumenical course, synods, dioceses, Methodist districts etc).

3.6.C.2 There is much to be commended in this ecumenical approach. The ecumenical perspective of theological education is one in which the United Reformed Church and its colleges have been and still are pioneers but the Training Committee is anxious about a number of issues.

- How does a small denomination such as ourselves influence the training culture developed by one as large as the Church of England?
- How does a small denomination with distinctive insights and gifts to offer the church catholic develop its own perspectives and insights with confidence as a gift to the ecumenical pilgrimage?
- How does the United Reformed Church participate fully and effectively in nine regions and maintain and support those who have particular skills in theological education from the reformed tradition?
- What would be the situation if at some time the Church of England went down a route which was unacceptable from our Reformed perspective?

3.6.D&E Pathways D and E share a central idea but it works out in different ways. It involves the creation of a new body within the life of the church which for the purposes of this paper will be called “The United Reformed Church School for Theological Education” (“School” in short!). This School could be **either** a faculty of people engaged in the provision of training etc (pathway D below) **or** a Reformed resources centre for theological education to which those engaged in the field could turn to resource their teaching needs (pathway E below).

3.6.D&E.1 These options assume that all institutions currently used find their place in the new regional training partnerships and, where possible and appropriate seek to develop particular specialisms in their service of the church.

3.6.D&E.2 In both D and E there will need to be a careful analysis of all the resources the Assembly places into training to discover where there would be saving and where there would be extra costs. The

Training Committee does not expect either D or E to increase the amount spent on training and education, rather we expect that, by bringing together the whole variety of ways in which training and education is financed there would be more than enough human and financial resource to promote either pathway. We do however recognise that there is much to examine, not least the financial implications and staffing of pathways.

The School would be of and for the denomination.

3.6.D Pathway D

United Reformed Church School for Theological Education working in 11 local areas (nine regions in England plus Scotland and Wales)

3.6.D.1 The School would oversee the provision of all theological education and training in the United Reformed Church offered in the name of the whole denomination, including those aspects of education and training that are deemed necessary for Assembly recognised ministries (elders, Church Related Community Workers and 'ministers'). It would also provide education and training for other areas of service and commitment in the work of the people of God as otherwise is identified.

3.6.D.2 All those undertaking or delivering training and educational opportunities under the auspices or for the United Reformed Church would be members / students of the School. This would mean some cross committee negotiation and reflection by Assembly/Mission Council, given that some areas of education are the proper responsibility of other committees. Nevertheless the School's responsibilities could include ministers, Church Related Community Workers, elders, worship leaders, youth workers, junior church leaders, evangelists, church membership classes and so on. Students' membership of the School would be expressed in regional gatherings, integrated learning opportunities (including residential learning opportunities) and would concentrate on exploring both the joys and trials of both the Reformed heritage and its contribution to the future of the church catholic. Students would receive localised education and training delivered as ecumenically as is possible, depending on the particular facilities and relationships in the region in which they are resident. The Scottish College provides a useful, but by no means prescriptive model for how the School might operate.

3.6.D.3 The School would:

- be a human and educational resource in the broadest sense;
- localise education and training delivered ecumenically whenever possible;
- be disciplined in preparing people for a variety of ministry for a church witnessing across the

British Isles. The larger part of the School's workload would be generated within England, and it would therefore be vital for the School to be sensitive and responsive to the needs and distinctiveness of Scotland and Wales;

- foster the vast range of teaching and training skills needed within the United Reformed Church;
- be at the centre of the provision of training such as Training for Learning and Serving and TLS LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences) and thereby be committed to addressing those fractures in theological education that are not necessary;
- seek to develop a relationship between all those engaged in denominational education and training within the School. All those appointed by synods and those recognised as providing 'Assembly' training and education would be members of the School faculty and be supported and nurtured by it;
- oversee all ministerial and other training, including the Reformed input to the regional training partnerships;
- The relationship of the school and Assembly and Training Committee would need examining.

3.6.D.4 This pathway would seek to deal with many of the pressures and opportunities developed in paper 1 but it has yet to be tested in terms of feasibility, how it would relate to existing institutions, developing ecumenical partnerships or how effective it would be.

3.6.E Pathway E

United Reformed Church School, working in 11 local areas (9 Regions in England plus Scotland and Wales) plus Reformed Resources Centre

3.6.E.1 Pathway E assumes that however the regional training partnerships develop and whatever the role of those institutions the United Reformed Church currently uses there will be need to resource that training from the Reformed perspective. We would envisage a 'Reformed Resources Centre' (probably based in Westminster College, Cambridge – whose other role in the region or for the church is not determined in this model) to act as a library; and as a centre of expertise and research into the reformed tradition. The resources in the Centre would be personnel as well as books, artifacts and on line resources and would be co-ordinated and delivered where needed by means of a clearing house organisation.

3.6.E.2 The School could attract people to it and its staff could go out to people in local situations. It would be responsive to providing the specifically Reformed elements to any training or educational activity prescribed by the Assembly and being delivered in regional partnerships. It could be at the hub of a

network for those who are or have been engaged in research. It would have a major role to overcome the inevitable variation in training and educational practice across these islands.

3.6.E.3 Whilst not an educational institution per se and thus not able to deliver directly the activities listed under D it would make that task easier and less complex by building on the resources that the denomination has already accrued. It could use and coordinate the skills and experience of United Reformed Church staff living in different parts of the church.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The Training Committee has seen these pathways but as yet 'they look like trees walking' (Mark 8 24). There is much to be clarified, discuss, explore and investigate before any informed proposals can be taken to General Assembly in 2005. The Training Committee anticipates a very full agenda in the coming months. The Committee will need to:

- a) work through what the structures of any future school might be
- b) bear in mind the position of various minorities within those structures
- c) do detailed work on costings – present and future – including the place of volunteers within the structures
- d) work with the synods in England to help them determine their place in the Regional Training Partnerships in that nation
- e) work with the national synods of Scotland and Wales to determine how they operate within those nations for training and educational purposes
- f) work with our training institutions to see how they may be a positive part of ecumenical regional training
- g) work with other Assembly committees to explore the nature of life long learning in many contexts
- h) gather reactions from around the church
- i) decide a direction to recommend and
- j) and then work on the consequences of that direction to prepare for presentation to and discussion at the 2005 Assembly.

(FOR INFORMATION Extract from the booklet *Becoming a Minister – Colleges and Courses used by the United Reformed Church for Training*.

In order to obtain the minimum requirement for ordination, candidates are required to follow one of the following course paths, or a mixed-mode combination:

The satisfactory completion of the Introductory Course, including attendance at the "Our Church United Reformed Church Ethos and History" weekend.

Followed by either:

A Full time Course

This is College based and includes 3 or 4 years of full-time training including an Internship year or placements in each year.

or

A Part Time Course

This takes place at a recognised Ecumenical Course (3 years) plus one year assessed placement work, usually supervised by college staff & overseen in consultation with the Synod Training Officer

Or it can be on the *Faith in Living* Course, a four-year integrated course at the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester. Most Ecumenical Part-time Courses operate with regular weeknight sessions and some weekend; the *Faith in Living* Course provides local home-based tuition with six residential weekends a year usually in Manchester.

Full-time Courses recommended by the United Reformed Church are:

Mansfield College, Oxford

Northern College, Manchester

Queens', Birmingham

Westminster College, Cambridge,

and for candidates accepted by Scotland Synod of the United Reformed Church:

courses arranged through the Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College.

Part-time Ecumenical Courses currently recommended by The Training Committee are:

The East Anglian Ministerial Training Course (EAMTC)

The East Midlands Ministry Training Course (EMMTC)

The North East Ecumenical Course (NEOC)

The Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester (PTM)

The St Albans and Oxford Ministry Course (SAOMTC)

The South East Institute for Theological Education (SEITE)

The South Wales Ordination Course

The Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme (STETS)

The South West Ministerial Training Scheme (SWMTS)

The West Midlands Ministry Training Course (WMMTC)

The Scottish Congregational and United Reformed Church College

Candidates accepted for training by the Scotland Synod may train through certain Scottish Universities, supplemented by a course run by the Scottish Congregational and United Reformed College.)

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Review of Training Needs

General Assembly encourages the Training Committee in its review of training needs, to explore further the pathways A-E it has identified in the light of the Assembly debate and to sample opinion and consult widely before returning with proposals to Assembly in 2005.

4. TRAINING FOR LEARNING AND SERVING

4.1. TLS has gone from strength to strength. Supported by a staff team consisting of Revd David AL Jenkins (TLS Programme Co-ordinator), Revd Hilary Collinson (One-year Course Co-ordinator) and Mrs Heather Skidmore (Course Administrator) the expanding programme reaches into parts of the United Reformed Church other courses cannot reach. Designed as 'open access', its Bible based courses relating to present day contexts stimulate the mind, challenge the heart and enrich the soul of all involved. In its 9 year history in England and Wales it has reached people from all walks of life, ranging in age from late teens to mid eighties and coming from very diverse theological and church backgrounds including ecumenical partner churches. In this period 627 people have enrolled on courses and at least 1,927 and probably closer to 2,500, have acted in a support network capacity for course members. In Scotland, the closure of the Scottish Churches Open College (SCOC) in 2003 is regretted both educationally and ecumenically but it has afforded the TLS Programme an opportunity to offer its resources in Scotland also.

4.1.1 The 2 year Foundation Course which, in common with other courses, includes home study, local groups, regional weekends and optional assessed written work provides a base from which opens the Gateway One Year Courses, although some of these may be accessed directly with the right background knowledge and experience.

- Experiencing Faith – a novel approach to interfaith relations through meeting people rather than simply learning from a book
- Gateways into Care – suitable for anyone acting in a Christian caring role both inside and outside the church
- Gateways into Prayer – an opportunity to widen and deepen our spirituality by learning together and through concentrating on listening and responding to God
- Gateways into Worship – the main United Reformed Church route to Assembly Accreditation as a Lay Preacher but also for anyone interested in worship
- Gods' Jesters – inspiring and promoting the use of Performance Arts in worship

4.1.2. The new TLS LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences) programme of local short courses is targeted for any who wish to undertake a programme of learning and assumes no prior study but it is especially targeted at those who wish to train for District/Area recognition as a lay preacher. It has been developed at the request of the United Reformed Church's Lay Preaching Support Committee. It was launched in June 2003. Unlike TLS standard courses

(which start every September) LITE courses can spring up at any time of the year whenever they are locally organised. Three courses are currently available ('Introductory Course', 'Getting to grips with the Bible' and 'Leading Worship') with take-up as in March 2004 of around 180 course members in 11 Synods. 70 of these people had already registered for a second short course making a total of over 250 registrations in the first 9 months. 2 new courses will be available this year – 'God's Word for Today' (Preaching) and 'Talking about God' (Theology).

4.1.3 The development of LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences) is an exciting if unpredictable development. TLS has tended to encourage people to undertake the standard courses. However the Training Committee seeks to supply the training needs which the church requests. The Lay Preaching Strategy Proposal adopted by assembly in 2002 included this recommendation to Districts/Areas: 'Identify training programmes appropriate to different people at different stages of experience and development which could be delivered by district or in co-operation with synod training officers or ecumenical partners. (Assembly Reports 2002 2.3.3 page 69). The Training Committee has provided LITE as a serious option to meet this need and as a way of indicating a standard for locally delivered training.

4.1.4 The take up of LITE is as stated above and is encouraging. However there is indication that it may change the shape of TLS. There is a smaller expression of interest in TLS standard courses for September 2004. This may be because there is a bow wave of initial interest in LITE and a backlog of people looking for something more locally deliverable. The balance of take up between LITE and the standard courses may settle in the near future. It may also be the case that our best hopes may be realised and those who undertake LITE as an accessible first step in theological education may so have their appetites whetted that they embark on standard TLS thereafter.

4.1.5. LITE is not intended nor able to be a resource sufficient to support a sustained ministry of lay preaching. We hope that Districts/Areas and Synods will work with TLS in encouraging people who undertake LITE (and people can of course still start straight away on the TLS standard courses if they wish – LITE is not a compulsory prerequisite) to take further their interest in learning into the more developed TLS standard courses.

4.1.6 In any event we are delighted that this locally deliverable training is being taken up and we will seek to both monitor and develop this provision.

4.2 Learning Standards

A TLS Standards Board has been established and is now operational. This makes completion certificate awards and oversees the quality of material and delivery. To our delight, TLS was nominated for a 2003 New Learning Opportunities Award. Editorial Boards have been set up for each course and have completed their reviews of courses delivered in 2002-3. The Foundation and Gateways into Worship courses have been completely revised and re-written since we bought the copyright from the Scottish Churches Open College in 2000-1. First full deliveries will complete by June 2004. Difficulties were experienced in the delivery of some of the new Foundation Course material in the academic year 2002/2003 but these teething troubles have been addressed and proper revisions undertaken.

4.2.1 In conjunction with the University of Wales (Bangor) – who validate TLS, an Examination Board has been set up for TLS students who opt to study for a Certificate and Diploma of Higher Education in Contextual Theology. Currently 66 course members (out of 144) are registered for this option. An External Examiner nominated by United Reformed Church and appointed by the University has delivered her first report.

4.3 Teaching Standards

Weekend tutors are closely monitored by student assessment and local tutors are invited to annual training sessions held regionally. We are always looking for suitable people to teach and encourage TLS course members on standard or LITE courses. We urge local churches to seek out and help us train those who have tutoring talents – lay or ordained, old or young.

4.4 New Courses

We are developing a 'Community Experience' suite of 3 courses at the request of General Assembly 2002 and in conjunction with Ministries Committee and the CRCW community. This will be available at 3 levels of learning relating to experience of serving and interest in training. It is targeted for availability in September 2005.

4.4.1 We have been able to engage in this project relatively speedily because the United Reformed Church already has a recognised community work ministry and ready partners with whom TLS can work in developing training modules. However, we are also conscious of the request from Assembly 2002 to develop a course on evangelism. Although the ministry of individual evangelists is currently being identified in a variety of situations by the Life and Witness Committee, they advise us that there is as yet no 'across the board recognition' of any one style of evangelist which might lead to the development of a TLS module. Nevertheless, the Secretaries for Training and Life and Witness are exploring an ecumenical training course in evangelism with our counterparts in the Methodist Church. Representation from the TLS community will figure in these discussions.

4.5 Wider Involvement

We remain responsive to approaches and requests from all parts of the United Reformed Church and outside. 'Experiencing Faith', the one-year course developed in conjunction with the Inter-Faith Relations Committee and now in its first year of delivery is one such response. The Community Experience suite is another. The request from Ministries for training ideas for District Lay Preaching Recognition has led to the development of TLS LITE – a robust response which is producing a programme of locally delivered courses entirely relevant to mission in context.

4.5.2 The Training Committee's involvement in the Church of England's *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church (HIND)* implementation groups (see paragraphs 8.1. for further information on *Hind*), working on the implications of ecumenical Regional Training for all, ensures that the process is fully aware of what the United Reformed Church has to offer by way of lay and lay preacher training.

4.6 Management

The United Reformed Church TLS Management Group, with course member representation and ecumenical observers, operates as a sub-committee of the Training Committee. It has continued to meet quarterly, setting policy and overseeing implementation of the Programme. We note that 149 completion certificates have been awarded over two years and that this includes 39 new Lay Preachers.

4.6.1 We offer our thanks to Course Managers and to the 15 Regional Organisers/Administrators, 108 Local Tutors, 47 weekend tutors, 28 markers and around 600 members of Support Networks involved with TLS over the last two years. We also thank the United Reformed Church Communications and Editorial Committee for layout and for the production of 5,070 volumes of bound material.

4.6.2 The Committee is in correspondence with the Communications and Editorial Committee over the use TLS makes of the United Reformed Church Bookshop.

4.7 Personnel

David A L Jenkins retires from the Programme Coordinator role this summer and we acknowledge with deep thanks the results of a monumental piece of work for the United Reformed Church in guiding and nurturing TLS to its present point of development. It has been a gift to the church of incalculable value. To reiterate and reinforce some of the statistics above, in the 9 years he has been co-ordinator there have been 617 course members enrolled for courses, over 2,000 members of support networks, 226 local tutors, 98 tutors on residential weekends, 25 people serving as regional organisers or administrators, 33 as academic markers. There have been 236 residential weekends organised (which by the way have raised £12,500 for good causes through their weekend offertories). 92

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course units have been written under United Reformed Church sponsorship. £70,000 worth (price list) of text books have been purchased by course members and David has travelled 183,000 miles in his car on TLS business. His energy, dedication and skill have taken a project, established by the Scottish Churches Open College and rooted it successfully in the United Reformed Church. It has grown and flowered under his care as a dynamic lay training programme and it is proving increasingly flexible in offering training in different fields and at different levels. This is in very large part due to David's indefatigable energy, tireless capacity to work and commitment to the programme and its worth. He is an administrator par excellence with great attention to detail, a teacher of skill, a dedicated pastor, an organiser and educator and the church has benefited hugely from the generosity of his life and service in this capacity amongst us.

4.7.1 We are glad that both David and Jill Jenkins are willing to continue to serve as weekend tutor and Course Manager (of Care and Prayer) respectively for the time being.

4.7.2. In acknowledgement of the increase in work as TLS has grown, the scope of both the Administrator and the One-year Course Co-ordinator positions has been increased. The whole team looks forward to working with the Revd Stanley Jackson who takes over as the new full time Co-ordinator on September 1st. Stanley is a Methodist minister currently the Director of the Open Learning Centre at Cliff College (part time) as well as being an RE teacher and school chaplain. He was previously Head of Consultancy and Training at the Bible Society. The appointment is subject to formal concurrence by the Methodist Church. In his hands we know that TLS will continue to **T**rain all who are called to **L**earn more in order to **S**erve God better in the church and in the world.

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Revd D A L Jenkins

General Assembly acknowledges the enormous debt that it owes to the Revd David A L Jenkins for his services to Training for Learning and Serving offered over the past 9 years and on his retirement from this post records its gratitude to him.

5. LAY TRAINING IN SCOTLAND

5.1 The Committee heard of the decision by the Scottish Churches Open College (SCOC) to close as from December 2003. This has been essentially to do with SCOC's economic dependence on the Church of Scotland whose own financial crises had resulted in them withdrawing their funding from SCOC. This has been felt by the Synod of Scotland as little short of a tragedy because of the loss of SCOC's provision

of innovative lay training. The Committee believes that SCOC has demonstrated creativity and quality of educational output. It also brought TLS to birth. The Education Committee of the Synod of Scotland is dealing with the repercussions of this situation and working ecumenically towards establishing lay training provision in the future whilst currently drawing support from TLS.

6. YOUTH AND CHILDRENS WORK TRAINING PROGRAMME

6.1 The Training Committee's role towards the Youth and Children's Work Programme has changed since the Committee last reported to Assembly. Until Assembly 2003 its role was of oversight of the programme. Since that date the oversight responsibility has passed to the Youth and Children's Work Committee with Training retaining an advisory capacity.

6.2 Assembly 2002 asked the Training Committee to consider and implement the recommendations in the Youth Review which related to ministerial training. The committee has had conversations with Youth & Children's Work committee about these matters and been furnished with the results of a YCW survey of training institutions used by the United Reformed Church. The Committee considered that the results indicated a situation where reasonable attention was being given to these issues in ministerial training. However, the committee has subsequently written to the colleges and courses that we use, quoting the Assembly inspection criteria that were laid down in 1995 and which include reference to youth and children's work in initial ministerial training.

6.3 The Continuing Ministerial Education Sub Committee of the Training Committee has also been pleased to receive a draft CME module on Youth and Children's work that had been written for use with ministers by two of the Youth and Children's Work Training Officers. The committee has been pleased to agree that (with certain suggested amendments or additions) this was a good basis for a Post Ordination

Education and Training weekend. It is intended to schedule this in the programme that begins in the autumn of 2004.

6.4 Prior to Assembly 2003 the Committee had oversight of the processes whereby synods were reviewing or appointing Youth and Children's Work Trainers. The committee has been happy to confirm the re appointment of Mick Maskell as Yorkshire Youth and Children's Work Trainer, to agree the appointment of Andrew Mickelfield in Wessex and to support the Southern and Wessex synods in the review and re-appointment of Howard Nurden and Stephen Collins respectively.

6.5 At Assembly 2003 a consultation was held and chaired by the then Training Committee convenor John Proctor. This involved representatives of the Youth and Children's Work Committee, the Training Committee and representatives of the synods who are not currently part of the YCWT programme.

6.6 One of the final acts of oversight responsibility of the Training Committee has been to re-write the Youth and Children's Work Trainers Staff Development Policy Document. This work was done by John Proctor after extensive consultation. It is a foundational document in the running of the programme and the revised work was published early in 2004. The Committee is grateful to John for the extensive work he did on this revision.

7. PRE ORDINATION OR COMMISSIONING TRAINING FOR MINISTRY

7.1 Church Related Community Workers

7.1.2 It is the policy of the Training Committee to train all CRCWs at Northern College, a member of the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester. The appointment of Revd Dr Husselbee to Northern College in the summer of 2001 with special responsibility for the Community Work training programme has been a significant step in the development of this unique course in Christian ministry.

7.1.3 She took over at a point when, due to the collapse of the local training scheme on which the course relied for professional validation, the future was entirely uncertain. Through considerable effort, and over some time, this has now been satisfactorily resolved through the English Standards Board, a recognised Government agency, so that students now completing the Diploma in the Faith in Living course of the Manchester Theological Partnership, including the community work components, are also credited with

a nationally recognised qualification in Community Work. It is hoped that this programme will shortly be available to degree level.

7.1.4 At the same time the course has been shaped to meet the core competencies recently agreed by the Church Related Community Work Programme Sub Committee in discussion with the Training Committee.

7.1.5 While, at the moment, there are few students taking up this avenue of training there is the prospect of one or two new students this coming autumn and the course is now poised to be able to offer an ecumenically based resource for a wider clientele.

7.1.6 There are also plans afoot to offer courses in community work and community participation through Training for Learning and Serving and TLS LITE (Local Introductory Training Experiences), starting in 2005. This is referred to in the TLS part of the report.

7.1.7 Professor Paul Ballard, a Training Committee member, has been able to act as the link between the Training Committee and the Course Tutor in Manchester strengthening lines of communication and offering appropriate support.

7.2 Ministers of Word and Sacrament

The Hind Report

7.2.A1 All of the training of ministers which we undertake is ecumenically arranged whether:

- part-time training on ecumenical courses (which are usually strongly Church of England in terms of student and staff numbers);
- at an ecumenical foundation such as at Queen's Birmingham;
- in the Cambridge Theological Federation, of which Westminster College is a part;
- in the Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester of which Northern College is a part;
- in Mansfield College, Oxford where training is in partnership with Regent's Park Baptist College and under the umbrella relationships of the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education;
- through the Scottish College where students are placed in that country's major universities.

For the institutions in England to some degree or another the Church of England is a major player in the relationships that deliver our training.

7.2.A2 It is for these reasons that news that the Church of England is reconfiguring its theological education is more than just information about the work of another church with whom we have close relations. It is rather news of a process which is bound to impact on us considerably. As reported two years ago, the Secretary for Training was invited to join the process (then called the Structure and Funding of Ordination and Training 'SFOT' or more commonly 'Hind' after the surname of its chairman, John Hind) shortly after he had taken up post and as the group was moving towards producing its interim report.

7.2.A3 The process was already ecumenical in that the Methodist Church had had a representative from the outset. The Church of England also wrote to a number of other denominations inviting them to share in the process. The Churches Together in England coordinating group 'Ecumenical Strategy Group for Ministerial Training' which has wide ecumenical membership, was also fully informed of these developments and discussed them, thus keeping other churches in the picture.

7.2.A4 The Training Committee responded to the interim report in 2002. They noted that the report was seeking to deal with many problems that were also problems for the United Reformed Church and whilst

offering various points that reflected some United Reformed Church concerns generally warmed to the developments the Church of England were unfolding.

7.2.A5 In the summer of 2003 the General Synod of the Church of England, with one or two amendments, agreed to adopt this report as policy. It has since then become known as 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church'. Anyone interested in it can view it at www.cofe.anglican.org – then click 'papers' and 'ordination training'.

In brief, these are some of the essential points:

- it grew out of a number of previous Church of England publications including 'Managing Planned Growth';
- it was originally grounded in a financial concern for the cost of training but took on a wider brief to consider what is the best possible training the church currently requires;
- originally a Church of England report (and they still are the lead body) it was slow to pick up ecumenical steam but it was never without ecumenical representation and the ecumenical aspect of it is now well developed;
- it originates in Church of England so its immediate impact is only in one of the nations in which the United Reformed Church exists – England;
- it was originally focussed on ordination training but it has broadened its remit considerably to include concern for all training, lay and ordained.

7.2.A6 Its central concerns included two faultlines that it felt were unhelpful in the life of the church:

- between pre ordination training and post ordination training. It felt that there was a lack of cohesiveness and coordination in these provisions either side of ordination;
- between the training for those working towards the ordained ministry and those wanting formal education for a range of lay ministries.

7.2.A7 Other concerns included:

- coordinating adult education provision in the church in a way which includes all training;
- addressing the small number of students at some institutions;
- creating new structures that could be developed with ecumenical partners.

7.2.A8 In seeking to deal with these concerns the report suggested these strategies:

- re-configuring of initial training to be the period from entry into training to the end of the first training post (in United Reformed Church terms to the end of post ordination education and training) – *this is a foundational principle of the report*;

- the establishment of Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) – for ordained and lay training. These partnerships are to be of colleges and courses, Church of England Diocese, Methodist Districts and United Reformed Church Synods. They are to be responsible for all the training in a region;
- the establishment of a framework for learning which is flexible and coherent;
- the creation of a programme or framework of learning for lay people generally called Education for Discipleship and developments of Church of England Reader training;
- savings in finance were not targeted directly – but there is rather an aim to keep finances stable whilst money is raised to fund new lay training initiatives. The stability is found by proposed efficiencies and the use of IT in RTPs and some reduction in residential places.

This is a very brief reflection of the report and is intended only as a taster. Readers who want to know more should consult the published documentation. The points above may however help however to indicate the direction of the policy.

7.2.A9 After the General Synod of 2003 the Church of England led the way in setting up an implementation process but invited the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church to be full partners in that implementation process. The Training Committee responded to that invitation positively. It is hoped that implementation will be delivered in a rolling programme up to 2007.

7.2.A10 In order to organise the implementation a number of groups have been established with particular responsibilities. The first one was the group that was to decide the boundaries for the Regional Training Partnerships. Its work was completed by Easter 2004 – but after this report was written. The Training Committee invited John Waller to represent it on this group and is grateful for the service he has afforded us. The process has heard United Reformed Church concerns and needs and we believe that the outcomes will afford us the best chance possible to be involved in these partnerships.

7.2.A11 Other groups have been inaugurated or are in the process of being established in the next few months. At the time of writing these are the United Reformed Church representatives:

- Parameters for the Curriculum – Revd Dr Janet Tollington;
- Financial framework – Revd Roy Lowes Secretary for Training;
- Education for Discipleship and Reader training – Revd David A L Jenkins;
- Post Ordination Training – The Secretary for Training;

- Research – *yet to be appointed* – will begin next September;
- Steering Group – The Secretary for Training.

7.2.A12 Others will be drawn into this process. The representatives listed above, including the Revd John Waller and the General Secretary, have also had one meeting chaired by the Secretary for Training, to coordinate our understanding of the process and liaise over our relationship to these groups. At least one further meeting is planned.

7.2.A13 It is important to relate that the Training Committee is keeping a number of matters in mind as this process unfolds:

- that any firm policy decisions on training within the United Reformed Church will be taken by Assembly 2005 after it has debated the proposals of the Training Review;
- that nevertheless, the Training Committee cannot stand idly by and be separate from the Church of England process until then as its impact on the United Reformed Church is considerable. Rather, the Training Committee is warmly welcoming the invitation to be involved in the implementation process and is doing what it can within its resources to ensure that the United Reformed Church is able to be involved in it as fully as it can be;
- the Secretary for Training has attempted to keep Synod Moderators, Training Officers, colleges, courses and Mission Council appraised of developments and encouraged their involvement in the process;
- that secretaries of other committees are also aware of developments and to that end two meetings in the last year have been arranged for the Secretary for Training to speak to fellow officers of Ministries, Life and Witness, Ecumenical and Youth and Children's Work committees;
- that we are fully aware that this process is in England only. The Committee is arranging a meeting with representatives of the synods of Wales and Scotland and the Scottish College to ensure that their needs and ecumenical arrangements are fully taken into account as it conducts its Review and relates to the Church of England process.

Other Matters

7.2.B1 As indicated in our 2002 report we are responsible for overseeing the structures by which ministers are supported in training. The consultation referred to two years ago (with synod moderators and college and course staff) was completed and a document 'Oversight and Care of candidates for Ministry' was published in the summer of 2003 and circulated to synod moderators, training institutions and students. It is hoped that this will clarify the

process by which candidates and students are cared for and given oversight. The Committee is grateful for the work that John Proctor, convener to summer 2003, put into this process.

7.2.B2 Since last summer further conversations have been held which focus on the situation of these who have completed training but who are not yet in pastoral charge. This is not a Training Committee responsibility but it is a matter about which the Training Committee is concerned. It has been part of the discussions and the paper above has helped to frame the deliberations.

7.2.B3.1 The Training Committee continues to play its part in the ecumenical processes of validating and inspecting the colleges and courses that we use for the training of ministers of Word and Sacrament and church related community work.

7.2.B3.2 At the time of writing an Inspection on the Cambridge Theological Federation Education in Cambridge (which includes Westminster College) is coming to an end and an inspection of the North East Ecumenical Course is in progress. Inspections have recently been completed on the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training (which includes Mansfield College and the St Alban's and Oxford Ministry Course), on St Michael's College, Llandaff, Cardiff (including the South Wales Ordination Course) a follow up report on the East Midlands Ministry Training Course and a validation process on the South East Institute for Theological Education. Many of these have not yet reached the stage of being placed before the Training Committee but where they and earlier ones have been, the committee has been pleased to agree our continued use of these institutions.

7.2.B4 The Secretary for Training represents the committee on the Educational Validation Panel and the Inspectors Working Party both of which groups, though led by the Church of England, are ecumenical.

7.2.B5 The committee is grateful for the services of those United Reformed Church members who are prepared to serve in inspections and validation processes. It was pleased that the Church of England ran training days for Inspectors earlier in the year at which the United Reformed Church was represented.

7.2.B6 The committee was pleased to note the setting up of the Ecumenical Validation Board in Wales and to offer any support deemed useful to the national synod in this work.

7.2.B7 Ministers may undertake research in a range of ways including part time through Continuing Ministerial Education. Sometimes ministers or students in training are supported in this work (to a greater or lesser degree) by the Training Committee.

7.2.B8 In the last three years Rachel Poolman has used a United Reformed Church Scholarship to study for a doctorate through Birmingham University, a process which she hopes to complete this year. Doug Gay has taken advantage of the Millennium Bursary Fund offered by the Congregational and General Charitable Trust and is in his second year of study in Edinburgh.

7.2.B9 Meanwhile Suzanne McDonald and Romilly Micklem, both students at Westminster College until last summer have embarked on research at St Andrews and Heythrop College respectively, supported by the Training Committee.

7.2.B10.1 Sarah Hall, completing an internship year at Mansfield, has been awarded her doctorate from Edinburgh University and Kathy White hers from Anglia Polytechnic University. Congratulations to both.

7.2.B10.2 We also wish well others engaged in research with whom the Committee has dealt in recent years and who continue with their studies: John Bradbury, Kirsty Ann Burroughs and Julian Templeton.

8. CONTINUING MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

8.1 The Post Ordination Education and Training Review

8.1.1 The Committee had been conscious that the immediate post-ordination or commissioning period in a Minister's (of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Work) formation was a critical one. It is a time in which pre-service learning is tested in the practical environment and in which both familiar and new areas are (re-)visited in a significantly new context. It is a testing time, in which the new minister meets a number of challenges and ought to have support for his or her learning, as well as pastoral support.

8.1.2 The programme has been a mixture of URC-wide courses, synod events and support and facilitation by a pastoral adviser. These opportunities for sharing in learning and reflection can play an important role in the person's development. The Committee was aware however of a level of criticism, perhaps most significantly of criticism of the United Reformed Church wide programme.

8.1.3 A review group was established and this section reflects the consideration of its report in CME Sub-Committee and in the full Training Committee. The group's work was conducted with full awareness of ecumenical developments in this field, not least with regard to the 'Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church' taking shape within the Church of England.

8.1.4 The Training committee has approved the principal conclusions namely:

8.1.4.1 On balance, the review group's survey of POET participants and others indicated a broad satisfaction with the URC-wide programme of courses. There was however evidence of significant criticism of some courses and at times of serious weaknesses. This has led to the conclusion that there has to be consistent dedicated support for this element in the programme particularly in order to ensure that the programme maintains high standards organisationally, in the briefing and support of tutors and in quality assurance. The Training Committee therefore moved to the creation of a 0.5 post to undertake these duties and we are pleased to report that the Revd Betsy Gray-King has been appointed. *(Betsy works in an Oxford social enterprise and serves as an NSM at Brill URC. She has supervised the placement of students and tutored in worship, preaching and spirituality at Mansfield College, Oxford. She has also co- led weekends in the POET programme and she has been programme co-ordinator for the Theology and Ministry Across Cultures exchange programme run in conjunction with the United Reformed Church's World Church Programme.)*

8.1.4.2 Our commitment to the idea and practice of lifelong learning has called us to see ministerial education holistically. We believe that different

stages in that continuing education process have had tendencies to fragmentation and therefore to problems of apparent incoherence, repetition and gaps. Our view is therefore that the whole of ministerial education from pre-service training on should be configured into a single framework with recognised phases of:

- pre-ordination/commissioning (1),
- immediate post-ordination/commissioning for three years (2) and
- subsequent on-going ministerial education and training (3).

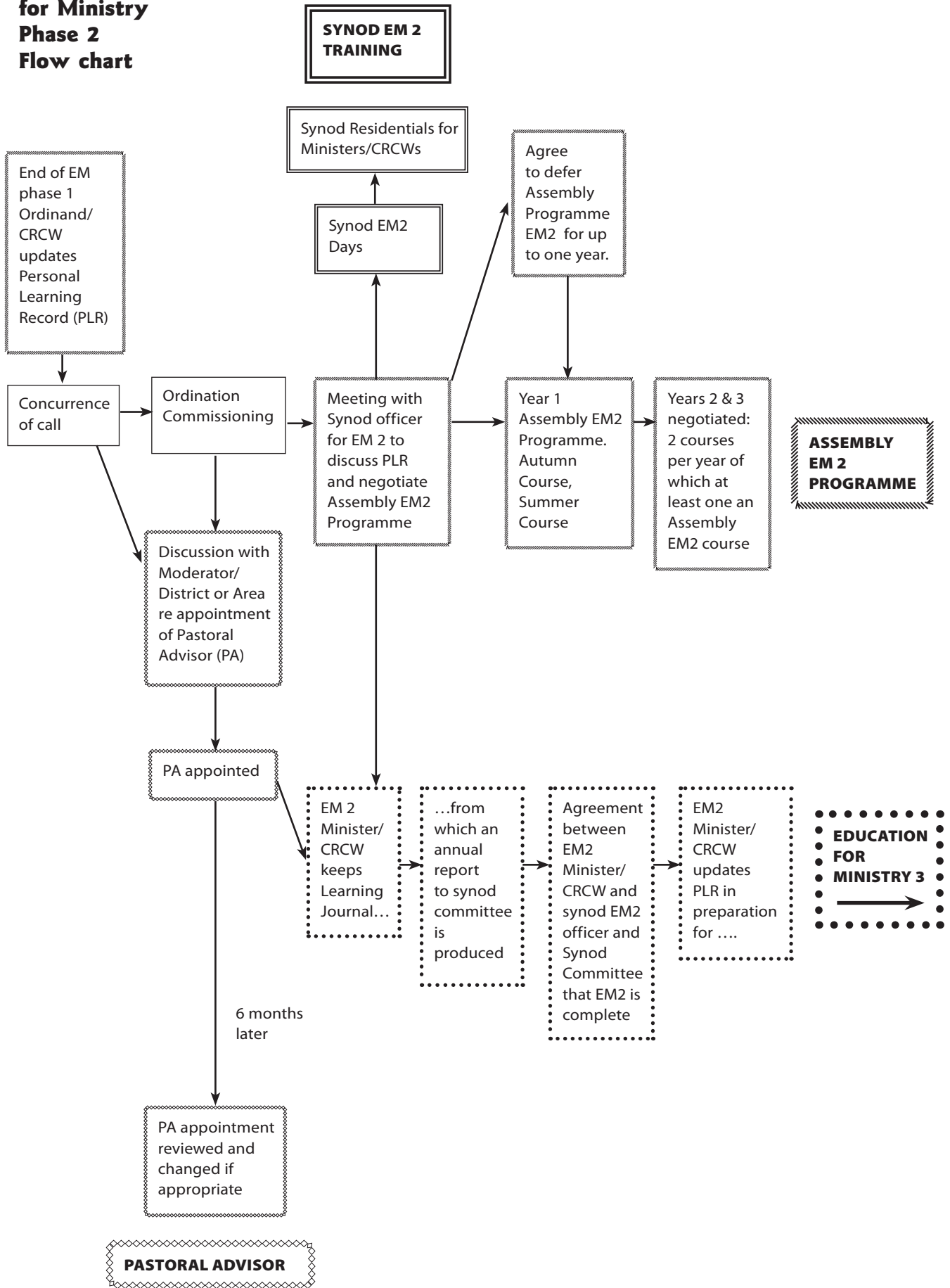
8.1.4.3 While we believe that it would be unrealistic and possibly undesirable to attempt to specify a single curriculum for phases 1 and 2, the Committee proposes to facilitate conversations with interested parties to clarify common core curricular elements. Transfer between phases would be facilitated by the development of a portfolio process which would serve both to inform a "receiving" educational provider and to act as a reflective tool for the student/ minister. We believe it to be important that the learning programmes are flexible and responsive to the experience and needs of individual learners.

8.1.4.4 The importance of phase 2 requires that it be underpinned by appropriate support. At present, the role of pastoral adviser can be a most significant one. We see this continuing and indeed being enhanced by strengthening the support of pastoral advisers themselves, by ensuring that they are well-informed as to the learning dimension of their work with ministers and by encouraging the minister-pastoral adviser conversation as a space in which learning can be more effectively planned and reflected upon. At present, pre-ordination/commissioning students are under the care of their "sending" synod and thereafter as ministers of Word and Sacrament /CRCWs, of their districts/areas. To ensure the desired continuity in learning development, we propose that in phase 2 ministers' learning should be in the care of the synod in which they are working.

8.1.4.5 To make communication and understanding of the process simpler and easier we propose the removal of the titles Continuing Ministerial Education (CME), Pre-ordination training, Post-Ordination Education and Training (POET), and Ongoing Education and Training (ONET). In their place we propose Education for Ministry, phases 1, 2 and 3 to respectively cover Pre-ordination, Post-ordination and Continuing Ministerial Education.

8.1.4.6 The Sub-Committee is now working on the further implementation of the recommendations of this review. *(Please refer to the diagram to see a map of the process regarding Education for Ministry Phase 2 (currently Post Ordination Education and Training)*

Education for Ministry Phase 2 Flow chart



8.2 Continuing Ministerial Education grants

8.2.1 It is good that there continues to be an upward movement in uptake of grants and learning opportunities under the CME programme. The level of financial provision that the United Reformed Church makes is an affirmation of the value that the Church places on those in ministry and on the importance of lifelong learning and continuous development. Such evidence as is available points to more participants, to improved guidance in decision-making and to more extensive involvement. The CME Sub-Committee is endeavouring to improve the quality of intelligence available to it about trends in order more effectively to plan for the future. There continues to be discussion of a number of issues, e.g. the balance between personally focused learning programmes and activities of a more corporate nature.

8.2.2 The last two years have seen a change in the way in which grants are provided to more efficiently and effectively enable the church to comply with best financial practices.

8.2.3 The Committee has also kept in touch with synods over its financial support of their ministers schools. Further work will need to be done to produce the best possible system but interim measures are currently ensuring appropriate levels of funding provision.

8.3 Sabbaticals

8.3.1 The CME Sub-Committee considered the resolution of General Assembly 2003 asking that they reconsider the restriction on ministers over the age of 60 undertaking sabbaticals. The Training Committee has agreed with the CME Sub-Committee's recommendation that we rescind this rule bearing in mind the following factors:

- The importance of equal opportunities for serving ministers whatever their age
- The fact that a number of ministers continue to serve the church in retirement
- The fact that both the Training Committee and CME Sub-Committee had earlier considered rescinding this rule. Concern to let the CME programme bed down before making any alterations – and then changes of staff in the Training and CME offices had delayed action.

8.4 Making it work

The Sub-Committee is keen not only to encourage participation in continuing education but also to help participants to maximise their learning and make best use of the range of opportunities available. It has published and circulated a guidance booklet *Making it Work*, aimed at encouraging ministers to engage in a positive process of planning and reflection.

Resolution 36**Sabbaticals**

General Assembly resolves to rescind the following restriction on Ministers undertaking a sabbatical after the age of 60. '...Ministers are offered...a sabbatical term of up to three months.... but not after the age of 60. A...two month sabbatical will be available... between the ages of 60 and 63' (CME 'Learning for Life Leaflet' 2001, page 4). Applications will now be processed as with most CME requests, via the synod-training officer who will assess the proposal.

Resolution 37**Education for Ministry**

- a) **General Assembly agrees that all training for Ministers & CRCWs be reconfigured in a single framework called Education for Ministry (EM) in three phases with initial ministerial training as EM 1, Post Ordination Education Commissioning and Training as EM 2 and Continuing Ministerial Education as EM 3.**
- b) **Assembly agrees that Education for Ministry 1 and 2 be reconfigured as a coherent programme, with the learning of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Workers in EM 2 remaining under the care of Synods and the Continuing Ministerial Education sub Committee until the completion of EM 2.**
- c) **Assembly welcomes the review of the POET Programme and the implications for the development of POET as spelt out in the text of the Training Committee's Report.**

9. FINANCE

9.1 The budget is dominated by the cost of training full-time students for stipendiary ministry. Having fewer students reduces the amount paid in maintenance grants but this is offset by rising college costs. Fees to the colleges are effectively determined by the range of courses to which the Church is committed and not by the number of students.

9.2 The success of both "Training for Learning and Serving" and "Continuing Ministerial Education" makes these significant and increasing costs. For CME in particular there is a financial commitment well beyond the current take-up but a pattern of applications is emerging which gives some confidence in forecasting.

9.3 The Sub-Committee has considered a wide range of hardship claims from students. It has been evident that there is an ever-increasing variety in the personal circumstances of students and the courses they undertake. This means that there will always be some students whose needs are not met by the standard grants and the Sub-Committee seeks to address each situation on its merits.

10. MISCELLANEOUS

10.1 General Assembly 2002 asked the Training Committee to evaluate and review training materials already available within the church, with a view to producing materials that could be more widely used to assist representatives to understand their roles within the various councils of the church. Whilst the committee has considered this issue time has not yet been found to pursue this work in any detail.

10.2 Regular consultations have been held with Synod Training Officers regarding Synod managed student placements (800 hours) for those students for the ministry who have been training on part time courses.

10.3 On behalf of the Committee the convener, John Humhreys, last autumn attended a consultation in South Africa organised by the Council for World

9.4 The Finance Sub-Committee is concerned to ensure that candidates for ordained or commissioned ministry have proper and appropriate financial counselling as they approach training. They have inaugurated conversations with and offered support to the Ministries Committee to ensure that a more developed process is established.

9.5 It is increasingly clear that grant rules that were introduced in the past to solve problems are now causing anomalies, particularly in the area of housing costs. A process has been initiated to simplify and revise the rules.

9.6 The Finance Sub-Committee has embarked on exploring the financial implications of the various pathways identified in the Training Review.

Mission. The meeting, one of a series, was on training and mission issues and we await with interest the report from CWM on its response to the recommendations of the consultation.

10.4 The Secretary for Training convened a meeting of representatives from Life & Witness and Ecumenical Committees in producing a paper as a United Reformed Church response to the publication *Presence and Prophecy*. This book from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland promotes mission as a controlling and coordinating priority in the ordering and organising of church strategy and theological education. The United Reformed Church response has been submitted to Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and was scheduled to be discussed together with other ecumenical responses, in April 2004.

11. PERSONNEL

11.1 There are many people who in many ways are involved in tutoring and training across the church, many known, many not known to us. We offer here our public debt of gratitude to them for the work that they do to the church's great benefit.

11.2 Most especially though here we offer gratitude for the ministry of John Proctor on the Training Committee. His four years as convener of the Committee came to an end at Assembly 2003 and also marked the end of a period of ten years of committee service. His thorough attention to detail, his grasp of complex issues and ability to communicate them with clarity, his knowledge of and experience in the theological education field and the policy of the committee were harnessed to a care and consideration for people and processes in a way which provided a ministry amongst us of unusual competence, clarity and very real Christian care. We are much relieved that that ministry continues in his work at Westminster College and in other ways in the life of the church. A meal was held during the Committee's September gathering in Cambridge to thank John for his work. John and his wife Elaine were there and the General Secretary spoke and expressed the church's appreciation of John's work.

11.3 It is also a mark of the speed with which *anno domini* proceeds that as well as John Proctor this year we record the completion of service on the committee of Dr Graham Campling and Revd Carole Ellefsen Jones (though the latter has been asked to continue on the committee by invitation until 2004 due to her work as convener of the TLS Management Group), Revd Dr John Parry, Revd Professor Paul Ballard and Mrs Anthea Coates. This amount of experience, gifts and knowledge leaving us feels like something of a cold draft and we thank them all for the work that they have done not only in attending and contributing wisely and effectively to meetings but in various other ways outside of our gatherings.

11.4 The chill of the cold draft referred to above is warmed by the presence of talented and able new committee members whom we have welcomed in the last two years: Mrs Susan Brown, Revd Sue Henderson, Revd Malachie Munyaneza, Mrs Valerie Burnham and Dr Ian Morrison. Most particularly is this true of the committee's new convener John Humphreys who took up the reins in 2003. John's insightful, experienced presence and calm and careful hand on the tiller is already proving of great benefit to our deliberations.



Youth and Children's Work

This Committee supports, encourages and promotes work among children and young people, including the policy and oversight of the YCWT Programme, giving oversight to Pilots, and relates to FURY Council. It also ensures that its concerns are fully taken into account in Doctrine Prayer & Worship, Church & Society, Life & Witness Committees, facilitating the involvement of young people in all the Councils of the Church.

Committee Members

Convener: Revd Kathryn Price **Secretary:** Mrs Soo Webster

Mrs Brenda Cheer (to July 2003), Mrs Daphne Clark, Ms Lorraine Downer, Ms Helen Honess (from January 2003), Mr Gareth Marshall Jones (FURY joint Chair 2003), Mrs Kath Lonsdale (to July 2003), Mrs Hannah Middleton (from July 2003), Mr Huw Morrison, Mr Jonathan Price (to January 2003), Ms Emma Pugh (FURY Chair 2002), Revd John Sanderson, Ms Rosemary Simmons (FURY joint Chair 2003), Mrs Elaine Thomas, Mrs Doreen Watson (from 2003), Mr Gus Webbe (from July 2003), Revd Andrew Willett, Mrs Anthea Coates (representing Training Committee from July 2003), Mr Stephen Collins (representing YCWT team)

Secretary for Youth Work: Mr John Brown

Pilots Development Officer: Mrs Karen Bulley

Children's Advocate: Mrs Rosemary Johnston

1. Policy

1.1 These past two years have been dominated by the Youth and Children's Work Review and its recommendations and the resolutions that were passed in 2002. We have spent time working these through and translating them into a coherent strategy, which we are presenting to General Assembly this year.

1.2 We began by adopting two aims, which arose from debate at St Andrew's and discussion in committee:

- a) that all children and young people in the United Reformed Church have the opportunity to develop and grow on their Christian journey;
- b) that the local church, at all levels, be given the support it needs to fulfil its mission and share the gospel of Christ amongst children and young people in its community.

2. Training

Working closely with the Training Committee we continue to monitor, and take part in, the provision for training in work with children and young people as it is offered to ordinands, ministers, paid workers and lay people through the theological courses, Continuing Ministerial Education, Kaleidoscope and Spectrum and Training and Learning for Service (TLS). Youth and Children's Work Trainers (YCWTs) are closely involved in the revision of Kaleidoscope and Spectrum and the writing of new modules for TLS, in addition to their role in delivering training, with other staff involvement, of Pilots officers and others working with children

and young people. As more churches employ paid workers, we are aware of the need to reach a consensus in what constitutes acceptable qualification.

3. Districts/Areas and Synods

The Committee read with interest those reports it received from Districts, Areas and Synods. There is clearly some exciting work happening, though it is equally clear that there is not equality of opportunity. Some areas have plentiful resources, while others are not so fortunate. We hope that through better resource sharing this situation can be improved. We would also thank local churches for filling in the reverse of the annual returns form. This information is currently being analysed and recorded for further use.

4. Ways of working

As indicated in this year's resolution, we have adopted a new way of working – through task groups. This is in its infancy at the moment, but the groups are getting off the ground and are being supplemented by ex-committee members and others with experience in the field. The intention is that this will release time at our meetings to engage in more in-depth discussion, which has been at times swallowed up in the detail of things.

5. Staff

The Committee received Lesley Anne DiMarco's resignation almost immediately following the 2002 Assembly, having already presented a case to the Staffing Advisory Group for the continuation of the post. We were disappointed that Mission Council delayed the advertisement of the post and the Church

should be grateful to the Children's Advocate, Pilots Development Officer and YCWs for making sure that youth work did not cease altogether. John Brown came into post on 1st January this year and has already made a difference. We cannot overemphasise the strain that the 16 month vacancy put on the whole sphere of youth and children's work.

6. National Youth Resource Centre

6.1 Following the amendment at St Andrew's, which set up a task group, convened by John Humphreys, to review the National Youth Resource Centre and make a recommendation to the 2003 Assembly, we have been concerned with first the hopes of a renewal and then the implications of the closure of the Centre. Through the Centre Management Committee, convened by Bryan Thomas until the end of 2002 and by Bill Mahood until the closure, we tried to ensure that all was done well. Following Liz Byrne's move to pastoral ministry in Birkenhead, Deborah McVey was appointed to be temporary Centre Minister. We are grateful to Bryan and Bill for their leadership and would particularly thank Deborah for the gracious way in which she ministered in a difficult situation and the Deputy General Secretary for guiding us through the legal requirements. Thanks are also due to all the staff and community team, who showed their commitment to the Centre to the end. We also wish Liz Byrne and Ian Smith well in their new pastorates, with gratitude for all they both did for the Centre, particularly through its later difficult years.

6.2 The resolution that closed the Centre last year also proposed that the Committee should investigate the possibility of setting up a different programme to support local church work. It is as a result of this exercise that we have arrived at the strategy that is presented this year.

7. Pilots

Pilots has had a good two years, which is reported separately. The post of Pilots Development Officer was reviewed in 2002 and a recommendation made that it continue for a further five years, as much of the previous term had been spent in setting up new processes and firming up old ones and little in the way of real development had been possible. Mission Council agreed to three years, but we remain convinced that Karen Bulley still has much to offer and are full of admiration for what she has achieved in a relatively short time in the whole life of Pilots. Neil Thorogood, convener of Pilots Management Committee, is also to be thanked for his leadership and advocacy and his contributions to discussion when he joins us in committee. A welcome development has been the number of 'roadshows' that have taken place in many Synods and the increase in the number of Regional Pilots Officers. By the time Assembly happens Pilots will have been to Legoland, inviting the whole church to join them, be part of the excitement and

'Be a Pilot for a day', building on the success of 'Pilots at Cadbury World'.

8. FURY

8.1 FURY, too has its own report, but the Committee was pleased to see the success of the camp last year and has already made sure that funding is available for the planning of the next one.

8.2 Discussions on a membership for FURY are still ongoing, as there are many groups that need consulting. However it is hoped that a proposal will be ready for FURY Assembly 2005.

9. DfES

The first three-year programme, with funding from the Department of Education and Science, saw the establishment of some very different projects and these can be read about in *Mission Possible*, available from the Youth and Children's Work office. The most recent programme has enabled a similarly wide range of initiatives, aimed at involving young people in the structures of the church. Equivalent sums of money were made available to the National Synods of Wales and Scotland for projects which met the same guidelines. Outwith the Synods, the money has been used to fund 'What do you think' – the pre-Assembly briefing meeting for under-25s – and a survey, and forthcoming conference, for Voyagers and Navigators, the 11-18 groups of Pilots. A Monitoring Committee, convened by Ian Smith, assesses and evaluates all the projects and reports to Youth and Children's Work Committee. We thank all on the committee for this work.

10. YCWT programme

10.1 In 2002 oversight of the YCWT programme was passed to the Committee, which is grateful to John Proctor for finishing the revision of the Staff Development Policy. We have been delighted by the resolutions coming to Synods this spring, which suggest that by next year the team might be up to 12.

10.2 A continuing concern is the nature of support and training needed and available to the Synod-based managers and this will be the subject of further work.

11. Publications

11.1 This year saw the publication of *In the beginning*, to encourage ministry with young children and their families, begun by Margaret Collins, during her time on committee, as a response to many requests for information to the office. Rosemary Johnston has completed the work, in close collaboration with Doctrine, Prayer and Worship committee.

11.2 Rosemary has also been working on a revision of the *Charter for Children* with Neil Thorogood and the result is a series of posters and cards with suggestions for study and activity, which will be published this year.

12. Other work

A report to General Assembly can only give snapshots of the work of a committee over two years, but other significant involvement has been in the Churches' Network for Non-violence and advocating and enabling under-25s engaging in the Catch the Vision process.

13. Thanks

13.1 There have been thanks peppered through this report, but some have still been missed out. The staff has been the backbone of Youth and Children's Work these past two years, especially Karen Bulley and Rosemary Johnston, but not excluding the YCWTs, who all carried an extra load most of the time. Because of his previous experience, John Brown has slotted into the work almost seamlessly. The folk associated with the National Youth Resource Centre have been in our prayers for much of the time and we are grateful for their dedication. The office staff support our work in very many ways, for which we thank them.

13.2 We have said goodbye to a number of people – the FURY chair (Emma Pugh 2002, Gareth Marshall Jones & Rosemary Simmons 2003) changes every year, just as we have got to know them a little, Brenda Cheer and Kath Lonsdale finished their committee terms last year and Andrew Willett will finish this year. All have made invaluable contributions to our work. Finally, a special thanks to Soo Webster, who carried on as Secretary to the committee for an extra year to see the work of the Review through to some kind of conclusion and finishes her term with us this Assembly.



FURY Council

Committee Members

FURY Chair 2003: Miss Rosemary Simmons & Mr Gareth Marshall-Jones

FURY Chair 2004: Miss Amanda Wade

FURY Chair Elect: Mr Gareth Jones

1.1 Many things have happened in FURY over the past two years. In January 2004, John Brown was inducted to the post of Secretary for Youth Work. The induction took place at FURY Assembly and FURY welcomed this unique opportunity to witness and promise to support their Secretary for Youth Work.

1.2 The time before John's appointment was a difficult one, with a vacancy lasting 16 months. Ian Smith acted as an interim Secretary for Youth Work for 6 months, but FURY is grateful to all those who stepped in to fill the breach at other times, specifically the Youth and Children's Work Training team, Karen Bulley (Pilots Development Officer), Rosemary Johnston (Children's Advocate) and Ray Adams. All of these did so in addition to their own jobs, which sadly meant that occasionally other areas of work paid the price.

1.3 FURY Council has had a busy two years. As well as fulfilling its usual responsibilities of planning FURY Assembly, FURY Council has also been very involved in organising and supporting FURY Camp 2003. This event was a success, with over 100 participants spending a week in a field in Sussex. This was the first FURY Council organised national youth event for 5 years, and we are pleased that its success has led to the beginning of planning for another camp in 2005. There will also be a reunion for all the 2003 participants in 2004.

1.4 FURY Council is made up of a variety of representatives; one from each Synod as well as three representatives who are elected annually at FURY Assembly to serve a two year term. In addition to these, other groups are represented on FURY Council – the United Reformed Guide and Scout Fellowship (URCGSF), Pilots, Girls' and Boys Brigade. FURY also sends a delegation to British Youth Council and the leader of this delegation also sits on FURY Council. As well as these, there is a Chair and Chair-elect who are also elected at FURY Assembly. One of FURY Council's primary roles is to carry out the work of FURY Assembly throughout the year and so the type of work varies from year to year. FURY Council also differs in its approach to pieces of work; discussing items in small groups before feeding back into a plenary, setting up task groups to look at particular issues or plan events, and even keeps discussing in the gaps between the three meetings in a year by the wonders of email.

1.5 This multiplicity of approaches has a range of benefits. It enables us to make a better use of our time, allows us to use people's strengths and talents to FURY Council's advantage and to make use of the expertise of people outside FURY Council, whilst still retaining an overview.

1.6 FURY has a FURY Communications Group (FCG), which looks after and contributes to many of the more public aspects of our work, from setting up and maintaining the website (www.furyonline.org.uk), to producing FURY's quarterly pull out in Reform, f2. This is designed so that once it has been read, it can be pulled out and passed on to young people in your church – if you do not do this already then please do so!

1.7 FURY Assembly happens annually and every district is invited to send two representatives and an observer. Sadly not all districts take up this opportunity, but despite this our numbers have been rising and approaching 200. There is always a diverse range of business and the inevitable entertainment. The business has included styles of worship, the role of District FURY representatives, the funding of places at FURY Assembly as well as political issues such as the war in Iraq. As well as dealing with motions that are brought by representatives, we also look at issues within the wider church. In 2004 we were delighted to welcome a representative of the "Catch the Vision" Group to speak, enabling FURY to contribute to this important debate. We are still working on issues from the 2002 General Assembly; specifically some of the points raised in the Youth and Children's Work Review. One of the biggest issues has been the recommendation that FURY has a recognised membership, instead of the current system, whereby any young person, aged between 11 and 25, who has any connection with the United Reformed Church, be it attending Sunday morning worship, belonging to the Guide company or attending the youth group is a member of FURY. Work is still ongoing and there are no obvious answers. FURY has also been very involved in the aftermath of the decision to close the National Youth Resource Centre at Yardley Hastings. FURY Council has been instrumental in collating some of the personal stories and memories of the centre and is actively involved in planning for the future with representation on the 12c task group.

1.8 Another annual event is “What Do You Think” the pre-General Assembly event for young people. For the past two years we have obtained DfES money to fund this and have seen our numbers rise. This is a fantastic opportunity for the under 26 representatives to meet and prepare for Assembly, by looking at the book of reports together as well as hearing and questioning some guest and expert speakers. This weekend is ably led by members of the YCWT team and FURY Council.

1.9 One of the other big issues that FURY faces is the huge disparity between Synods. Some of the representatives on Council are fortunate to come from Synods who employ a member of the YCWT team as well as having Synod Youth Secretaries in post, some of whom are employed specifically by the Synod. In contrast we have other Synods, who report that they have no YCWT, no Synod Youth Secretary and even no youth structure. This variation makes it difficult to progress work across all Synods simultaneously and

while some areas become more and more successful, there are others which are the exact opposite. The chance for the Synod representatives to join together at FURY Council and share their experiences, both good and bad, is a valuable chance to support each other. The role of district FURY representatives also varies greatly and it is crucial that the wider church realises the contributions these representatives can make when encouraged, supported and made aware of the structures.

1.10 FURY has an exciting future ahead. The programme of national events is beginning to grow, with FURY Assembly, What Do You Think? and FURY Camp reunion and Camp all available for young people. There is a website and magazine for people to read about FURY and contribute their experiences of FURY, whether it be from their local church or nationally. FURY has a lot to offer young people; so please try to give your support and encouragement.



Pilots

Committee Members

Convener: *Revd Neil Thorogood*

Treasurer: *Revd Martin Truscott*

Pilots Development Officer: *Karen Bulley*

Mrs Marilyn Armstrong, Mr John Hornby, Mr Huw Morrison, Revd John Sanderson, Revd Stephen Haward,

Revd Sandra Turner

PILOTS:

BECAUSE CHURCH IS MEANT TO BE AWESOME!

1. We Hear You!

1.1 Pilots across Britain are saying fantastic things to the United Reformed Church! Pilots is the United Reformed Church's non-uniformed organisation for children and young people made up of Deckhands (5-6 years), Adventurers (7-10), Voyagers (11-14) and Navigators (15-18). The Congregational Federation share as sponsors of Pilots.

1.2 As of April 2004 there were 500 Pilots Officers in 150 Companies. That is a continuation of the steady growth across Pilots, and especially in its older age groups, for some years now!

1.3 In 2003-2004 a major research project has allowed Voyagers and Navigators to tell us what matters to them. Amongst other things we discovered that 91% attend their Pilot Company every week and 53% are in worship in their local church at least once a month. That's a real indication of how well Pilots enables congregations to develop strong relationships with young people and children; relationships that transform churches and Pilots alike! We also know that Pilots allows major worship and Christian exploration to escape the Sunday straight jacket and dance into weekday evenings at times and in ways truly relevant to the lives of young people. We discovered that 40% of Voyagers and Navigators expressed a desire to exercise leadership in Pilots. As a result many will gather for a conference in August where they will be able to take responsibility for shaping their own future.

1.4 Hear and rejoice with Pilots as they tell us the top five things that they like best about their organisation:

- Playing games (the number 1)
- Meeting friends
- Learning and worshipping God
- Making new friends
- Doing crafts

2. We are Here for You!

2.1 Pilots is an expanding, exciting and innovative organisation because it is truly local. We have a brilliant national team in our Pilots Development Officer (Karen Bulley) and our administrative support (Sylvia Paine), who in turn resource a network of Regional Pilots Officers and work extensively with Synod Youth Leadership Training Officers. So every local company is never far from personal, committed and effective support and encouragement. Pilots has proven tools to help local churches foster lay leadership amongst children and young people.

2.2 In the last two years we've run 27 Pilots Roadshows across the country to help churches discover how Pilots can help them. We have also run several "So you want to know more about Pilots" and Pilots Officers training events at Windermere. Pilots is truly "owned" by a local church which is responsible for its Pilots company and its leadership. That's an important commitment. It also means that the success of a Pilots company is truly a success of a local church and something to shout about!

We are creating an exciting Pilots web site to support local churches in their work with Pilots.

3. We Do it Big!

3.1 By the time Assembly meets Pilots will have taken over Legoland Windsor for a day in May. Thousands will travel from across the three nations of the United Reformed Church. Hundreds of churches will share a day of fun, faith and fellowship. Pilots is able to go large with skill and a real taste for adventure!

3.2 Pilots continues to be an ecumenical organisation shared with other denominations. We continue to produce Voyages that explore many parts of the world and the lives of young Christians in those countries.

4. We Work!

4.1 The whole of General Assembly is too short to tell you all the good news about Pilots. All you have to do, if you want to let Pilots bring its blend of fun and faithfulness to your church, is contact the Pilots Desk at the United Reformed Church on 020 7916 2020 or email pilots@urc.org.uk! You won't regret it!

Resolution 38**Youth and Children's Work Committee**

General Assembly notes that after considerable research the Youth and Children's Work Committee has been unable to comply with the instruction contained in resolution 12 of 2003 'to use the model of the Ginger Group teams and work with others in drawing up plans for the development of a team to become a resource to local churches . . . '.

General Assembly therefore calls upon the Youth and Children's Work Committee

- to re-establish a network of District and Synod youth secretaries to complement the children's work network;
- to develop an Assembly-wide database of youth and children's groups and workers, with the aim of sharing resources and skills;
- to have regular quality mailings, building on the success of *Urchin* and *Bridge*, which shall include opportunities for the participation of young people and children;
- to develop a five year plan, focusing work under the headings of Belonging, Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism and Action. All are to be featured in every year, but with a particular emphasis on one in each;
- to ensure that all those working within the United Reformed Church with children and young people are adequately trained for their role;
- to monitor, in collaboration with Training Committee, training in work with children and young people offered at all levels, including ordination, Continuing Ministerial Education and Training and Learning for Service;
- to support and advocate the Youth and Children's Work Trainers' programme;
- to create a forum for theological reflection on youth and children's ministry both within the United Reformed Church and ecumenically;
- to offer opportunities for children and young people and those who work with them to explore faith development and spirituality;
- to ensure good stewardship.

1.1 The Youth and Children's Work Committee met soon after General Assembly 2003 to decide how to proceed with Resolution 12 and identify the issues that needed to be explored. We set up a task group, under the convenership of Stephen Collins, made up of people with a wide range of experiences (ex-Ginger Group member, local church minister, youth worker, FURY rep, etc).

1.2 The group met and produced three different models – an Assembly-level mission team of 12, a team of 6 employed through the Government's New Deal programme, a team of 12 Synod Representatives to work with and through FURY Council. The costs of the programmes ranged from £114,480 to £36,700. These models were used as the basis for wide consultation, including a session at FURY Assembly and written responses.

1.3 The evidence from much of the consultation proved to be of a negative nature towards the idea of setting up a new Ginger Group type project. The main concern is the recruitment of young people to the scheme at a time when there are so many similar programmes, many offering the opportunity to travel

abroad. It was also recognised that the needs of local churches have changed in the twenty years since the original Ginger Group programme came to an end, not the least being the development of the YCWT programme. The Committee was also concerned that, whatever the final strategy, the main focus and beneficiary should be work with local churches. We recognised that many of the young people in the Ginger Groups found it to be a life-changing experience, but were not so convinced of the long-term effect in local churches.

1.4 Taking all this into consideration, the task group produced a fourth model. The proposal was to employ a co-ordinator to establish a database as a tool for the sharing of skills and resources. Individuals would be asked to offer time and/or talents and these would be matched with local churches expressing a particular need. The Youth and Children's Work Committee considered this at their meeting in February and raised a number of issues, ranging from practicality to more imaginative use of those already working in the Synods – YCWTs, youth and children's workers, Synod and District youth and children's secretaries.

1.5 At the same meeting we started to develop the skeleton strategy that we had begun to put together – using task groups to take on specific areas of work, these task groups being made of committee members, Church House staff, YCWs and others concerned with work with children and young people. It was clear that many of the ideas coming from these task groups echoed those coming from the ‘Ginger Group’ task group. We therefore felt that the most holistic way of approaching an overall strategy was to combine the two. The result is the strategy now placed before Assembly for its support. The strategy

includes a resource-sharing database and developing network as the bedrock, with a five-year programme of resources and events offered to all aspects of our remit – children’s groups, youth groups, Pilots, uniformed organisations. Other aspects of the strategy – training, theological reflection and budgeting – provide the necessary support.

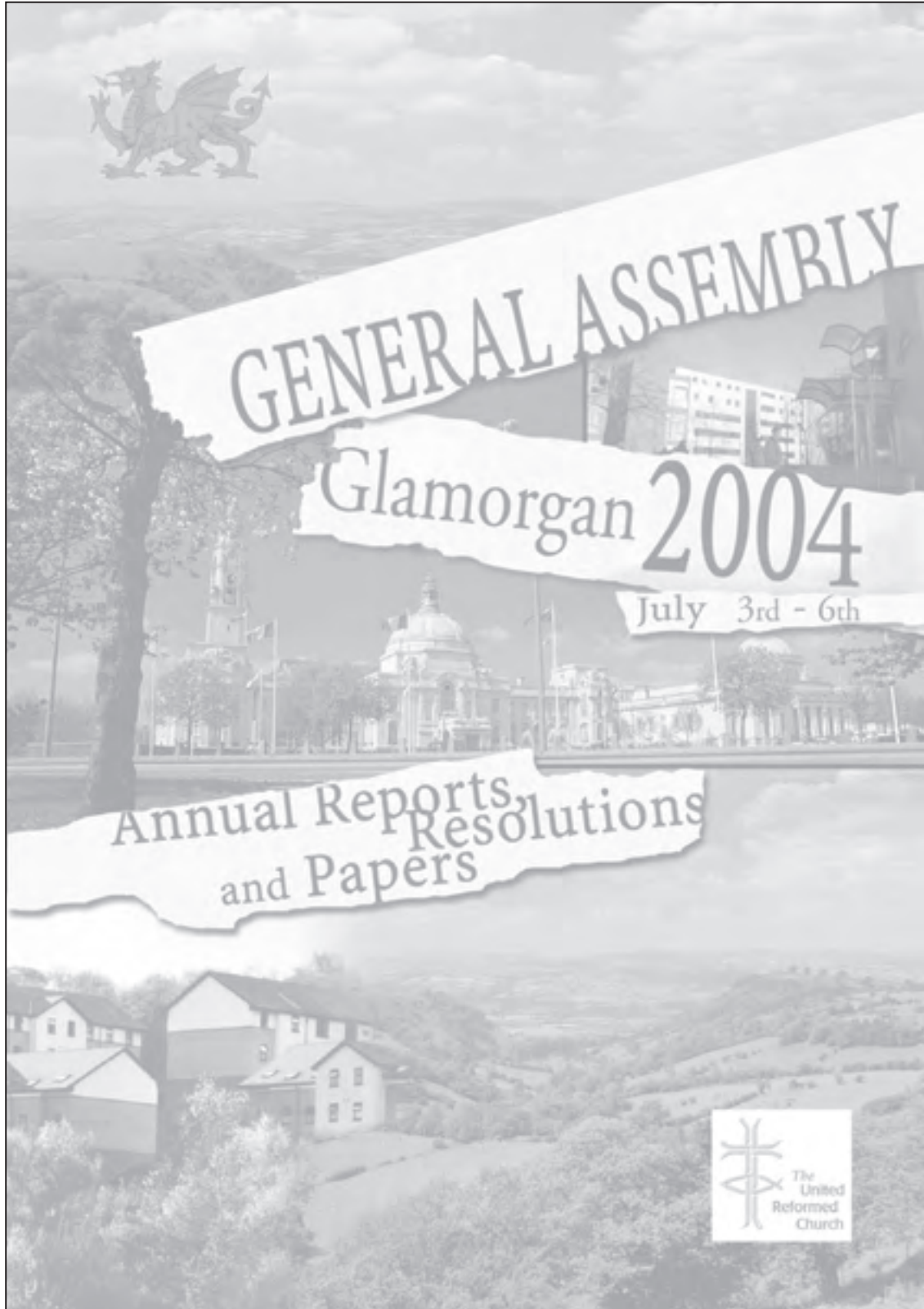
1.6 The Committee would like to thank the members of the task group and all those involved in consultation for the very thorough work they carried out.





The
United
Reformed
Church

Appendices



Appendix I

Guidelines for the Introduction of Stipendiary Ministers to pastorates declared vacant by District/Area Councils

'Mission Council welcomes the following procedure and encourages the Synod Moderators to implement them and make them known to the wider church.'

1. A personal profile on one sheet of A4 to standard format shall be prepared by a minister seeking a move. This will be circulated in advance of the Moderators' meeting. It shall include details of particular geographical or other constraints.
2. A synopsis of its profile on one sheet of A4 to a standard format shall be prepared by a vacant pastorate and tabled at the Moderators' meeting.
3. If more than one minister has expressed an interest in a particular pastorate then the personal profiles of all those interested shall be made available to the pastorate, but they may then choose only one candidate with whom they wish to meet.
4. Pastorates may enquire via the Moderators to see if a particular minister would be willing to meet with them.
5. Ministers seeking a move may be shown more than one profile.
6. On request, ministers may be shown the synopsis of any vacant pastorate not already the subject of a formal introduction.
7. The present system of notifying all ministers monthly of all vacancies shall continue.
8. The Moderators' meeting shall be free to approach ministers to consider urgent needs in particular vacancies.

Appendix 2

Equipping The Saints: Changing Ministry For The Challenge Of Mission A Report From The Future Patterns Of Ministries Working Party

CONTENTS

1. Summary: What's this all about?
 2. Challenging context
 3. Meeting the challenge: from disciples to apostles
 4. Meeting the challenge: the whole church working together
 5. Meeting the challenge: set apart ministries
 6. Meeting the challenge: further implications
 7. Conclusion, recommendations and resolution: What next?
- Appendix I Background: terms of reference, working party and previous work.
- Appendix II Feedback: responses to the interim report to Assembly 2002.
- Appendix III References: details of important reference documents.

1. SUMMARY: WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

1.1 A fast changing society provides a challenging context (section 2) for the Church. In our interim report to the 2002 Assembly, we suggested that the Church's response would need to recapture a sense of the ministry of the whole people of God (section 4), and our post-bag has supported this view. One way of viewing this key concept is to think of making people more active members of the Church focused outwards into the world – from disciples to apostles (section 3). We challenge every local church to think afresh about its support of its members when they are dispersed in their daily living (sub-section 4.4).

1.2 Fortunately our heritage provides many riches to help us understand and implement ministry that is not restricted to the clergy. We believe that the ministry of the Elders (sub-section 5.3) is central in this and, indeed, that it is a precious gift the United Reformed Church has to offer its ecumenical partners. The Church needs to be more careful and focused in the way it appoints, develops and uses Elders. It also needs to be clearer about the role of Local Church Leaders within the Eldership (sub-section 5.4).

1.3 Ministers of the Word and Sacraments (sub-section 5.7) are a valuable and scarce resource that the Church must use more effectively. As Elders become more confident in their leadership of local churches, the Church can allow itself to think differently about the deployment of Ministers. Spreading Ministers ever more thinly cannot possibly be the best mission strategy. We believe that the assumption that every congregation should have a slice of its own Minister is unsustainable, but every congregation does need effective leadership. The Church needs to be much more imaginative in its development of flexible collaborative leadership patterns (sub-section 5.8).

1.4 If the Church is to develop more diverse leadership patterns then it needs more flexible arrangements for the training, funding and deployment of Ministers and other church leaders (sub-section 5.9).

1.5 More diverse leadership patterns also make it desirable and necessary that the Church should think again about presidency at the sacraments (sub-section 5.11).

1.6 In presenting this report we know that the changes it recommends cannot happen instantly, that some of them require further work, and that they do not address other major issues for the Church (section 6). But we believe that they would contribute to Changing Ministry for the Challenge of Mission.

2. CHALLENGING CONTEXT

2.1 Background and terms of reference

2.1.1 Assembly 2002 received an interim report from the working party on Future Patterns of Ministries. It asked Ministries Committee to present a further report to Assembly 2004. This second report from the Future Patterns of Ministries working party is the response to that request. Appendix I provides more information on the terms of reference of the working party, its membership, its method of working and the previous work on which this report is built.

2.2 The changing world in which we live

2.2.1 The United Kingdom today is a place where most people have no involvement in and no real contact with organised religion. Indeed, for most people being committed members of any institution (in the traditional understanding of 'committed') is something they do not want to do or to be. Of those who are active in the practice of their faith, an increasing proportion are non-Christian. Many of those who say, when asked, that they are Christian choose not to take part in the activities and structures of the Church as an institution.

2.2.2 Even for those who are committed members of the Church, the congregation to which they belong is but one of many foci in their increasingly complex lives. This is the case, for example, for parents with young families and for people with busy and stressful jobs / roles outside the Church. When the Church should be supporting such people it is too often increasing the pressure on them by making unrealistic demands on their time and energy in support of 'in church' activities.

2.2.3 Many older church members remember when their local church was not only the centre of their life but also the main centre of the life of their community. This was the situation for a relatively short period, in historical terms. There are very few places where this is now the case. There are many more places where the local church behaves as if this is the case – continuing with activities that are not what local people now want or need; struggling to maintain work that would now be done better by others or collaboratively with others in the community; apparently unaware of the multi-cultural elements of society; hoping that people who have no real or recent experience of Church will come into their church as it is rather than looking for new ways of reaching out to those beyond its walls. It is almost a century since William Temple reminded the Church that it is the one institution that exists primarily for the benefit of its non-members.

2.2.4 Yet, surveys repeatedly tell us that people are as spiritually aware as ever. And our eyes and ears tell us that the mission imperative is as urgent today as ever it was. The cries for justice, healing and reconciliation can be heard all around us. The isolation caused by the fragmentation and individualisation of society leaves people desperate for somewhere to belong, somewhere to share their unanswerable questions, somewhere they can feel safe and loved. The local church ought to provide such a place: a worshipping community that enables people to be and to live, where people are drawn into a relationship with the transcendent; a living community that seeks to be a sign, foretaste and instrument of God's kingdom.

2.2.5 A current Government consultation is looking at the application of employment rights to office holders, including ministers of religion. Legislation may follow. There are other Government and Charity Commission initiatives which could have a significant impact on the Church, its ministers and other staff. The Church must remain alert to such developments, influence them when it can and respond to them when it must, but we do not speculate on them further in this report.

2.3 Ministry is for mission – God's unchanging mission to the world

2.3.1 Talk of the mission of the Church, whether local or universal, is shorthand that can be misleading. The Church must keep reminding itself that mission is God's activity in which it is called to participate. The context of God's mission is not only the Church but is primarily the world. Ministry in all its forms should be enabling and enacting this participation in God's mission.

2.3.2 The *Basis of Union* (paragraph 11) states that the purpose of the United Reformed Church is

to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;

to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;

to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;

and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.

2.3.3 The five marks of mission adopted by the United Reformed Church, as well as by most of its ecumenical partners, are

to proclaim the good news of the kingdom

to teach, baptise and nurture new believers

to respond to human need by loving service

to seek to transform unjust structures of society

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

2.3.4 Taking these two statements together, it is clear that the Church exists for mission, the whole life of God's people is for mission, and ministry is for mission, because mission is God's activity. In order to fulfil their part in this activity, the people of God are endowed with a rich variety of gifts that enable all the members of the Church to make their unique individual contributions to the common life and witness of the Church in the course of their daily living. All these gifts should be valued equally within the fellowship of the Church. It is as these gifts are used for the common good under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the members of the Church become the whole people of God, Christ's body in the world.

2.3.5 God's mission is unchanging but the context is always changing. The *Basis of Union* and the *Growing Up* document, based on the five marks of mission, do not present a complete account of what God's mission is or how the Church is to be engaged in that mission. These are complex questions that will, to some extent, have different answers in each place and in every time.

2.4 Changes in the United Reformed Church since the Patterns of Ministry Report in 1995

2.4.1 The nature and effectiveness of ministry has always been a matter of concern, debate and development in the United Reformed Church and in its antecedent traditions. Assembly is not the only council of the Church, but its reports and resolutions give a flavour of what has been happening.

2.4.2 In 1995, Assembly received the *Patterns of Ministry* Report. That report, like this one, focussed on the need for more effective missionary engagement as the proper basis for ministerial deployment. There was agreement on many things including there being a single order of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church, embracing stipendiary and non-stipendiary service. Proposals were not accepted for the appointment of Moderating Elders in every congregation; for the development of Local Ministers; or for the renaming of lay preachers. Further work was requested on a statement on

the *Theology of Ministry*. This was prepared by the Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee and accepted by Mission Council in 1997 as a resource document of the Church. This statement is available on the Church's web-site.

2.4.3 In 1998, Assembly agreed on guidelines for appointing Local Church Leaders and how they might be recognised, affirmed and developed. Synods, District Councils and local churches were encouraged to experiment. The report to Assembly spoke of every church member having a ministry to exercise within the ministry of the whole people, and of how the Church is enriched as more members are enabled to use their gifts in a creative and satisfying way. There are now some very different models of Local Church Leadership operating in a number of the Synods. In other Synods, there is apparently no opportunity to offer this form of service.

2.4.4 In 1999, Assembly adopted the Growing Up document as the mission strategy of the Church, based on the five marks of mission. This strategy was to be implemented from 1999 to 2001, recognising that any plan is time limited. The effect of this document has been, rightly, to place mission at the centre of recent thinking about and planning of the life and work of the Church including, and perhaps especially, the life and work of local congregations in their communities. It follows that mission must also be at the centre of any planning for ministry.

2.4.5 In 2001, Assembly passed an enabling resolution concerning the grouping of churches, which followed on from the report on this subject distributed to churches in May 2000. An increasing proportion of congregations belong to denominational or ecumenical groupings. The 2001 report defined what it meant by 'group' and 'joint pastorate', though this did not mean that all existing groups or joint pastorates were defined in this way. Various experiments have been introduced in different Synods, including 'clusters' and 'local mission partnerships'. One of the few things all these models have in common is one or more ordained Ministers often with other church leaders working together with several local churches. The precise relationship of Minister to congregation varies widely. An ever-present question about such structures is to what extent they continue to be effective: are they driven by maintenance issues or mission priorities?

2.4.6 Ministerial deployment is always a 'hot' topic and has recently been the focus of a separate working group. Throughout the life of the United Reformed Church the proportion of its members that are serving Ministers has been growing. In this sense, to talk of a current shortage of Ministers is factually inaccurate as well as unhelpful. However, whilst membership numbers have reduced substantially the number of local churches has hardly reduced at all. The United Reformed Church is mainly made up of small congregations. The real strain on ministerial deployment and on the individual Ministers is caused by expecting those people to provide effective ministry to all these congregations and the communities in which they are set. Serious questions have to be asked about whether continuing with this approach is really serving the needs of God's mission and also about what this is doing to the Ministers themselves. Ministerial recruitment is a related matter and is a real concern for the Church as it seeks to replace Ministers who are retiring or leaving the ministry

from a shrinking pool of potential candidates. The number of lay preachers is likely to reduce significantly over the medium term because of the age profile of those currently serving. It is a challenge for every member of the Church to identify people who might serve in these ways and encourage them to put themselves forward.

2.4.7 Finance is also an ever-present issue. Each year, Assembly approves a budget for the following year. However, responsibility for meeting that budget rests with the church members. Over 85% of the central budget is spent on stipendiary Ministers, Church Related Community Workers, and training. Because, over a number of years, basic stipends have been increased above inflation and the ratio of Minister numbers to membership numbers has increased, there has been a 'double whammy' on the budgets of congregations and individual church members. It can be argued that the challenge of this growing cost of ministry is one that church members should be ready to meet but there is growing evidence of their unwillingness to do so. Any strategy for future patterns of ministries must ensure that the Church makes best use of its financial as well as its human resources.

2.4.8 The policy of the United Reformed Church regarding presidency at the sacraments has changed little. There is wide diversity of practice to meet the perceived needs of local congregations and this practice is not always in line with the Church's stated policy.

2.4.9 In the autumn of 2002, Mission Council launched a thorough and radical review of the life of the United Reformed Church, now under the banner of 'Catch the Vision for God's tomorrow'. Clearly, in relation to matters of ministry our concerns overlap with those of the Review Group.

2.5 Responses received to the 2002 Future Patterns of Ministries interim report

2.5.1 We are most grateful to those who responded in writing to the questions posed at the end of the 2002 report. We have also talked with many others who have engaged with the material that was sent to them. Appendix II contains more details of the responses received from individuals, local churches, Districts and Synods.

2.5.2 The 2002 report, and the questions that were circulated for consideration and feedback, focussed mainly on the 'ministry of the whole people of God' or, more precisely, on the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ 'in and through the Church, the whole people of God' (*Basis of Union*, paragraph 19). The responses indicated widespread acceptance of the concept of the ministry of the whole people of God and of the shared responsibility of all church members to make this as effective as possible. However, there was considerable variation in understanding of what this might mean in practice and of what terms like 'ministry' mean. Many respondents were concerned to emphasise the importance of Ministers and leadership, alongside their commitment to the ministry of the whole people.

2.5.3 All the feedback received has been carefully considered and has informed our subsequent work, including the contents of this report.

2.6 The challenge of language – some definitions

2.6.1 Coping with variation

It is clearly important to be as precise as possible with the language that we use. It is also necessary to acknowledge the wide variety of interpretations of many words that are in common use among us including 'minister', 'ministry', 'ministries', 'vocation' and 'discipleship' and that words can have different meanings in different contexts.

The two documents that we have considered most important in this context are the *Basis of Union* and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Details of these documents and others are listed in Appendix III.

2.6.2 The ministry of the whole people of God

The section of the *Basis of Union* on ministry proceeds from the ministry of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the whole people of God to particular set apart ministries. It begins with (paragraph 19) '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'. It goes on to say 'This service is given ... by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life'. We endorse this understanding and have based our work upon it.

The first section of the chapter on ministry in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is headed 'The calling of the whole people of God'. It includes (section I paragraph 5) 'The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. ... All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and the service of the world to which the Church is sent.'

Both documents set ministry in the context of the world, the place where the people of God spend their daily lives – the 'dispersed mode' of being the Church described in sub-section 4.3 below.

2.6.3 Ministers and ministries

The *Basis of Union* continues with (paragraph 20) 'For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church'. It then goes on to describe the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the ministry of Church Related Community Workers and the ministry of Elders.

What distinguishes Ministers, Church Related Community Workers and Elders is not that they are more involved than anyone else in the ministry of the whole people of God but that their ministries are exercised in offices recognised by the Church.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry defines its use of the term 'ministry' as meaning (section II paragraph 7b) 'in its broadest sense the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the

universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.' It goes on (paragraph 7c) 'The term ordained ministry refers to persons who have received a charism [gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit] and whom the Church appoints for service by ordination and the laying on of hands.' In relation to the ordained ministry, it says (section II paragraph 8) 'In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ and thereby provide a focus for its unity.'

2.6.4 Vocation and discipleship

To describe every member of the Church as having a particular ministry to exercise or as participating in the ministry of the whole people of God is not the same as saying that every member is a Minister. To do this would be to render the term 'Minister', which has an established and well understood meaning within and beyond the Church, completely redundant.


For this reason, some would prefer to talk about the discipleship or vocation of church members rather than the ministry of the whole people of God. This may be just a difference of terminology to describe the same thing. However, we are concerned to emphasise that the ministry of the whole people of God requires the active participation of every church member, and that it relates to every aspect of their lives not just when they are together in church. The particular ministries of individuals should be understood as being within the context of the ministry of the whole people of God, out of which they emerge.

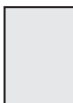
3. MEETING THE CHALLENGE: FROM DISCIPLES TO APOSTLES

3.1 The gospels in the New Testament present a picture of a small group of people becoming disciples of Jesus – his followers – literally, one might say, as they followed in his wake as Jesus strode towards his destiny in Jerusalem. The rest of the New Testament shows us how that small group of people was transformed by the Easter/Pentecost experience. They were still disciples but now they were empowered to go, empowered to preach, teach and baptise, empowered to be witnesses. They became apostles.

3.2 A picture of the Church

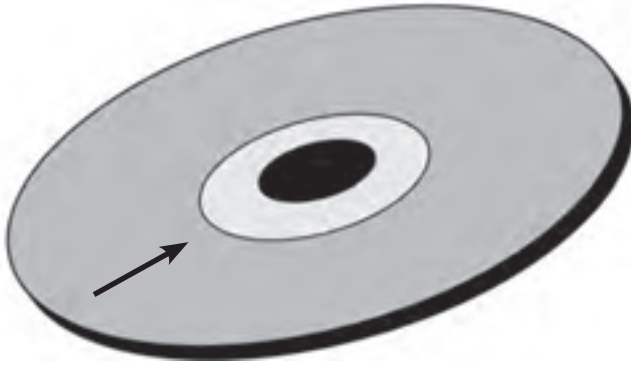
Pictures are dangerous because analogies are always imperfect, but a simple diagram has helped our thinking. A moving picture is more effective than a static diagram, as we hope to demonstrate at Assembly and on the Church's web-site.

 The area within the outer circle represents the whole membership of the Church, all those who to some degree seek to be disciples.

 The area within the intermediate circle represents those members who are living as apostles (what some might call the apostolate), actively engaged in the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ through his Church.

The area within the inner circle represents people recognised and set apart by the Church to exercise particular ministries.

Maintenance

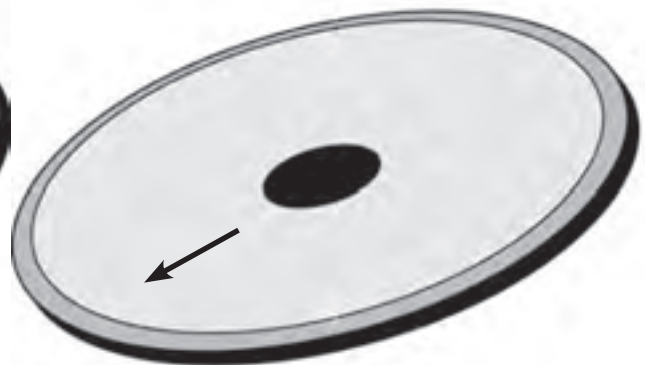


3.3 There is a danger that congregations can become increasingly passive groups of people looking more and more to their Ministers and / or the Elders to do the work of the Church. Then, the intermediate circle shrinks. This can happen in congregations of any size and circumstance. The reasons for it are complex and not always the same. It might be that a congregation has become over-dependent on a few people making it vulnerable to changes in their availability or involvement; or that its commendable faithfulness leads to misplaced determination to preserve activities and buildings that have outlived their usefulness rather than to an openness to the needs of God's mission today. Whatever the reasons, the effect is that the congregation becomes inward focused. In the diagram, the intermediate circle becomes hardly larger than the inner circle and ministry becomes largely what the Ministers and a small number of others do.

3.4 The challenge is to expand the intermediate circle as more people grow in their understanding of discipleship into a commitment to be witnesses in word and action. The work of ministry is then more fully shared by the whole Church. Those in set apart ministries are not left to shoulder impossible expectations and workloads. There is time and energy for the Church to address more challenges than just the challenge to survive.

3.5 If the Church remembers that it is part of the world and it is that world, beyond the outer circle, that is the main place of God's mission then the Church's eyes will be automatically focussed outwards rather than inwards. The Church's recognised ministries will become the means by which all the gifts of all the people are engaged in the ministry of the whole people of God. The intermediate circle will not just expand towards the outer circle but the energy will overflow beyond it into the world. We see this as a central objective for the Church and for every one of its congregations.

Mission



4. MEETING THE CHALLENGE: THE CHURCH – THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD IN MINISTRY TOGETHER

4.1 Corporate not personal

4.1.1 It is our understanding of ministry that it is a corporate activity of the Church, the whole people of God. However, this does not mean that it is just about what the people do when they are together. It does mean that all legitimate ministry should be of the people of God, specifically of a worshipping Christian community, owned, affirmed and supported by them, even when it is exercised by an individual on their behalf.

4.2 'Laos' means everybody

4.2.1 In the New Testament, 'laos' means people and the 'laos of God' are the people of God, the Church, with different and complementary gifts and ministries but sharing one common vocation to be the people of God's new creation. In law and medicine it is customary to use the term 'lay' to describe people who are not professionally qualified. In some parts of the Church this usage is adopted and those who are not ministers or priests are described as 'lay' or 'the laity'. This can easily lead to a view of these 'lay' people not only as untrained but also as amateurish in their discipleship with the Ministers seen not only as learned but also as a higher grade of Christian. Although the Churches of the Reformed tradition largely rejected this usage within the Church, it is sadly not wholly absent in thought or practice. The ministry of the whole people of God should mean the ministry in which every member is called to be engaged in every aspect of their lives, including those called to ministries set apart by the Church.

4.3 Gathered and dispersed

4.3.1 The United Reformed Church believes in the priesthood of all believers. The emphasis is on the 'all', the community of the baptised. Appendix B of the *Patterns of Ministry* report quoted the following from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (commentary on section II paragraph 17). 'The priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the baptised have in their respective ways the function of sacrifice and intercession. As Christ has offered himself, Christians offer their whole being "as a living sacrifice". As Christ intercedes before the Father, Christians intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Nevertheless the differences between these two kinds of priesthood cannot be overlooked. Whilst Christ offered himself as a unique sacrifice once for all for the salvation of the world, believers need to continually receive as a gift of God that which Christ has done for them.'

4.3.2 It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the life and witness of the gathered Christian community. However, it has been said already (paragraph 2.2.2) that even for those who are committed members of local churches the life and work of the gathered community is one commitment among many, and most of their time is spent elsewhere. More importantly, most encounters of church members with other people do not take place inside church buildings doing churchy things. Most of the opportunities to work for God's justice, healing and reconciliation are not to be found inside the Church. The context of God's mission is not only the Church but primarily the world.

4.3.3 The emphasis of the life and witness of each congregation ought to be much more on when its members are dispersed and less on when they are gathered, even if this means giving up some of its in-church activities. If a congregation is to be a Christian community that is truly a sign, foretaste and instrument of God's Kingdom then its life as a community must embrace what its members do when they are apart at least as much as it embraces what they do when they are together. These are both aspects of what it means to be 'church in community'.

4.3.4 It is vital that this embracing of the life of the individual in the life of the whole, and of the ministry of the individual in the ministry of the whole, includes every person whatever their age or circumstances.

4.4 Challenged, recognised and affirmed

4.4.1 Some people are set apart by the Church to exercise ministries in dispersed mode. This includes Church Related Community Workers and Chaplains. However, there is a great deal of ministry exercised by others in dispersed mode, i.e. in their daily lives, that currently goes unrecognised and unsupported by the Church. This is the fault of the Church and not of those engaged in these dispersed ministries. The Church needs to put this right.

4.4.2 It may be, also, that there are others in local churches who need to be challenged to recognise the opportunities for ministry in the places where they spend their time. They also need to be encouraged and supported in these ministries.

4.4.3 The enabling and equipping of this dispersed ministry of the whole people should be a major priority for Ministers and Elders.

Recommendation 1: Every local church should be challenged to review its life at all levels with the specific aim of being more supportive and enabling of the dispersed ministry of its members even if this means doing less 'in church' activities. Local churches should look for ways, within the context of worship and otherwise, of affirming the ministries of their members outside the church. This needs to be an inclusive activity from which no one is left out.

4.5 Diversity and experiment

4.5.1 In order to achieve this major shift in emphasis (at least for some) towards the world as the main focus for the ministry of God's people, congregations should be encouraged to experiment with new ways of being church. This might mean stopping some 'good work' in order to create space for new work that is even more relevant to their understanding of God's mission today. It might, for instance, include new ways of gathering Christians together ecumenically at different times and in different places – going to where people are rather than expecting them to come into existing church buildings or services.

4.5.2 There are good stories of such experiments around the Church. These include congregations that have moved out of their long cherished buildings to worship elsewhere, releasing the buildings to be used in new ways to meet local needs, bringing new life to both congregations and communities. We need to share these stories more so that we can learn together.

Recommendation 2: Every local church should be encouraged to explore new ways of gathering at different times and places – the Church going to meet people where they are rather than the Church expecting people to come to where it is.

5 MEETING THE CHALLENGE: SET APART MINISTRIES

5.1 Being thankful for what we've got

5.1.1 Any consideration of future patterns of ministries must start from where we are today and must begin by affirming with great thankfulness the quality and quantity of sacrificial service that is offered within and on behalf of the United Reformed Church. This includes, but is not limited to, those serving in the various set apart ministries formally recognised by the Church.

5.1.2 The main focus of our 2002 report was on seeking a common understanding of the phrase 'the ministry of the whole people of God'. We were disappointed by the reaction of a small number of people who thought that this emphasis implied a devaluing of the contribution of those serving as Ministers of the Church. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

5.2 Summary of current situation regarding set apart ministries

5.2.1 'Ministry' may be defined simply as service and set apart ministries might then be understood as various forms of servant leadership based on the model of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is an extensive and varied range of recognised ministries within the United Reformed Church. Some of the most common of these are considered below but there are others including pastoral visitors, Junior Church leaders, training officers, synod moderators and various other Assembly appointments. Some of these are recognised locally and others by the whole Church, some are restricted to Ministers and others are not. They are all in some sense set apart ministries.

5.2.2. The United Reformed Church ordains those who are called to be Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and those who are called to be Elders. Ordination is, in each case, to a particular form of ministry. The United Reformed Church is not the only Church that ordains people to ministries that do not include presidency. For example, the Roman Catholic Church ordains its deacons and these people are not authorised to preside at the sacraments. Ordination is important because it represents a life time commitment or, in the words of the *Basis of Union* (paragraph 20), a commitment to serve for 'so long as God wills'. Although ordination continues to be a somewhat controversial matter, we are content with the statement on ordination included in the 1995 *Patterns of Ministry* report and do not repeat its arguments further here.

5.2.3. The United Reformed Church is deliberately diverse as it seeks to respond to God's call to mission in different places and times. We welcome this diversity and look for increased flexibility to enable the Church to become even more effective. Nevertheless, we also recognise the need to be concerned for the good order of the Church and aware of the sensitivities of its ecumenical partners.

5.3 Elders

5.3.1 The *Basis of Union* says (paragraph 22) that Elders are called to 'share with Ministers in the pastoral oversight and leadership of local churches'. Later, it lists the functions of the Elders' meeting. We consider that the *Basis of Union* says all that is necessary about the ministry of Elders. The challenge for the Church is to take what it says more seriously.

5.3.2 Eldership was not invented by the United Reformed Church. Elders were introduced by Reformed Churches after the Reformation in order to provide a group of 'lay' people to share responsibility with the Minister for the ruling of the parish or congregation. It was believed that various references in the New Testament Epistles showed that this was the practice of the early Church. Some writers believed that Elders were equivalent to New Testament Presbyters (Ministers), with a distinction made between ruling and teaching Elders, but this was never a universal view. Later, Elders were given a pastoral role which complemented their responsibility for church governance. Elders were ordained to recognise their commitment to ministry. This was not a case of people taking their turn at doing a job for a period. Elders worked alongside Ministers in all the councils of the Church. This was, in summary, the understanding of Eldership that the Presbyterian Church of England brought into the United Reformed Church.

5.3.3 It is our view that the ministry of the Elders is at the heart of what it means to be the United Reformed Church, both in its function and in its operation. The ministry of the Elders is of the local church, it is locally focussed and it is collaborative in style. The pastoral oversight and leadership of each local congregation is primarily the responsibility of its Elders' meeting supported by its Minister(s), rather than the other way round (which is how many see it). There is considerable evidence that a congregation is more likely to be effective when its members have a shared vision. The Elders' meeting in each congregation needs to foster a vision of what it means to be a community of God's people in that place. Where Ministers are present they are part of the Elders' meeting, with one of their key tasks being to ensure that every Elder and the Elders as a team are properly prepared for and supported in their roles.

See Recommendation 6 following paragraph 5.7.12

5.3.4 The representative ministry of each local congregation in its local community and among its local ecumenical partners should be the responsibility of its Elders, even though these duties may be carried out by a Minister or a Local Church Leader (see sub-section 5.4 below).

5.3.5 The effectiveness of the ministry of Elders is impeded in some congregations because the Elders' meeting acquires a whole range of tasks which, however important, do not need to be performed by the Elders. This can, in turn, lead to an increase in the number of serving Elders beyond what is necessary. It is our view that Elders' meetings will be most effective where they are relatively small and focussed on their core responsibilities of providing pastoral oversight and leadership. Some local churches have benefited greatly from the appointment of councils or committees to assist with some of the pastoral, practical and administrative tasks. Non-serving Elders can have an important role here.

5.3.6 We consider that best practice in the appointment of Elders normally involves the following sequence of events: 1: Election; 2: Preparation; 3: Ordination; and 4: Development. Election is the discernment by the church meeting of those among them called to be Elders, and the process used should reflect the importance of this task. Preparation confirms the call for the individual and for the congregation. Ordination is the setting apart of people for this particular form of ministry. Development includes ongoing support and appropriate training where specific skills need to be developed. This development will hopefully encourage some Elders to offer other forms of service, including those discussed in sub-sections 5.4 to 5.7 below. Synods and Areas / Districts should ensure that resources are available to support and facilitate such best practice in all local churches.

5.3.7 Eldership is a ministry of the local church and authority for the election and ordination of Elders rests with the congregation in church meeting. However, ordination is a representative act carried out by the local church on behalf of the whole Church. It is therefore appropriate that District Councils should formally acknowledge the call of Elders by local churches and, where possible, be represented at their ordination and, if they are transferring from another District, their induction.

Recommendation 3: The appointment and ordination of Elders should involve a commitment to continuing development, including appropriate local training. Synods should facilitate this training, working with local Ministers and making full use of available resources. District Councils should formally acknowledge the call of Elders by local churches and be represented at their ordination and, if they are transferring from another District, their induction.

5.4 Local Church Leaders

5.4.1 Since the concept of Local Church Leaders was approved by Assembly in 1998, a number of Synods have introduced their own models. Others have apparently done nothing. Although there is considerable variation, the models may be summarised as either roles or functions. In some Synods, the Local Church Leader has a role in the local church and Elders' meeting not unlike the 'Moderating Elder' proposal that was rejected by Assembly in 1995. In other Synods, each Local Church Leader is appointed to carry out one or more particular tasks or projects but he or she does not have any overall responsibility. Although these developments are to be warmly welcomed, the inconsistent opportunities for service, practice and training between different Synods can cause problems.

5.4.2 It is crucial that local church leadership remains rooted in the Elders' meeting of the particular congregation and that it is seen as part of the corporate ministry of the Elders. We do not believe, therefore, that the Local Church Leader should become a separate order or category of ministry.

5.4.3 Our understanding is that the concept of Local Church Leader approved by Assembly in 1998 was of a role rather than a set of tasks. We support this emphasis and are attracted to the term 'Pastor' to describe this role. It is also our view that Assembly needs to come to a mind about the nature of Local Church Leaders, the scope of their role and to adopt an overall framework. Such a framework for this form of local leadership would help define this role to ecumenical partners. It would not invalidate other patterns of leadership but it would make clear that they are different. However, it will be important not to be over prescriptive. Some Elders' meetings will recognise the value of appointing one (or more) of their number to this sort of role. Others will prefer to carry this responsibility collectively. The Church should not act as if one model is better than another. Support and training need to be offered to every Elders' meeting, whatever model they adopt for their leadership. What matters is the effectiveness of the leadership provided to each local church by its Elders, not precisely how this is done.

Recommendation 4: Whilst welcoming the current Local Church Leaders as successful experiments and effective forms of local leadership, the Church should build on this experience to create a flexible framework for the introduction of Pastors of local congregations, a role working from within the Elders' meeting. All Synods could then be encouraged to make use of this as one optional form of leadership available to local churches.

5.5 Accredited Lay Preachers

5.5.1 Worship is at the heart of the life of the United Reformed Church and each of its congregations. To maintain worship of the highest possible standard that is challenging, exciting and inclusive requires people to lead it who are properly trained and equipped for and supported in this role. This does not mean that every worship leader needs or should receive the same training. It does mean that initial and continuing training is important for all those who regularly lead worship on the Church's behalf.

5.5.2 The Church is greatly indebted to all those who regularly lead its worship, not least its Ministers but also those who have committed the time and energy to become Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers and who offer this demanding service, often with too little appreciation. We should also acknowledge that there are other lay preachers who are recognised / accredited by their District Councils and others of all ages who help to lead the worship of local churches.

5.5.3 The training of lay preachers is best used in the leading of worship, teaching and Bible study. If lay preachers are locally based then their work can be more fully integrated into the collaborative ministry in that place, with Ministers, Elders and others. We welcome this local focus. However, this does not take anything away from the important contribution of those lay preachers whose ministry is exercised through the leading of worship of congregations over a wide geographical area. To emphasise the importance of the relationship with local churches and to avoid inappropriate associations with the word 'lay', we would prefer that the title of this form of service was changed from 'lay preacher' to 'local preacher'. Such a proposal was narrowly rejected by Assembly in 1995. The commitment to seek a joint pastoral strategy with the Methodist Church would be helped by the removal of differences in terminology that are not significant.

Recommendation 5: The United Reformed Church should adopt the title 'local preacher' in place of 'lay preacher'.

5.6 Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs)

5.6.1 CRCWs have become an important recognised ministry of the United Reformed Church. However, it is important to acknowledge that church related community work in this Church did not begin with the appointment of the first CRCW. For example, there are many Ministers today who are engaged in similar work for at least part of their time.

5.6.2 In some branches of the Church, there is a separate order of ministry called a Diaconate. If diaconal ministry is understood to be about building bridges between church and society then, clearly, the work of CRCWs is one important expression of the Church's diaconal ministry. We welcome the present policy of growing this ministry.

5.6.3 Following the *Patterns of Ministry* report in 1995, Mission Council initiated some work on Diaconal Ministry and the possibility of establishing a Diaconate within the United Reformed Church. A paper was presented to Mission Council

in 2001. No action was taken but the paper is available on the website. Diaconal ministry is being exercised on behalf of the Church by many people including but by no means limited to CRCWs. It is our view that this diaconal ministry needs to be encouraged and developed but that this would not be helped by the creation of a Diaconate.

5.7 Ministers of the Word and Sacraments (Ministers)

5.7.1 The *Basis of Union* says (paragraph 21) 'Some are called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments'. It goes on to say 'They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world'.

5.7.2 The title 'Minister of the Word and Sacraments' is not entirely satisfactory in that Ministers are required to do many things in addition to preaching and presiding and much preaching and presiding is done by others. However, the title does emphasise the centrality of worship in the life of the Church and the important contribution that Ministers make to that worship. The Church looks to its Ministers to act, not exclusively but principally, as the guardians of its faith and witness, helping 'keep the community faithful to the teaching and practice of apostolic Christianity' (David Bosch). In this quotation 'apostolic' means being sent; it is not a reference to the first century Church. The question is how should this be done in the context of today's Church and world. As the Church adapts to meet the challenge of God's mission today, so must its use of Ministers adapt to keep the Church effective as well as faithful.

5.7.3 The United Reformed Church, like any human community, needs leadership – locally and as a whole. The effectiveness of the Church is directly dependent on the quality and appropriateness of its leadership. Ministers play a crucial role in the leadership of the Church. The contribution of Ministers to the ministry of the whole Church will, in our view, always be vitally important. The primary model for leadership in the Church is the servanthood of Jesus Christ.

5.7.4 The United Reformed Church, within the Reformed tradition, has a high view of the role of its Ministers. Ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments (and also to the Ministry of the Elders) is once for all and not repeated. The *Basis of Union* says (paragraph 20) 'those who enter on such ministries do so for so long as God wills'. Ordination recognises that this calling is a commitment to a way of being as well as to a way of doing. The most important qualities of people called to this service are the depth of their faith, their commitment to journeying with others, and their willingness to proclaim the gospel within and outside the Church, in words and actions. The demands made on these people make it essential that they are thoroughly prepared and then continually supported and developed in order to sustain them and to keep them effective.

5.7.5 If the membership numbers in the Church continue to decline then there will be further human constraints on the number who offer to serve as Ministers and financial constraints on the number of stipends that can be paid. Ministers will be, as they have always been in our traditions, a scarce as well as a valuable resource. It is the duty of the

whole Church to ensure that these people who are God's gift to the Church are properly cared for and that, as far as possible, their gifts are deployed effectively and realistically. In many cases, we are currently doing neither of these things.

5.7.6 If the vocation of the Church is to participate in God's mission in the world then the main purpose of Ministers must be to equip, empower and lead the members of the Church, the whole people of God, for their ministry in the world in response to God's call. PT Forsyth wrote that Ministers 'act on the church so the church can act on the world'. The Church's expectations of its Ministers must be refocused if they are to be enabled to do this more effectively. It has been said already that the United Reformed Church is mainly made up of small congregations. It is likely to remain so unless the Church takes strategic decisions to withdraw from many of those places where it is currently present but not numerically strong. Although some hard decisions are undoubtedly necessary, they must be taken according to mission priorities not congregation sizes.

5.7.7 The *Basis of Union* says (paragraph 24) that the Church 'shall take steps to ensure that so far as possible ordained ministers ... are readily available to every local church'. The practical meaning of 'so far as possible' has changed significantly over the lifetime of the United Reformed Church. It is unavoidable that the interpretation of 'readily available' must also change. This phrase cannot now mean, if it ever meant, that every congregation can assume a right to be served directly by a slice of 'their own' Minister. For example, a rigid allocation of Sunday services and an assumption that a particular Minister will be available for all hospital visits and funerals may not be practicable. We are convinced that the practice of spreading Ministers ever more thinly, without fundamentally changing the expectations of what the Ministers can and should do, is not the best mission strategy. Expectations that are unachievable and inappropriate, whether held by church members or by the Ministers themselves, need to be challenged and changed. We believe that a major shift is now essential in the way most District and Area Councils approach deployment

5.7.8 As stated above, we believe that the Elders of each local church must be the ones primarily responsible for the development and continuation of its ministry. Ministers can then be deployed in far more varied and imaginative ways than have previously been possible. We would hope for a much better match, in future, of the gifts of particular Ministers with the tasks the Church asks them to undertake.

5.7.9 Central to the role of Ministers as a whole and the roles of most Ministers in practice, working particularly through clusters / groups or Area / District Councils, should be the development and support of the leadership of local congregations. The emphasis in this work with local churches must be on developing more effective collaborative ministry, dealt with further in sub-section 5.8 below.

5.7.10 Ministers, alongside the Elders in each place, also have a key representative role, interpreting the world to the Church and the Church to the world, and representing the wider Church (United Reformed and ecumenical) to the local church. For some, this role will be embodied in work as Chaplains and other work set in the world. This representative role of Ministers has implications for their

ongoing training in relation not only to developments in theology, doctrine and worship but also to their appreciation of changes in community and culture.

5.7.11 A Minister is a member of a local church. Whatever the Minister's particular role, his / her ministry is part of the ministry of the whole people of God. It will continue to be necessary, where the Minister is the best equipped or where other resources are not available, to ask a Minister to do work that is not, exclusively, his / hers on behalf of the Church. This might be locally to initiate or support church programmes or community development work, or it might be administrative work in support of the Church's structures. For each individual Minister this part of his / her work must be properly defined so that the scoping of the overall workload is realistic. For the Church as a whole there needs to be a mechanism within the deployment process for assessing how much of this work its Ministers can collectively support before it is counter productive, however useful in itself. It is our view that neither of these objectives is currently being met satisfactorily.

5.7.12 The United Reformed Church employs a number of its Ministers in Assembly, Synod and District appointments. The justification of these posts is not within the remit of this report, though we do readily acknowledge that a great deal of vital work is being done in this way. The Church has procedures in place for reviewing these posts and, in particular, all Assembly appointments will be considered as part of the 'Catch the Vision' review of the structures of the Church. Whether these posts should be filled by Ministers is a separate matter that needs to be considered in relation to each post and also in relation to the Church's overall deployment of its Ministers.

Recommendation 6: The United Reformed Church should re-commit itself to the development of appropriate and effective leadership in every local congregation, whilst recognising that this does not mean that every congregation will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership. The deployment of Ministers should be determined by the need to make the best use of this scarce resource in equipping, empowering and leading the Church in its participation in God's mission.

5.8 Collaborative and complementary leadership

5.8.1 The United Reformed Church is a conciliar Church with a collaborative style of leadership. This has already been referred to several times in this report. The Elders' meeting of each local congregation is at the heart of this collaborative leadership. The purpose of this approach is to make the best use of the particular people available in each place for the good of the whole people of God and the effectiveness of its ministry in the world. Some would question whether the Church has been good at putting this collaborative style into practice. We hope that as Elders' meetings become more confident in their leadership of local congregations so Ministers will be released into developing new ways of working that are more creative, supportive and purposeful.

5.8.2 The Church's structures and policies are deliberately flexible. There are very few tasks that are the responsibility of one particular office within the Church. This flexibility creates enormous potential for a high quality, richly diverse and complementary style of leadership to be offered to the Church locally and nationally.

5.8.3 In a situation where leadership resources are scarce, it is vital that the Church orders its life in a way to make best use of the gifts and service that are offered. The opportunities for mutual support and personal development available to the members of ministerial teams are of great benefit to the Church as a whole as well as to the individuals. We would encourage the further development of local groupings or clusters of churches, described by some as local mission partnerships, served by teams of leaders including Ministers, Elders, Local Church Leaders, Lay Preachers and others. In some cases, the Area / District Council will be the natural 'cluster'.

5.8.4 With the focus on mission, there will be many places where the most effective 'cluster' will be a local ecumenical grouping embracing churches serving the same community, rather than a denominational one linking United Reformed Churches serving very different communities, perhaps far apart.

5.8.5 It will still be appropriate, in some circumstances, for a Minister to be scoped to work full-time with a single congregation but this ministry should still be collaborative in style. Where this happens it should reflect agreed mission priorities and should not be driven by history or size of congregation.

Recommendation 7: Churches should be encouraged to work in groups or clusters, wherever possible ecumenically, with Ministers, Elders, Local Church Leaders, Lay Preachers and others offering them collaborative leadership.

5.9 Classification, training and remuneration of Ministers and other ministries

5.9.1 The United Reformed Church has stipendiary and non-stipendiary Ministers, but Assembly made clear in 1995 that there is a single order of Minister of the Word and Sacraments comprising both stipendiary and non-stipendiary service. The *Manual* (section K) sets out 'Patterns of Stipendiary Ministry' based on a document produced by Ministries Department (as it then was) in 1988 and 'Models for Non-stipendiary Ministry' approved by Assembly in 1995. The actual situation is more complex than this. There are stipendiary Ministers who do not work full-time for the Church and others who are full time but do not take any stipend. There are non-stipendiary Ministers who are working full-time for the Church in an exactly comparable way to their full-time stipendiary colleagues.

5.9.2 Increasingly frequently, the Church receives requests from individual Ministers who want to switch from stipendiary to non-stipendiary service or vice versa or to change from full-time to part-time service or vice versa. This may be in response to changed personal or family circumstances or to perceived changes in the needs of the Church. The Church is not consistent in the way it responds to such requests and the further training it requires of such people.

5.9.3 The Church needs to be much more flexible in its recruitment and deployment of Ministers and others and to reduce the obstacles that are perhaps inadvertently put in people's way in order to make more effective use of the service being offered. In particular, the Church needs to be more successful in attracting people to serve as non-stipendiary Ministers. To facilitate this the Church needs to

uncouple ordination, training and remuneration from one another so that it can be more flexible in relation to each of them. It is our view that ordination (or commissioning) should be about setting a person apart for a particular ministry on behalf of the Church; training should be about equipping a particular person for a particular role (it should therefore be tailored and continuing); and payment should be a practical matter dependent on the circumstances of the individual and the resources of the Church. What is said here about Ministers should logically also apply to Church Related Community Workers and we welcome the current work towards the introduction of non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers.

5.9.4 The Church needs to develop new ways of classifying its Ministers and CRCWs that are more useful to the Church and the individuals. This should be based on the service they are able to offer and might include the available time (e.g. half-time or full-time); whether they are geographically restricted (as are most non-stipendiary and many stipendiary Ministers); and what particular skills or experience they have. Such a change would clearly have implications for the way that the deployment of Ministers, CRCWs and others is understood and operated.

Recommendation 8: The Church should develop a new way of classifying its Ministers according to the service being offered that can supersede the existing stipendiary 'Patterns' and non-stipendiary 'Models'.

5.9.5 We welcome the decision of Mission Council to ask for a development policy for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers, including a review of methods of appraisal and accountability. The Church needs a more flexible approach to initial and continuing training that is more responsive to the varied needs and changing circumstances of students and those appointed to these ministries.

Recommendation 9: The Church should continue to develop the flexibility of the initial and continuing training of its Ministers and Church Related Community Workers to meet more effectively their varied circumstances and their fast changing contexts and to enable them to more easily transfer between different forms of service.

5.9.6. The payment of a stipend is meant to allow a person set apart by the Church as a Minister or CRCW to fulfil his / her vocation. The level of the stipend should be adequate to free the person and his / her dependents from financial anxiety and to enable him / her to participate in society. It would be wholly wrong if any financial constraints on the Church persuaded it to pay less than adequate stipends. The 'right' level of the stipend will always be a controversial matter that will need to be handled sensitively. We believe that the concept of the stipend in relation to Ministers and CRCWs is still more appropriate than the payment of a salary.

5.9.7. The logic of this argument suggests that there ought to be much greater variation in the amount offered to Ministers and CRCWs, up to an agreed maximum stipend plus allowances, reflecting the significant variations in their circumstances including income from other sources inside and outside the Church. It also implies that it might be necessary and just to offer at least a part stipend or other benefits to some of those serving as Ministers and currently

classified as non-stipendiary where they are not receiving adequate income from elsewhere. This increased flexibility might also affect the policy of the Church regarding the retirement of Ministers and CRCWs and careful consideration would also need to be given to the proper provision of housing and pensions. Some Ministers choose not to take all the stipend and allowances which the Church offers them. This is and should remain entirely their personal decision.

5.9.8 We envisage a significant change over the next, say, twenty years in the balance between stipendiary and non-stipendiary service with many more people offering part-time service to the Church whilst working and earning income elsewhere. If this were to happen it would enable the Church to have Ministers and CRCWs serving in more locations (albeit in part time service) without increasing the Church's costs.

Recommendation 10: Work should be done on the implications and mechanics of making the remuneration package of all Ministers and Church Related Community Workers more flexible according to their circumstances, such as dependent relatives, within the maximum figures approved each year by Assembly.

5.10 Finance – flexible resources to support flexible leadership patterns

5.10.1 The central budget of the Church receives income from various sources. However, most of the income comes from local churches through the Ministry and Mission Fund and this broadly equates to the total costs of training, paying and supporting Ministers and Church Related Community Workers. Given the diversity of ministries within the Church and the varying needs of local churches, it would make sense to broaden the use of the Ministry and Mission Fund from a 'payments to Ministers' fund to a fund that supports the Church's rich variety of leadership patterns. This should include existing national grants to support local non-standard ministries and be able to support more than just the work of Ministers and Church Related Community Workers. It follows that the Church might decide in the future to spend more of its available resources on other forms of leadership and, by implication, less of those resources on Ministers. Such decisions could affect only future actions and it is vital that those people already paid out of the Ministry and Mission Fund continue to be properly looked after. We envisage that all congregations would continue to contribute to the Ministry and Mission fund whether or not a Minister was involved directly in their local leadership and all local churches would be eligible to benefit from the Fund to support their mission. Local churches would deserve much more and clearer information about how their money was being spent through this Fund.

5.10.2 The proposals in sub-sections 5.9 and 5.10 could not be considered properly without taking account a number of other issues, for example the relationship between the central Ministry and Mission Fund and the financial resources held elsewhere in the Church.

Recommendation 11: Detailed consideration should be given to broadening the terms of the Ministry and Mission Fund so that it could be used not just to pay for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers but also to support other forms of leadership within

the Church. An attractive annual report on how the Ministry and Mission Fund is spent should be made available to local churches.

5.11 Presidency at the Sacraments

5.11.1 Given the changing relationship between Ministers and congregations, and the developing ministry of Elders that we call for in sub-section 5.3 above, we believe that the issue of presidency needs to be re-examined. There is very significant variation of practice around the Church and it is not all in line with what is said in the *Basis of Union*. The Church needs a policy that preserves order but allows for variety of both circumstance and practice. We begin by summarising in paragraphs 5.11.2 to 5.11.7 what we understand to be the current stated position of the Church.

5.11.2 The *Basis of Union* says (paragraph 24) that the United Reformed Church shall 'make provision through District Councils, in full consultation with the local churches concerned, for the recognition of certain members of the Church, normally deaconesses, elders or accredited lay preachers, who may be invited by local churches to preside at baptismal and communion services where pastoral necessity so requires ... only such recognised persons may be invited.'

5.11.3 A statement on the then situation concerning presidency at the sacraments was accepted by Assembly in 1991 and is included in the current *Manual* (section F). This statement sets out the background, describes the variety of practice and sets out three alternative views concerning presidency – in summary, restrict it to Ministers; extend it to include lay preachers; or extend it further to include presidency by 'local lay leaders'. However, the statement did not propose any revision of the *Guidelines on Presidency at the Lord's Supper*. These Guidelines date from 1975 and were re-affirmed by Assembly in 1980. They are available on the Church's web-site.

5.11.4 The *Manual* also includes (section F) the Statement on Presidency at the Sacraments from the *Patterns of Ministry* report which was accepted by the 1995 Assembly as expressing the mind of the Church 'at this present time'. This Statement suggests the following pattern of presidency:

- a) a Minister should preside when available;
- b) in situations of pastoral necessity where no Minister is available, the District Council should make provision for lay presidency; Moderating Elders and Lay Preachers should be considered first;
- c) authorisation for lay presidency, normally from within the congregation concerned, should not cover a period longer than a year without consultation and review of the needs of the congregation concerned.

[This is the wording that was accepted by the 1995 Assembly even though it separately rejected the proposal to establish 'Moderating Elders']

5.11.5 This 1995 Statement clearly acknowledges that it is possible for District Councils to authorise lay presidents for a longer term than for particular dates and times. It draws attention to the sentence in the *Basis of Union* (paragraph 24) that says 'the pastoral needs of each situation shall be reviewed periodically by the district or area council in consultation with the local church'. This is not a reference to

the regular quinquennial visits by Area / District Councils to congregations but a separate requirement of those Councils to review regularly the pastoral needs of congregations where special arrangements have been made. It is important to emphasise that it is for each local church to decide how often it wishes to celebrate the sacraments. For example, the 1995 statement recognises that some congregations wish to celebrate communion every Sunday and this is part of the pastoral needs of these congregations to which their Area / District Councils must attend.

5.11.6 The *Basis of Union* refers (paragraph 24) to lay presidency by accredited lay preachers and one of the functions of Area / District Councils is to accredit lay preachers (*The Manual* section B paragraph 2 (3) A (vii)). In 1979, Assembly resolved to establish a Register of Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers and expressed the hope that District Councils, in accrediting lay preachers, would apply the national standards. In 2002, Assembly accepted a Lay Preaching Strategy which acknowledged that District Recognition of lay preachers exists alongside National Accreditation. It is our view that the word 'accredited' in the *Basis of Union* refers to all those accredited by District Councils and not only those on the Register of Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers. Therefore, the *Basis of Union* permits District Recognised Lay Preachers to be invited to preside at baptismal and communion services.

5.11.7 In 1998, Assembly approved an amendment to the *Basis of Union* to provide for presidency at the sacraments in local churches in emergency situations.

5.11.8 It is our view that the *Basis of Union* provides sufficient flexibility to allow for the appropriate authorisation for presidency at the sacraments of every local church.

5.11.9 Presidency at the sacraments in the United Reformed Church is in two senses a representative act. The president represents the congregation in what s/he does and represents the wholeness of the wider church in the local congregation. Presidency by a visiting Minister, for example a Synod Moderator, can be an important expression of the wider church in the local congregation. However, because of the importance of the representation of the congregation in the presidency, we consider that the person who presides should normally be someone who is in an ongoing close relationship with that congregation. The implication of the wording in the *Basis of Union* and of the 1995 Statement is that a Minister in such a close relationship will normally be available to preside and that 'situations of pastoral necessity' will be the exception. In fact, the availability of such a Minister is less and less common. The result is that the celebration of the sacraments in a local church is increasingly frequently presided over either by a Minister who is not well known to the congregation or by a Lay Preacher or one of the Elders who are authorised by their District Council on a semi-permanent basis. The current wording is, therefore, not entirely satisfactory.

5.11.10 The change in the pattern of local church presidency suggests that it may be time for the Church to re-state its policy on this matter in a form not only that is consistent with its understanding of the nature of presidency and the distinct ministries of Ministers and Elders but also that caters for most circumstances in most congregations.

5.11.11 In the context of what is said in sub-section 5.3 above, the question arises as to whether some or all of the Elders of each local congregation should be permanently appointed or ordained to preside at the sacraments. To appoint or ordain only some of the Elders to preside would divide the Eldership into two categories that would be confusing within the United Reformed Church and would create difficulties in its ecumenical relationships. To appoint or ordain all Elders to preside would seriously blur the distinction between the ministries of Ministers and Elders and would, again, cause ecumenical difficulties. We therefore conclude, perhaps reluctantly, that the existing provisions are preferable to any alternative currently available.

5.11.12 As stated above, we consider that the person presiding in a local church should normally be someone who is well known to that congregation. We believe that the current provisions of the *Basis of Union* for Area / District Councils to authorise particular Elders or Lay Preachers to preside for defined periods are adequate. We hope that Area / District Councils will take their responsibilities seriously in recognising when 'pastoral necessity' arises in each local church, what the best response should be, and in keeping such situations under review.

5.11.13 Presidency at the sacraments is a matter on which particular sensitivity is required regarding the Church's relationships with its ecumenical partners. However, some have argued that it is the varied practice within the United Reformed Church, rather than its policy, which causes most concern in some of the other Churches.

Recommendation 12: Area / District Councils should recognise and use the flexibility provided by the *Basis of Union* with regard to presidency at the sacraments to ensure that the needs of each local church are properly met. Where 'situations of pastoral necessity' occur, the Councils should take great care to keep them fully and regularly under review, out of respect to the congregations concerned and to the Church's ecumenical partners.

6. MEETING THE CHALLENGE: FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Ecumenical relationships

6.1.1 An increasing number of United Reformed Church congregations are involved in local ecumenical projects or partnerships. The Church's future patterns of ministries need to take this fact into account, allowing these congregations maximum local flexibility and minimising the burden placed on them by Church structures.

6.1.2 All the major Churches in the United Kingdom are, in one form or another, reviewing their future patterns of ministries. It is vital that the United Reformed Church continues to pay attention to what its ecumenical partners are thinking and doing and that any proposed changes to the United Reformed Church's patterns of ministries are shared with its partners before those changes are introduced.

6.1.3 In particular, the United Reformed Church is committed to developing a national pastoral strategy with the Methodist Church, with which it already has several

hundred united congregations. This commitment needs to be put into practice by arranging an early opportunity to discuss these proposals with Methodist representatives and to be ready to amend them if appropriate.

Recommendation 13: Formal discussions about the recommendations in this report should be arranged with representatives of the Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners.

6.2 Internal structures

6.2.1 This report has referred in several places to the burden that the internal structures of the United Reformed Church place on local churches and, in particular, on Ministers. This is an important and urgent matter that impacts on the effectiveness of the ministry of the Church and its Ministers. It is not within the remit of this report to consider these structures. However, it has been made clear that they will be considered by the 'Catch the Vision' Review Group.

6.3 Buildings

6.3.1 While this subject is beyond the remit of this report, we have been very aware that a number of our 'challenges' in relation to ministry are caused or exacerbated by the number of buildings from which the Church currently chooses to operate. An enormous challenge is presented to the Church both locally and nationally by its buildings. There are too many buildings that are either no longer needed where they are or that are no longer fit for purpose. This is another important and urgent matter that needs to be addressed for the sake of the ministry of the whole Church and in particular for the sake of those who are currently struggling to maintain these premises and to support the people who use them.

7. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND RESOLUTION: WHAT NEXT?

7.1 Conclusion

7.1.1 Many of our recommendations describe what is already happening in some parts of the Church. There is much good work being done and effective, sacrificial service being offered in the Church and in the world on the Church's behalf. We need to keep learning from each other as we respond locally to God's call to mission.

7.1.2 The use of 'changing ministry' in the title of this report is deliberately ambiguous. The ministry of the Church is always changing or adapting to meet new challenges. It is also part of the purpose of that ministry to facilitate change in the Church and the world, but this is not change for the sake of change. We do not propose the creation of any new orders of ministry or any new offices in the United Reformed Church. We do believe that our recommendations demand a radical transformation of the Church's existing patterns of ministries, particularly the way in which it uses Elders and Ministers. The purpose of this transformation is to re-focus the Church on its participation in God's mission to the world and to equip all the members of the Church, the whole people of God, to play a fuller part in the continuing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7.1.3 Since we began our work, Mission Council has launched a thorough and radical review of the life of the United Reformed Church, now described as 'Catch the Vision for God's tomorrow'. This review is expected to make recommendations about the structure of the Church as well as about its ministry. The recommendations in this report are based on the structure as it is. It may disappoint some that this is, in a sense, another interim report. The wording of the recommendations and of the single resolution reflects the need to co-ordinate the work of the two groups and to provide an opportunity for feedback on our recommendations before substantive resolutions are brought to Assembly. Your feedback on these recommendations will be very important. We recognise that we are asking you to respond very quickly in order to meet the timetable for Assembly 2005.

7.2 Recommendations

1. (after paragraph 4.4.3) Every local church should be challenged to review its life at all levels with the specific aim of being more supportive and enabling of the dispersed ministry of its members even if this means doing less 'in church' activities. Local churches should look for ways, within the context of worship and otherwise, of affirming the ministries of their members outside the church. This needs to be an inclusive activity from which no one is left out.
2. (after paragraph 4.5.2) Every local church should be encouraged to explore new ways of gathering at different times and places – the Church going to meet people where they are rather than the Church expecting people to come to where it is.
3. (after paragraph 5.3.7) The appointment and ordination of Elders should involve a commitment to continuing development, including appropriate local training. Synods should facilitate this training, working with local Ministers and making full use of available resources. District Councils should formally acknowledge the call of Elders by local churches and be represented at their ordination and, if they are transferring from another District, their induction.
4. (after paragraph 5.4.3) Whilst welcoming the current Local Church Leaders as successful experiments and effective forms of local leadership, the Church should build on this experience to create a flexible framework for the introduction of Pastors of local congregations, a role working from within the Elders' meeting. All Synods could then be encouraged to make use of this as one optional form of leadership available to local churches.
5. (after paragraph 5.5.3) The United Reformed Church should adopt the title 'local preacher' in place of 'lay preacher'.
6. (after paragraph 5.7.12) The United Reformed Church should re-commit itself to the development of appropriate and effective leadership in every local congregation, whilst recognising that this does not mean that every congregation will have a Minister directly providing their day-to-day leadership. The deployment of Ministers should be determined by the need to make the best use of this scarce resource in equipping, empowering and leading the Church in its participation in God's mission.
7. (after paragraph 5.8.5) Churches should be encouraged to work in groups or clusters, wherever possible ecumenically, with Ministers, Elders, Local Church Leaders, Lay Preachers and others offering them collaborative leadership.
8. (after paragraph 5.9.4) The Church should develop a new way of classifying its Ministers according to the service being offered that can supersede the existing stipendiary 'Patterns' and non-stipendiary 'Models'.
9. (after paragraph 5.9.5) The Church should continue to develop the flexibility of the initial and continuing training of its Ministers and Church Related Community Workers to meet more effectively their varied circumstances and their fast changing contexts and to enable them to more easily transfer between different forms of service.
10. (after paragraph 5.9.8) Work should be done on the implications and mechanics of making the remuneration package of all Ministers and Church Related Community Workers more flexible according to their circumstances, such as dependent relatives, within the maximum figures approved each year by Assembly.
11. (after paragraph 5.10.2) Detailed consideration should be given to broadening the terms of the Ministry and Mission Fund so that it could be used not just to pay for Ministers and Church Related Community Workers but also to support other forms of leadership within the Church. An attractive annual report on how the Ministry and Mission Fund is spent should be made available to local churches.
12. **(after paragraph 5.11.13) Area / District Councils should recognise and use the flexibility provided by the Basis of Union with regard to presidency at the sacraments to ensure that the needs of each local church are properly met. Where 'situations of pastoral necessity' occur, the Councils should take great care to keep them fully and regularly under review, out of respect to the congregations concerned and to the Church's ecumenical partners.**
13. (after paragraph 6.1.3) Formal discussions about the recommendations in this report should be arranged with representatives of the Methodist Church and other ecumenical partners.

7.3 Resolution

RESOLUTION

General Assembly:

- (i) welcomes the report *Equipping the Saints*;
- (ii) challenges every congregation to respond locally to recommendations 1 and 2;
- (iii) invites comments on recommendations 3 to 13 from churches, Area / District Councils and Synods to be sent to Ministries Committee by 31 December 2004;
- (iv) requests further work to be done by Ministries Committee in co-operation with the Catch the Vision Review Group and others so that formal proposals can be brought to the 2005 meeting of General Assembly.

Appendix I: Background: Terms of reference, working party membership and method of working, previous work

1. Terms of reference

1.1 Assembly 2000 received a report following a review into non-stipendiary ministry. Assembly agreed to the convictions and concerns expressed in that report in the following resolution:

General Assembly instructs the Ministries Committee, in consultation with others, to continue the discussion of present and future patterns 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*.

1.2 In response to this resolution, Ministries Committee set up a working party to further explore these matters with others inside and outside the United Reformed Church. The working party presented an interim report to Assembly 2002. This report ended with five questions, the responses to which were intended to provide the working party with a better appreciation of the understanding within the wider church of the ministry of the whole people of God. Assembly passed the following resolution:

General Assembly

- 1 **welcomes the interim report of the Future Patterns of Ministries Working Party of Ministries Committee**
- 2 **remits it to local churches, districts and synods for consideration and response by the end of April 2003**
- 3 **requests Ministries Committee to present a further report to General Assembly in 2004 in the light of the responses received and the additional work to be done on outstanding issues.**

2. Working party membership and method of working

2.1 A workbook was prepared to help churches consider and respond to the 2002 report. It was based on the report but contained additional material including some appropriate Bible studies. This workbook was distributed with the 2002 Assembly Record. The working party has received the responses to the 2002 report and has, with some changes of personnel, continued its work. This work has included ongoing consultation with others within and outside the Church. This report is the result of that work and is offered to Assembly and the wider church for consideration, decision and action. The report is presented in a form that can be read on its own but it obviously builds on all the previous work.

2.2	Membership of the working party	from	to
	Revd Christine Craven – executive secretary	2000	2004
	Revd Dr Peter Cruchley-Jones	2000	2002
	Mr John Ellis – convener	2002	2004
	Mrs Wilma Frew	2000	2004
	Revd Graham Long – convener	2000	2002
	Revd John Piper	2000	2004
	Revd Rachel Poolman	2000	2002
	Revd Bill Sewell	2000	2004
	Revd Dr David Thompson	2002	2004
	Revd Kirsty Thorpe – theological reflector	2000	2002
	Revd Dr Sandy McDonald		
	– Church of Scotland	2000	2002
	Revd Bill Snelson		
	– Churches Together in England	2000	2002

Appendix II: Feedback: Responses to the Future Patterns of Ministries Report to Assembly 2002

1. The Questions

1.1 Running through the interim report of the Future Patterns of Ministries working party to Assembly 2002 was the conviction that a fuller understanding and development of the ministry of the whole people of God was of primary importance if the United Reformed Church was to become more effective in mission. In order to test the mind of the Church on this matter, the report asked for feedback on the following five questions:

1.2 Assuming you agree that the 90,000 members of the United Reformed Church should all be engaged in its ministry, what key messages do you have on sections 2 to 7 of this report?

In your experience to what extent are the existing ministries of ministers and elders geared to equip your members to exercise their ministry? In what ways do they hold them back?

What are the main changes to your activities and structures which you believe will develop and support your members' ministries in their daily lives?

From your local experience, describe any innovations in leadership patterns which you feel should be considered for adoption more widely?

As you look at your needs, what would be the most useful changes that could be made to the United Reformed Church as a whole?

2. The Responses

2.1 Written responses were received from 8 individuals, just over 100 churches, 12 Districts and 7 Synods. Oral feedback was received from many others. Members of the working party were involved in discussions of the 2002 report and its questions in churches, Districts, and Synods.

2.2 Some generally shared understandings were:

Every church member should be actively involved in the ministry of the Church, the whole people of God.

Every local congregation needs effective leadership.

Ministers and others need to be trained in collaborative leadership.

Ministers and Elders need to be enablers and encourages as well as 'doers' – bringing out the gifts in others (rather than deskilling them by pretending to be omni-competent).

The representative role of Ministers is important.

Local mission should be the main focus and should preferably be ecumenical.

2.3 Some common questions were:

What does the 'ministry of the whole people of God' mean in practice?

What does 'ministry' mean? How do we re-think and re-work the ministry of each local congregation, making best use of the available resources?

We are generally good at welcoming people in our churches but how do we make ourselves better at 'going out' into the world with the Good News?

How do we stop the feelings that Ministers are being 'spread too thin' and that the Church 'does not have enough Ministers'?

How should we interpret the Basis of Union today when it says that a Minister of the Word and Sacraments should be 'readily available to every local church'?

How do we make the Church structures more enabling of local mission and less of a burden?

2.4 The working party is most grateful to those who responded in writing to the questions posed at the end of the 2002 report. We were greatly encouraged by these contributions. The points listed above are inevitably an inadequate summary of the responses received. These were all carefully considered and they have had a significant impact on our subsequent work including the contents of this report.

Appendix III: References: Details of important reference documents

1. Foundational documents

1.1 The following documents are those that we consider to be foundational in any discussion of ministry within the United Reformed Church. We have deliberately chosen not to repeat their arguments at any length in this report.

The *Basis of Union* of the United Reformed Church.

The section on Ministry in the *Manual* of the United Reformed Church.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry published by the World Council of Churches in 1982. ISBN: 2-8254-0709-7. Copies can still be obtained via the United Reformed Church bookshop.

The *Patterns of Ministry* report to Assembly 1995 available from the United Reformed Church.

The statement on the *Theology of Ministry* presented to Mission Council in October 1997 and accepted by it as a resource of the Church. Available on the United Reformed Church web-site.

The Diaconal Ministry and the Diaconate presented to Mission Council in January 2001 and accepted by it as a resource of the Church. Available on the United Reformed Church web-site.

The *Guidelines on Presidency at the Lord's Supper* which were re-affirmed by Assembly in 1980. Available on the United Reformed Church web-site.

2. Other important references

2.1 A bibliography was provided to accompany the interim report of the Future Patterns of Ministries working party to Assembly 2002. These references are also relevant to this report but are not repeated here. In addition, the following publications have been particularly helpful to the working party:

The Elders, seniority within earliest Christianity by RA Campbell published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh in 1994. ISBN: 0 567 09702 1.

Ministry for Mission by David Peel published by Northern College, Manchester in 2003.

Stating the Gospel by David Thompson published by T & T Clark, Edinburgh in 1990. ISBN (hardback): 0 567 09508 8.

2.2 Many of the Churches in the United Kingdom have been involved in similar reviews of the future of their ministry. In addition to those referred to in our 2002 bibliography, we note in particular:

Presence and prophecy produced by the Board of Mission for the Archbishops' Council. Published by Church House Publishing and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland in 2002. ISBN: 0-7151-5548-2.

Mission-Shaped Church Report to General Synod of Church of England February 2004. Published by Church House Publishing. ISBN: 0-7151-4013-2.

Appendix 3

Document 1 (The Buenos Aires Document)

Faith Stance on the Global Crisis of Life

World Alliance of Reformed Churches South-South Member Churches' Forum on
Confessing/Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth (*processus confessionis*)
22 – 26 April 2003, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Introduction

Representatives of WARC member churches in Asia, Africa, Caribbean, the Pacific and Latin America met from 23 to 26 April 2003 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. We gathered together to reflect and take a faith stance in response to the 23rd WARC General Council's call for a Committed Process of Recognition, Education and Confession (*processus confessionis*) regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction, which was initiated in Debrecen 1997. Our gathering in Buenos Aires acknowledged the present moment in the world's history as a **kairos**, challenging us to decisive action, because the whole of creation faces a crisis of life and immense suffering.

Experience

Through sharing our experiences, we discovered the dramatic convergence of the sufferings and crises of both people and nature in the countries of the South. We were unanimous in our recognition of the negative effects of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO in their domination and exclusion of the Southern nations and their common experience of the negative and destructive effects of deregulation and speculative investments.

We recognised that creation is in crisis. We understood that nation states and democratically elected governments are weakened. We realised that the colonisation of consciousness, reinforced by the media, makes people believe that there is no alternative. We also recognized the current trends of militarism as a total war strategy of security for the global market. We read the signs of the times from the unparalleled integration of economic globalization and global geopolitics.

Analysis

We are clearly living in a new stage of capitalism, which combines all forms of power and affects all dimensions of life. The capitalist system has switched its focus from production to finance. It is also new in its far-reaching and all-encompassing strategy of domination where the global financial market acts as empire and god. It is bolstered by military, political and ideological power, and its forces determine the survival of the countries and people at the periphery.

Through neo-liberal globalization, the economy, designed to sustain life and the well-being of all, has become a totalitarian faith system of wealth accumulation for the

few, endangering life as a whole on the planet. It is the very essence of neo-liberalism to deregulate the capitalist market driven by an unbridled lust for money and absolute control, thus making the market an idol.

Having recognized all these negative effects of neo-liberal economic globalization, we are convinced that the neo-liberal model cannot be transformed or adjusted, because it has inherent contradictions and has failed again and again in lifting up the countries, nature and peoples of the South to life. Therefore, **we are united in our rejection of the neo-liberal model**. We share the critique of the global civil movements, including the global peace movement, in resisting and rejecting the neo-liberal model as destructive to all creation.

Connecting this analysis with our faith

Neo-liberal globalization, therefore, is in complete contradiction to the central tenets of the Christian faith. It is in contrast to God's Economy:

- God's economy is inclusive, neo-liberal economy is exclusive.
- God's economy is a protective economy for the poor, neo-liberal economy is an exploitative economy of the poor.
- In God's economy, wealth flows from the rich to the poor, in the neo-liberal economy, it flows from the poor to the rich.
- The economic index of God's economy is the poor, the neo-liberal economic index is the rich.
- God's economy is based on God's love and grace, neo-liberal economy is based on greed and profit making.
- God's economy is an economy of solidarity, neo-liberal economy is an economy based on limitless competition.

We, representatives of WARC member churches in the South believe that neo-liberal ideology compromises the integrity of the Gospel and that we should take a faith stance against it.

We take a faith stance because the very integrity of our faith is in question. Neo-liberal ideology uses a theological and ideological framework to justify its presumed messianic role by claiming: economic sovereignty, absolute power and authority beyond any regulation, the right to act above

national and international law, the right to act beyond ethical and moral rules. It claims that God has blessed prosperity, and poverty and disease are the results of God's disfavour due to disobedience and laziness.

Neo-liberal ideology claims absolute power, a power which is over and against the sovereignty of God and the claims of the Gospel. Therefore, it is critical, for the integrity of our faith, that we take a faith stance. Our Reformed communities have taken such faith stances in the past whenever the Sovereignty of God has been undermined and the Gospel has been at stake politically, socially and economically (Barmen Declaration 1934, Theological Declaration of Korean Christians 1973, WARC General Council, Ottawa 1982, Confession of Belhar, 1986).

Our Faith Stance

In line with this history, we, representatives of churches of the Reformed tradition in the South, take a faith stance against neo-liberal ideology and practise so that God may be glorified and the promise of abundant life may be fulfilled:

1. We reaffirm that God created the Garden of Life (political, social, economic and ecological as well as spiritual). (Gen. 2:8-9)

We repent from idolatry, believing that the empire will bring about the peace and security, and that the power of money will solve all problems. We repent that the doctrine of creation (Genesis 1) has been used to conquer, dominate, exploit, and destroy life, especially women and the earth, and that we have neglected to care for life which is under the threat of ultimate destruction.

We reject any claim of economic, political and military power, which subverts God's sovereignty over life. We reject the absolute ownership of property by private entity, personal or corporate, for it denies God's sovereign ownership over all things.

We resist the power of death in the forms of global economic exclusion, imperial domination and military hegemony, which annihilates people and the earth.

We declare that God's design for the economy is to sustain the life and well being of all creation. We worship God, not Mammon, which demands the limitless sacrifice of life for its existence. We declare that God's sovereign reign means that all creatures are free partners in the whole realm of life.

2. We reaffirm that God has made an all-inclusive covenant with all creation (Genesis 9:8-12). This covenant has been sealed by the gift of God's grace, a gift, which is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1). We reaffirm that God made a covenant of liberation from the imperial powers (Babylon and Rome). God's covenant is over and against any contract, which is the "law" of domination and exploitation. It is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are God's primary partners.

We repent from believing that Christians have an exclusive relationship with God. We have excluded people because of their class, race, sex, ethnicity or religion. In our beliefs about salvation we have excluded people outside the Christian and also non-human community.

We reject any exclusive Christian claim over God's blessing and protection, and thus, we reject any theological justification for neo-liberal ideology and the imperial power.

We resist the domination of the global economy, imperial power, military hegemony, and modern science and technology that destroys the wholeness of creation.

We declare that God is Creator and Sustainer of all living beings for their common living.

3. We reaffirm that the Body of Christ unites the whole cosmos, overcoming all divisions and conflicts. We reaffirm that the garden of life under a new heaven and a new earth is continually sustained and renewed through the Spirit (Colossians 1:16-18, Revelation 21:1-5).

We repent from not recognizing the unity of life in the whole universe in the Reign of Christ and the work of the Spirit. We repent that, in the name of Christ, we have condemned the faiths and spiritualities of other peoples as well as degrading other creatures. We repent that by confining the Spirit to the soul, we justified the ideology of individualism.

We reject any doctrine of limitless competition, which is the source of economic, political and social conflicts and violence. We reject corruption at all levels as an integral part of the system.

We resist any power that promotes the logic of the jungle, an ideology that legitimates the survival of the fittest and the victory of the strong over the weak.

We declare that the Body of Christ is unconditionally and universally an inclusive reality, and that the Spirit is an all pervasive energy in the universe that works for the constant renewal of life.

Our Covenant for Life

In response to a liberating God, who made a covenant for life with the whole of creation, we declare the following covenant for the life of the whole created community.

God of Life,
You are our God who liberates us from any system of oppression, exclusion and exploitation.

- I. We shall not make Mammon our God, accumulating power and wealth.
- II. We shall not make ourselves an idol, worshipping the effectiveness of our achievements.
- III. We shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord God calling the implementation of the wealth accumulating market and imperial wars a Christian policy.
- IV. We will observe the Sabbath day by not exploiting human labour and destroying Mother Earth.
- V. We will provide for solidarity between the generations, not only by securing a decent living for the aged but also by not burdening the coming generations with ecological damage and debt.
- VI. We shall not murder, excluding from the economy those who have no private property or who cannot sell their labour in the market.

Appendix 3

- VII. We shall not tolerate the commodification and sexual exploitation of women and children.
- VIII. We shall not allow the manifold robberies of economic and financial actors.
- IX. We shall not misuse the legal system for our personal profit but promote the economic, social and cultural rights of all people.
- X. We shall not follow the greed of limitless accumulation by depriving our neighbours of their means of production and income so that all may live in dignity on God's rich and beautiful earth.

Buenos Aires 26 April 2003

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Church Representative

Revd Ebénézer M Woungly-Massaga
 Revd Dr Godffrey P Ngumi
 Revd Adamu Manasseh Musa
 Revd Dr Elisée Musemakweli
 Dr Willem J Botha
 Revd Jameson Buys

Revd Wailie C Khongwir
 Revd Nicolaas J Gara
 Revd Mindawati Perangin-Angin
 Prof Dr Samuel Lee

Revd Dr Carlos Camps Cruell
 Revd Dr Dale A Bisnauth
 Ms Yvonne Dawkins

Revd Norberto Spengler
 Ms Priscila Y Primerano
 Mr Nicolás P Rosenthal
 Revd Miguel Palomino
 Revd Jonas Furtado do Nascimento
 Revd Milton Mejía Camargo
 Revd Santos Espinoza
 Ms Bertha Lilia Salinas Torres
 Ms Noemí N Geymonat Armand Ugon
 Revd Epifanio Márquez

Revd Dr Taipisia Leilua

Mr Helis Barraza Díaz
 Revd Sergio Bertinat
 Revd Germán Zijlstra

Prof Dr René Krüger
 Prof Dr Néstor Míguez
 Prof Dr Claudio Lozano

Revd Elizabeth J Nash
 Prof Dr Yong-Bock Kim
 Prof Dr Bob Goudzwaard
 Prof Dr Ulrich Duchrow
 Revd Gretel Van Wieren

Revd Roberto Jordan

Revd Dr Seong-Won Park
 Ms Giulia Ramagnano

Church/Organisation

African Protestant Church, Cameroon
 Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Kenya
 Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria
 Presbyterian Church in Rwanda
 Dutch Reformed Church, South Africa
 Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

Presbyterian Church of India
 Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), Indonesia
 Karo Batak Protestant Church (GBKP), Indonesia
 Presbyterian Church of Korea

Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba
 Guyana Presbyterian Church
 United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Evangelical Congregational Church, Argentina
 Reformed Churches in Argentina
 Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Argentina
 Presbyterian Church of Argentina
 Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil
 Presbyterian Church of Colombia
 Fraternity of Evangelical Churches of Costa Rica
 Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Mexico
 Waldensian Evangelical Church of the River Plate, Uruguay
 Presbyterian Church of Venezuela

Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

Alliance of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches
 in Latin America

Speakers

WARC *Processus Confessionis* Task Force members

WARC Executive Committee member

WARC Staff

For further information, please contact Revd Dr Seong-Won Park, Executive Secretary of the Department of Cooperation and Witness P.O. Box 2100, 150, route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
 Tel : +41 22 791 62 36, Fax: +41 22 791 65 05, Email: swp@warc.ch

Document 2 (The London Colney Document)

The time has come

Faith stance on Covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth London Colney, UK, February 8-11 2004

The north-south member churches' forum in London Colney continued the journey begun by the 23rd general council (Debrecen 1997), which invited member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into a process of "recognition, education, and confession" regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction. This forum gathered representatives of 26 member churches from the north and south and developed the following faith stance on the way to the 24th general council (Accra 2004).

Why take a faith stance?

There is a growing recognition that the way in which the capitalist market system works today causes the suffering and death of people and creation on a massive scale. Life is at stake; suffering and destruction abound. Hunger and starvation, diseases such as HIV/Aids, social insecurity, and ecological destruction often become opportunities for further profit. The same market forces that victimize the south are at work in the north. The economic and environmental problems are interconnected and aggravate each other in disastrous ways, constantly pushing us away from the God of life and from fullness of life for the whole creation.

Economically, the capitalist market does not serve the exchange of useful goods and services for all, nor is it held politically and socially accountable for the common good. Built on the absolute property rights of a minority of owners and regulated to benefit corporate profit, it has only one goal: to maximize the accumulation of wealth by a few. Financial capital dominates the economy, excludes the poor, fosters speculation, and traps people and nations permanently in debt. Capital goes less and less into the long-range sustainable production of goods and services. Instead, the drive of corporations and the market often causes unemployment, degradation of working conditions, forced migration, and increasing structural indebtedness. Macroeconomic policies such as structural adjustment programmes, privatization, devaluation of local currencies, and cutbacks in social services, imposed on countries by global economic institutions, widen the gap between rich and poor.

Ecologically, creation is in crisis. Nature is seen only as the raw material for consumption and wealth creation. There is no recognition of nature's intrinsic value or that regular communion with creation is important for our spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing. The unlimited growth policy of industrial economies accelerates the plundering of the earth and the irreversible destruction of the environment. All over the world, the industrialization of agriculture is driving small farmers out of business. Many species and habitats are being destroyed, and creation as a whole is in peril.

We live in a time of empire – an empire that enforces the current trend of militarism as a global war strategy in order to secure markets and imposes destructive macroeconomic policies on entire countries to serve the ends of the market.

The degree to which economic globalization and global geopolitics are integrated today has no historical parallel. Modern science and technology are used to serve global military power and the global market, rather than to serve life. Structural violence is intensified by racism, caste systems and gender inequalities.

Poverty robs women of the fullness of their humanity. The trafficking of women and children exploits, commodifies, and even enslaves.

In the midst of social, economic and ecological deterioration, plagues and diseases are spreading all over the world, affecting animals as well as people, and hitting the poorest countries in an alarming way. Millions of people die from Aids and too often are deprived of effective medical treatment by profit-oriented pharmaceutical corporations.

The media, increasingly controlled by corporate powers, colonize human consciousness, instilling the consumerist values of the market.

At the heart of today's economic and environmental problems is what is referred to in many parts of the world as neoliberalism, neoliberal capitalism or the Washington Consensus.

This consensus has the core beliefs that

1. competition, consumerism and the unlimited accumulation of wealth are best for the whole world.
2. the capitalist market is built on the principle of private property without any social obligation, as well as contract as the only legal basis.
3. the practice of liberalizing and deregulating the market, privatization, openness to foreign investment and imports, the unrestricted movement of capital and lower taxes will achieve common wealth.

In fact, the rich and the rich nations use political institutions and military force to secure their own interests and do not follow the practice they require for others.

Neoliberal ideology claims to be without alternative and thus challenges the sovereignty of God, while also demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from creation. Therefore the integrity of our faith is at stake.

Our faith is at stake because

- suffering and destruction is contrary to the will of God, who created life and conquered death through Jesus Christ
- neoliberal capitalism makes the false promise that it can save the world
- neoliberal capitalism claims sovereignty over life and demands an allegiance that amounts to idolatry.

The integrity of our faith is at stake

As people who belong to the God of life we have been given a new vision, the biblical vision of the fullness of life for people and the earth. We commit ourselves to this biblical vision, which is opposed to neoliberal capitalism in the following ways:

- a) It is oriented to the fulfilment of basic needs and human flourishing, not to maximum productivity and consumption (Isaiah 65, 1 Timothy 6).
- b) It has care and distribution as its driving force, not accumulation (Luke 12:16-21).
- c) It promotes solidarity, serving living communities, and rejecting individualism (Acts 4-5).
- d) It subjects financial markets to the service of the real economy, not the real economy to the rule of finance (Luke 19).
- e) It corrects systematic indebtedness and the loss of land by jubilee measures and constrains the economy to respect the environment, instead of allowing the search for profits to destroy it (Leviticus 25).
- f) It creates a space where justice and peace will kiss (Psalm 85:10), instead of subjecting every space – physical, mental, and spiritual – to the ends of the market.

We are challenged as churches to make a confession of faith because we have listened to the cries of suffering people and the groaning of creation. This confession of faith will reject the injustices of today’s global economy by reaffirming our faith in the triune God who opens up a new creation in Christ and calls us to respond faithfully to God’s covenant.

1. We affirm that God is sovereign over all creation (Genesis 2:8-9)

We repent of the belief that the market economy and the power of money will bring about peace, security and freedom from hunger and disease. We repent of the misuse of the doctrine of creation (Genesis 1) to conquer, exploit and destroy life – especially women and the earth – misinterpreting our role as stewards of creation. We repent of the belief that neoliberal capitalism is the solution to the world’s problems.

We reject any claim of economic, political and military power that subverts God’s sovereignty over life. We reject the cooption by large capital owners of the gifts of God, given to all people, as absolute property for private profit at the expense of the common good, because this denies God’s sovereign ownership over all things. We reject the idea that humankind has an unrestricted right to dominate and conquer nature.

We declare that God’s design is to sustain all creation. We declare that God’s sovereign reign means that all creatures are endowed by God with dignity and are to live in companionship with one another.

2. We affirm that God has made a covenant with all creation (Genesis 9:8-12)

This covenant has been sealed by the gift of God’s grace, a gift that is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55:1). God’s covenant is over and against any contract that is the “law” of domination and exploitation. It is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are in a preferential way God’s partners. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant.

We repent of our complicity with neoliberal capitalism, which excludes the poor and vulnerable from the fullness of life. We repent of our excluding people because of their class, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.

We reject the misuse of the biblical idea of God’s covenant by any group or nation to exclude others on ideological or political grounds. We reject military, political, and economic domination. We reject the ideological and political misuse of Scripture and Christian faith to justify any form of domination.

We declare that God’s covenant invites all creation into a relationship of participation in common living. We declare that God gives us the freedom to build, preserve, and care for all creation (Genesis 2, 1 Corinthians 10:23-26).

3. We affirm that in Christ all divisions and exclusions are overcome. There is unity of life in community, among nations and in the cosmos (Ephesians 2:11-21)

We repent of not recognizing the unity of life in the whole universe through the reign of Christ and the presence of the Spirit. We repent of degrading people of other faiths and spiritualities in the name of Christ. We repent of breaking the body of Christ through divisions and schisms.

We reject unlimited competition and the cynical social doctrine of the survival of the fittest.

We declare that the body of Christ is called to be, unconditionally and universally, an inclusive reality.

4. We affirm that the Holy Spirit gives us a vision for a new heaven and a new earth

The Holy Spirit continually renews and sustains the vision of the garden of life in a new heaven and a new earth (Colossians 1:16-18, Revelation 21:1-5). The Spirit moves us into fellowship with one another and towards hope for a new vision based on love, forgiveness and transformation in Jesus Christ.

We repent of not being sensitive to and trusting in the life-giving, transforming power of the Holy Spirit and therefore limiting our vision of justice, peace and hope for the world. We repent of justifying the ideology of individualism by confining the Spirit to the soul.

We reject the view of modernity that privileges the material over the spiritual. We reject the market’s drive to dominate all of life through materialism and consumerism.

We declare that the Holy Spirit is working in all creation, inspiring, renewing and transforming life.

Covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth

The Alliance fellowship has been led by the Holy Spirit to a time and place where a choice must be made; a stance must be taken. Churches can no longer remain lukewarm in responding to the suffering and destruction of people and the earth. Now is the time for churches to proclaim with passion that we will commit our time and energy, indeed, our very selves, to changing, renewing and restoring the economy and the earth.

We, as the church of Jesus Christ, oppose

- maximum productivity, consumption and accumulation to serve the ends of individuals and corporations at the expense of the poor and creation;
- the use of the military to promote the market mechanisms;
- the use of the Bible to oppress people and the earth, and to support the goals of the current economic ideology;
- the unjust applications of tariffs and subsidies;
- corporate activity that utilizes unjust labour policies in order to maximize profits;
- the consolidation of agriculture that drives small farmers out of business;
- structural adjustment programmes that create unemployment and exploit the environment;
- the destabilization of economies through unregulated currency speculation;
- unpayable levels of international debt;
- the idea that there is no alternative to neoliberal capitalism.

We, as the church of Jesus Christ, confess and repent

- of falling short in responding to the urgent cries of the poor and creation;
- of not speaking prophetically against the powers that oppress and enslave;
- of failing to lift up a biblical vision of the economy as opposed to the current market vision;
- of giving in, especially in countries in the north, to materialism and over-consumption.

We, as the church of Jesus Christ, are called to

- support economic activity that promotes sustainable communities and ecosystems;
- work for the release of systematic indebtedness where it enslaves people and countries;
- support governments so that they may protect their people and markets, and develop infrastructure, healthcare, and education in locally appropriate ways;
- work for rigorous and internationally enforceable pollution controls;
- advocate the upholding of universal human rights;
- promote the protection of workers' rights;
- strive for multilateral and unilateral disarmament and peace;

- make significant contributions to environmental protection and preservation;
- promote sustainable investment that gives consideration to the poor and the environment;
- adopt lifestyles that witness to God's economy for life;
- create faith stances and continue with the process of recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction within our own churches.

We, as the church of Jesus Christ, and as a sign of hope, reaffirm our commitment to work with

- national, regional and global ecumenical bodies and faith communities to covenant for justice in the economy and the earth;
- civil, peoples' and citizens' movements in the struggle for justice;
- groups who work for alternatives in order to build a sustainable economy and environment (eg the Fair Trade and Just Trade movement).

We pray

We praise you, O God, for your creation; for the diversity of humankind; for the provision you have made for the sustenance of life throughout the earth; for the interconnectedness of creation; for the privilege you have granted us to play a role as stewards in sustaining creation.

We confess, O God, that we have not always recognized our place in creation, as people created by you to be in companionship with one another and the earth. Help us to be instruments of renewal and restoration and not of destruction. We repent of our fears, inconsistencies and weaknesses in responding to your call.

We pray, O God, for the vulnerable who are negatively affected by ecological and economic injustice and ask that you give them the strength and resources to rise above their situations.

Grant your church, O God, in the midst of the forces of evil and death, the power to truly represent your voice and to work with you as partners in bringing about life in all its fullness. Amen.

Appendix 4

Students sent by Synods

(information as of autumn 2003)

Northern

Stipendiary

Liz Jewitt (NEOC), Jan Maxwell (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Margaret Johnson (NEOC), Stan May (NEOC),
Yvonne Tracey (Synod)

North Western

Stipendiary

Leoni Betts (Mansfield), John Bradbury (Westminster),
Richard Bradley (Westminster), Philip Brooks (Northern),
Ruth Dillon (Northern), Gillian Heald (Northern), Richard
Howard (Mansfield),
Michele Jarman (Northern), John Jarman (Synod), Lena
Talbot (Northern),
Marion Tugwood (Northern), Kerry Wade (Northern)

CRCWs-in-training

Alison Dalton (Northern), Yvonne Hawkins (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Sheila Coop (Northern), Lindsey Cottam (Northern), Ann
Hufton (Northern)

Mersey

Stipendiary

Peter Lyth (Queens), Stuart Radcliffe (Northern), Carolyn
White (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Anne Bedford (Northern)

Yorkshire

Stipendiary

Peter Blackband (Northern), Murray George (Northern),
Annette Haigh (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Geoff Ellis (Northern)

East Midlands

Stipendiary

Marcus Hargis (Northern), Suzanne McDonald (SC&URC)
Jenny Mills (Mansfield), Jenny Morgan (EMMTC),
Alison Termie (EMMTC), Stuart Turner (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Louise Gee (EMMTC) Victor Webb (Northern)

West Midlands

Stipendiary

Kay Cattell (Westminster), Viv Randles (Northern)
Liz Shaw (Northern), Ann Sheldon (Westminster)

CRCWs-in-training

Rosemary Buxton (Northern), Dennis Neville (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Robert Maloney (Northern), John Potter Queens)

Eastern

Stipendiary

David Coaker (Northern), John Cook (Westminster),
Heather Kent (Westminster), Tim Richards (Westminster),
Jenny Yule (Westminster)

CRCWs-in-training

Liz Kam (Northern)

Non-stipendiary

Donald Nichols (EAMTC), Sam White (Westminster)

South Western

Stipendiary

Ruth Browning (Northern), Paul Ellis (SWMTC),
Viv Henderson (SWMTC)

Non-stipendiary

Jennifer Kilgour (SWMTC)

Wessex

Stipendiary

Bridget Banks (STETS), Lucy Brierley (Westminster),
Sarah Hall (Mansfield), Colin Harley (Westminster),
Helen Higgin-Botham (Westminster), Keith Morrison
(Northern),
Jon Sermon (Northern), Barry Welch (Westminster)

Non-stipendiary

Anne Bray (STETS), Clare Callanan (STETS),
Gordon Connell (STETS), David Moss (STETS),
Alison Toplas (STETS)

Thames North

Stipendiary

Andrew Birch (Queens), Sheena Dickson (Mansfield),
Anne Dove (Westminster), Dominic Grant (Westminster),
Edward Sanniez (Westminster)

Non-stipendiary

Pauline Main (EAMTC), Mark Woodhouse (Northern),
Ann Woodhurst (Synod)

Southern**Stipendiary**

William Bowman (Westminster), Gordon Brown (Westminster),

Elaine Brown (Westminster), Martin Knight (Northern), Suk In Lee (Queens),

Romilly Micklem (Westminster), Sarah Moore (Westminster),

David Morgan (Mansfield), Martyn Neads (Queens),

Alan Seymour (Mansfield), Caroline Vodden (Mansfield)

Non-stipendiary

Ed Collins (SEITE), Diane Farquhar (STETS)

Sue Powell (Synod), Jenny Snashall (STETS)

Roger Wood (STETS), Malcolm Wright (SEITE),

Ernest Yu (Westminster)

Wales**Non-stipendiary**

Elizabeth Lowder (SWOC)

Scotland**Stipendiary**

Craig Jesson (SC & URC), Jack Muir (SC & URC)



Appendix 5

Statistics of Students in Training

	Students in Training				Anticipated entry into URC Service			
	Feb 2001	Feb 2002	Feb 2003	Feb 2004	2004	2005	2006	2007
STIPENDIARY								
<i>Full Time Courses</i>								
Mansfield College	10	9	6	8	3	2	1	1
Northern College	29	25	24	22	11	2	4	4
Queen's College	3	5	4	4		1	3	
Scottish Congregational & United Reformed Church			3	2			1	1
Westminster College	31	27	23	20	9	4	2	5
<i>Part Time Courses</i>								
EMMTC				2	1	1		
NEOC	1	1	1	1				1
STETS			1	1			1	
Scottish Congregational & URC			1	1		1		
SWMTC			1	2			1	
Synod	2	1	2					
Sub total	76	68	66	63	24	11	13	12
CRCW								
Northern	6	5	6	5	1	1	3	
NON-STIPENDIARY								
<i>Part Time Courses</i>								
EAMTC	5	5	1	2			1	1
EMMTC		2	2	1		1		
Northern College	10	6	7	8	3	1	3	1
NEOC	2	3	2	2	1		1	
SEITE	3	3	3	2			1	1
STETS	6	8	7	8	3	3	1	1
SWOC		1	1	1		1		
SWMTC	1	2	3	1			1	
Synod			2	3	3			
WMMTC	5	1	1	1			1	
<i>Full Time Courses</i>								
Mansfield	1							
Queens	1							
SC & URC	4	3						
Westminster	3	4	3	2	1	1		
Sub total	41	38	32	31	11	7	9	4
GRAND TOTAL	123	111	104	99	36	19	25	16

EAMTC	East Anglian Ministerial Training Course
EMMTC	East Midlands Ministry Training Course
NEOC	North East Ordination Course
SEITE	South East Institute Theological Education
STETS	Southern Theological Education and Training Scheme
SWMTC	South West Ministry Training Course
WMMTC	West Midlands Ministry Training Course
SC & URC	Scottish Congregational and United Reformed Church
SWOC	South Wales Ordination Course



Appendix 6

Reports from Colleges

The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education

1.1 The Queen's Foundation, comprising the Queen's College, The West Midlands Ministerial Training Course and the Research Centre, continues to operate a unified centre for theological education and ministerial training. As a Foundation we are dedicated to excellence in theological education and formation for ministry in partnership with our sponsoring churches – the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. We believe that our ecumenical and theological diversity, together with our setting within the multi-ethnic and multi-faith city of Birmingham, and our relationship with the University of Birmingham, provides a rich and challenging resource for students to explore the distinctiveness of their own tradition and identity, as well as fostering lively dialogue and deep respect for the traditions of others.

1.2 The staff and student body have been working hard to develop the unitary and integrated life of the Foundation. There is no doubt that the bringing together of full and part-time study, College and Course mode of delivery, permeated with a research culture, provides for all in the Foundation a rich and stimulating environment. Given the historic separation of these elements in the Churches' training institutions the Foundation has not only blazed a significant trail, but also it has had much to do and learn to make this work well. We believe the fruits are now in evidence and we are looking forward to developing the Foundation further. In particular we are learning how to make best use of our experience of forming and re-forming community as diverse and fluid communities gather and disperse. This feels to be close to the task of most ministers as they seek to build community in their locality and congregation among fluid and mobile communities, and therefore feels highly pertinent in the context of ministerial formation.

2. Students

2.1 This year we have approximately 145 students studying at the Foundation. The proportion of students with each of the three 'departments' is now roughly equal, which represents a considerable development in the life of the Foundation. Of these students, 10 are members of the United Reformed Church, with 5 sponsored for training for ordained ministry, and 5 who are serving ministers undertaking in-service studies and research programmes.

2.2 As in previous years our Foundation life has been enriched by student exchange visits and by the presence of a number of research students from overseas. Our links with the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary remain close, with exchanges operating between students and visiting scholars. We are developing new relationships with churches in Port Elizabeth in South Africa and are building on our long established links with the faculty at Leipzig, with whom we enjoy an annual student exchange.

3. Staff

David Hewlett took up his position as Principal of the Foundation at the end of April 2003. David brings experience of both full and part-time modes of training and welcomes the opportunity to develop both of these in the framework of the Foundation. We have also been glad to welcome Tony McClelland, formerly on the staff of the Northern Ordination Course, as Senior Methodist Tutor and Dean of the West Midlands MTC, and Knut Heim as tutor in Biblical Studies. We are sad that Christine Worsley, currently Dean of College, but for a long time a member of the West Midlands Ministry Training Course staff, will be leaving at the end of this academic year. She has given generously to the Foundation of her time, energy and gifts, and she will be much missed. We also said farewell to Rod Burton who returned to Circuit ministry in South Africa.

4. Research

The Research Centre flourishes with nearly 50 students, registered with the University of Birmingham in association with the Foundation, studying for a range of postgraduate degrees from MA to PhD. We are hoping to launch a new MA in Ministry, which has been specifically designed to facilitate the learning and experience of the Internship year for United Reformed Church candidates, but we trust will also be valuable for post-ordination and post-stationing training in the other churches. Staff research also continues in the course of the busy life of the Foundation. Nicola Slee has published "Faith and Feminism", and "Women's Faith Development: Patterns and Processes"; Alistair Ross has published "Counselling Skills for Church and Faith Community Workers"; Adam Hood has published "Baillie, Oman and Macmurray: Experience and Religious Belief". Other staff plan further publications for later this year, including a teaching resource for learning New Testament Greek.

5. Worship and Spirituality

Visiting president and preachers at Foundation services, in their sharing of our journey, enhance our spirituality and deepen and challenge our faith. Worship, together as a Foundation, and separately as College and Course communities, lies at the heart of our life. In an ecumenical context we welcome the challenge of drawing deeply on the traditions and best practices of each participating Church, attending to places of convergence and difference which are often not located on denominational lines, and working hard to explore new patterns of worship that serve churches committed to working and worshipping ecumenically. We have been privileged to receive a wide range of visiting preachers and speakers, including Dr Rachel Muers, from the University of Exeter, who gave our annual Foundation address on the theme "A Time to be Silent", and Professor Kim Yong-Bock from the Asia Pacific Graduate School.

6. Future directions

The Foundation is very aware that all our sponsoring churches are undergoing major reviews in terms of their training needs and resources. We are confident that the Foundation is well placed to serve the churches and to respond to new challenges and opportunities. We look forward to the next

12 months as a time of significant development as we enter regional and wider partnerships which we believe will not only greatly enrich our work, but to which we have much to contribute. We value highly the integral place of the United Reformed Church in the Foundation and welcome new opportunities to develop this relationship further.

Mansfield College

1.1 After the numerous and often difficult changes of the past few years, the Mansfield College Ministerial Training Course has had time to bed down and consolidate in its new partnership with Regent's Park College. There has been no change in the staff for the last couple of years. The Revd. Dr Walter Houston teaches Old Testament studies as well as being course Director. The Revd. Julian Templeton has been reappointed for a further four years after the end of his contract this year as Assistant Director (half-time), in charge of placements and internships and worship teaching. New Testament teaching is given by the Revd Dr John Muddiman and Ms Lynda Patterson, and Ms Peggy Morgan continues to teach world religions. Most other courses are taught by Regent's Park staff, and a particularly important role in the partnership is played by the Revd Dr Robert Ellis, Director of Pastoral Studies there. However, at the end of this year we shall say farewell to Lynda Patterson, who has come to the end of her time as a College Lecturer in Theology. She has been a brilliant teacher, and we shall be sorry to see her go. The College remains an active member of the Oxford Partnership for Theological Education and Training (OPTET).

1.2 On the supervisory side, there have been some changes to our Ministerial Education and Training Committee. John Proctor has ceased to be one of the United Reformed Church representatives, but his fairness and attention to detail in the chair have persuaded us to co-opt him in that role. We shall also have a regular co-optation from the Wessex Synod from now on.

1.3 The work which we have put in over the past few years into rebuilding the course, developing the partnership with Regent's Park, and mending fences with the College, was all tested in the ecumenical inspection which the joint Mansfield-Regent's Park course underwent, along with all the other OPTET institutions, in November. Our team of inspectors included two United Reformed Church

representatives, one Baptist, and one very experienced Anglican. The inspection report was received a few days before the writing of this report, and though it is a confidential document it is right that I should let Assembly know that the tone and tendency of the report was strongly favourable; the general conclusion was that the course was a well-designed and effective course for the training of ministers. Though the inspectors found points that needed attention, we feel, both staff and students in our two Colleges, that our hard work has received the recognition that it deserves.

1.4 That has given us the courage to build on our success by developing into the field of continuing ministerial education. We already have a number of students for the Oxford Master of Theology in Applied Theology, an excellent course for theological reflection on pastoral practice, but too few of them are from the United Reformed Church. In co-operation with OPTET we hope to develop other courses, and to encourage applications for part-time research among ministers and others. We would also like to repeat that staff are available and willing to speak to ministers' summer schools and conferences out of term time. The strength of our staff is mainly in biblical studies.

1.5 The one major concern that remains with us is the low level of recruitment for initial ministerial training. We had just two new students joining the course in 2003, one of them part-time; and Sarah Hall rejoined us for her final year after successfully completing her doctorate in Edinburgh. Three students completed the course last year, and three more will do so this year. During this academic year our numbers have been in single figures. There may be a slight upturn this year. At the time of writing we know of two entries for 2004, and there may yet be more.

1.6 Please pray for Mansfield and its staff and students.

Northern College (United Reformed and Congregational)

1. Farewell to David Peel

On 22 September 2003 in the Members' Lounge at Lancashire County Cricket Club, Old Trafford we said farewell to Revd Dr David R Peel who had served 14 years on the staff of the College, 10 of these as Principal. During that time David had helped many current ministers of the United Reformed, Congregational, Moravian and other churches to understand more about their faith, especially in Systematic Theology. During his time at Northern College David has written several books and articles which have been of great help and challenge the Church, including *Reformed Theology* and *Ministry for Mission*. We wish him well in his new joint post as tutor at the North Eastern Oecumenical Course and with Northern Synod.

2. New Principal

We are delighted that Revd Dr John Campbell, who has been minister of South Aston United Reformed Church for 14 years, has been appointed as Principal of Northern College and that he will be joining us on 1 July 2004. Members of the United Reformed Church General Assembly will remember the bible study that he provided for Assembly and may like to look out for his books, "Springs of Living Water – Five Bible Studies" and "Being Biblical – How can we use the Bible in constructing ethics today?" published by the United Reformed Church.

3. Partnership for Theological Education

John Campbell's arrival is eagerly awaited, not only by the staff and students of Northern College, but also by everyone at the Partnership for Theological Education since Northern College and the other colleges that make up the Partnership (Hartley Victoria Methodist College, Northern Baptist College, Unitarian College Manchester and the Northern Ordination Course) are all a part. Northern College together with the first three colleges share teaching on the "Faith in Living Course", and we couldn't manage without each other. The building in which we live, Luther King House, which once was owned by Northern Baptist College, is now jointly owned. The house has changed considerably over the last few years, making it more comfortable for those who are its students, those who attend conferences and those who use it as an hotel – all of which helps us to survive, and enriches the student body.

4. Comings and Goings

This year we said farewell also to other Partnership members of staff, who will be known by many students. Rachel Jenkins, Northern Baptist College tutor, retired at the end of March 2004, fit and well following her return to work after cancer treatment. Sister Margaret Walsh, Director of the Manchester Ecumenical College (and the weekend courses) left in February 2004. We welcomed Mark Brummitt as Fellow/Tutor in Old Testament Studies in September 2003. His acting ability and challenging presentation of Hebrew Scriptures have enthused many students.

5. BA and MA in Contextual Theology

We continue to be very proud of the way in which our students wrestle with relating their academic theology with their practical experience which makes them well-rounded ministers and lay people. Most spend about 18-20 hours each week in their placement churches and then come into college on two days a week or six weekends a year to relate their experience to their studies. Currently, the Partnership has 59 students on the midweek BA Contextual Theology course (23 of whom are from Northern College). Thirty-three from the Partnership (4 from Northern College) are studying for the MA, but a number of United Reformed Church ministers as part of their Continuing Ministerial Education, are also studying on the MA course. There are 65 Partnership students studying on the weekend course, 9 of which are from Northern College, and six of whom are studying on the Community Development Work Course

6. Settlement of Students

All last year's leavers received calls to churches as follows:

Neil R Eldridge	(SM)	St Mary's, Banbury (Wessex Synod)
Kate Gartside	(SM)	Rhos on Sea, Old Colwyn (Wales Synod)
Kate V Gray	(SM)	St Mark's Wythenshawe (North Western Synod)
Dennis Neville	(CRCW)	Bloomsbury Mission Project, Birmingham(West Midlands Synod)
Brian Norris	(SM)	South Derbyshire Team Ministry (East Midlands Synod)
David Y Poulton	(SM)	Partnership of North Warwickshire Churches (West Midlands Synod)
Helen Stephenson	(CRCW)	Grindon URC, Sunderland (Northern Synod)

Robert W Sheard	(SM)	North Cumbria Group (Northern Synod)
Chris J Tolley	(SM)	Over URC, Winsford and Northwich (Mersey Synod)
Mike A Walsh	(SM)	Heald Green URC (North Western Synod)
Robert Weston	(SM)	Park URC, Reading (Wessex Synod)

7. Church Related Community Work Course

This year, we have had five Church Related Community Work students in training, joined by David Jonathan (Johny), a CWM/URC missionary from India, who is working at Grassroots in Luton. We are in the process of developing level 3 (BA community courses with the University of Manchester, and overseas courses. Alison Dalton, a third year Church Related Community Work student, is planning a three week visit to community work projects in the Czech Republic in October 2004.

8. Research

In total, the Partnership has 21 studying for research degrees. The Revd Graham Adams (Congregational Federation), and the Revd Doug Gay (United Reformed Church) are continuing with their PhD research part funded by Mona Powell Fellowship bursaries. The college also contributes towards three social context research projects: the Revd Chris Vermeulen, working in urban theology based at The Woodlands, Altrincham; the Revd John Fielding, working on inner city theology in Liverpool; and the Revd David Herbert, who is working on rural theology in Northumberland.

9. The World Church

9.1 We continue to feel very much part of the World Church. Several students have spent time abroad, mostly in Third World countries. Most visits were from one to three months in Zimbabwe, Jamaica and India. This has resulted in some very creative theological writing and, we hope, continuing interest in links with the world church.

9.2 Also, we benefit considerably from the presence of Revd Li Hau-Tiong from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan and his wife, Sue Fen who is studying on the MA programme. Hau-Tiong is with us for two years completing doctoral studies. We are also pleased to have the Revd Alisi Tira of the Kiribati Protestant Church as a Council for World Mission scholarship holder engaged in MA studies.

10. Staff

10.1 Jan Berry, who teaches Pastoral Theology and Liturgy, is continuing with her PhD studies at Glasgow University into women's liturgies and rituals of transition. John Parry, who teaches World Mission and Other Faiths studies, has just completed four years on the United Reformed Church Training Committee and is now convener of the Interfaith Committee and has been chaplain of FURY. He is currently on sabbatical giving a series of lectures in Taiwan and visiting other parts of the world church.

10.2 Lesley Husselbee, who is the Director of the Community Development programme, and placements and who is the link person with local churches, has also been acting as Principal from August 2003 until 1 July 2004. She has also contributed to 'Roots'.

Westminster College

1. The Cambridge Theological Federation

1.1 We reported last year that the Federation had asked Westminster's John Proctor to carry out a thorough review of our curriculum and its objectives, with a view to keeping it addressed towards the changing needs of churches and students. As a result of his report a Teaching and Learning Development Group for the Federation, convened by Stephen Orchard, has been established to implement its findings. The first step has been for the Federation to apply to become part of the Regional University of the Anglia Polytechnic University. A new award, with a new flexibility in the way it can be delivered, is being planned, with an eye to those students who cannot meet the residential requirements for graduate courses at Cambridge University, those for whom such courses are not appropriate and those who have no church sponsorship. At the same time the Church of England, in consultation with the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, is setting up regional training partnerships. The new award is one of the resources the Cambridge Theological Federation has to offer in any new regional arrangement. However, Westminster has at the same time to keep an eye on its role as one of the national providers of education within the United Reformed Church.

1.2 The Federation, spurred on by an Inspection, is also considering what it means to offer an ecumenical theological education. Although we have the components of such a course amongst us we wonder how to make the best use of them. Our largest single grouping is of Anglicans, but all the main Christian denominations are represented within the Federation and we also have a significant number of international visitors. Although this provides informal opportunities for ecumenical learning we are not sure that we are fulfilling our potential as a place of ecumenical education within the formal curriculum. Part of our answer has been to plan an international conference on ecumenical theological education for 2005, which we hope will gather a properly representative group where we may learn together what are the conditions in which such education takes place.

2. The wider Church

It is always a delight for us to provide hospitality for Continuing Ministerial Education. Ministers come to us for a short period to draw on the teaching and library resources of the college. This learning is for their own purposes but as a community we all benefit from the experience. We also have at least one minister on sabbatical leave each term, often with his or her spouse. The sabbatical programme extends to international visitors and Westminster is held in high esteem around the world, especially in the growing number of those who come to us from the United States and New Zealand. Last year we received a ministerial student from the Waldensian Church on a year's study programme and a German Protestant student for a term as well as our Columbia University exchange student. Our own students once more took advantage of the programmes and scholarships on offer to see the Church at work in the United States and Fiji.

3. The buildings

3.1 The requirements of the new disability legislation directed us once more to examine our buildings. Remarkably for a Victorian building Westminster can be made very accessible at the ground floor level. The problems come in introducing disabled staff and students to the upper floors of the college. We can find no way consistent with our finances or our listed

building status to bring people into the Library if they cannot manage stairs. For the moment we have worked on ways of bringing the Library to them. It may be that a future extension to the Library will enable us to incorporate a lift. Another problem our disability audit revealed was the poor levels of lighting provided by our listed electrical fittings. We were able to reassure our insurers that wiring was up to modern standards by carrying out remedial work on a few sections that were twenty years old. Nothing can be done to improve the light levels delivered by a system which once seemed bright compared with its rival – gaslight. We are considering other approaches to this problem. What was fascinating was the enormous enthusiasm our disability auditor displayed for our buildings. Our inability to make major alterations over the last hundred years means that we have a wonderful specimen of the work of Henry Hare, a leading architect of his day.

3.2 One piece of brightening we have achieved in the college is the re-painting of the Dining Hall ceiling. We know this has not been attempted for at least thirty years and we suspect longer. The work required the use of oil-based distemper to match the original and great care in cleaning and painting the elaborate plaster work, which incorporates symbols representative of all the Presbyterian churches in the world in 1899. Less obvious to the visitor is the long programme of remedial work in the cellars, where the beams bearing the floors above were deteriorating. The floors are now good for another hundred years. For the future we are exploring the possibility of creating archive storage in the large attics of the residential wing. The continuing work on the United Reformed Church History Society collections has now made it clear what needs to be kept. The work of cataloguing that collection and college books in the Carrie Room is also giving us hard information on what storage we need for historic books and enabling us to project future requirements. In all this we are aware of our responsibilities to the United Reformed Church at large and our sister churches around the world. The collections now at Westminster are a unique resource for the study of our tradition. This is more than antiquarianism. The lessons of Reformed history are significant in shaping our vision of the future of our own denomination but they also have a significance for the whole Church catholic.

4. Celebration

4.1 At our Commemoration of Benefactors in 2003 our preacher was Professor Morna Hooker and the lecture was given by Dr Jolyon Mitchell of New College, Edinburgh. We gave thanks also for the gifts of our leavers, who were:

4.2 Peter Clark (North Kent Group), Richard Eastman (South Leicestershire Group), Stella Hayton (Bingley and Shipley), John Mackerness (Spennings and Calder Enterprise), Susan McKenzie (Wood Street and Chesterfield Road, Barnet), Jay Phelps (Anstey), and Janet Sutton (Alkington and Providence).

4.3 Suzanne McDonald & Romilly Micklem completed their courses and are continuing their academic studies in St Andrew's and London respectively.

4.4 Finally, we give thanks for the life of John O'Neill, whose teaching inspired a generation of Westminster students between 1964 and 1985 before he moved to Edinburgh. John loved the New Testament and helped others to love it too.

Scottish United Reformed and Congregational College

1. The College as a college

Still “new(ish) kids on the block” within the United Reformed Church, perhaps we need a little more than most to explain to folk who we are – so a quick bullet point introduction for those not familiar with us.

- ✓ We served as a learning resource for the Congregational Union of Scotland for more than a century and were recognised by the United Reformed Church at unification in 2000.
- ✓ We stand in a particular relationship to the nation in which we are set. We are part of our tradition. We draw on its cultural resources. We collaborate especially with other national bodies. We seek to respond to the challenges being faced in our nation as well in the wider world.
- ✓ We function as a higher education provider, but our ethos, purpose and practice is that of a wider adult education community, a place of lifelong learning.
- ✓ We use educational partners in order to provide a flexible range of learning opportunities which can be tailored to meet the actual needs of learners.
- ✓ We are often referred to as a “virtual” college because we are not buildings-based but in fact are “college” wherever people work with us to engage in learning.

2. The student body

2.1 In a sense, the most difficult question to answer is “How many students do you have?”. At its simplest, we have one ordinand and one student transferring from the ordained pastorate, but then we have lay education students and others following adult education and spirituality programmes.

2.2 In ordinand terms, we welcomed Craig Jesson BA, a graduate in human resources development for a three-year programme of ordination training. He is concurrently matriculated for an undergraduate MA in religious studies with the University of Glasgow. He brings valuable experience, not only with his prior degree, but also from his work in social work management. We are glad that, as it is our “turn”, Craig is now the student representative on the General Assembly Training committee. We have with us also Pastor Jack Muir, who was ordained to the pastorate within the Congregational Union of Scotland, and who ministers in the Peedie Kirk, Kirkwall, Orkney. Jack is the last of those who were on the active list of pastors and who have undertaken further training with us for additional recognition in their ministry. The very character of our student body requires us to be a highly flexible “institution” and to work to find ways of not only ensuring that good learning takes place, but that there is built a sense of community.

2.3 We said farewell to two ordinands who had been with us on 15 month learning programmes: Dr Deborah Anderson who has been called to pastorates in West Midlands synod and Dr Irene John. We are glad that one of Scotland’s contributions to the pool of ministers is people of high academic quality.

3. The research network

The network is an open one. We welcome anyone who is undertaking study at a postgraduate or advanced level, primarily in theological or Biblical studies but not exclusively so. (The Principal is still undertaking a PhD in Education and the synod Moderator an MA in literature!) It is an opportunity for researchers to interact with a learned but not necessarily specialist community and to review their research work from a wider perspective. With regret, we had to say farewell Dr Sarah Hall who had been studying for her PhD at Edinburgh, but we have been compensated well by the arrival of Ms Suzanne MacDonald, a PhD student at St Andrews. Suzanne has already contributed in such ways as being a speaker at the URC Synod of Scotland Ministers’ conference. The network meets each academic term but members interact also in less formal ways. It is one of the ways in which we endeavour to be college as a community of lifelong learners.

4. The annual retreat

This is a key opportunity for an otherwise dispersed community to meet physically and to learn together. It brought together people from the northern isles to the Scottish borders, College students, officers, staff and friends. Our theme this year was *Holy Fools*. We learned something of the place of Christian clowning, not least its radical age, and even practised some of the simpler techniques. We did Bible study on Wisdom and Folly in the Bible and heard of the Fools for Christ in Russian Orthodoxy and beyond. Our retreat book was *Holy Fools*, the novel of Joanne Harris.

5. Continuing Ministerial Education

The College firmly recognises that, as a provider of ministerial training, it has to be as concerned with continuing education as initial training. We have endeavoured this year to offer some opportunities on an ecumenical basis, but have experienced some difficulty with recruiting from a wider market. We believe that we have particular expertise around educational practice, in ministering to older people, in management and organisational development and in the use of storytelling. We are interested too in exploring how our capacity might be utilised in consultancy style work.

6. Life after Scottish Churches’ Open College

We have reported earlier on the sad closure of SCOC. Its loss impacts on the educational and ecumenical scenes in a number of ways. Directly, we have lost an important mechanism for providing liberal, contextual theological learning for a wide range of learners on an ecumenical basis. For the time being, only the counselling course provision continues. We have yet to discern how the churches might collaborate together in the planning and delivery of adult learning opportunities.

7. The “Hind” report

7.1 The long title of the Church of England’s reform proposals is one that well accords with our own understanding of our role and contribution. We are concerned for ministerial formation in its widest sense and in the context of helping the church to develop as learning community. We are conscious how far this will be a significant ecumenical development for most of the

synods of the United Reformed Church and therefore for all the colleges and courses it recognises... but we are aware that formally the territory is England and that the other two nations/synods lie outside its remit.

7.2 It would be naive, however, to imagine that this major influence upon training provision will not leak into the wider policy planning of the Training committee and across the national borders to some extent. We, therefore, are glad that the Training committee is encouraging Scotland and Wales to be well-informed about and engaged in the “English” process while at the same time taking responsibility for sharing in the ecumenical development of theological learning in their own specific contexts.

8. The Training review

The College welcomes the approach of the Training committee to carrying out a review that is positive and developmental. We echo its commitment to lifelong learning, to developing work across the ministries of the whole people of God, to ecumenical collaboration and to affirming the distinctive characteristics of the national synods.

9. The Library

The dissolution of Scottish Churches’ Open College withdrew a significant reader population from the user groups of the united library belonging to this College together with the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Board of Parish Education of the Church of Scotland. Since then, the Board of Parish Education has resolved also to withdraw from the library

partnership as part of its review of how it delivers and supports lay training within the Church of Scotland. In the interim, the College and the Scottish Episcopal Church will form a library together but on a reduced service basis. Consideration is being given by the library committee and the library partners as to the longer term viability and developmental potential of the library. In narrower terms, the College is not exclusively dependent upon the united library as members of staff and student bodies have also membership of university libraries but we are conscious that the united library stock represents a distinctive stock which is of considerable value to learners.

10. Friends of the College

We have formed or perhaps re-formed a friends organisation so that supporters may contribute to the work of the College, be kept in touch with its life and have a real sense of belonging to the College community.

11. Contribution to the Synod and wider United Reformed Church

Under a reciprocal agreement, the College makes a significant contribution to the educational life of the synod of Scotland with the Principal acting as its Education Secretary. Currently, the Principal serves also as Convener of the Training committee’s Continuing Ministerial Education sub-committee and in the past year has worked on the training review for West Midlands synod and as leader of a Refresher course.



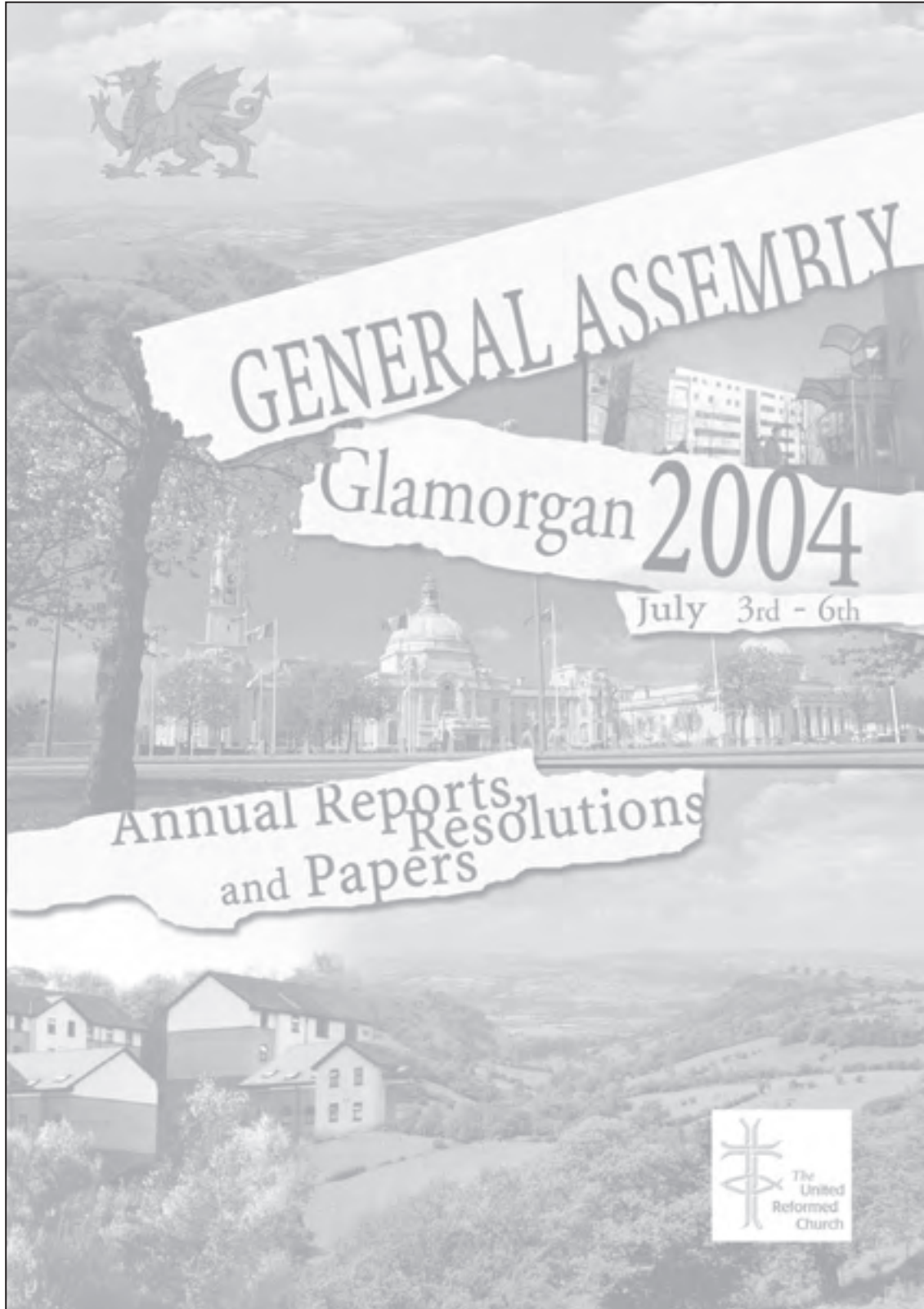
The
United
Reformed
Church

Appendix 7



The
United
Reformed
Church

Information



URC History Society

1. The Convent of All Hallows, Ditchingham provided an excellent venue for the Study Weekend held from 19 to 21 September – Indian Summer temperatures to explore chapels and churches in Suffolk and Norfolk under the guidance of Ronald Bocking and Eamon Duffy, comfortable accommodation and good food. Members were also able to enjoy a feast of stimulating papers and shorter communications. Professor Patrick Collinson gave the Annual Lecture on 'Dissent before Dissenters'. Appropriately, much of his evidence focussed on East Anglian communities. Thirty six members and friends attended. Morning worship at Emmanuel Church Bungay also provided an opportunity to meet the Moderator of General Assembly, Alasdair Pratt.

2. The completion of the task of distributing congregational records to local Archives and Record Offices has allowed the Council to refocus attention on the Presbyterian General Assembly material in the Society's care. This is of national interest and requires dedicated accessible space. The conversion of an attic area at Westminster College may supply a solution. Thirty years after union, material is still being deposited, in this case papers from Presbyterian Housing Ltd. Work has continued, thanks to the assistance of Mr and Mrs Richard Potts, in listing and sorting ministerial papers and sermons.

3. In the Library change is more apparent. Duplicate stock has been disposed of, making shelving and access more convenient. Following the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the Society and Westminster College, the proceeds will be shared between the two bodies. In addition the future of the collection is safeguarded should either party cease to exist. Dr Marian Foster has continued her part time work as cataloguer, coming across such C17 gems as Faithful Teate's *Scripture map of the wilderness and way to Canaan* (1655), possibly an influence upon John Bunyan.

4. The communications revolution initiated by the World Wide Web means that queries come more often by email than by a personal visit. The Administrator, Mrs Margaret Thompson, (01223 741300

/mt212@cam.ac.uk) may be contacted at Westminster College, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0AA on any weekday save Wednesday. Family History, where a relative has been a missionary or a minister is often requested, but the most intriguing enquiry in 2003 concerned an aboriginal boy, George Van Diemen, who was placed in the care of the Revd George Greatbatch, itinerant preacher in the Liverpool area and then minister at Southport in the early years of C19. (A fictional account of the boy may be found in *English Passengers* by Matthew Kneale).

5. The *Journal* issues for the year contained the usual eclectic mix, ranging from Philip Doddridge and Children, via the history of Barton Chapel in Cheshire to English Congregational reactions to the Spanish Civil War. Would-be contributors are asked to contact the Editor, Professor Clyde Binfield. He can offer practical advice on 'house style' as well as historical insight.

6. At the General Assembly in Portsmouth a useful consultation took place on a document prepared by the Council, 'What local churches should preserve'. Members' contributions were incorporated in the version that could appear in *The Manual* eventually. In the meantime single copies may be obtained from the Administrator.

7. The Administrator is pleased to receive church histories produced for significant anniversaries, the most recent being *One Hundred Years of Trinity* [St Albans]. Any material connected with the partnership between the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Church of the Palatinate will also be very welcome at Westminster, as it is hoped to produce an account of the relationship in time for the Jubilee of the Covenant of Table and Pulpit Fellowship in 2007.

8. Leaflets explaining what the Society can offer were sent to every minister and church secretary in the autumn mailing. All who have an interest in the history of the United Reformed Church, whether academic or local, specialised or general, are welcome. Membership remains good value at £13 and students may claim a reduction.

URC Musicians' Guild

1. Any opportunity to report on our activities is an opportunity not to be missed! Where to begin? Well, a good place is the Guild's Celebration Day held at Caterham United Reformed Church in October 2003. Not only did the trees in their glowing autumn colours give us a glorious welcome but our hosts also pulled out lots of stops to make sure that Guild members travelling from far and wide enjoyed a happy and rewarding day of music-making for the glory of God.

2. Our Celebration Day each year is the one event when *all* the Guild's members across the UK are invited to join together for a day which is hugely enjoyable; a chance to meet with old friends, to sing new kinds of worship music, to learn about pipe organs maybe, or to find inspiration to form a musical group back home. It is a day offering far more than might be suggested if we called it 'the AGM'!

3. However, this is not the only event organised by the Guild. Many other musical activities are arranged throughout the UK by our branches. The branches are based on the areas of United Reformed Church Synods and each of them holds two or more events each year, so there are plenty of great musical opportunities from which to choose.

4. Another good place to continue with our report is 'Guild Review'. This lively and informative journal is sent three times a year to our members. Each edition contains reviews of new music, enthusiastic reports of events, interesting articles and advertisements for future meetings.

5. In addition to special events and a special magazine, the Guild continues to offer a special service to churches. Our Organ Advisory Service has a network of skilled musicians who can advise a church on problems, or opportunities, relating to pipe organs, whether it be repairs, new 'voicing', complete overhaul or even disposal. Our Register of Redundant Pipe Organs can sometimes help find an organ a new home.

6. So, not only does the Guild nurture the use and enjoyment of music – of all kinds – in our church worship, but it supports the creators of music whether they be composers, instrumentalists, singers, sound recorders or just those many people who continue to attend Christian worship because they really like the hymns and songs.

7. It might come as a surprise therefore to hear that membership of the Guild is currently declining. 2004 Yearbook statistics indicate that United Reformed Church membership stands at almost 85,000. It surely must come as a shock then to be told that only about 400 of these are individual members of the United Reformed Church's musical organisation. This is very worrying but what does it truly indicate? Do United Reformed Church members no longer care about the music in Christian worship? (Surely this cannot be the case.) Is the number of musicians in our churches generally decreasing? Or do United Reformed Church members simply not know about the Guild?

8. The Guild is for *everyone* who appreciates music in worship. Please help the Guild to report on a huge increase in its membership with even more enjoyment of new music, new worship groups and new young organists in post in the next Report to General Assembly. Our annual subscription for individual members is £4 – yes, that is £4 – and church or corporate membership is a minimum of £10.

9. For further information about membership, branch events and the organ advisory service please do contact our Honorary General Secretary: Mrs Chris James, 56 Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5PE (Tel: 01462 742684)

Or why not visit our website at www.urcmusic.org.uk ?

Schools Related to the United Reformed Church

1. Representatives of the Schools (Caterham, Eltham, Silcoates, Taunton, Walthamstow Hall and Wentworth) met in London for their annual business meeting on 9 June 2003. There was a particular welcome for Mrs J Milner who has succeeded Mrs J Lang as Headmistress of Walthamstow Hall.

2. In addition to relations with the United Reformed Church and CWM, matters of advocacy and publicity were considered and future meetings of students, staff, and governors at Corrymeela and with the Collegio Valdese, Torre Pellice, were planned.

3. The Schools remain appreciative of support from the Milton Mount Foundation and the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust.

4. The following reports have been received:

4.1 Caterham School

Caterham has had another successful year with exciting developments in independent learning, which is encouraging greater breadth, scholarship and self-development. Examination results continue to improve, with the best ever results at GCSE and A level and a position in the league table of the top 100 schools in the country.

Boarding numbers continue to develop: 140 pupils represent thirty different countries.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award continues to develop: four gold awards have been attained, the expeditions taking place with World Challenge in Bolivia. This year another group of thirty-four pupils are going with World Challenge to Botswana.

In sport the Boys' Hockey XI is now one of the top teams in the South of England. They lost only one match by 1 goal.

Music goes from strength to strength, marked most recently by an excellent production of Haydn's "Creation".

Following on the success of the trip to Italy for the six United Reformed Church schools a second "Building Bridges" conference is planned to take place in Northern Ireland at the Corrymeela Reconciliation Centre in County Antrim.

The new Master Plan for the school is under discussion and a new development is imminent.

4.2 Eltham College

This academic year has focused very much on the process of development. The Pastoral structure throughout the Senior part of the college has now completed its transition into three Sections, Lower, Middle, and Sixth Form with Pastoral Year Heads co-ordinating the Tutor teams as they oversee the pupils' development. Five Working Parties have been established with members of the Teaching Staff to examine those aspects of school life which are critical to everyone's development: Teaching and Learning Styles, Curriculum and Assessment, High Education, Information and Communication Technology, and perhaps most importantly at the heart of our school, Our Community. Staff and Governors have worked hard in their groups discussing the various issues that pertain to these areas and recommendations are being produced for a Strategic Development Plan in the next academic year.

Parallel to all this, several physical developments are in progress. The Junior School has for too long been neglected and, following planning permission in July 2003, work is already far advanced in the creation of a new teaching wing while the Victorian villa, The Grange, is re-instated to become the administrative centre of the Junior School.

Following the dramatic transformation of the Chapel last year, we are now creating a Pick-up and Drop-off area immediately adjacent to the Chapel. This will enable parents to deliver pupils to the College with greater safety and with less disruption to our immediate neighbours. Additionally, this area will be available as parking in the evening when concerts, plays and other functions are taking place at the College.

Charitable activity remains at the centre of many lives within our community. In November pupils, their parents, and staff were involved in creating a Charity Art show where every painting, drawing, or artistic creation was sold, while in the Spring term, Sixth Form students staged a Charity Fashion Show; both these events were in aid of the British Red Cross. The teaching staff from both the Junior and Senior Schools combined in January to put on a Pantomime, which raised over £5000 for different charities. Year 7 and 8 pupils have undergone sponsored work-outs for Leprosy, the Leprosy charity.

Finally, we have launched a Development Campaign to raise funds for a Bursary Fund. Throughout the College's history a number of pupils have been able to

attend the College with financial support from either the Direct Grant or Assisted Places Schemes. Now that the Government has withdrawn this support, a professional approach to fund-raising has been adopted to establish the finances to make education at Eltham open to all who would benefit from it no matter what their financial background. A Development Director has been appointed, a Prospectus produced and circulated, and events including a Gala Dinner and a tele-raising campaign but we hope to raise sufficient funds to ensure that the ethos and Christian character of Eltham College are preserved.

4.3 Silcoates

The three schools of the Silcoates School Foundation are flourishing. Numbers are very healthy and this year's A level students produced the highest average points per candidate in our history.

After a distinguished ten-year tenure, Peter Johnson retired as Chairman of the Governors, passing the torch to Howard Bryan, head boy at Silcoates in 1962 and our "legal eagle" on the Board for many years.

We congratulate David Dinmore on his appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant for West Yorkshire. David has relinquished the Bursarship, but continues as Clerk to the Governors. Our new Bursar is Mr John Dickson, formerly Bursar of Leeds Grammar School. We have also welcomed Mr Robert Lilley as Head of the Junior School; he was previously Head of Fulneck Junior School.

The Chapel has been redecorated throughout and new lighting has been installed. The focus for everyone is inescapably on the cross above the table. Back home from its 10,000-hymn service, the revoiced and reconditioned organ now sounds very fine. In the summer the Chapel witnessed a thanksgiving for the lives of two notable Silcoates masters, Geoffrey Fowler and centenarian Frank Lusted. We also record with sadness the death of Claude Pike, Old Silcoatian and benefactor: he gave us many of the trees which beautify the campus.

Next door to the Chapel, the Hall, a grand old lady of some seventy years, has enjoyed an excellent "makeover". With an increased number of students studying for their A Levels we are building a substantial extension to the Sixth Form Centre. When it is completed in the new year, the construction of a new Music School will begin. Its foundation stone was laid by Paul Crossley, CBE, Old Silcoatian, who was Guest of Honour on Speech Day.

4.4 Walthamstow Hall

The academic year 2002-2003 saw a number of exciting developments. Work started on converting the former boarding accommodation in the main Arts and Crafts school building in September 2002. The

project, which included substantial structural work to redevelop the area into teaching space for Languages and Humanities, was completed in April 2003. The official opening of The Erasmus Centre classrooms, careers, and ICT facilities took place on 1 May 2003, and the school welcomed the Rt Hon Michael Portillo, MP to perform the ceremony.

The Erasmus Centre opening was the first in a programme of planned development to enable the school to maintain its tradition of excellence. The next phase, the refitting of all science facilities, started in August 2003 and is still in progress.

In August 2003, A2 examination candidates achieved 100% pass rate, all at grades A-D; over 68% were at grades A-B, and 43% at grade A. Similarly at GCSE, 100% girls gained 5 grades A*-C, the majority of pupils achieving at least 11 passes; 64.5% passes were at grades A*-A, ensuring us a very favourable placing in published league tables.

Beyond the academic curriculum, girls distinguished themselves in other important areas; leadership, service and extra-curricular activities included. It was a good year for sport; the U12 netball team became county champions and the 1st lacrosse team went to the National Finals at Berkhamsted.

In Autumn Term 2002 and Spring 2003, the Inter-house Music and Drama Competitions produced some outstanding teamwork as well as individual performances. Every girl in the Senior School participated in these events.

Members of musical groups provided some splendid entertainment at formal concerts in both Autumn and Summer terms. The opening of the Stables Music Centre at the Junior School site in Spring 2004 should guarantee that musical talent is encouraged from the earliest years. In Spring 2003 Senior School girls performed a moving version of "Princess Ascending" in The Ship Theatre, whilst Autumn 2003 saw a highly successful version of the dramatic comedy "The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society's Production of MACBETH". In the same term school singers had the opportunity to perform "The Pirates of Penzance" alongside professionals from The Grimm's Dyke Opera Company. This venture raised money for The Hospice In The Weald Charity.

Throughout the year, staff and girls in both Junior and Senior Schools combined to support a host of charitable causes through Form, House, and whole school fundraising. Of particular note was an initiative by Year 11 pupils who raised money to decorate the living quarters of Brazilian slum dwellers. A group of girls raised funds and visited a missionary church in Brazil in August 2003.

All these achievements reflect the school's continuing commitment to preparing girls for life beyond the classroom, a sentiment expressed in the recently formulated school mission statement.

Walthamstow Hall educates girls with academic potential to lead challenging and fulfilling lives in the 21st century.

An emphasis on the spiritual development of girls remains at the heart of the school's purpose, and is supported by a vigorous Christian Union and regular parents' Prayer Group meetings. So, the school moves forward, firmly rooted in the Christian principles on which it was founded in 1838.

4.5 Wentworth College

Our GCSE results last summer were very pleasing; 97% of entries achieved grades A* to C. Students in Year 13 completed their final modules in sixteen subjects with an overall pass rate of 97%, and for ten subjects it was 100%. Our sporting teams have also had a successful year, with a number of girls selected for county squads in netball and badminton, and national squads in badminton and sailing. Eighty-five junior members of the school participated in a most entertaining production of "The Sound of Music" last summer, whilst the senior drama production in the autumn was "Sand Castles".

As always, our girls have devoted much time to charitable activities, such as "Task Force" and tea parties for the charity, "Contact the Elderly". The sixth form charity week, eagerly anticipated by all girls, raised funds for the Retts Syndrome Association, Children in Need, and Comic Relief. Staff and girls also participated in The Race for Life in support of Cancer Research, and thirty girls volunteered for the National Swimathon Challenge. They swam 1000 lengths of the school swimming pool and raised £727.93 for the Macmillan Cancer Relief Fund.

The Advent Service last term was as usual held at Richmond Hill URC, Bournemouth, led by the Reverend Jackie Petrie and the Minister, The Reverend Dr Donald Norwood. It was well supported by Governors, parents and the congregation. The music provided by the school choir was especially appreciated. The Choir and Chamber Choir have sung at many events both in and out of school this year, including a concert at Christchurch Priory.

Silence and Retreats Network

1. The Silence and Retreats Network has continued making quiet headway. It has been a year of good progress in some fields but slow in others.

2. The Core Group is responsible for oversight of the network and for publishing the newsletter "Windows". The actual organisation of Retreats and Quiet Days is dealt with at Synod level and some Synods have made considerable progress in appointing contacts for each district and in ensuring that opportunities for Quiet Days are included in both CME and ministerial training programmes. Many more churches are also beginning to realise their value for elders and even congregational meetings during which questions can be faced at deeper levels than is possible in just an evening. In at least one Synod, training days have been organised for potential leaders of Quiet Days.

3. Membership has remained much the same. Financial constraints are the same for us as for every part of the church and this puts pressure on what we are able to do.

4. The network was represented at the service in St Paul's Cathedral in London in September to mark the opening of the London Centre for Spirituality. This promises a focus for both training and exploration; their contact number is 020 7621 1391. Several members will have attended the Retreats Association conference at Swanwick in May under the title "Faith Let Loose", an attempt to encourage us to venture out from a safe starting point towards a more courageous search for truth.

5. At the annual Synod link persons' meeting and retreat in March 2004 held at the Windermere Centre the Revd Barry Hutchinson, currently Director of St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island, became convener of the Network in succession to the Revd David Bunney.

Women's World Day of Prayer

The service this year, held on Friday 5th March, was prepared by the women of Panama with the theme 'In faith, Women Shape the Future'. A theme reflected in the prayers and readings as Panama faces the many economic and social changes in their country. This year is especially important for the women of Panama as they celebrate 50 years of their participation in the World Day of Prayer. Panama is a mainly Christian country where 85% of the population are Roman Catholic.

The services were well attended with over 350,000 orders of service used at the many different services held throughout England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Service and information sheets are produced for the Welsh speaking churches. Services were held in cathedrals, churches, halls, hospitals, nursing homes, and schools where the special children's service sheets, along with the teachers' notes are used at assemblies. The children's information is also used in many Junior church groups.

Day conferences and preparation days have continued to increase to the extent that there are now three conference co-ordinators arranging conferences in different areas of the country.

From 26 August to 3 September 2003 the National committee hosted the International Quadrennial conference at Swanwick. Over 200 representatives from the national committees of 90 countries joined together. It was particularly good to greet ladies from the former Eastern block countries. Amongst the many special events was the service held at Derby Cathedral, a truly international service with languages and music from all the continents.

The service for 2005 has been prepared by the women of Poland with the theme 'Let Our Light Shine'.

Scottish Committee Report

On 5 March 2004, the World Day of Prayer Services were held throughout Scotland from Caithness in the north, Orkney and Shetland to Dumfries and Galloway in the south. Throughout the day, over 730 services were held in churches, church halls, sheltered housing, schools, prisons, hospitals and nursing homes. It was estimated that some 26,500 attended, many of whom were men.

During the year the Scottish Committee have been involved in some innovations. Two 'Awareness Days' were arranged in Kirkcaldy and Perth. There was also a 24 hour retreat which resulted in the work on the 2005 Service being mainly completed. Those present also spent time in study and prayer and getting to know other members better. It was a very worthwhile experience which, it is hoped, will be repeated this coming autumn, when our plans for the 75th Anniversary Celebrations in April 2005 will be completed.



The
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